

Unit 1 – POEM 1:

Dust of Snow

ROBERT FROST

1. **Stanza-1:**

*The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree*

WORD MEANINGS

| | |
|--------------|---|
| Dust of Snow | particles of snow |
| Hemlock Tree | a poisonous plant (tree) with small white flowers |

Explanation: The poet, Robert Frost, recounts a small incident that changes his mood. It seems very simple but it has a great significance. The poet was, once, very depressed and hopeless. He was in a state of sorrow and was lost in his thoughts. He was standing under the hemlock tree. Suddenly a crow, that was sitting on the tree shook the tree and the fine particles of snow from the tree fell on the poet.

2. **Stanza-2:**

*Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.*

WORD MEANINGS

| | |
|------|-----------------|
| Mood | a state of mind |
| Rued | held in regret |

Explanation: When the soft and cold snow fell on the poet, it changed his mood from the state of sadness to happiness. He started feeling soothed (peaceful) and refreshed. This simple incident helped him enjoy the remaining part of the day. He, thus, became happy as it saved his rest of the day from being wasted and held in regret.

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

- Rhyme Scheme
- Irony
- Symbolism

Central Idea of the Poem –

The 'Dust of Snow', by Robert Frost is a small and simple poem with a deep meaning. It expresses the significance of small things in changing one's attitude. The Poem explains that the little things in life can make huge changes in our future. It also reflects that hard times in the life will lead to the happier times if we can persist with it.

Glossary :

Rued: Held in regret

Hemlock: A poisonous plant (tree) with small white flowers

This poem presents a moment that seems simple, but has a larger significance.

Thinking about the Poem

1. What is a “dust of snow”? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet’s mood changed?

Ans: *The ‘dust of snow’ means the fine particles of flakes of snow. The sudden shower in the form of the dust of snow changed the poet’s mood. The poet’s mood changed from the state of sadness to happiness. He felt refreshed and wanted to enjoy and make use of the rest of the day.*

2. How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.

- (i) What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think a crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?

Ans. *Generally, poets take the birds and trees which are known for their beauty and good qualities, like peacock, parrot, cuckoo, mynah, and tress full of beautiful flowers and fruits, etc. But, here Frost has taken a totally different approach. He chose a crow, which is not often used in poems. Crow is black in colour with very harsh voice and is believed to be a symbol of bad luck. Thinking of a crow brings depressing and sorrowful pictures to our minds.*

- (ii) Again, what is “a hemlock tree”? Why doesn’t the poet write about a more ‘beautiful’ tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?

Ans. *A hemlock tree is a poisonous plant with small white flowers. The poet, Robert Frost, didn’t choose to use an oak, maple or pine tree. Instead, he chose the hemlock tree and left all the beautiful trees present in the world. Actually, he did so to present his mood and feelings.*

- (iii) What do the ‘crow’ and ‘hemlock’ represent — joy or sorrow? What does the dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for?

Ans. *The crow and hemlock tree represent sorrow and depression felt by the poet in his materialistic world. The dust of snow is the symbol of natural joy and energy. The dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree means passing through the sad and depressing moments, the poet is entering the time full of joy and optimism.*

3. Have there been times when you felt depressed or hopeless? Have you experienced a similar moment that changed your mood that day?

Ans. *(it is to be tried on the basis of self-assessment that includes personal feedback based on an experience of the same)*

Unit 1 – POEM 2:

Fire and Ice

ROBERT FROST

1. **Stanza-1:**

Some say the world will end in fire
 Some say in ice.
 From what I've tasted of desire
 I hold with those who favour fire.

WORD MEANINGS

| | |
|--------|-----------------|
| Desire | wish |
| Hold | to take side |
| Favour | incline towards |

Explanation: The poet is analyzing about the end of the world. The poet provides and deals with two possible causes for the end of the world. He considers the age-old question of whether the world will end in fire or in ice. Both the two reasons contrast each other and are equally opposite to each other. On one side of the debate are those people who are in favour of fire. They believe that it will be the heat and the passion, which will lead the humanity, the world, to end. On the other side of the debate are those people who favour ice and feel that it will be the 'ice' which will freeze the world. Frost is providing a powerful statement on the subject of greed and jealousy. He is saying that above anything else, even hatred, which is the trait of humanity, is most likely to lead the world to its demise.

2. **Stanza-2:**

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.

WORD MEANINGS

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Perish | die |
| Suffice | be sufficient |
| Destruction | wiping out |

Explanation: The poet is very much sure of the destruction of the humanity. He first talks about the destruction caused by fire and in case this fails, then ice will result into hatred that will end humanity one day. Frost goes on to discuss, in a more understated manner, the power of hate, which is symbolized in the poem as ice. Hate, according to the speaker, is just as powerful as desire. While desire consumes, quickly, hate is just as great and powerful. Infact, by ending the poem with the concept of hate, poet directs the reader to the shy yet restrained devastation that hate can produce. Hate can occur and linger in people's mind for years', sometimes even lifetimes. Hate is presented as having the ability to lead to the devastation of the world if it were to happen for a second time, again providing a powerful warning against this human fallacy (misunderstanding).

Poetic Devices Used in the Poem

- Rhyme Scheme
- Symbolism
- Imagery
- Paradox
- Alliteration

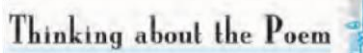
Central Idea of the Poem –

The central idea around which the entire poem revolves is that only love, equality, mutual understanding and sympathy for one and all can help in establishing peace on the earth. The poet mentions that both fire and ice can bring probable end to this world. The poet talks about how fire represents desire and can therefore be a cause of the end of the world. He also mentions ice as second issue to symbolize that the coldness and indifference towards one another will also be enough to bring an end to this world. Too much fire and passion can quickly consume a relationship, while cold indifference and hate can be equally destructive.


Glossary

Perish : Die

Suffice : Be sufficient


Thinking about the Poem

(Page 15)

1. There are many ideas about how the world will 'end'. Do you think the world will end some day? Have you ever thought what would happen if the sun got so hot that it 'burst', or grew colder and colder?

Ans. *There are definitely many ideas about how the world will 'end'. I do believe that the world will end some day as anything that has a beginning will have an end. This stands true for the world also. If the sun goes so hot that it burst, the whole of the earth would perish immediately as no part of the earth can bear the heat of that intensity. But if the sun grew colder and colder, everything will still perish as without sunlight, life will end.*

2. For Frost, what do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for? Here are some ideas:

| | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| greed | avarice | cruelty | lust |
| conflict | fury | intolerance | rigidity |
| insensitivity | coldness | indifference | hatred |

Ans. *'Fire' stands for greed, avarice, lust, conflict and fury.*

'Ice' stands for cruelty, intolerance, rigidity, insensitivity, coldness, indifference and hatred.

3. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem?

Ans. *The rhyme scheme of the poem is – a b a a b c b c b*

This rhyme scheme helps in bringing out the contrast between ideas of fire and ice. The talks about how fire represents desire and ice symbolizes coldness of hearts and hate towards one another and are sufficient to bring an end to the world.