

# [The most of it](https://assignbuster.com/the-most-of-it/)

In his early poem “ The Rhodora,” Ralph Waldo Emerson says, “ If eyes were meant for seeing, than beauty is its own excuse for being.” If one were to ask the speaker in Robert Frost’s “ The Most of It” how he feels about Emerson’s quote, there would probably be two different responses. The man in the poem would disagree with Emerson, because he does not recognize the beauty of nature surrounding him. He sees the “ tree-hidden cliff” and “ boulder-broken beach,” but does not think that their beauty is enough of a response (4-5). He feels alienated, and does not realize that “ counter-love, original response” comes in forms other than human replies (8). The poem’s speaker, however, has a different definition of what constitutes an “ original response” from nature. He is not searching for the supernatural return of a loved one, or a higher intelligence in the natural world. The speaker’s mind recognizes the response as “ its own excuse for being,” or simply the most that nature could give the man. Therefore, the speaker continues learning and making the most out of what he can see and understand. He celebrates nature’s physical and spiritual assets, while the oblivious man in the poem lives a life of solitude. The speaker emphasizes that if the man in the poem could fully accept and appreciate nature’s ambiguity, he would be able to recognize nature’s response for what it is and make the most of it. “ The Most of It” is a narrative poem written in succinct rhyming quatrains of iambic pentameter. The present tense emphasizes the man’s desires: he “ wants not its own love back in copy speech,” but “ original response” (7-8). However, the introduction of the response is described in the past tense. The water “ splashed,” and it (the response) “ stumbled through the rocks” (12; 19). The plosive alliteration of the “ boulder-broken beach” emphasizes the harshness of the environment, which seems undomesticated and quite solitary with its “ tree-hidden cliff across the lake” (4-5). Although “ The Most of It” is not (nor is it supposed to be) separated by stanzas, punctuation divides it into three parts. Periods occur at the end of lines 4, 8, and 20. The first four lines of the poem focus on the man’s extreme solitude. He thinks he is the universe’s sole inhabitant. The setting is primitive, and the man is the poem’s only reference to humanity. The speaker’s wording choices provide clues regarding the man’s solitude: his use of the word “ wake” in line 2 (“ For all the voice in answer he could wake”) hints at the death of the man’s physical or spiritual companion. Human beings have both physical and spiritual longings; perhaps the man is searching for a physical companion or a form of higher intelligence that can respond to him. Lines 5-8 focus on the man’s desire to end his isolation. He “ cr[ies] out on life,” asking for a response that is not “ its own love back in copy speech” to ease his loneliness (6-7). However, the man hears only his own voice in response. This “ mocking echo of his own” is used to enhance the intensity of the man’s loneliness (3). Death is also implied in the fifth line (“ Some morning from the boulder-broken beach”). Someone listening to the poem read aloud would be unable to distinguish between the words “ morning” and “ mourning.” If the second definition were to be used, the result (“ Some mourning from the boulder-broken beach He would cry out on life”) would present an image of the man walking along a rocky beach, struggling with grief over the loss of his friend. The final section of the poem’s three-part division is devoted to nature’s response. Lines 9-20 comprise a single, remarkably long sentence that the speaker uses to describe the response’s appearance. The speaker starts line 10 with the words “ Unless it was…” – a crucial moment in the poem. Although the man in the poem is unable to recognize a response, the speaker identifies “ it” as ambiguous nature’s reply. This response is the “ embodiment” that the man can hear as it “ crashed in the cliff’s talus” (10-11). However, Frost teases his readers and does not have the speaker identify the “ embodiment” until line 16, when the response metaphorically appears “ as a great buck.” From lines 9-18, every three lines start with the word “ And.” Because of this grammatical pattern, the speaker creates a list of descriptions that allow the reader to visualize the response. “ And then in the far distant water splashed,” and the response emerges (15). However, the speaker takes the pattern a step further when he uses “ And” to start lines 19 and 20. It is as if the speaker is desperately listing one detailed description after another in an attempt to get the man to appreciate nature for what it is, instead of faulting it for what it is not. Tactile imagery such as “ crumpled,” “ stumbled,” and “ forced” is used to give the response perceptible qualities (17; 19-20) that the speaker tries to get the man to notice. The response is more than just “ a great buck” (16). It “ landed pouring like a waterfall,” thus creating an image of water dripping and cascading from the buck (18). The vision of the great buck as it “ stumbled through the rocks with horny tread, and forced the underbrush” speaks to the authority of the human mind to distinguish it as nature and nothing else (19). The man in the poem cannot recognize that nature is responding to him because it is not giving him the answer that he is looking for. The conclusion of the poem is grim: “ that was all” (20). Like nature’s response, the last four words of the poem are ambiguous, although infused with an element of tragedy. The man in the poem searched for his “ counter-love” response, but was unable to recognize it when it was right in front of him (8). The poem’s ending brings his complete isolation to the forefront, and leaves the reader feeling a great deal of sympathy towards him. Conversely, those final four words symbolize the ambiguity and remoteness of nature. The speaker recognizes the grim reality of nature, but at the same time admires the response for what it is.