

To earthward by robert frost



**ASSIGN
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Robert Frost's "To Earthward" is an intimate lyric in which an old man reflects upon his passionate experiences with love as a youth and the lack of such experiences in his old age. Through diction, imagery and structure, the tone of the speaker changes from one of gentle nostalgia to resentment toward the ephemeral nature of love.

The entire poem, which consists of eight quatrains, adheres to a structure of six syllables in the first three lines of a quatrain and four syllables in the last line. Also throughout the colloquial piece are external rhymes, which are sometimes imperfect, but are used to keep the steady rhythm. This use of diction and structure makes the poem seem more universal. The speaker's situation is one that we all will experience someday. Alliteration is for emphasize in "bitter bark/ And burning clove" (23-24) and "stiff and sore and scarred" (25). The alliteration of harsh "B" and blunt "S" sounds accentuate the speaker's discontent with the dispassionate state of his current way of life.

In the first four quatrains the speaker is reminiscing about his experiences with love in his youth. He recalls how little it took to enchant him and that "love at the lips was touch/ as sweet as I could bear" (1-2) for in his youth love had seemed extremely intense. Vivid descriptions create a vibrant and fragrant image of his early love as a "musk/ From hidden grapevine springs/ Downhill at dusk" (6-8) that made him feel as though he would "swirl and ache/ From sprays of honeysuckle/ That when they're gathered shake/ Dew on the knuckle" (9-12). But the image of a rose petal that stings in lines 15-16 begins the speaker's diversion toward resentment. He implies that the joyful aspects of love are so intense because of the pain and tension that accompany love. Now that he is old, the speaker feels the need to live

passionately before he dies. He no longer fears the pain that accompanies love because he desperately longs for the intense love he experienced as a youth. He "crave(s) the stain/ Of tears, the aftermark/ Of almost too much love" (21-22) because he did not appreciate the transient nature of love until too late in his life. He is left to pound on the ground (his future resting-place), resentful that his longing for love will never be as intense as the experience of love itself.

Bibliography: