

# Fire and ice essay examples

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



## **Analysis of the poem Fire and Ice by Robert Frost**

The poem Fire and Ice was written in 1920 and belongs to early cycle of author's poetry. Nevertheless, it is one of the most well-known and popular work of Frost. It consists of only nine lines or 51 words. Yet the imagery of these lines is so deep that there are even different versions of inspiration reason gained by Robert Frost. According to the first one, the verse was written after re-thinking of Dante's Inferno image. According to the medieval poet, the lowest circle of the Hell, where betrayers were placed, is covered with ice and this is the worst punishment Dante could think of to such people as Judas Iscariot (Dante, Canto XXXIV). Robert Frost in some way argues with Dante's position.

The second version is based on the story told by Harlow Shapley, a Harvard scientist. Once he met the poet and was asked by him about the end of the world. Shapley explained that the planet could rather burnt by the Sun or frozen in case it would experience lack of sun warmth (On Fire and Ice).

As it can be seen from the versions of the origin of the poem its imagery is rather rich and fundamental despite the small size of the poem. It contains lots of sound devices to create a dramatic effect as well as symbols and allusions.

As for sound devices there is parallelism: " Some say the world will end in fire, Some say in ice" (Frost, 1920). It is the beginning of the poem and it turns the poem into a narration. It sounds like the start of a fairy tale or a legend. Other devices, which make the Fire and Ice sound more euphonic and convincing, are alliteration, assonance and consonance. They can be

traced in the fourth, fifth (assonance), sixth and seventh (consonance) lines. Besides, Frost many times repeats the letter F at the beginning of words to make alliteration.

The poem has two bright symbols, which actually compose the title of the work. It is fire and ice. Both elements are well-known among poets as symbols of human feelings. In Frost's poem fire is associated with desire that people experience throughout their lives. Sometimes, it is for the good. Desires inspire them to make discoveries, to reach their aim. Love, to some extent, is a desire as well. The author is familiar with this feeling ("From what I've tasted of desire").

Ice is set against the symbolical meaning of fire. For Frost ice means hatred. On the one hand, hatred is also a desire, because it is rather strong feeling to destruct someone or something, to harm and to hurt. On the other hand, this destructive element, which accompanies the feeling, put it on the opposite site among the feelings experienced by human beings.

Apart from the symbolical meaning of desire and hatred, the Fire and Ice contains two theories of the end of the world. According to the first one, the Earth would be burnt in fire. As for the other one, it would be frozen. It should be mentioned that the poem was written and published in 1920, after the World War I. Frost did not take part in the war but he knew about the events of it and about its horrors. It was one of the first times when humanity understood that the planet can be destroyed by them and not by the outer factors or Acts of God. Besides, the first attempts of nuclear power usage were made at that time. Basically, such fire can eradicate anything on the Earth. As for the ice, there were different theories according to which the

planet could freeze. One of them is the beginning of Ice Age. Another deals with the Sun and its activity. It was known that the sun is not eternal and can explode at some time. Robert Frost managed to include two opposite theories of the end of the world in a nine-line poem.

Finally, the author uses such techniques as rhyme and understatement. The rhyme repeats the scheme invented by Dante for Divine's Comedy. This proves the theory that the poem was written as an answer to the Comedy. The understatement is used, when Robert Frost writes " I" just to say that it is his personal meaning. Such method is also used at the beginning because he mentions " someone" without any names.

The poem Fire and Ice is one of the most often quoted poems in the American literature. It is not a surprise. Despite, it is only nine lines it, it provides answers to cosmogony problems of humanity as well as says a lot about people's feelings

## **Works Cited**

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