

Stopped by woods on a snowy evening vs the collar

[Literature](#), [Poetry](#)



Frost's *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* and George Herbert's *The Collar* can be compared in that both poems emphasize the roles and responsibilities people have in life and the duties they have to fulfill. What separates the two poems is a distinct difference in speaker and situation, which implies a different purpose in each.

In Frost's poem, the speaker talks about how he cannot stay in the woods to think and to admire the beauty of the falling snow. His horse indicates that it is odd for the man to want to stop here, " My little horse must think it queer to stop without a farmhouse near... To ask if there is some mistake" (673). This shows us that it is unusual for the man to stop in the woods for no apparent reason. We can draw from this that the man does not typically stop and take the time to contemplate or to appreciate the simple things in life.

In the last stanza of the poem it says, " The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep" (673). Here the speaker is showing us that although he likes the beauty of snowy woods, he cannot stay for long because he has promises to keep and a lot of things to do before he dies. It's almost as if he feels a constant pressure to keep going, to keep busy and that he does not have time to admire the woods. The speaker's role in the story portrays an incessant need to do something in order to make his life a valid and productive one. It is as if time spent appreciating God's creation is merely a waste of time and therefore a waste of his life.

Similarly, the speaker in *The Collar* has something he is supposed to accomplish in life. The speaker acknowledges the fact that his life is free, "

free as the road, loose as the wind, as large as store" and asks himself " Shall I be still in suit?" (673). Like the man in Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, the speaker of The Collar has come to a crossroads where he needs to decide if he is just going to wait around, or if he is going to fulfill his purpose in life and follow his calling. In the last two lines of the poem, the speaker hears God calling him, and he chooses to listen to Him.

One can infer that the man's calling is to become a priest from the title of the poem, referring to the collar that a priest or another member of the clergy would wear. Another interpretation of the title is in its irony. A collar restricts someone from going somewhere where they should not be. The irony is in the fact that he says his life is free, yet a collar reflects something confining. In both poems the speakers recognize that they have a destiny to fulfill in life, and acknowledge that they need to pursue that.

The Collar is different than Stopped by Woods on a Snowy Evening because the speaker in the story wants to ultimately serve God and do what God has planned for his life. Although the speaker starts out angry at the priesthood and living a restricted life, " I struck the board, and cry'd, 'No more; I will abroad!'" (950) he ends saying " But as I rav'd and grew more fierce and wild at every word, me thought I heard one calling, 'Child:' and I replied, 'My Lord'" (951). This shows us that even in his moment of rage, God had called him and he respectfully responded.

I think that although the speaker appeared to be lashing out at the priesthood, it was merely to release some tension and he had never actually

turned against God. Like many of us, I'm sure he just got frustrated doing what he was doing, and had the realization that he could be doing anything he wanted-things much less strict in practice, but he knows he was chosen by God to be a priest and he loves God, so no matter what, that is what he will do because of his love for Him.

On the contrary, *Stopped by Woods on a Snowy Evening* is not specifically about a man following God's calling for his life. Unlike the speaker of *The Collar*, when he stops to question things, he is not questioning why God has called him to serve in his vocation. He merely ponders if he can afford to stop doing what he's supposed to do to marvel at the snowy woods. It is not made clear to us that his purpose in life is to serve God or to follow his calling. The speaker in the story has his own plan of action that he wants to follow through on. He says, " I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep" (673) which only points out a commitment to others and to himself, not specifically to fulfilling the calling God has put on his life.

His responsibilities are different than the responsibilities of the speaker in *The Collar*. He does not feel a need to follow God and he doesn't have a congregation that is counting on him. His vocational situation is different and hence his responsibilities are different.

Another difference between the two stories is that in *The Collar* the speaker is speaking out in anger, but in *Stopped by Woods on a Snowy Evening* the speaker is more or less content with his life, although he would like to spend more time in the woods if he didn't have other things to do. The attitudes in

which the two speakers present the information to us are completely opposite. The differences in attitude help to portray and to emphasize the speaker's purpose in life.

Attitude alone is able to give us the purpose of the speaker and emphasize his commitment to himself and to God. It ties together their responsibilities so that we are able to observe their differences.