



# ROBERT FROST; THEMATIC ISSUES IN HIS MAJOR POEMS

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## Abstract

Robert Frost is well known poet and author in the field of English literature. He is famous for his literary work and they serve the society in its development and aesthetic sense. Robert Frost comes in a romantic genre of literature and there are other famous well known romantic poets also of well repute. This research paper deals with life and work of Robert Frost, the style he has followed in his writing and common themes of his poems which he covered throughout his works. This research paper describes in detail the summary in nutshell of some of his major poems and the themes governing his main works.

**Key words:** Robert Frost, Romanticism, Poetry Love, Nature, Duty, Communication, Death, Extinction, Everyday life, Isolation, spiritual ideology, meaning of life, Rural life, Affirmation.

## Robert frost; thematic issues in his major poems

Literature plays the most important role in our life. Literature brings vividness and depth in knowledge. It familiarises us about society's political, socio - culture and religious aspects of the past and present and as works a vessel because million of books have been published till now across the world. It gives the focus to society in the field of literature. Poetry is an aesthetic way to release the emotional burst of the human heart. Poetry is an art that influences the reader to appreciate creative writing, and the reader enjoys the poetry that's why it exists across the universe. One can express one's emotion and connect to others in an aesthetic way that explores the beauty of the word and world.

Robert Frost is well known poet and author in the field of English literature. He is famous for his literary work and they serve the society in its development and aesthetic sense. Robert Frost comes in a romantic genre of literature and there are other famous well known romantic poets also of well repute. The period of Romanticism in literature also known as the Romantic movement or Romantic era, was an artistic, literary, musical, and intellectual movement that originated in Europe at the end of the 18th century and in

most areas came at peak in the approximate period between 1800 to 1850. Romanticism is distinguished by its prominence in emotion and individualism, clandestine literature, paganism, idealization of nature, suspicion of science and industrialization, as well as glorification of the past with a strong preference for the medieval rather than the classical. It was partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution, the social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and also the scientific rationalization of nature. It was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music and literature. It had a major impact on historiography, education, chess, social sciences and the natural sciences. It had a significant and complex effect on politics, with romantic thinkers influencing conservatism, liberalism, radicalism and nationalism. Some romantic poets of the era are, William Shakespeare, William Wordsworth, John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelly, William Black, Robert Burns, Wolter Scotts, Charles Lamb etc. Robert Frost is one of them.

Robert Frost is twentieth century well known poet and playwright. He is an American poet who was born in the year 1874 in San Francisco California United state and died in 1963 in Boston Massachusetts at the age 89. Despite having so many difficulties in his life and the things he got involved with, he is well known for his poetic and writing works. His full name is Robert Lee Frosts His Father was William Prescott Frost, was a school teacher and later worked as an editor of the San Francisco evening bulletin. When Robert was hardly 11 years old his grandfather supported his family. Before his grandfather died, he purchased a farm for Robert and Elinor in Derry New Hampshire, where meanwhile Robert used to write poems while cultivating, especially in the morning time, till 9 years. Later all of his work which had been written by frost brought him very big popularity.

During his graduation Robert Lee Frost fell in love with his classmate Elinor Miriam. She accepted Robert's proposal and they were married at Lawrence Massachusetts. Robert and Elinor were blessed with six children out of six only one daughter, Lesley survived. In 1937 his wife was suffering from a heart problem throughout her life and developed breast cancer, ultimately she died of heart failure. Robert Frost graduated from Laurence high school in 1892. Robert frost joined Harvard University in 1897-1899 but due to illness he had to leave his studies. He again returned to the field of education as an English teacher at New Hampshire academy from 1906 to 1911.

Between 1922 and 1963 Robert had been teaching at the Bread Loaf school of English for middle bury college in 1921 he accepted a fellowship for a teaching post at a university of Michigan after that he was awarded a lifetime appointment at the university as a fellow. In 1940 he purchased 2 hectares of around a 5-acre plot in Miami Florida which is known for its pencil pines where he used to spend his winter season for the rest of his life, this property is also known for a house on Breeder Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts that best known today to the national historic register.

However Frost didn't graduate from any university, he was awarded over 40 honorary degrees. Above all he received an honorary degree from the Harvard alumni director in 1965.

In 1963 he died of unsuccessful prostate surgery and he was buried at the Bennington cemetery in Bennington Vermont. He got his epitaph named from the last line of his poem *The lesson of today* (1942) "I had a lover's quarrel with the word".

