

American lit final
summery, characters
names, phrases,
places



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Robert Frost " Mending Wall" (232)Summary

A stone wall separates the speaker's property from his neighbor's. In spring, the two meet to walk the wall and jointly make repairs. The speaker sees no reason for the wall to be kept—there are no cows to be contained, just apple and pine trees. He does not believe in walls for the sake of walls. The neighbor resorts to an old adage: " Good fences make good neighbors." The speaker remains unconvinced and mischievously presses the neighbor to look beyond the old-fashioned folly of such reasoning. His neighbor will not be swayed. The speaker envisions his neighbor as a holdover from a justifiably outmoded era, a living example of a dark-age mentality. But the neighbor simply repeats the adage.

Form

Blank verse is the baseline meter of this poem, but few of the lines march along in blank verse's characteristic lock-step iambs, five abreast. Frost maintains five stressed syllables per line, but he varies the feet extensively to sustain the natural speech-like quality of the verse. There are no stanza breaks, obvious end-rhymes, or rhyming patterns, but many of the end-words share an assonance (e. g., wall, hill, balls, wall, and well sun, thing, stone, mean, line, and again or game, them, and him twice). Internal rhymes, too, are subtle, slanted, and conceivably coincidental. The vocabulary is all of a piece—no fancy words, all short (only one word, another, is of three syllables), all conversational—and this is perhaps why the words resonate so consummately with each other in sound and feel.

Robert Frost " Home Burial" (237-40)Summary

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The poem presents a few moments of charged dialogue in a strained relationship between a rural husband and wife who have lost a child. The woman is distraught after catching sight of the child's grave through the window—and more so when her husband doesn't immediately recognize the cause of her distress. She tries to leave the house; he importunes her to stay, for once, and share her grief with him—to give him a chance. He doesn't understand what it is he does that offends her or why she should grieve outwardly so long. She resents him deeply for his composure, what she sees as his hard-heartedness. She vents some of her anger and frustration, and he receives it, but the distance between them remains. She opens the door to leave, as he calls after her.

Form

This is a dramatic lyric—"dramatic" in that, like traditional drama, it presents a continuous scene and employs primarily dialogue rather than narrative or description. It is dramatic, too, in its subject matter—"dramatic" in the sense of "emotional" or "tense." Form fits content well in this poem: One can easily imagine two actors onstage portraying this brief, charged scene. Rhythmically, Frost approaches pure speech—and some lines, taken out of context, sound as prosaic as anything. For example, line 62: "I do think, though, you overdo it a little." Generally, there are five stressed syllables per line, although (as in line 62), they are not always easy to scan with certainty. Stanza breaks occur where quoted speech ends or begins.

Robert Frost "The Road Not Taken" (241) Summary

The speaker stands in the woods, considering a fork in the road. Both ways are equally worn and equally overlaid with un-trodden leaves. The speaker chooses one, telling himself that he will take the other another day. Yet he knows it is unlikely that he will have the opportunity to do so. And he admits that someday in the future he will recreate the scene with a slight twist: He will claim that he took the less-traveled road.

Form

"The Road Not Taken" consists of four stanzas of five lines. The rhyme scheme is ABAAB; the rhymes are strict and masculine, with the notable exception of the last line (we do not usually stress the -ence of difference). There are four stressed syllables per line, varying on an iambic tetrameter base.

Robert Frost "Birches" (243) Summary

When the speaker sees bent birch trees, he likes to think that they are bent because boys have been "swinging" them. He knows that they are, in fact, bent by ice storms. Yet he prefers his vision of a boy climbing a tree carefully and then swinging at the tree's crest to the ground. He used to do this himself and dreams of going back to those days. He likens birch swinging to getting "away from the earth awhile" and then coming back.

Form

This is blank verse, with numerous variations on the prevailing iambic foot.

Robert Frost "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" (245) Summary

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On the surface, this poem is simplicity itself. The speaker is stopping by some woods on a snowy evening. He or she takes in the lovely scene in near-silence, is tempted to stay longer, but acknowledges the pull of obligations and the considerable distance yet to be traveled before he or she can rest for the night.

Form

The poem consists of four (almost) identically constructed stanzas. Each line is iambic, with four stressed syllables:

Within the four lines of each stanza, the first, second, and fourth lines rhyme. The third line does not, but it sets up the rhymes for the next stanza. For example, in the third stanza, *queer*, *near*, and *year* all rhyme, but *lake* rhymes with *shake*, *mistake*, and *flake* in the following stanza.

The notable exception to this pattern comes in the final stanza, where the third line rhymes with the previous two and is repeated as the fourth line.

Do not be fooled by the simple words and the easiness of the rhymes; this is a very difficult form to achieve in English without debilitating a poem's content with forced rhymes.

