

Dust of Snow

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

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

ROBERT FROST

Glossary

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

rued: held in regret

Thinking about the Poem

This poem presents a moment that seems simple, but has a larger significance. [Compare this other quotation from Robert Frost: “Always, always a larger significance... A little thing touches a larger thing.”]

1. What is a “dust of snow”? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet’s mood changed?
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?
 - (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?
 - (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?
3. Have there been times when you felt depressed or hopeless? Have you experienced a similar moment that changed your mood that day?

Fire and Ice

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.

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.

ROBERT FROST

Glossary

perish: die

suffice: be sufficient

Thinking about the Poem

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?
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

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