Robert Frost

(1874-1963)

"A poem should
not mean, but be."
Archibald MacLeish

Frost's poems are concerned with human tragedies and fears, his reaction to the complexities of life and his ultimate acceptance of his burdens.

Biography of RF

http://www.online-literature.com/frost/

- American poet, one of the finest of rural New England's 20th century pastoral poets. Frost published his first books in Great Britain in the 1910s, but he soon became in his own country the most read and constantly anthologized poet, whose work was made familiar in classrooms and lecture platforms.
- Frost was awarded the Pulitzer Prize four times. Nature and rural surroundings became for Frost a source for insights into deeper design of life.
- He once said: "Literature begins with geography."


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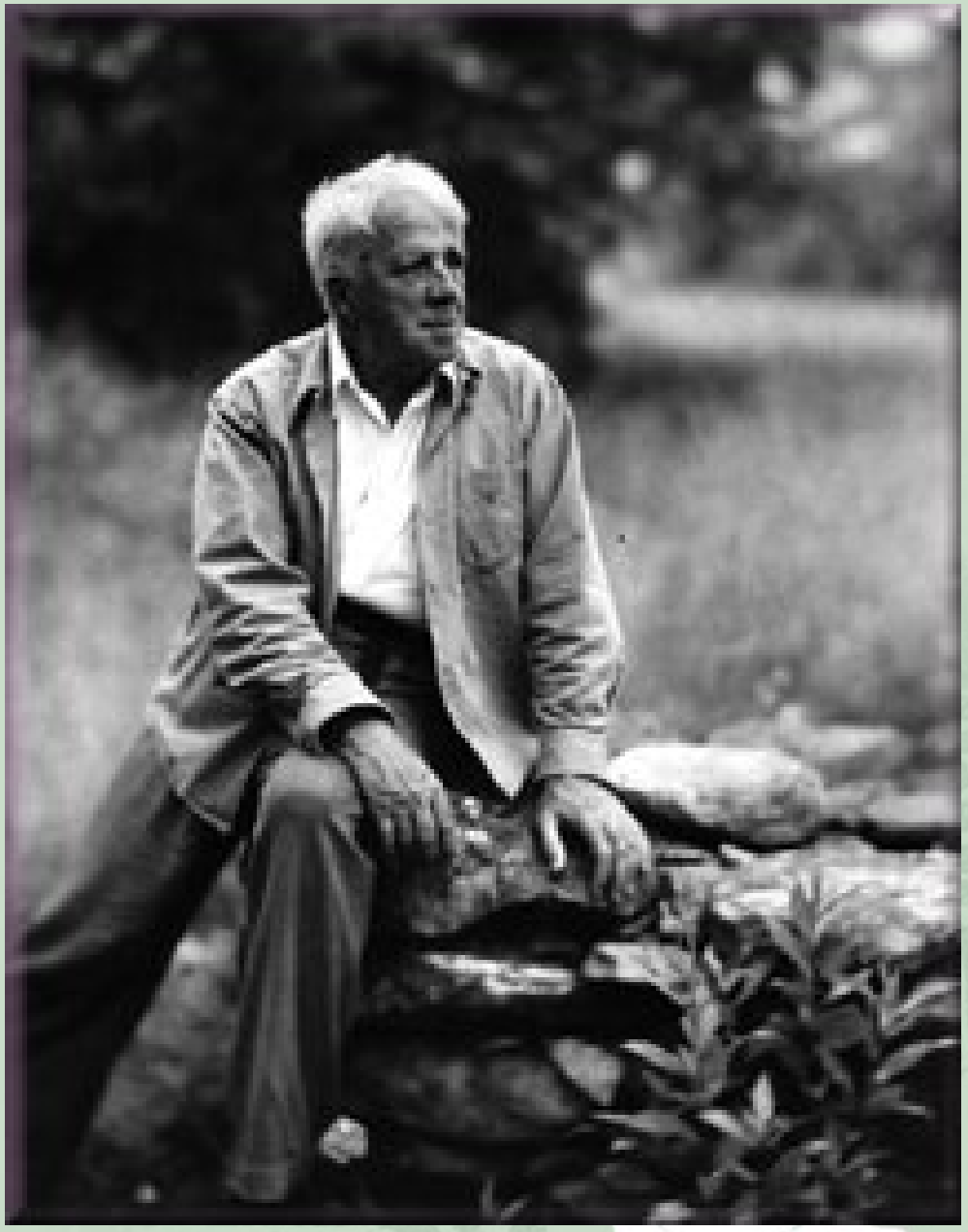
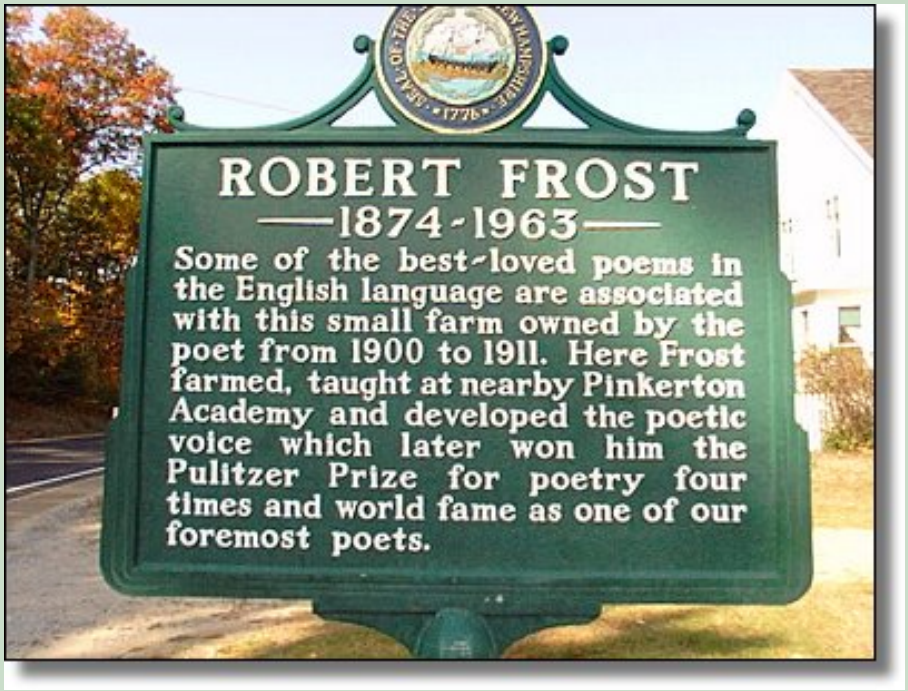


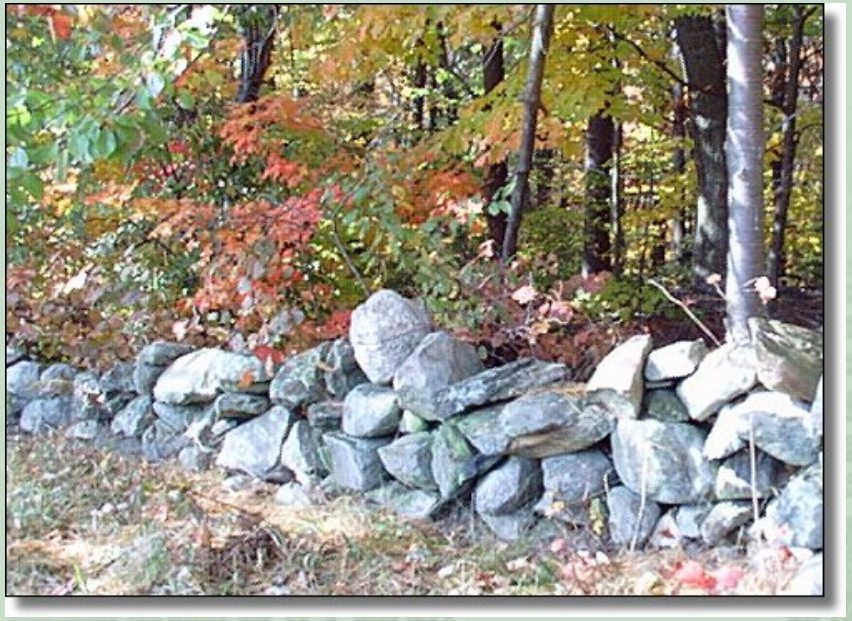
1874

- Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, California. His father, a journalist and local politician, died when Frost was eleven years old.
- His Scottish mother resumed her career as a schoolteacher to support her family.
- The family lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts, with Frost's paternal grandfather.
- In 1892 Frost graduated from a high school and attended Darthmouth College for a few months.
- Over the next ten years he held a number of jobs.
- Frost worked among others in a textile mill and taught Latin at his mother's school in Methuen, Massachusetts.

The Frost farm, where the family lived from 1900-1911



Another photo of the Robert Frost farm in Derry, New Hampshire. Note the stone wall.



Robert and Elinor Frost at Plymouth, New Hampshire, 1911

Known as the Frost House, this house was originally built for Massachusetts Agricultural College president Henry Goodell. The local papers noted that this Stick Style home was the more modern of houses in 1875 with hot and cold running water and a furnace.

Early Life

- In 1894 the New York Independent published Frost's poem 'My Butterfly' and he had five poems privately printed.
- In 1895 he married a former schoolmate, Elinor White; they had six children.
- Frost worked as a teacher and continued to write and publish his poems in magazines.

In Equal Sacrifice

Thus of old the Douglas did:
He left his land as he was bid
With the royal heart of Robert the Bruce
In a golden case with a golden lid

To carry the same to the Holy land;
By which we see and understand
That that was the place to carry a heart
At loyalty and love's command;

And that was the care to carry it in.
Now the Douglas had not far to win
Before he came to the land of Spain
Where long a holy war had been

Against the too-victorious Moor;
And there his courage could not endure
Not to strike a blow for God
Before he made his errand sure.

And ever it was intended so
That a man for God should strike a blow
No matter the heart he has in charge
For the Holy Land where hearts should go.

But when in battle the foe were met,
The Douglas found him sore beset
With only strength of the fighting arm
For one more battle has sage yet.

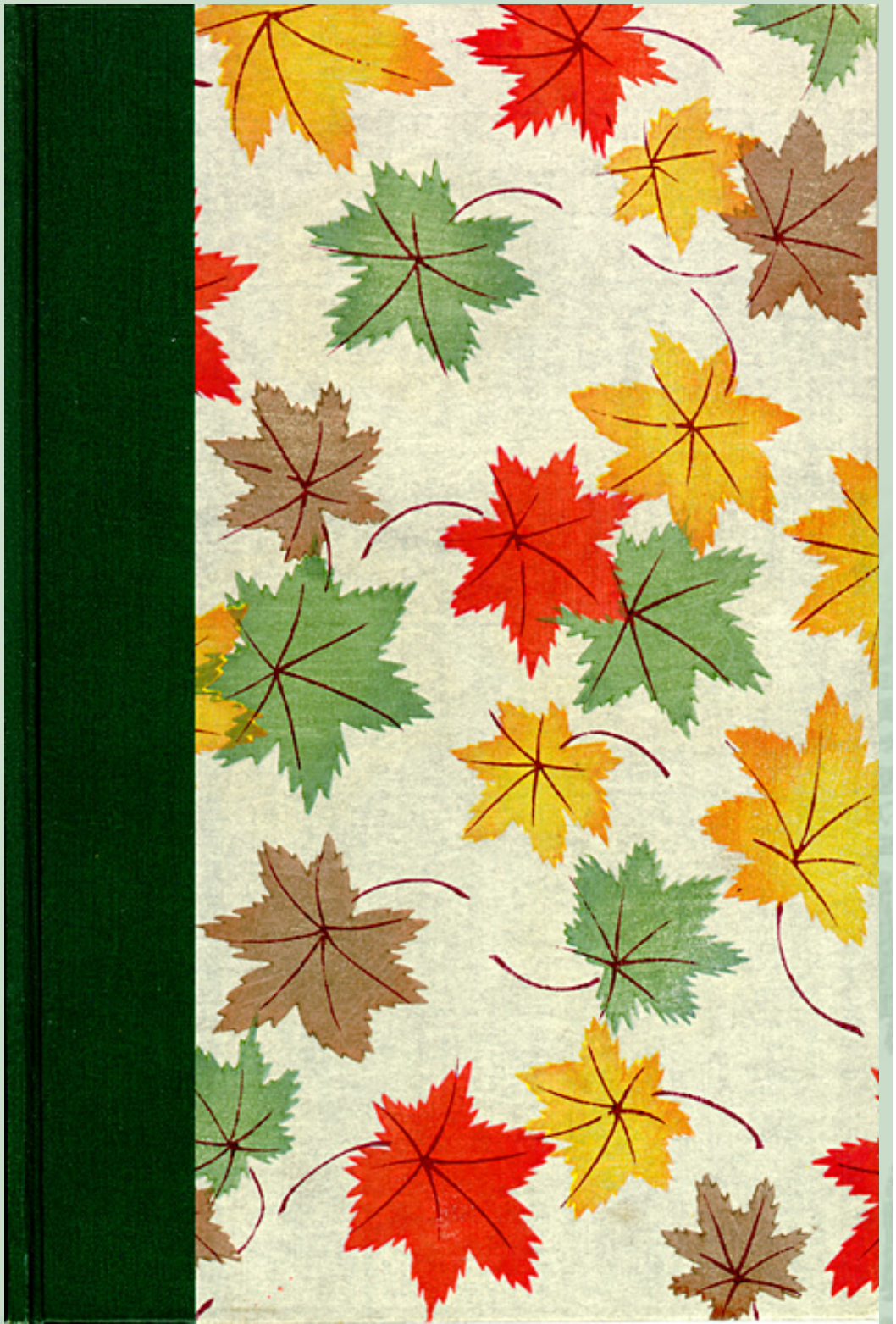
Frost's manuscript of a poem from *A Boy's Will* (1915)

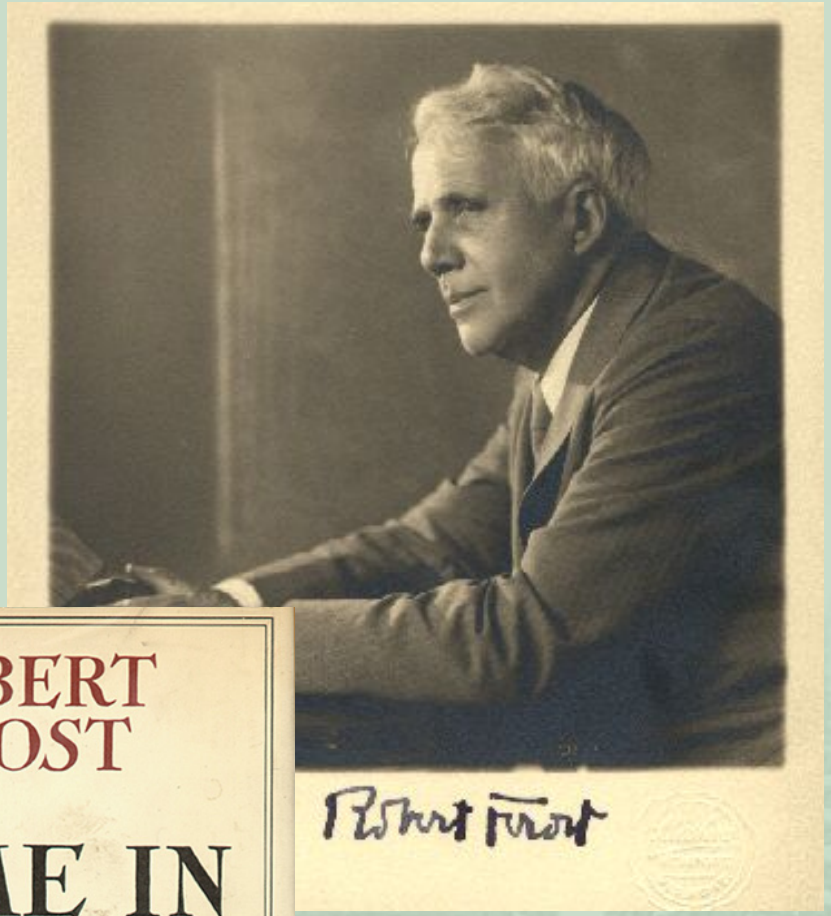
Frost in Franconia, N.H., 1915

NEW HAMPSHIRE

A POEM WITH NOTES
AND GRACE NOTES BY
ROBERT FROST
WITH WOODCUTS
BY J. J. LANKES

PUBLISHED BY
HENRY HOLT
& COMPANY : NEW
YORK : MCMXXIII





ROBERT
FROST

COME IN

AND OTHER POEMS

WITH COMMENTARY BY
LOUIS UNTERMEYER

1897 to 1899

- From 1897 to 1899 Frost studied at Harvard, but left without receiving a degree.
- He moved to Derry, New Hampshire, working there as a cobbler, farmer, and teacher at Pinkerton Academy and at the state normal school in Plymouth.

B-33

COME IN

AND OTHER POEMS

by ROBERT FROST

WITH COMMENTARY BY
LOUIS UNTERMEYER

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ARMED SERVICES EDITION

THIS IS THE COMPLETE BOOK—NOT A DIGEST

1914

- In 1912 Frost sold his farm and took his wife and four young children to England.
- There he published his first collection of poems, **A BOY'S WILL**, at the age of 39.
- It was followed by NORTH BOSTON (1914), which gained international reputation.
- The collection contains some of Frost's best-known poems: 'Mending Wall,' 'The Death of the Hired Man,' 'Home Burial,' 'A Servant to Servants,' 'After Apple-Picking,' and 'The Wood-Pile.' The poems, written with blank verse or looser free verse of dialogue, were drawn from his own life, recurrent losses, everyday tasks, and his loneliness.


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1915

- While in England Frost was deeply influenced by such English poets as Rupert Brooke.
- After returning to the US in **1915** with his family, Frost bought a farm near Franconia, New Hampshire.
- He taught later at Amherst College (1916-38) and Michigan universities.
- In 1916 Frost was made a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. On the same year appeared his third collection of verse, **MOUNTAIN INTERVAL**, which contained such poems as 'The Road Not Taken,' 'The Oven Bird,' 'Birches,' and 'The Hill Wife.'

Poems

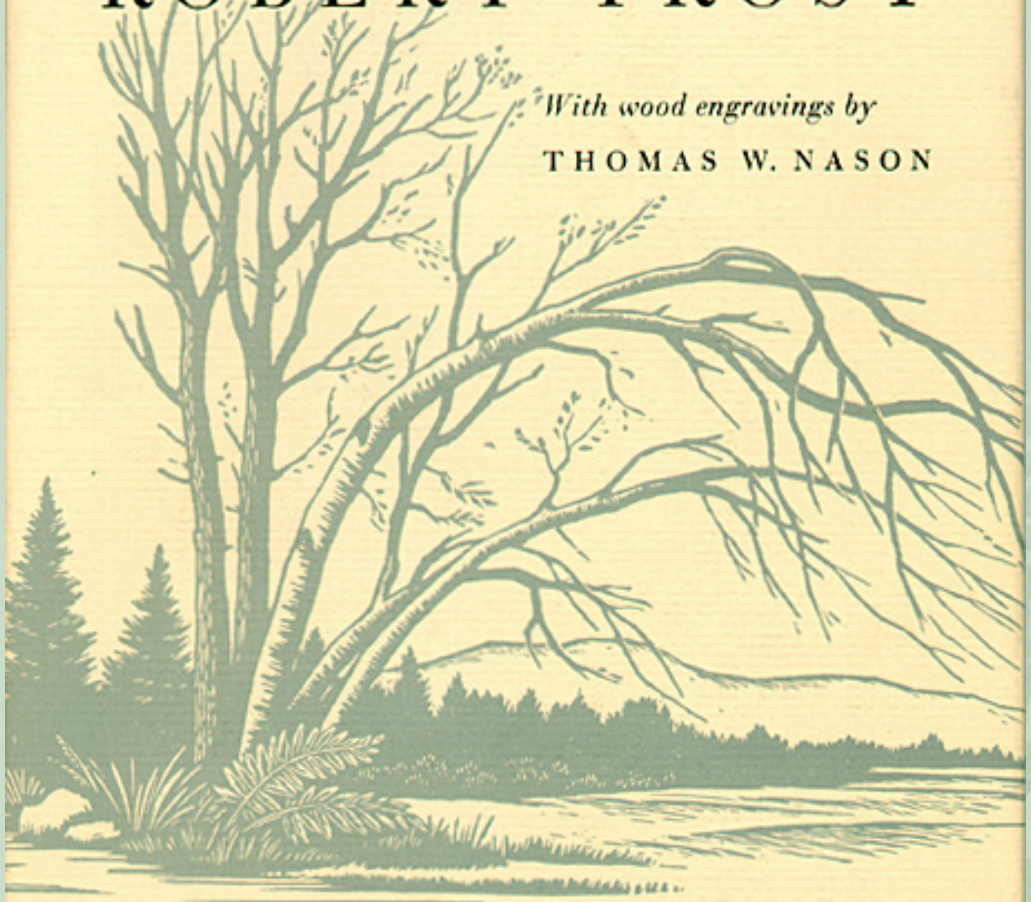
- Frost's poems show deep appreciation of natural world and sensibility about the human aspirations.
- **His images** - woods, stars, houses, brooks, - are usually taken from everyday life. With his down-to-earth approach to his subjects, readers found it is easy to follow the poet into deeper truths, without being burdened with pedantry.
- Often Frost used the rhythms and vocabulary of **ordinary speech or even the looser free verse of dialogue.**

YOU COME TOO

FAVORITE POEMS FOR YOUNG READERS

ROBERT FROST

With wood engravings by
THOMAS W. NASON



HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY · NEW YORK

1920

- 1920 Frost purchased a farm in South Shaftsbury, Vermont, near Middlebury College where he confounded the Bread Loaf School and Conference of English.
- His wife died in 1938 and he lost four of his children. Two of his daughters suffered mental breakdowns, and his son Carol, a frustrated poet and farmer, committed suicide.
- Frost also suffered from depression and the continual self-doubt led him to cling to the desire to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.
- After the death of his wife, Frost became strongly attracted to Kay Morrison, whom he employed as his secretary and adviser. Frost also composed for her one of his finest love poems, 'A Witness Tree.'

1957

- Frost travelled in 1957 with his future biographer Lawrance Thompson to England and to Israel and Greece in 1961.
- He participated in the inauguration of President **John Kennedy** in 1961 by reciting two of his poems, 'Dedication' and 'The Gift Outright.‘
- He travelled in 1962 in the Soviet Union as a member of a goodwill group.
- Among the honors and rewards Frost received were tributes from the U.S. Senate (1950), the American Academy of Poets (1953), New York University (1956), and the Huntington Hartford Foundation (1958), the Congressional Gold Medal (1962), the Edward MacDowell Medal (1962).
- In 1930 he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Amherst College appointed him Saimpson Lecturer for Life (1949), and in 1958 he was made poetry consultant for the Library of Congress.


ROBERT LEE FROST
MAR 26 1874 — JAN 29, 1963
I HAD A LOVERS QUARREL WITH THE WORLD
HIS WIFE
ELINOR MIRIAM WHITE
OCT 25 1873 — MAR 20, 1938
TOGETHER WING TO WING AND OAR TO OAR
MARJORIE FROST
MAR 29, 1905

1963

- At the time of his death on January 29, 1963, Frost was considered a kind of **unofficial poet laureate of the US**. "I would have written of me on my stone: I had a lover's quarrel with the world," Frost once said.
- **In his poems Frost depicted the fields and farms of his surroundings, observing the details of rural life, which hide universal meaning.**
- **His independent, elusive, half humorous view of the world produced such remarks as "I never take my side in a quarrel", or "I'm never serious except when I'm fooling."**

- Although Frost's works were generally praised, **the lack of** seriousness concerning social and political problems of the 1930s annoyed some more socially orientated critics.
- Later biographers have created a complex and contradictory portrait of the poet.

- In Lawrance Thompson's humorless, three-volume official biography (1966-1976) Frost was presented as a **misanthrope, anti-intellectual, cruel, and angry** man, but in Jay Parini's work (1999) he was again viewed with sympathy: "He was a loner who liked company; a poet of isolation who sought a mass audience; a rebel who sought to fit in.

- Although a family man to the core, he frequently felt alienated from his wife and children and withdrew into reveries.
- While preferring to stay at home, he traveled more than any poet of his generation to give lectures and readings, even though he remained terrified of public speaking to the end..."

Importance

Frost's importance as a poet derives from the power and memorability of particular poems.

The Death of the Hired Man (from *North of Boston*) combines lyric and dramatic poetry in blank verse.

After Apple-Picking (from the same volume) is a free-verse dream poem with philosophical undertones.

Mending Wall (also published in *North of Boston*) demonstrates Frost's simultaneous command of lyrical verse, dramatic conversation, and ironic commentary.

The Road Not Taken, Birches (from *Mountain Interval*) and the oft-studied Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (from *New Hampshire*) exemplify Frost's ability to join the pastoral and philosophical modes in lyrics of unforgettable beauty.

http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/robertfrost/index.shtml#bio

Quotes

- A liberal is a man too broadminded to take his own side in a quarrel.
- Education is the ability to listen to almost anything without losing your temper or your self confidence.
- The brain is a wonderful organ. It starts working the moment you get up in the morning and does not stop until you get into the office.

Quotes

- Happiness makes up in height for what it lacks in length.
- I'm against a homogenized society, because I want the cream to rise.
- Love is an irresistible desire to be irresistibly desired.
- The world is full of willing people, some willing to work, the rest willing to let them.

My favorite poems

Acquainted With the Night

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

Acquainted With the Night

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

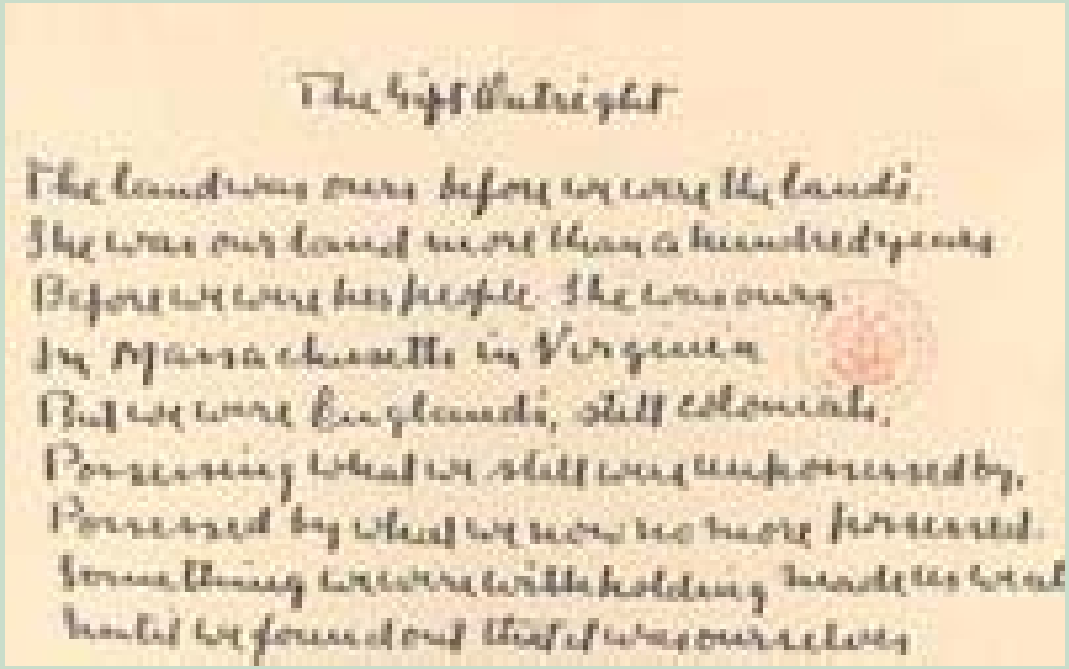
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

After Apple-Picking

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree
Toward heaven still,
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill
Beside it, and there may be two or three
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.
But I am done with apple-picking now.
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of hoary grass.
It melted, and I let it fall and break.

But I was well
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,
And I could tell
What form my dreaming was about to take.
Magnified apples appear and disappear,
Stem end and blossom end,
And every fleck of russet showing clear.
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin
The rumbling sound
Of load on load of apples coming in.
For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.

There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.
For all
That struck the earth,
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,
Went surely to the cider-apple heap
As of no worth.
One can see what will trouble
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.
Were he not gone,
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,
Or just some human sleep.



Robert Frost wrote a new poem entitled "Dedication" for delivery at the inauguration of John F. Kennedy in 1961, but never read it, because the sun's glare upon the snow blinded Frost from seeing the text. Instead, he recited "The Gift Outright" from memory.

The Gift Outright

The land was ours before we were the land's.
She was our land more than a hundred years
Before we were her people. She was ours
In Massachusetts in Virginia
But we were England's, still colonials,
Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,
Possessed by what we now no more possessed.
Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found out that it was ourselves
We were withholding from our land of living,
And forthwith found salvation in surrender.
Such as we were we gave ourselves outright
(The deed of gift was many deeds of war)
To the land vaguely realizing westward,
But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,
Such as she was, such as she would become.

R. F.

From A Witness Tree
1942

[Ac 6,538]

The Gift Outright

- The land was ours before we were the land's.
- She was our land more than a hundred years
- Before we were her people. She was ours
- In Massachusetts, in Virginia,
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The Death of the Hired Man

Mary sat musing on the lamp-flame at the table
Waiting for Warren. When she heard his step,
She ran on tip-toe down the darkened passage
To meet him in the doorway with the news
And put him on his guard. "Silas is back."
She pushed him outward with her through the door
And shut it after her. "Be kind," she said.
She took the market things from Warren's arms
And set them on the porch, then drew him down
To sit beside her on the wooden steps.

"When was I ever anything but kind to him?
But I'll not have the fellow back," he said.
"I told him so last haying, didn't I?
'If he left then,' I said, 'that ended it.'
What good is he? Who else will harbour him
At his age for the little he can do?
What help he is there's no depending on.
Off he goes always when I need him most.
'He thinks he ought to earn a little pay,
Enough at least to buy tobacco with,
So he won't have to beg and be beholden.'
'All right,' I say, 'I can't afford to pay
Any fixed wages, though I wish I could.'
'Someone else can.' 'Then someone else will have to.'
I shouldn't mind his bettering himself
If that was what it was. You can be certain,
When he begins like that, there's someone at him
Trying to coax him off with pocket-money,--
In haying time, when any help is scarce.
In winter he comes back to us. I'm done."

"Sh! not so loud: he'll hear you," Mary said.

"I want him to: he'll have to soon or late."

"He's worn out. He's asleep beside the stove.
When I came up from Rowe's I found him here,
Huddled against the barn-door fast asleep,
A miserable sight, and frightening, too--
You needn't smile--I didn't recognise him--
I wasn't looking for him--and he's changed.
Wait till you see."

"Where did you say he'd been?"

"He didn't say. I dragged him to the house,
And gave him tea and tried to make him smoke.
I tried to make him talk about his travels.
Nothing would do: he just kept nodding off."

"What did he say? Did he say anything?"

"But little."

"Anything? Mary, confess
He said he'd come to ditch the meadow for me."

"Warren!"

"But did he? I just want to know."

"Of course he did. What would you have him say?
Surely you wouldn't grudge the poor old man
Some humble way to save his self-respect.
He added, if you really care to know,
He meant to clear the upper pasture, too.
That sounds like something you have heard before?
Warren, I wish you could have heard the way
He jumbled everything. I stopped to look
Two or three times--he made me feel so queer--
To see if he was talking in his sleep.

He ran on Harold Wilson--you remember--
The boy you had in haying four years since.
He's finished school, and teaching in his college.
Silas declares you'll have to get him back.
He says they two will make a team for work:
Between them they will lay this farm as smooth!
The way he mixed that in with other things.
He thinks young Wilson a likely lad, though daft
On education--you know how they fought
All through July under the blazing sun,
Silas up on the cart to build the load,
Harold along beside to pitch it on."

"Yes, I took care to keep well out of earshot."

"Well, those days trouble Silas like a dream.
You wouldn't think they would. How some things linger!
Harold's young college boy's assurance piqued him.
After so many years he still keeps finding
Good arguments he sees he might have used.
I sympathise. I know just how it feels
To think of the right thing to say too late.
Harold's associated in his mind with Latin.
He asked me what I thought of Harold's saying
He studied Latin like the violin
Because he liked it--that an argument!
He said he couldn't make the boy believe
He could find water with a hazel prong--
Which showed how much good school had ever done him.
He wanted to go over that. But most of all
He thinks if he could have another chance
To teach him how to build a load of hay----"

"I know, that's Silas' one accomplishment.
He bundles every forkful in its place,
And tags and numbers it for future reference,
So he can find and easily dislodge it
In the unloading. Silas does that well.
He takes it out in bunches like big birds' nests.
You never see him standing on the hay
He's trying to lift, straining to lift himself."

"He thinks if he could teach him that, he'd be
Some good perhaps to someone in the world.
He hates to see a boy the fool of books.
Poor Silas, so concerned for other folk,
And nothing to look backward to with pride,
And nothing to look forward to with hope,
So now and never any different."

Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw
And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
As if she played unheard the tenderness
That wrought on him beside her in the night.
"Warren," she said, "he has come home to die:
You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time."

"Home," he mocked gently.

"Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course he's nothing to us, any more
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail."

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in."

"I should have called it
Something you somehow haven't to deserve."

Warren leaned out and took a step or two,
Picked up a little stick, and brought it back
And broke it in his hand and tossed it by.
"Silas has better claim on us you think
Than on his brother? Thirteen little miles
As the road winds would bring him to his door.
Silas has walked that far no doubt to-day.
Why didn't he go there? His brother's rich,
A somebody--director in the bank."

"He never told us that."

"We know it though."

"I think his brother ought to help, of course.
I'll see to that if there is need. He ought of right
To take him in, and might be willing to--
He may be better than appearances.
But have some pity on Silas. Do you think
If he'd had any pride in claiming kin
Or anything he looked for from his brother,
He'd keep so still about him all this time?"

"I wonder what's between them."

"I can tell you.
Silas is what he is--we wouldn't mind him--
But just the kind that kinsfolk can't abide.
He never did a thing so very bad.
He don't know why he isn't quite as good
As anyone. He won't be made ashamed
To please his brother, worthless though he is."

"I can't think Si ever hurt anyone."

"No, but he hurt my heart the way he lay
And rolled his old head on that sharp-edged chair-back.
He wouldn't let me put him on the lounge.
You must go in and see what you can do.
I made the bed up for him there to-night.
You'll be surprised at him--how much he's broken.
His working days are done; I'm sure of it."

"I'd not be in a hurry to say that."

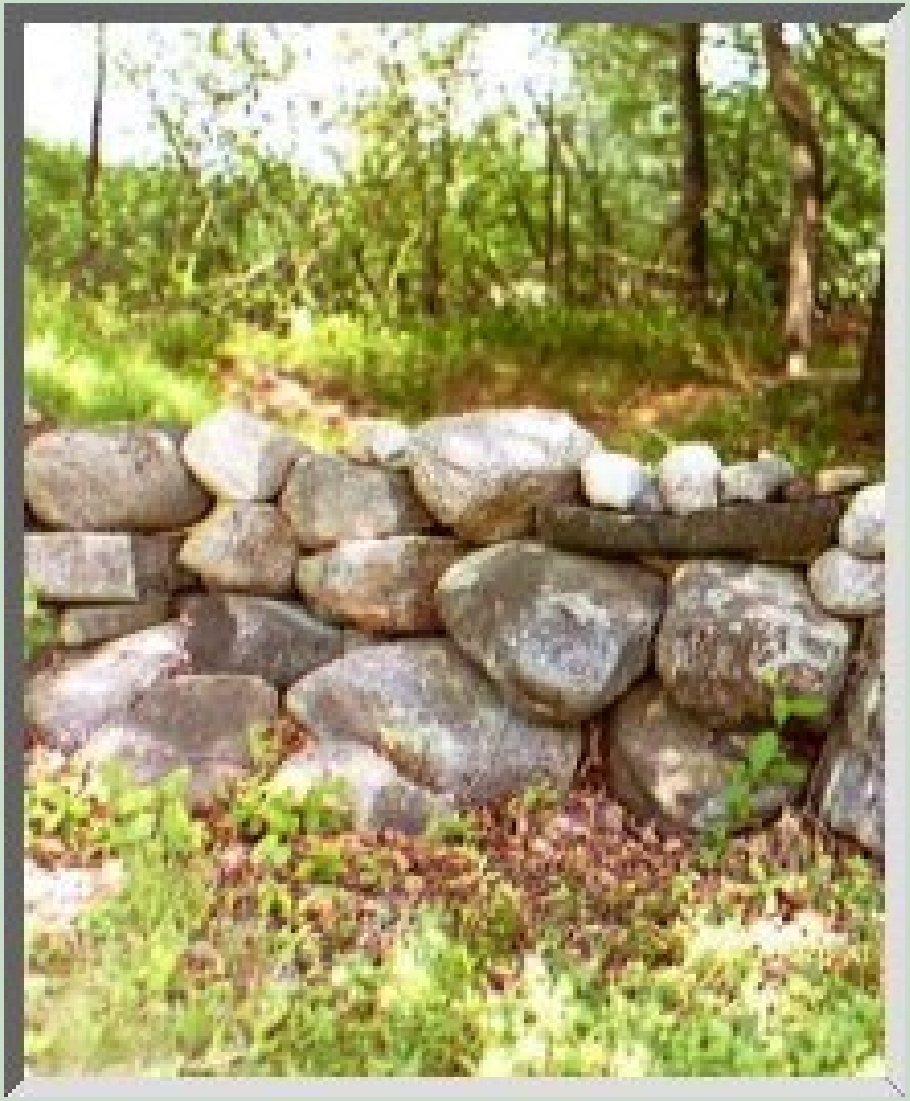
"I haven't been. Go, look, see for yourself.
But, Warren, please remember how it is:
He's come to help you ditch the meadow.
He has a plan. You mustn't laugh at him.
He may not speak of it, and then he may.
I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon."

