

# Robert frost poem explication - stopping by the woods on a snowy evening and afte...

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In Robert Frost's poems " After Apple Picking" and " Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," Frost connects the pastoral with deeper meanings within the context of life itself. In " After Apple Picking," the use of language connects sleeping and resting after a hard day's work with preparing oneself for death; in " Stopping by Woods," this sense of death and sleeping is staved off by a man who has much more to do in his life. These two poems discuss the inevitability of death in the human spirit, with one narrator somewhat more welcoming of it than the other.

In " After Apple Picking," the first two lines directly connect the concepts of nature and the afterlife, with a " long two pointed laddersticking through a tree/ Toward heaven still" (lines 1-2). Since the ladder itself is pointing toward heaven, it is heavily implied that he means to travel up it to get to Heaven itself. Much like in life, as the potential for death/sleep nears, the man thinks about the work he has left unfinished: " There's a barrel that I didn't fill/ Beside it, and there may be two or three/ Apples I didn't pick upon some bough" (lines 3-5). These are indicative of the few things he has yet to do in his life; nonetheless, he still feels as though he has done well in his life, as evidenced by his being " done" with apple-picking now (line 6). This word implies finality, and an overall sense of satisfaction; though there are some things that remain to be done, his own drowsiness is leading him to contemplate sleep/death.

The concept of sleep as death is something that is covered in both poems, with the narrator of " After Apple-Picking" seeing it as a relief. With the impending silence and peace of death, the narrator posits a potential

afterlife - the aforementioned " Heaven" - wherein his life's work is reflected in his dreams. " There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch/ Cherish in hand, lift down and not let fall" (lines 29-30). In the end, however, he is not truly dying, but just contemplating his death; he likens his " long sleep" to that of a woodchuck; since he is actively comparing it to hibernation and stating that it is different than " some human sleep," it is just a bit of whimsy in his mind (lines 40-41).

This whimsical and reflective look toward sleep and death is somewhat subverted in Frost's poem " Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening." Instead of the long, 41-line piece of contemplation, this poem is short, repetitive and hurried, as if the narrator himself seeks to get on with his work. Here, the woods are implied to be the domain of Death itself: " Whose woods these are I think I know" (line 1). However, he rejects the possibility of death, as he fears the coldness and desolation of the woods: " He will not see me stopping here/ To watch his woods fill up with snow" (lines 3-4).

Throughout the poem, he is constantly allured by the " lovely" yet " dark and deep" nature of the woods; this is likely in reference to the weakening of strength and the need for rest those who are about to sleep/die require (line 13).

The horse, as a creature independent of the understanding of human death, is understood to " think it queer" to be frightened and reticent of dying (line 5). In order to check upon whether or not the narrator is all right, and whether or not he wants to rest here (i. e. die), he " gives his harness bells a shake/ To ask if there is some mistake." (lines 9-10). Here, the horse reveals

his lack of understanding of the narrator's situation, but still remains a true and loyal friend. With his help, then, the narrator rejects the notion of resting/dying, as he has "miles to go" before he "sleep(s)" (line 15). By repeating this line twice at the end of the poem, Frost cements the narrator's determination to keep going; he has much more to do before he is meant to die, and so the narrator repeats it to himself in order to give himself the motivation to continue.

Both of these poems take interesting perspectives on death, especially through the metaphor for sleep. In "After Apple-Picking," the narrator finishes a hard day's work and contemplates what it would be like if he lived an afterlife that echoed his own current life. In "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening," the narrator shrugs off the specter of death as he feels he has more he must do. Both take intriguing stances on the subject of death and dying, and are presented with a lyricism that only Frost could provide.

## Works Cited

Frost, Robert. "After Apple Picking." Poets. org.

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Frost, Robert. "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening." Poets. org.

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