

The world of the child
in a rural setting in
the poem 'out, out'



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Throughout 'Out, Out', Frost utilises a multitude of techniques in order to express the thoughts, feelings and poignancy of a young child and the rural idyll he inhabits. The exploration of this important theme, and the injection of subtle vocabulary, allegory and syntax it entails, is of paramount importance to Frost and he treats it with according lustre. Throughout the poem Frost conjures a bleak and wholly malicious image of innocence being overwhelmed by the adult, and industrial, world: a theme prevalent throughout a large proportion of his poems. From the start of the poem, Frost immediately creates a sense that the rural idyll is being entreated upon by an evil being: industry. For example: " And the buzz saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled." The repetition contained within this excerpt, obviously, is a suitable method of conveying the relentlessness of the buzz saw, but it is its positioning that strikes the reader: it is located after a brief passage of Frost eloquently describing the surrounding scenery: " Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it...under the sunset far into Vermont." This quotation helps to juxtapose rural life with industrial and is also, obviously, allegorical for the boy's life being ended by the saw. However, Frost also explores ulterior themes that underlie the majority of the poem. For example, on numerous occasions, it seems that Frost, using the events that unfold throughout the course of the poem, is commenting upon the altogether naivety and short-sightedness of farmers in rural America: " From there those that lifted eyes could count five mountain ranges." This quotation particularly shows Frost making a profound and subtle inference on the fact that farmers do not appreciate the staggering beauty that surrounds them and nature as an entity, they merely destroy it. Another example of this theme rising to the surface is: " No one believed." This <https://assignbuster.com/the-world-of-the-child-in-a-rural-setting-in-the-poem-out-out/>

extract shows the pure stupidity of those that surround the child and the generic ignorance of the rural world when encouraging industry. Quotations similar to those above also create a deep sense of empathy within the reader and an abject dislike of the adults: a factor that greatly increases the emotional involvement of the reader within the poem and the successfulness of the piece. Vocabulary and syntax are also technical protagonists in conveying the aforementioned themes; for example, Frost incites a superior level of emotion by using simple childish phrases and words: “ Big boy doing a man’s job.” This quotation highlights the ridiculousness of the tasks given to the boy and how he is being forced to ‘ grow up’ and that how adults are stealing his blissful innocence, just as, ultimately, industry is stealing the rural life: a characteristic Frostian technique. It seems, however, that Frost’s primary concern when selecting vocabulary was to emphasise the brevity of the child’s existence, for example, the extraction of the title from the Shakespearian quotation: “ Out, Out-brief candle.” This again, reiterates the purity of youth and the underlying callousness of man’s heart, but also makes reference to the seemingly insignificance of life in general: “ No more to build on there.” Continuation is also an important theme throughout the poem. Often expressed through the vulgarity of the adults and industry, it proves to be an instigator of undeniable emotion within the reader and, most importantly, highlights the unpleasant and mediocre existence of the child: “ And they, since they were not the ones dead, turned to their affairs.” This quotation presents the vast chasm, in which no love or respect lingers, between adult and child and how the parents do not see the death of their son as tragic, but merely as a decrease in their economic potential: this is made even more prevalent by the mysterious absence of the parents of the <https://assignbuster.com/the-world-of-the-child-in-a-rural-setting-in-the-poem-out-out/>

boy. This extremely morbid comment on the farcical and unsubstantial morals of the adult world almost certainly had personal resonances within Frost. The actual event of the cutting of the arm is complexly expressed by Frost using an advanced myriad of techniques. Imagery, however, is what initially strikes the reader: "As if to prove saws knew what supper meant." This personification of the saw shows an ulterior intelligence within the mechanisms of industry: it is almost like willfully destroying a human life. The metaphoric 'meeting' of saw with flesh is also profound: "He must have given the hand. However it was, neither refused the meeting." This implies that the boy has suicidal tendencies, but also, allegorically, shows a willful merging of two contrasting ways of life. Despite the initial appearance of the poem as simplistic and even uninteresting, when one digs deeper into the pile of literary techniques cast into the poem by Frost a wholly different piece begins to unfurl slowly: a comment appropriate to most of his other works.