Most of the major works of Robert Frost have been written and influenced by William Wordsworth, John Keats, Ezra Pound, Williams Butler Yeats and Ralph Waldo Emerson. He got vibes from all the good poets of contemporary British at that time. On top of that Ezra Pound is such a person who helped him a lot in publishing his works. Robert Frost is a single person who has won four-time Pulitzer prizes for his major works. In 1924 for New Hampshire, 1931 for the collected poem, 1937 for a Further range, 1943 for a Witness tree. Although Robert Frost was an American poet, he first got his work published in England after that it got published in America. He won Bollingen prize in 1962.

When he was at 20, in 1894 he sold one of his very beautiful poems named is *My butterfly* it is a kind of elegy that was first published on November 8, 1894, in addition to the New York Independent. Due to some personal issues in 1912 Frost along with his family sailed to Great Britain -Beaconsfield, one small town outside of London where he got a chance to publish his two poetry collections in London which are *A boy's will* which was published in 1913 and *North of Boston* was published in 1914.

*A Boy's will* is one of the very famous poetry collections that has been written by Robert Frost. Its themes are light of rural life and philosophy as well as individuality. This is the poet's first published book and the book was first published in 1913 by David Nutt in London, with the whole support of Robert's Wife Elinor. Its first collection came to America after two years of England's publication in 1915, through the Henry and Holt Company. *North of Boston*, one of his major works, is a collection of seventeenth poems that was initially published in 1914 by David Nutt because it is a collection of seventeen poems therefore it is called the 'Book of People'. In this collection he not only deals with New England themes but also yankees farmers. It is a collection of seventeen poems, through this collection the poet shows life of the people of England people's life that's why it is called a book of people too. Important poems of this collection are *After apple picking*, *The death of the hired man* and *mending wall*.

At that time world war first was also going on and continued until 11 November 1918. During the war first he had to return to America. During the years 1917 -20, 1923-25 and on a more informal basis 1926-1938 Frost used to teach English at Amherst College in Massachusetts.

Robert Frost's other major works include **1916 mountain interval**. This is originally published in 1916. It is the third collection of books that was published by David Holt. This collection includes some famous poems like *Birches*, *The road not taken* and *Out, out*. In **1923 selected poems** the volume published in 1923, he revised some of his poems in this volume and did republished. The very famous poem in this collection is the runaway. **1923 New Hampshire** is a collection of poems by Robert Frost that was published in 1923 and this collection includes several important poems such as *Fire and Ice* and *Stopping by the woods on a snowy evening*. Apart from that Robert frost initially published many other poetic collections. Some of his plays are *A way out* (1-act play) (1929), *The cows in the corn* (1-act play) (1929), *Masque of reason* (1945), *Masque of mercy* (1947).

His poem *Mowing* is an elegy that was published in *A Boy's will*. In this poem the poet expresses himself like a mower in the field, he has his scythe and his scythe seems to be whispering to the ground. Throughout the poem, he also mentions that the poet and the scythe have a passion for reaching the truth. *Mending wall* was published in 1914 with his major work North of Boston. It is a monologue that is written in

blank verse. In this poem the poet says walls and fences are a good fence makes good neighbours. But the poet is not in favour of fences, he believed that something there is that doesn't love walls. *The road not taken* was initially published in the mountain interval in 1916. In this poem, the poet, considering that the poet is in a puzzle to get a righteous path, which way he should go because he is standing on that road that has two ways to take. This poem is best known for its simplicity, clarity and epigrammatic force.

*Birch* is a natural lyric that has been taken from the mountain interval and was published in 1916. In this poem, the poet is concerned about its fusion of fact and fancy. He observes the habit of birches minutely, after that he sees the trees and finds that they are bending right and left repeatedly. Besides all this these birches are enveloped with snow. The poet also expresses his desire to climb up to heaven but later he wishes to return to the earth, poet accepted that the earth is the right place for love “I do not where it is likely to go better”. *Fire and ice* is a short lyric poem that is in nine lines, published in New Hampshire in 1923. Here the poets express fire as desire and ice as hatred. The poet describes the imagery and uses two symbols fire and ice for destruction. Fire shows the intensity of passion or desires. It is as destructive as ice but ice shows the cold of hatred. *Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening* is one of the most moving lyrics that had been taken from New Hampshire. It was published late. The poet says that “the woods are not only lovely and dark but also deep but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep and miles to go before I sleep”, this poem seems very simple but also very deep in meaning and a good example of symbolist techniques that help the people to enrich themselves with music and melody. *Two tramps in mud time* was published in a further renege in 1936, and was a lyrical one. This poem has been written from a first-person point of view and is autobiographical in truth where the poet reveals the attitude of the poet and the tramps and the poet fuses pleasure and needs, addressing the poem’s present fruit as a farmer who is working in his dooryard and talking with the passer-by, after that, they prejudice the judge to be a fool as he doesn't know the proper manner of handling the axe. Later they say nothing but the poet got it they want nothing but to do work. *The Gift outright* is also a sixteen lines lyric that was published in *A witness tree* in 1942. In this poem the poet expressed his love for the country and the poem had a great influence on Americans, it completely consists of beginning with the British colonists who occupied the land in America. His work includes many other poems of great value.

