

Robert college, and
learned that he loved



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Robert Frost Robert Frost was born on March 26, 1874 in San Francisco.

His father was William Frost, a Harvard graduate who was on his way westward when he stopped to teach at Bucknell Academy in Pennsylvania for extra money. His mother, Isabelle Moodie began teaching math at Bucknell while William was there, and they got married and moved to San Francisco. They were constantly changing houses, and William went from job to job as a journalist. About a year after moving to San Francisco, they had Robert. They named him Robert Lee Frost, after William's childhood hero, Robert E. Lee. Frost's father died from tuberculosis at age thirty-four, in 1885. Isabelle took Robert and his sister back east to Massachusetts.

Soon they moved to Salem, New Hampshire, where there was a teaching opening. Robert began to go to school and sit in on his mothers classes. He soon learned to love language, and eventually went to Lawrence High School, where he wrote the words to the school hymn, and graduated as co-valedictorian. Frost read rabidly of Dickens, Tennyson, Longfellow, and many others. Frost was then sent to Dartmouth college by his controlling grandfather, who saw it as the proper place for him to train to become a businessman. Frost read even more in college, and learned that he loved poetry. His poetry had little success getting published, and he had to work various jobs to make a living, such as a shoemaker, a country schoolteacher, and a farmer.

In 1912 Frost gave up his teaching job, sold his farm, and moved to England. He received aid from poets such as Edward Thomas and Rupert Brooke, and published his first two volumes of poetry, *A Boy's Will* in 1913, and *North of*

Boston in 1914. These works were well received not only in England, but in America. Frost returned to America in 1915 and continued writing his poetry. He produced many volumes of poetry, among which are *Mountain Interval* (1916), *West-Running Brook* (1928), *A Further Range* (1936), *A Masque of Reason* (1945), and *In the Clearing* (1962).

Frost received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry four times (1924, 1931, 1937, 1943) and became the first poet to read a poem at the presidential inauguration of John F. Kennedy. His poetry was based mainly on life and scenery in rural New England, and reflected many values of American society. He died on January 29, 1963 in Boston, Massachusetts.

His epitaph reads: "I had a lovers quarrel with the world." Frost once said, "I guess I must be just an ordinary man" (Cox 5) and though he is, without a doubt, an extraordinary man, there is some truth in the statement.

Throughout his poetry, Frost seems to make many attempts to appeal to the common working American and his feelings. He does this through the subject matter and themes as well as through the diction he uses.

"An ordinary man is one whose imagination and character result from the constant impact of the irresistible force of desire against the immovable object necessity, the impact of feeling against reason, and the impact of faith against fact" (Cox 17). It is for this reason that Frost's work speaks to and for all men. Many of the poems Frost wrote deal with situations set in a simple, rural setting. The characters he creates are very realistic, and are not romanticized. This is one reason why people can relate to the poems.

His characters “ seem more real than their neighbors with manifest reservations” (Cox 8). One could say that the people are more three-dimensional than just imaginative words on a paper. He uses farmers and workers in his poetry, and sometimes he pokes fun at the more “ sophisticated” people and how they feel. Frosts world is one that is related to a real world with its definite boundaries in time and space (Gerber 90). Frost seems to have a good understanding of the world in which his characters, ordinary people, live. He understands the necessities of the ordinary man, one who has to work hard to support himself and a family, no matter what events may take place. An example is the poem “ Out, Out-“, in which a young boy has his hand accidentally cut off by a chainsaw, and when he dies, the family, “ since they were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.” This theme reoccurs again in other poem, where a tragic event occurs, but life goes on, and the characters in the poem must ignore some of the pain in order to continue to work and live.

Another theme he uses often is the pride of the working man. He understands that a working mans’ value is measured by the amount and the quality of the work that he does, and an example of a poem where this is used is The Death of the Hired Man. In this poem, Silas, an old man, returns to a farm where he has worked sporadically in the past, and wishes to work again. The owner of the farm and his wife both know this, but they respect the pride of the old man, and do not want to damage that pride by refusing to let him work to earn his keep.

Frost understands the pain and tragedy that occurs in life, and is not a stranger to the experiences that make men grieve and despair. He has kept

his sanity not by blinding himself to the elements which make men mad, but rather the most important result of his acquaintance with sorrow has been the realization that the exercise of the creative faculties is independent of the circumstance (Gerber 89). Frost acknowledges this in the poem *Aquainted with the Night*, when he talks about walking through a city at night, and seeing all that goes on that those who only walk at night cannot see. Frost also uses fairly simple words in his poetry, which makes it easy for the reader to understand, while making it sound no less elegant. The diction relates directly to the subject of his poems, because the farm workers and ordinary men do not think or speak with complex words, but, like Frost, they use simple words to make a complex statement.

One could say that Frosts words are like simple, single-colored strands of thread, which he weaves together to make an elegant, beautiful tapestry.