Robert Frost " Directive" (248)Mina Loy " Parturition" (296-9)William Carlos Williams " The Young Housewife" (304)the sense of the poem's being literally autobiographical—an effect that is characteristic of much of Williams's poetry. Although some critics identify the poem's narrator as Williams himself, one cannot do this with any certainty, since the poem may be partly

or entirely fictional. The most one can say with certainty is that the narrator possesses the skills of a poet and storyteller.

The second element is a thematic one: "The Young Housewife" is about women—a subject that is often at the heart of Williams's poetry. The poem is an early, successful rendering of several themes relating to women that Williams treated throughout his career, all of which can be summed up under the theme of how a lustful man sometimes behaves in response to a desirable but unobtainable woman.

William Carlos Williams "The Red Wheelbarrow" (309) Our speaker is invisible. We know he is wise, because he apparently knows what depends upon a red wheelbarrow, while we are stumped. We know he is an appreciator of life, and, in particular, of the small things in life

William Carlos Williams wasn't into writing complex poems that take the reader a lot of work to unlock and digest.

William Carlos Williams "This is Just to Say" (310) We start out with the title of this poem, which could be telling us that this poem is written for no other reason than to say exactly what it says. Deep, right?

And what it says is that the speaker ate the plums, which he thinks "you," someone who, we can guess, lives with the speaker, was saving for breakfast.

William Carlos Williams "The Dance ('In Brueghel's Great Picture, The Kermess')" (311) The speaker gets excited about a painting called "The Kermess" by Brueghel, and he tells us all about it. The rhythmic, swirling <https://assignbuster.com/american-lit-final-summery-characters-names-phrases-places/>

language of the poem paints a picture of a peasant festival, complete with beer, big-bellied dancers, and tons of raucous music. Celebrate good times, gang.

setting is an art museum

Ezra Pound " In a Station of the Metro" (318)A man sees a bunch of faces in the subway and thinks they look like flowers on a tree branch.

in a subway in paris

kind of a haiku

Wallace Stevens " The Emperor of Ice Cream" (284)its a at a wake a lady dies

n a broad sense, the wake represents the enactment of the speaker's central message: even in the presence of death, we should enjoy the taste of ice cream—and the focused moment of bliss that pleasure affords. e. e.

cummings " somewhere i have never traveled, gladly beyond" (642)no

capitalizationsEdna St. Vincent Millay " Recuerdo" (633)ryhme sceem repetition

this poem traces the adventures of a couple throughout the night. Jumping on and off of the ferry, they manage to wander through town (stopping for dinner) and ramble through the wilds (making a fire and lying on a hill to star-gaze). Edna St. Vincent Millay " I, being born a woman" (634)rhymes dude it was a one night stand get over it

social double standeredsT. S. Eliot " The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (368-71)london

dont want people to see him

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dramatic monologue

gradually reveals more and more about a person

some lines rhyme some dont

called rhyming couplets Sterling Brown " Ma Rainey" country singer blues famous

blues rhythem

people come from cape girardeau and poplar bluff

speaks language of a black southerners earlyth 20th century

many poems about aferican american experience in the rural merican

south Sterling Brown " Odyssey of Big Boy" (handout, or available on

Blackboard) song. bout jobs and women Langston Hughes " I, Too" (872) jim

crow era

black servent with dreams

us

maybe slave or close to it

assert the narrator's identity as a human being, an American citizen - and a beautiful one, at that.

race ambition freedom are themes Langston Hughes " The Weary Blues"

(872) about a piano player they heard

free verse walt whitman influence

Lenox Avenue

harlem

written 1920s Langston Hughes " Theme for English B" (880) black college

student 22 years old in harlem Ernest Hemingway The Sun Also Rises Jake

barnes narrator

Robert Cohn

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lady brett ashely

spain paris madrid

bull fightingWilliam Faulkner " Barn Burning" (800-12)Ralph Ellison " Chapter One" of Invisible Man, Volume E 214-224after civil war grandparents former slaves

speaks of washington

steals electricityRobert Lowell " Skunk Hour" (318)fake rhyming

on island of coast of maine

known for twists and turnsRobert Hayden " Homage to the Empress of the Blues" (172)about blues singerRobert Hayden " Those Winter Sundays" (172)dad burned wood in morning

old rifty house

transcends race could be white or blackAllen Ginsberg " Howl" (492-500)drug users

Carl Solomon

long lines free versesDavid Mamet Glengarry Glen Ross, 1009-42chicago salesman

Levene, Roma, Moss, and Aaronow—and their supervisor, Williamson, who work together selling undesirable real estate at inflated prices. Yusef

Komunyakaa " Slam, Dunk, & Hook" (1045-6)sonny boy

basketballRobert Pinsky " The Want Bone" (811)creat life

ocean beachSharon Olds " Adolescence" (866)domestic violence

shocking subject matter ONAMERICAN LIT FINAL SUMMERY, CHARACTERS NAMES, PHRASES, PLACES SPECIFICALLY FOR YOUFOR ONLY\$13.

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