

Critical analysis of  
robert frost's,  
"stopping by woods  
on a snowy evening"  
essay...



**ASSIGN  
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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.

In Robert Frost's, " Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," a traveler discovers a world of perfect quiet and solitude in the woods one snowy

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evening. But existing alongside this world is also another world of noise, people and social obligations. The poem is a symphony in balance of finite and infinite worlds. In addition, the entire pattern set out in flawless quatrains and iambic tetrameter is hypnotic, pulling the reader along into its drowsy wake. Permeating the overall lyric is the sense of a struggle to regain poise and to balance opposites. In the same way the rhyme, imagery, and rhythm are interlaced throughout, the lyric leads to glimpses of the richness and lyrical nuances linking the world in the woods to the "real" world outside.

The opening two lines in the first stanza, deceptive in their simplicity, hold a wealth of information, "Whose woods these are I think I know/His house in the village though." There is an immediate contrast between the owner of the woods, who lives in the village and is being portrayed as existing in the materialistic world, and the traveler, who is trespassing in the woods and seemingly is on a more spiritual journey, "To watch his woods fill up with snow." Obviously spellbound by this image, the traveler watches the "woods fill up with snow," like sand filling in an hourglass or a great force leveling and erasing, as if by magic, the substantial landmarks in the world that dominates the villagers. In other words, he seems to be trying to find the balance in life, infuriated by the villager's emphasis on the pragmatic, the practical and conformity.

Another example of the sense of balance in the lyric is the end-rhymed words in the first stanza. Words like "know," "though," and "snow" are clipped and taut while the "here" in line three creates a lingering feel and introduces a new sound which will become the prevailing rhyme sound in the <https://assignbuster.com/critical-analysis-of-robert-frosts-stopping-by-woods-on-a-snowy-evening-essay-sample/>

second stanza. Indeed the melancholy and sense of aloneness in the first two lines prepares one for seeing the strange process not of snow falling, but of woods ' filling up with snow.' Here the language heightens and teases the senses with magical resonance. After all ' snow falling' is an ordinary occurrence but the sight of the woods simply ' filling up with snow' is unforgettable.

The imagery of the ' wild' woods ' tamed' by a blanket of snow casts a drowsy hypnotic feeling that compels and mesmerizes the traveler with thoughts of lingering for a while. At the same time, the opening line in the second stanza, " My little horse must think it queer," is a gentle reminder of the everyday life and the real world, and portrays that this person is used to traversing lonely roads with only his horse for company. The personification linking man to horse reveals the traveler's quirky sense of humor and reinforces his hold on reality. Nonetheless this surreal frozen nowhere has been made more strange because the day is the winter solstice, ' The darkest evening of the year." Again taken literally this could be the most ' lightless night' or the night when one is confronted by the darkest of emotions.

The rhythm of the next couplet creates a kind of jaunty air. " He gives his harness bells a shake/To ask if there is some mistake." Equally important, is the use of onomatopoeia in this stanza, lending a distinct sense of sharpness and quickness to the scene. The traveler is jolted back to reality as the harsh abrupt movement of his horse brings him back to earth, and he realizes it's time to leave. But the brief stop centers him he knows that something has changed. At the same time, the last two lines create a lingering tranquil

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feeling. " The only other sound's the sweep/Of easy wind and downy flake." Now the sounds he closely attends to are silence, images of regular movement and softness of touch. Likewise the whisper of the gentle wind and the falling snowflakes are almost ghostlike and seductive in their intensity.

The first line in the final stanza continues the struggle for a sense of poise that surfaces in the lyric " The woods are lovely, dark and deep." At first glance it seems as if " dark and deep" (line 13) are part of the loveliness, but another interpretation might well be that the woods are both lovely and dark and deep. In other words, the woods hold opposing qualities. The repetition of the closing lines combines to emphasize that the magical lure of the woods is being cast aside, and the speaker is reconfirming his commitments to the world of schedules and duties. The unbroken rhythm of " But I have promises to keep/And miles to go before I sleep/And miles to go before I sleep," is monosyllabic and reverberates with meaning. In effect, it would seem that the temptation of losing himself is past and he hurries back to his restrictive world but possibly with a better outlook on life. On the other hand, considering the spiritual journey undertaken by the traveler, the possibility exists that he now realizes the brief span of human life and speed the compulsion to take risks and explore the truth while there is still time.

In conclusion, woven throughout this lyric is the unmistakable thread of finite and infinite worlds or solid and unsubstantial. Consequently the balance of the wild nature of the woods is revealed, and the contrasting everyday activities of a normal world are never far from the surface. As a result of the juxtaposition of both worlds, the reader like the traveler, is almost seduced

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by the lure of the timelessness of the woods, but realize also the "real" world exists and that balance must be maintained. Clearly the traveler seems to be in contact with a larger force than the seemingly controlled environment that he inhabits daily. In brief, the allusion could be drawn that when he refers to the woods' owner, he may mean at some level God, whose "house" (the church) is also in the village. The traveler then, may have fallen "out of favour" with the villagers and with his faith, but has emerged hopefully with a better understanding of life.