It hit the moon.
Then there were three there, making a dim row,
The moon, the little silver cloud, and she.

Warren returned--too soon, it seemed to her,
Slipped to her side, caught up her hand and waited.

"Warren," she questioned.

"Dead," was all he answered.



a quote written by Louis Untermeyer in the 1940's. It is found in "The Pocket Book of Robert Frost's Poems", Henry Holt, 1946

"The strength of 'Mending Wall', one of Frost's most often quoted poems, rests upon a contradiction. Its two famous lines oppose each other. The poem maintains that:

" 'Something there is that doesn't love a wall.'

"But it also insists:

" 'Good fences make good neighbours.'

Mending Wall

- "The contradiction is logical, for the opposing statements are uttered by two different types of people and both are right. Man cannot live without walls, boundaries, limits and particularly self-limitations; yet he resents all bonds and is happy at the downfall of any barrier. In 'Mending Wall' the boundary line is useless:

  " 'There where it is we do not need the wall.'
"And, to emphasize the point, the speaker adds playfully:
  " 'He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
  My apple trees will never get across
  And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.'

- "Some readers have found far-reaching implications in this poem. They have found that it states one of the greatest problems of our time: whether national walls should be made stronger for our protection, or whether they should be let down, since they cramp our progress toward understanding and eventual brotherhood. **Other readers have read 'Mending Wall' as a symbolic poem.**

- In the voices of the two men the younger, whimsical, 'new-fashioned' speaker and the old-fashioned farmer who replies with his one determined sentence, his inherited maxim - some readers hear the clash of two forces: the spirit of revolt, which challenges tradition, and the spirit of restraint, which insists that conventions must be upheld, built up and continually rebuilt, as a matter of principle.

  "The poet himself frowns upon such symbolic interpretations. He denies that the poem says anything more than it seems to say. **The contradiction is the heart of the poem. It answers itself in the paradox of people, in neighbors and competitors, in the contradictory nature of man."**

MENDING WALL
By Robert Frost

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they would have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.

I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need a wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.

My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down. I could say "Elves" to him,

But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

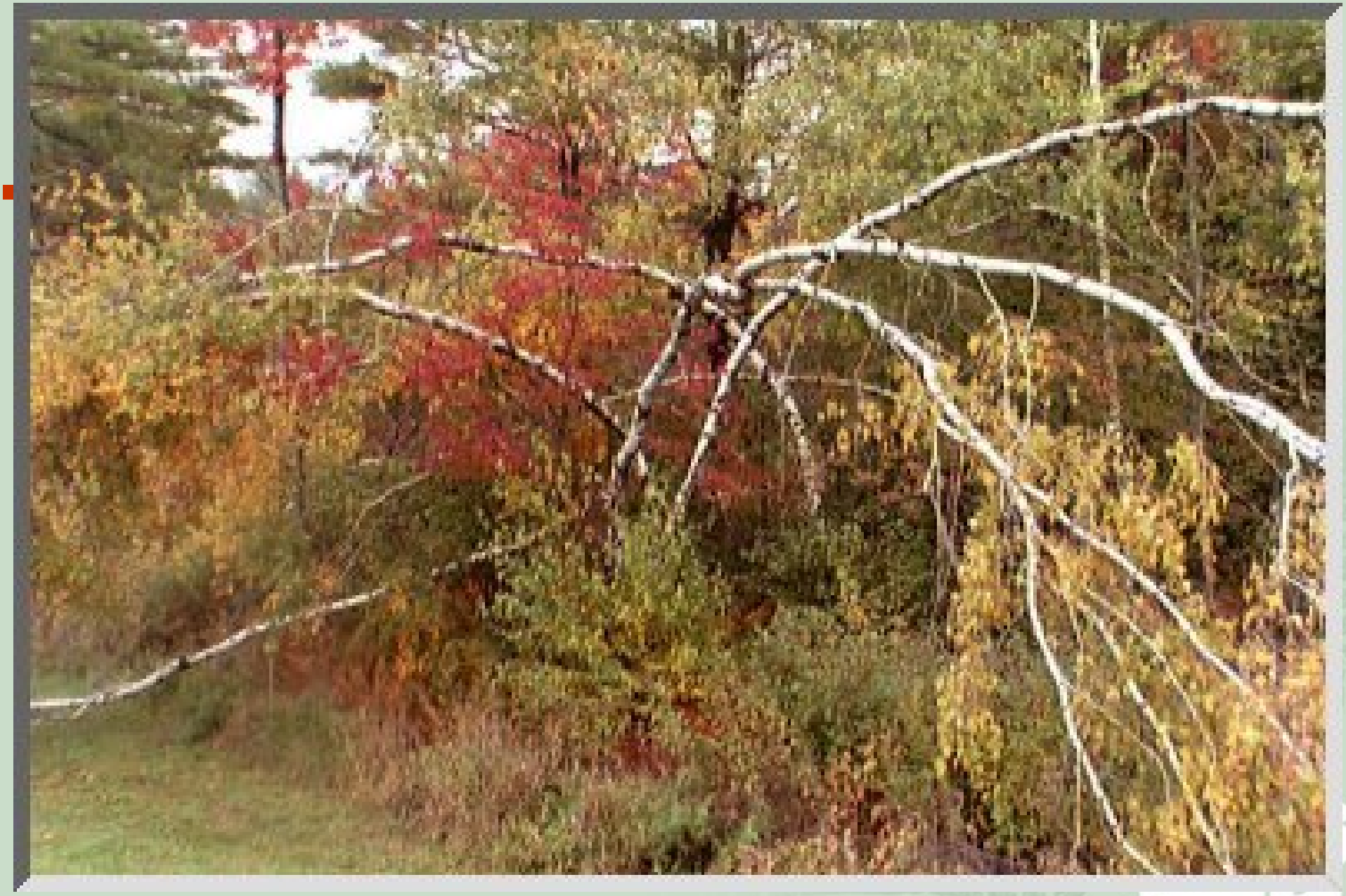
The Birches

- When I see birches bend to left and right
- Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
- I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
- But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
- Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
- Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
- After a rain. They click upon themselves
- As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored
- As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
- Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
- Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust--
- Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
- You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.