Robert Lee Frost is known for his unique writing style. In his work, he usually not only spoke with rhyme but also covers the meter of all things naturally. He is apt in knowing and describing the depth of emotions of people from all walks of life. A person whose name is **Louis Untermeyer** said that Robert Frost’s works as poetry seem to be like singing something and poetry that talks about people talking.(1)

Frost’s way of expressing words is very simple, polite and understandable. Most of the time he uses graphical language as well as introduces a speaking voice in his poem. Through his works, he expresses very simple truths, revealed by technical subtleties and symbols. His poems are written not only in a colloquial way but also he puts philosophical insight with independence through his poems characters. For example

*The woods are lovely dark and deep  
But I have promises to keep*

*And miles to go before I sleep*

*And miles to go before I sleep*

Frost sometimes uses diction as aphoristic and proverbial. In his work he mentioned that a good fence makes a good neighbour written in *Mending wall*. Frost used to write in dramatic situations which helped him to create a twist, because of his creative writing style he places the characters as they speak. The best example we can see in his work is *Stopping by the woods on a snowy evening*. It seems like a drama but in a real situation this is the climax and resolution of this poem. He also expressed his feeling about some poets who use poetry as a tool for expressing frustration and disgust and visualize the aim of writing poetry he said that delight leads to wisdom. Later he writes an essay which he entitled “the figure a poem makes”. Through this major work he showcases how we can show delight and pleasure because this poem starts with delight and also ends with a clarification of human life in a momentary stay against confusion.

Sometimes frost also uses phrases in his work. It is not only for emphasizing with the poetic diction but also for word choice. All these things he has been using in his works. His letters, which are written between 1913 and 1914, although the sense is positive as well as proactive but it is also clear like a normal conversation that we talk about every day. Most of the works he covers using rhyme, meter and alliteration. For example in His work *Mowing* where it has been shown that captured back the and-forth sound of the scythe swinging while *Out-out* imitates the jerky noise of the roar of a buzz saw.

## Themes

Themes of any piece of work, describe the socio- psychological, cultural, religious and political set up of any society and place and even reflects the psychological mindset of the writer too. That is why it is always enriching and ecstasy producing to read such works. As we know Robert Frost is considered a great American poet, best known for capturing the language, people and even landscapes of the region of America known as New England. Robert frost knew all the literary devices that is why he used several metaphors in his writing.

‘Nature’ is prominently described in his poems. This theme usually we see in his work *The Road not Taken* and *Mending Wall*. Robert frost has had a great connection with nature since childhood, that is why he presents a great deal of importance on nature in every single work, he spent most of his time in New England during his childhood that is why the majority of pastoral scenes he used to describe are inspired by some specific place in New England, well cover stereotypical pastoral themes like sheep and shepherd. He focused on the dramatic struggle that he uses for not only showing natural world but also expressing the conflict about changing season in his writing work.

Robert Frost is one of the sublime poets who always used to cover the most excellent attributes of nature. Nature is based on expressing grandeur of rural areas as well animals which are primary elements of his works. Frost deals with human psychology, mainly in rural background in their daily life that begins with the birth of man and it continues till end of one's life.

‘Communication’ is one of the most important themes of Robert Frost expressed in his work *Mending Wall*. It is proved that his every single work conveys one pleasurable message: it could be natural love, rural life and on and on. Even he tries well to express the only possible escape from isolation and despair. He

emphasizes that to communicate with another person is very hard, he tries to clear this thing by his work in *Home Burial* where he expresses two fearful events, first the death of a child and second is the destruction of a marriage. He says that the death of a child could be tragic but lack of communicating between husband and wife that is the sufficient reason to express their sorrow in comparison to what they have lost in their life. Frost well mentions the barriers to communication in his work. He usually writes in free verse, another example of that is the theme in *Acquainted with the Night* in which the narrator couldn't come out from depression because he is unable to get eye contact with another person that is lying by him.

'Everyday life' is one more theme he covers in his works. Frost was getting so much interest in everyday activities. According to him this is a place where one poet can express humanity and he also wanted to be truthful to himself, even though he said that whatever we do in a day also has a hidden meaning that we have to explore as a poet who expresses all these things in his work. Robert, in his work *Mowing* speaks about the scythe this is a tool which uses of harvesting as well as it shows the presence of hard work and the tradition of New England countryside.

'Isolation', in the individuals, is mainly woven in *Acquainted with the night*. This theme is very close to the theme of communication, he writes sometimes in this manner that his poems' characters get isolated and in that opposite condition some characters don't show a bit of depression and loneliness due to their unique perspective. In his work *The Lockless door* the narrator profoundly states that the narrator has been struggling with prison for a long time, due to all this the narrator gets very terrified by the door when someone knocks on it, this situation is quite enough to understand isolation.

'Rural life' is again majorly covered in *Mending wall* and *North of Boston*. Robert Frost was well aware of rural and urban life. In most of the works he used to write about nature and nature is the attribute of Robert Frost's poems, in which he profoundly states influences from and compassion for animals. That's why most of the time he expressed rurally life in his works. He expresses his struggle of doing farming. His poems' starting point is an observation of natural life and a grander turn into the human psychological condition. He believed that nature is just not a source of joy but also an impetus of human intelligence. If the narrator lives in an urban large city so it is quite difficult to find metaphysical meaning about one's life curriculum between mankind and nature. He expresses some glimpse about rural life and urban life he believed that, although urban life is indeed real.

Robert Frost has shown concern for duty too in his research work. The sense of 'Duty' is found in *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*. Robert Frost believes in normal life that's why he expresses duty or perseverance towards New England's rural community which gives him an important value. He usually expresses his native's major conflict between wish and job. Both play an important role in human life even he says if you are a farmer this is your responsibility to feed your family members and you are the person who needs to acknowledge responsibilities towards them instead of thinking about your dreams and passion. It has been shown in his work *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* where poet says that I truly want to stay in dense woods where I can feel the magic of snow continuously falling. Though he is aware about his duty towards his family and community that's why he is unable to stay in the jungle since he needs to accept his duty and fulfil that.

'Extinction or Death' is subject which is covered by many poets as it attracts to all writers. In his poems *Stopping By Woods On a Snowy Evening*, *After Apple Picking*, *An old man's winter night* we sense such issues dealt with delicacy.

Robert Frost not only describes the knowledge of literature, history but also of science and philosophy. He doesn't want to describe the situation and conditions of modern life. He covers extinction or death in his major work mostly. We can see in his poem where he use word 'sleep' that particularly mean death, fire and ice express desire or hatred. Some other works like *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, *After Apple picking* and *An Old man's Winter Night* all poems are example of theme of death. He narrates his poem like a speaker is search of something for his self discovery.

*The Gift of Outright* is entwined with the theme of 'Affirmation'. It is one of the famous themes of Robert Frost used in his poetry because Frost's poetry dealt with men's problems like to make man to cope with the situation and make people aware about their limitation. Frost evokes that people should explore and seek knowledge and get to the truth. According to Frost people must use their knowledge to accept the things and the barriers therein respectively. He tries to express human's sorrow. He said that whenever people face any mystery or puzzle in life they should be very positive towards their passion.

'Love' is the central point of Frost's poem. He believes that love is the only force that can make you cope with challenges in the universe. it is very significant in Frost's several poems love plays an important role in man and female life, even sometimes friendly love also comes out but when love doesn't work it seems like love breaks down in their situation and ultimately a moment comes which evokes the different aspect of human, especially of a woman who cannot tolerate this situation. Frost is a different writer who didn't deal with other poets' works and themes like T.S. Eliot and other poets do, which means this is not that he didn't know about modernism.

Robert Frost's was much attached to New England (Britain) and his country's parts. Although Robert Frost believed in simple language but whenever he needs to use a metaphor, rhymes, rhythm and literary devices he has used. Frost is much interested in nature, rural life, struggles of life and communication in all the areas and he has used normal routine aspects in his works. Prominently whenever he wrote some works he got very big popularity for this works. That's why he is one of the great poets of the twentieth century. His contribution to the literature is a founding stone and has a long lasting impact on all literary works. Robert frost published his hundreds poems and around twenty seven collections during the twentieth century as well as he was nominated for a Nobel peace prize in literature a total of 31 times .since he used to write for conversational, realistic, rural and introspective, his best quality in literature he is known for his long-lasting poem and whatever he wanted to do he did and never afraid from his failure. During his lifetime most of the twentieth-century poets were influenced by his works and poetry even his poems are anthologized for study across the universe along with austere beauty and simplicity meanwhile whatever themes he used to use in his works which were also universal.

Since Robert frost had been called the interpreter because of his poetry His works evoke a deep relationship between nature and people on top of that he used to write in a very soothing conversational tone,

he portrays nature in a friendly light and never seems cruel and connects the theme to the human limitation that's why his poetry easily connects to human tendency.

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