

FIRE AND ICE

About the Author- Robert Frost

Robert Frost – A Short Biography

Robert Frost was a famous American poet. He was born in San Francisco on March 26, 1874. His father belonged to New England, and his mother was a Scottish immigrant from Edinburgh. By the 1920s, Frost was the most celebrated poet in America. His poetical works 'A Boy's Will' (1913), 'North of Boston' (1914), 'New Hampshire' (1923), 'A Further Range' (1936) 'Steeple Bush' (1947) and 'In the Clearing' (1962) increased his fame and honour. The poem 'Dust of Snow' was published in 'New Hampshire' in 1923. This collection gave him the Pulitzer Prize.

INTRODUCTION

'Fire and Ice' is a highly symbolic poem by Robert Frost. This poem is a meditation about how the world will end the poet says that the fire of lusts and endless desires and ice of hatred among human beings will put this world to an end one day.

Central Idea of the Poem

'Fire and Ice', is an extremely compact little lyric. Not a syllable is wasted. The theme of the poem is the age-old question. The question is whether the world will end in fire or in ice. The poet decides that any of the two options would achieve its purpose sufficiently well. The poet shares the common belief that everything that exists will have its end too. People are divided on this issue. Some think that the natural element of fire will cause the destruction of this world. Others believe that ice will be the cause of the end. Putting in terms of human emotions, the element of 'fire' stands for passions, desires, and love. Unbridled passions and desires can cause the end of the world. The poet has experienced both these emotions. It doesn't matter how the world will end. Even hate born out of cold and icy reason is sufficient to cause destruction and the end of the world.

Style

The little lyrics is extremely compact. Not a single syllable is wasted. The aim is aphorism — brevity. For Frost truth remains ambiguous. The question goes unanswered. The subject is highly sublime. The treatment or language is very simple. The rhyme scheme of the poem is a, b, a, a; b, c, b, c, b.

Word-Meaning

Some — some people, **End in fire** — in the end, this world will end in a fireball, **In ice** — this world will freeze and ice will cause the end of this world, **From what I have tasted** — (here) from my experience, **Tasted of desire** — experienced passions and desires in love, **Hold with those** — stand with those, support those persons, **Who favour fire** — those who believe that this world will end in fire.

EXPLANATION

Robert Frost's poem "Fire and Ice" is a strong symbolic poem where fire is used as the emotion of desire and ice, that of hatred.

He has used the idea of two groups who have their own possible explanation for the end of the world. One is of the opinion that fire alone, can destroy each and every possibility of life on Earth while the other thinks that if ice as a result of extreme low temperatures could cover the earth's surface, it would lead to the end of the world. Both the components are compared with self-destructing human emotions: desire and hatred.

The poet is originally of the opinion that he has been very closely associated with the "fiery desires" and considers it capable of bringing human beings on the verge of destruction. Thus, he considers fire as more competent for destruction. But then he thinks that "icy hatred" is just as capable of ruining humans, though slowly and steadily. Therefore, if Earth was to end twice, ice would be just as good as fire. If fire would lead to rapid destruction, ice would lead to silent damage. Similarly, if fire is pure passion, ice is pure reason. Thus, the poem, very artistically, underpins the philosophy that we let our emotions rule us and if don't control them they will surely bring us all on the verge of chaos.

DETAILED SUMMARY

'Fire and Ice' is a symbolic poem by Robert Frost. The poet wants to aware the humanity that everything will end one day as a result of human misdeeds'. The poet says that both fire and ice are destructive. The fire of violent desires will put the world to an end. If the world had to perish twice then it will be-perished by-. the hatred between man and man. Ice has been presented as a symbol of hatred.

Point-wise summary:-

- 1. End of the World:** It is certain that this world will come to an end. The poet shares the belief of the people that everything that exists now will end sooner or later. The poet deals with a very sublime subject — the end of the world.
- 2. Two Different Beliefs:** The poet talks about the two different beliefs regarding the end of this material world. Some say that this world will 'end in the fire'. The world will be reduced to a fireball in the end. There are others who think that this world will end in ice, freezing all kinds of life into death and destruction.
- 3. Poet's View:** The poet sides with those who believe that this world will end in fire. The poet links these two very powerful elements of nature to human emotions and human behaviour. 'Fire' is a symbol of human passions. The fire also stands for unbridled desires. Uncontrolled passions of love and desire will be the cause of the destruction of this world. Uncontrolled fire and untamed passionate desires will certainly bring an end of this world. The poet confesses that he himself has 'tasted of desire'. So, he is quite aware of the potential of unbridled passion and fire of the love of causing death and destruction.
- 4. 'Ice' Represents 'Hate' or 'Cold' Reason:** No doubt, 'fire' can bring an end of this world. But if this world has to be destroyed twice, then 'Ice' can serve that

purpose 'Ice' represents a dialectical emotion that is opposite to 'fire'. It represents 'hate'. This 'hate' is not the product of an outburst for revenge. On the other hand, it stands for cold and ice reasoning. The poet compares the nature of ice with hatred. Ice benumbs. So is cold and calculated reasoning. 'Hate' born of cold reasoning, makes a man insensitive to feelings. Hatred can make our minds numb. Cold thoughts and reasoning make us, insensitive and cruel. So, the poet thinks that 'ice' or 'hate' can be a great and strong cause for the destruction of this world. 'Ice' or hatred will 'suffice' to bring an end of this world.

Main Points of the Poem

1. The poet feels that this world of ours will come to an end.
2. He is not very clear when the end will come.
3. He comes to this conclusion on the basis of what people say on this subject.
4. He seems to show his agreement at what people say regarding the ending of the world.
5. On the basis of what people think, the poet believes that this world will come to an end by the two highly contrasting but powerful elements of nature — fire and ice.
6. Either fire or ice or both will be the cause of the ending of the world.
7. Then the poet links these two powerful natural elements to human beings and their emotions.
8. In the first stanza, the poet shows his agreement with those who believe that fire will cause the end of the world.
9. He links the element of fire to the human emotion of desire or passion.
10. The uncontrolled fire of passion and desire may lead us to the end of this world.
11. Then, the poet comes to the second alternative that can cause the end of this world.
12. It is the 'ice' which can also cause the end of the world.
13. In terms of human emotion, ice means 'hate' created by 'cold reasoning'.
14. Cool and calculated icy reasoning can lead to hate and can be the cause of the end of this world.
15. The poet himself has experienced both these primal emotions of love as well as hate, fire as well as ice, passions as well as cold reason.
16. He has experienced enough of hate which is born out of icy cold reasoning.
17. In the end, Frost agrees that it doesn't matter whether it is fire or ice, both can cause the end of the world.
18. 'Ice' or 'hate' born out of cold reasoning is quite sufficient for causing the end of the world.