

"birches" by robert frost – a poetic analysis essay sample

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In the poem "Birches" by Robert Frost, Frost attempts to illustrate a cycle of growing up from childhood to adulthood. According to Frost, through the use of childhood imagination one can easily endure the struggle we call life. "Birches" is separated into different sections, beginning with a description of a birch tree being bent under various conditions. The poem then continues to a farm boy's childhood, where he is 'seen' swinging on the birches, and lastly Frost describes his desires to return to his childhood, wanting to start over. This poem contains no rhyme scheme and is not divided into stanzas. Frost utilizes the use of various literary devices, such as personification, symbolism, alliteration, and metaphors to describe to the audience the difficulties life throws at us, and how one can persevere with the aid of innocent images found in many of our childhood memories within our souls.

The first attempt to evoke our sense of sight by Frost came in the first part of the poem. Frost describes to the audience birches which are bent to left and right. He wants to believe that the bends were caused by a boy swinging on them, yet he realizes that "swinging doesn't bend them down to stay/As ice-storms do (Line 4-5)." This can be symbolic of how life tends to weight us down with stress and responsibilities, causing us to change completely as the birches do. Frost then describes how the sun's warmth shatters and breaks the ice like the "inner dome of heaven had fallen (line 13)." More symbolism can be found within the sun and the ice. The sun helps us to "shed crystal shells/Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust" (line 10-11) through its warmth providing relief from the ice, just as our loved ones around us help with their love to relieve us of our stressful lives.

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While, the sun provides relief the ice symbolizes the hardships and obstacles we each have to face in life. In order to advance into the future, we must break away from the ice with the support of love ones. Frost then seems to attempt to compare human beings to the birches. Like the birches that "click upon themselves/As the breeze rises (line 7-8)" suggests that problems often cause people to fight amongst each other. In addition, when we are struggling against major stress like the branches that are overloaded with ice, we do not break. Instead, people and birches bend to adjust to the situation that is dealt to them. Frost once again reinforces the idea of how the birches are similar to us, with a comparison between bent branches "trailing their leaves on the ground" to "girls on hands and knees throwing their hair before them to dry in the sun (line 18-19)." After this comparison, Frost now changes direction from the description of birches to a more innocent and simple depiction of the life of a young boy living on a farm.

Frost continues to show how we are all connected to the bent birches. Frost now describes to the audience the life of a little boy living on a farm. He repeats an earlier desire to have "some boy bend them," (line 21) instead of an ice storm. The boy that Frost felt should bend the branches should be innocent and pure, such as a boy who would be out to fetch cows, however would play and bend the birches instead. The boy should be secluded from society and taught himself to play with what was around him. He would be able to adjust to all seasons either summer or winter and could be by himself and enjoy the company, playing on his father's trees, one by one. The little boy should bend the branches due to swinging on them often and "until he

took the stiffness out of them (line 29)." The boy is aware of how much pressure the branches can take without them breaking.

Frost again tells the reader how conscience the boy is of the capabilities of the branches by using an image of a cup filling to the brim and even above the brim. This boy is symbolic of the problems found in society. We "bend" due to the corruption and problems found in society such as crime, pollution and other evil things we subject each other to. Frost attempts to remind us of a simple and pure boy free from all the evils of society due to his seclusion from it. Frost repeatedly says that he would rather have the boy bend the branches, instead of an ice storm, suggesting that we all have forgotten the simplicity and joy of swinging on branches, now that we have technological advancements such as television, computers, and radios. Frost now begins to reminisce about his own childhood and how the bent birches can be related to a person's life.

In the last section of "Birches" Frost reflects on his childhood. He tells us that "I once myself a swinger of branches," (line 41) and that he wishes to return to that state. Frost says when life is "weary of considerations" (line 43) and he has lost his way in a pathless wood he would like to get away from Earth for awhile and come back as a child. Frost goes on to say "May no fate willfully misunderstand me And half grant what I wish and snatch me away Not to return. Earth's the right place for love: I don't know where it's likely to go better (line 50-53)." This could mean that negative things are bound to exist in Earth everywhere, however beauty does exist, one just has to look for it in a more simplistic and innocent location.

The poem "Birches" by Robert Frost describes the struggles we go through in everyday life. Through the use of literary elements, Frost successfully uses the images of bent birch trees and an innocent child to display the hardships we face and that we should all go back to a more innocent and simpler time.