- They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
- And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
- So low for long, they never right themselves:
- You may see their trunks arching in the woods
- Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
- Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
- Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
- But I was going to say when Truth broke in
- With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm
- (Now am I free to be poetical?)
- I should prefer to have some boy bend them
- As he went out and in to fetch the cows--
- Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
- Whose only play was what he found himself,
- Summer or winter, and could play alone.

- One by one he subdued his father's trees
- By riding them down over and over again
- Until he took the stiffness out of them,
- And not one but hung limp, not one was left
- For him to conquer. He learned all there was
- To learn about not launching out too soon
- And so not carrying the tree away
- Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
- To the top branches, climbing carefully
- With the same pains you use to fill a cup
- Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
- Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
- Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
- So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
- And so I dream of going back to be.

It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.



The Woodpile

- Out walking in the frozen swamp one grey day
- I paused and said, "I will turn back from here.
- No, I will go on farther--and we shall see."
- The hard snow held me, save where now and then
- One foot went down. The view was all in lines
- Straight up and down of tall slim trees
- Too much alike to mark or name a place by
- So as to say for certain I was here
- Or somewhere else: I was just far from home.
- A small bird flew before me. He was careful
- To put a tree between us when he lighted,
- And say no word to tell me who he was
- Who was so foolish as to think what *he* thought.
- He thought that I was after him for a feather--
- The white one in his tail; like one who takes
- Everything said as personal to himself.

- One flight out sideways would have undeceived him.
- And then there was a pile of wood for which
- I forgot him and let his little fear
- Carry him off the way I might have gone,
- Without so much as wishing him good-night.
- He went behind it to make his last stand.
- It was a cord of maple, cut and split
- And piled--and measured, four by four by eight.
- And not another like it could I see.
- No runner tracks in this year's snow looped near it.
- And it was older sure than this year's cutting,
- Or even last year's or the year's before.
- The wood was grey and the bark warping off it
- And the pile somewhat sunken. Clematis
- Had wound strings round and round it like a bundle.

- What held it though on one side was a tree
- Still growing, and on one a stake and prop,
- These latter about to fall. I thought that only
- Someone who lived in turning to fresh tasks
- Could so forget his handiwork on which
- He spent himself, the labour of his axe,
- And leave it there far from a useful fireplace
- To warm the frozen swamp as best it could
- With the slow smokeless burning of decay.

- The Road Not Taken

- Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
  And sorry I could not travel both
  And be one traveler, long I stood
  And looked down one as far as I could
  To where it bent in the undergrowth;
- Then took the other, just as fair,
  And having perhaps the better claim,
  Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
  Though as for that the passing there
  Had worn them really about the same,

- And both that morning equally lay
  In leaves no step had trodden black.
  Oh, I kept the first for another day!
  Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
  I doubted if I should ever come back.
- I shall be telling this with a sigh
  Somewhere ages and ages hence:
  Two roads diverged in a wood and I --
  I took the one less traveled by,
  And that has made all the difference.

Gathering Leaves

- **Spades take up leaves**
  No better than spoons,
  And bags full of leaves
  Are light as balloons.
- **I make a great noise**
  Of rustling all day
  Like rabbit and deer
  Running away.

- **But the mountains I raise**
  Elude my embrace,
  Flowing over my arms
  And into my face.
- **I may load and unload**
  Again and again
  Till I fill the whole shed
  And what have I then?

- **Next to nothing for weight:**
  And since they grew duller
  From contact with earth
  Next to nothing for color.
- **Next to nothing for use.**
  But a crop is a crop,
  And who's to say where
  The harvest shall stop?

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STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

- "As I remember it, 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' was written in just about that way, after I had been working all night long on 'New Hampshire.' But I must admit, it was written in a few minutes without any strain. Critics think I had that sort of all-night struggle before I could write the little poem I'm talking about. They must have heard me say, sometime or other, years back, that I wrote all night, in connection with 'Stopping by Woods.'

- But the thing I worked on all night had no struggle in it at all. It's in print, called 'New Hampshire.'. . .Then, having finished 'New Hampshire,' I went outdoors, got out sideways and didn't disturb anybody in the house, and about nine or ten o'clock went back in and wrote the piece about the snowy evening and the little horse as if I'd had an hallucination--little hallucination--the one critics write about occasionally. You can't trust these fellows who write what made a poet write what he wrote. We all of us read our pet theories into a poem."

  Mertins, M.L.: *Robert Frost: Life and Talks-Walking*

HI & LOIS/ by Brian & Greg Walker

- Whose woods these are I think I know.
  His house is in the village though;
  He will not see me stopping here
  To watch his woods fill up with snow.
- My little horse must think it queer
  To stop without a farmhouse near
  Between the woods and frozen lake
  The darkest evening of the year.

- He gives his harness bells a shake
  To ask if there is some mistake.
  The only other sound's the sweep
  Of easy wind and downy flake.
- 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.

A PATCH OF OLD SNOW

- There's a patch of old snow in a corner,
  That I should have guessed
  Was a blow-away paper the rain
  Had brought to rest.
- It is speckled with grime as if
  Small print overspread it,
  The news of a day I've forgotten--
  If I ever read it.

This picture is an actual photo of the constellation Orion.

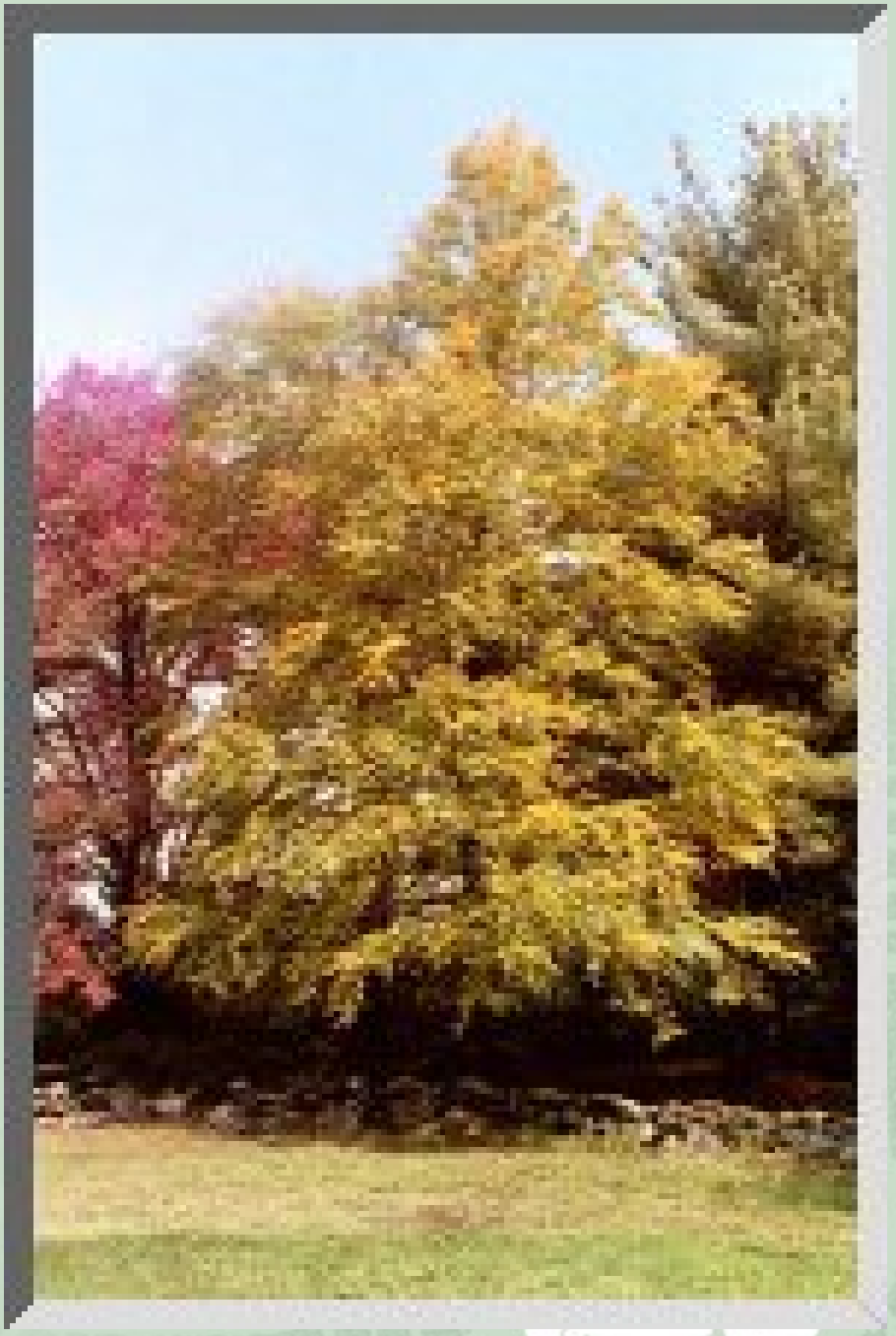
ON LOOKING UP BY CHANCE
AT THE CONSTELLATIONS

