

Robert Frost and Fire and Ice

Fire and Ice

Fire and Ice is a short rhyming poem written by Frost in 1920, probably inspired by Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 32 (the first book of his 14th-century *Divine Comedy*), which deals with the theme of sinners in a fiery hell, up to their necks in an icy lake. Other sources claim that the poem was created after a conversation with astronomer Harlow Shapley about the End of the World. A well-known astronomer, answering the question of frost, said that either the Sun will explode, or the Earth will slowly freeze. Choose for yourself. Robert Frost, in his own inimitable way, chose both, a poem expressing this dualism in a typical rhythmic manner, using a modified version of the rhyming scheme known as *terza rima*, where the second line of the first *terzet* completely rhymes with the first and third lines of the next. It was invented by none other than Dante in His *Divine Comedy*, so Frost may have borrowed the idea. In short, both sources sound plausible and resulted in a curious ironic poem, the tone of which was somewhat casual and restrained, while the subject is one of the most serious that can be thought of. If you listen carefully to the video, Robert Frost speaks almost brusquely, as if telling the reader-you decide which method (of destruction) you prefer. Sooner or later, one or the other will happen. First published in 1923 in his book *New Hampshire*, *Fire and Ice* is a powerful symbolic poem in which fire becomes an emotion of desire and ice becomes an emotion of hate. In essence, fire is pure passion, ice is pure reason.

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 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.

- The poem by R. Frost is based on the antithesis of fire –ice, which is stated in the title of the poem. In addition, the poem has an antithesis: "some – others" ("some say: death will come from fire, // Others say that from ice), which indicates the presence of two opposite points of view, each of which has the right to exist. That is why the poet never came to a final conclusion about the cause of the destruction of the universe.

Robert Frost wrote in classical dimensions, avoiding the free verse so popular in the West: a certain conventionality makes Frost even a little old-fashioned. But behind the external unpretentiousness of his poems lies the richness of the inner content, the variety of shades of mood. A master of small form, he makes it exceptionally capacious: here is a landscape sketch, and philosophical reflection, and a subtly rendered household episode, and a small novella in verse. Although the world seems harmonious and whole to Frost, the poet does not pass by social problems. He writes about hard-core property owners ("Mending the Wall"), the bitter lot of rural farmhands ("Death of a farmhand"), and racial prejudice ("The Last Indian"). Loving his country, he welcomes the progress of humanity ("Science Fiction"), asserts the right of every nation to choose its own destiny, and praises peace on earth.

- In Frost's poetry, nature is equal to man, that is, he puts them on the one hand equal and interchangeable, and on the other shows how insignificant man is in front of the power and infinity of nature. Man in Frost's poetry is a finite creation, and nature and time, though fleeting in their essence, still have power over people.

The peculiarity of Frost's poetic manner is that episodes of everyday human activity invariably receive a multi-layered philosophical and metaphysical interpretation ("After Apple-Picking", "Birches"). Continuing the Browning tradition of dramatic monologue, Frost introduces poetic dialogues filled with conversational intonation and subtle psychologism ("The Black Cottage", "Home Burial" - the subject of Brodsky's essay).

- This principle of verse dramatization combines many of the main aspects of Frost's artistic system: the concreteness of the "proposed circumstances", combined with the consistent development of an action or judgment, the attitude to colloquial speech with its lexical-grammatical and intonation features, with its laconism and understatement, due to the abundance of situational context. These features open up wide possibilities of operating with subtext and allow the co-existence within the same poem of the plan of the hero (at the level of the text) and the plan of the author (at the level of the subtext). Frost's subtext is realized through the use of polysemy of the word, historical and cultural allusions (for example, the title of the poem "After Apple-Picking" — ("After picking apples" - simultaneously implies the real process of picking apples, and the state of man after the fall), metapho

- For Frost, naturalness is a universal spiritual and ethical measure of personality; communication with nature is the path to self-understanding and comprehension of God. Therefore, the images of nature in his lyrics initially have an ontological dimension and tend to be mythological symbolism. Numerous allusions that arise when reading such lyrical masterpieces of Frost,

