

# The complexity of the simple: an analysis of design by robert frost

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)





Simplicity should never be looked upon as bad, neither should the complex be looked upon as overwhelming. Both have their places in this world and they both compliment each other in amazing ways. In Design, the speaker conveys many complex ideas through simplistic and small things in both the words and the structure of the poem itself. The speaker of this sonnet uses a simple of a flower, moth and a white spider to paint a complex idea. Just the structure of the poem alones reveals how simple things can add up to complex beings.

The octave of the sonnet starts off with the speaker describing a picture of a spider holding a dead moth while on top of a flower, in what seems to be apart of a “ witches’ broth (6). ” This picture is presented through a simple rhyme scheme of abbaabba. The speaker continues the rhyming sounds of “ oth” and “ ite” throughout keeping a constantancy about the sonnet. Along with this the speaker alternates the consonance and assonance of the lines from rigid sounds to soft ones. “ I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,(1)” in this first line the consonance of the d and t sounds create a more rigid tone in the line. This is immediately juxtaposed with the following line, “ On a white heal-all, holding up a moth (2). ” Line two repeats the sounds of h and o, this consonance and assonance is much softer and very different than the preceding line. This back and forth can be felt and read throughout the octave, and really helps brings light to the poem and allows it to flow off the tongue of the reader. This flow continues into the sestet and it incorporates the volta in a very smooth way.



The volta in this sonnet brings in a new voice from the speaker. One of questioning and deep insight as opposed to the previous tone of wonder and observance. Structurally the volta and sestet continue and flow with the octave rhyme scheme: acaacc.

Every single line in the sestet are questions except for the solution of the sonnet. The setting has changed from an observation to an imagination within the speakers mind. Each line continues to question aspects of the spider, moth and flowers' circumstance, " What had that flower to do with being white, The wayside blue and innocent heal-all? (9-10). " Each line continues to go deeper and deeper into the real thought provoking question of the sonnet. Here is where the speaker the solution of the sonnet to the readers. " What but design of darkness to appall?-/If design govern in a thing so small (13-14). " In the previous lines the speaker had been questioning how these three entities came together in such a way, this gloom imagery of a spider on a flower holding up a dead moth. In those last two lines, the speaker suggests that if there is a design behind these creatures and their circumstance, then there should be some fear of this " designer" that allowed this to occur. The simplicity of these creatures came together and designed this gloomy image that has brought about a profound question. Sonnets have a certain structure to them that makes them a sonnet. Every word, rhyme, consonance and line in itself is very small in this sonnet compared to the big picture of the sonnet, however all these small things bring to life the bigger aspect of the complex sonnet itself. So does the



content of the poem too, the spider, moth and flower all themselves are small and simple.

However, their existence together brings about a complex question that is very important. The speaker in both the structure and content brought about a complex being through simple things. Simplicity is not a bad thing nor is it something to be afraid about, simple things can bring about the complex, as well as the complex can illuminate how simple things are.