- You'll wait a long, long time for anything much
  To happen in heaven beyond the floats of cloud
  And the Northern Lights that run like tingling nerves.
  The sun and moon get crossed, but they never touch,
  Nor strike out fire from each other nor crash out loud.
  The planets seem to interfere in their curves
  But nothing ever happens, no harm is done.

We may as well go patiently on with our life,
And look elsewhere than to stars and moon and sun
For the shocks and changes we need to keep us sane.
It is true the longest drought will end in rain,
The longest peace in China will end in strife.
Still it wouldn't reward the watcher to stay awake
In hopes of seeing the calm of heaven break
On his particular time and personal sight.
That calm seems certainly safe to last to-night.

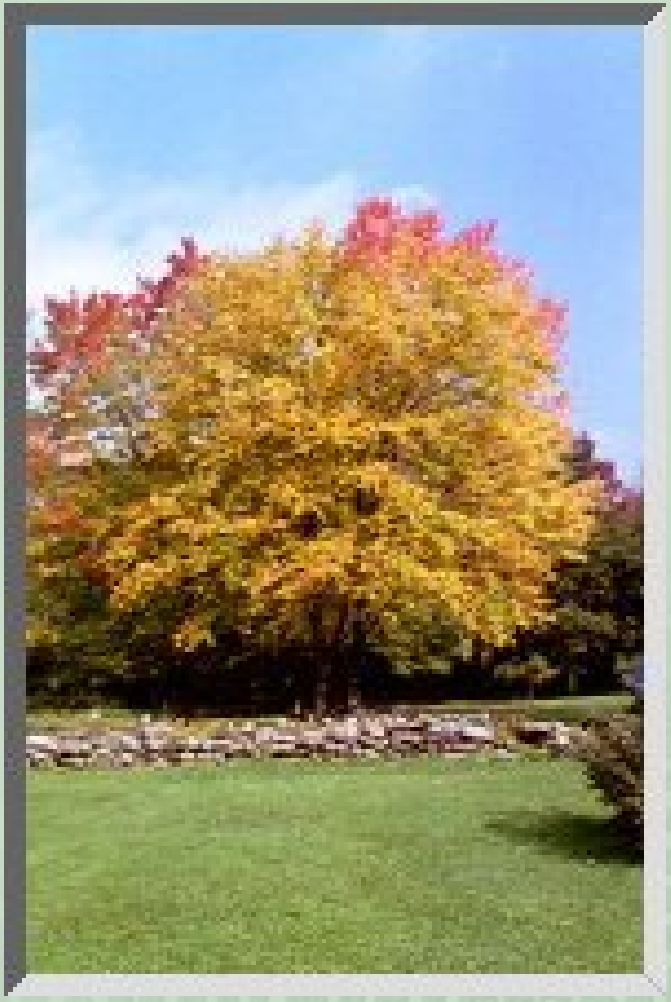
THE SOUND OF TREES

- I wonder about the trees.
  Why do we wish to bear
  Forever the noise of these
  More than another noise
  So close to our dwelling place?
  We suffer them by the day
  Till we lose all measure of pace,
  And fixity in our joys,
  And acquire a listening air.



- They are that that talks of going
  But never gets away;
  And that talks no less for knowing,
  As it grows wiser and older,
  That now it means to stay.

My feet tug at the floor
And my head sways to my shoulder
Sometimes when I watch trees sway,
From the window or the door.



I shall set forth for somewhere,
I shall make the reckless choice
Some day when they are in voice
And tossing so as to scare
The white clouds over them on.
I shall have less to say,
But I shall be gone.

Fire and Ice by Robert Frost - 1923

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Go to http://www.geocities.com/john_deere_b/FireandIce.html for Frost's own reading of the poem.

THE TUFT OF FLOWERS

- I went to turn the grass once after one
  Who mowed it in the dew before the sun.
- The dew was gone that made his blade so keen
  Before I came to view the leveled scene.
- I looked for him behind an isle of trees;
  I listened for his whetstone on the breeze.
- But he had gone his way, the grass all mown,
  And I must be, as he had been,-alone,
- "As all must be," I said within my heart,
  "Whether they work together or apart."
- But as I said it swift there passed me by
  On noiseless wing a bewildered butterfly,

- **Seeking with memories grown dim o'er the night**
  Some resting flower of yesterday's delight. And once I marked his flight go round and round,
  As where some flower lay withering on the ground.
- **And then he flew as far as eye could see,**
  And then on tremulous wing came back to me. I thought of questions that have no reply,
  And would have turned to toss the grass to dry; But he turned first, and led my eye to look
  At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook, A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared
  Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared. I left my place to know them by their name,
  Finding them butterfly weed when I came.

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- **At a tall tuft of flowers beside a brook, A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared**
  Beside a reedy brook the scythe had bared. I left my place to know them by their name,
  Finding them butterfly weed when I came. The mower in the dew had loved them thus,
  Leaving them to flourish, not for us, Nor yet to draw one thought of ours to him,

- **But from sheer morning gladness at the brim. The butterfly and I had lit upon,**
  Nevertheless a message from the dawn, That made me hear the wakening birds around,
  And hear his long scythe whispering to the ground,
  And feel a spirit kindred to my own;
  So that henceforth I worked no more alone; But glad with him, I worked as with his aid,
  And weary, sought at noon with him the shade;
  And dreaming, as it were, held brotherly speech
  With one whose thought I had not hoped to reach.
  "Men work together," I told him from the heart,
  "Whether they work together or apart."

Links

- http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/a_f/frost/frost.htm Robert Frost (1874 -1963)
- http://www.bartleby.com/people/Frost-Ro.html