



The Poetry of Robert Frost (Collected Poems, Complete & Unabridged)

Robert Frost , Edward Connery Lathem (Editor)

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The only comprehensive gathering of Frost's published poetry, this affordable volume offers the entire contents of his eleven books of verse, from *A Boy's Will* (1913) to *In the Clearing* (1962). Frost scholar Lathem, who was also a close friend of the four-time Pulitzer Prize-winner, scrupulously annotated the 350-plus poems in this collection, which has been the standard edition of Frost's work since it first appeared in 1969.

The Poetry of Robert Frost (Collected Poems, Complete & Unabridged) Details

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From Reader Review The Poetry of Robert Frost (Collected Poems, Complete & Unabridged) for online ebook

Jan-Maat says

I was intrigued to learn that Frost and Edward Thomas had met and spent time together in England before the first world war following on from a review of some of Frost's poetry by Thomas. I feel both that in some way that the two of these people are now coming together in my understanding is a sign both of the deficiencies in my education and that luckily there is ever more to discover about the world. I believe "*The Road not taken*" was inspired by some of the walks the two went on and that Frost encouraged Thomas to write and publish his own poetry too. There is something unnerving about that connection for me, perhaps just the sense of how long Frost's adult life was since he was also performing at the inauguration (view spoiler) of J.F. Kennedy.

I recall a verse about almost being carried off by an eagle as a child which has then that reoccurring theme in poetry of the writer's self identity as poet, but also their own place in their culture. Frost not becoming Ganymede stands in relation to Petrarch and his Laura evoking the laurel which crowns the poet's brow as symbol of the Muse's victory.

Although the volume, no doubt cheaply acquired, stands on the shelf I doubt I'll become deeply acquainted with it. Poetry for me has the feel of hard work to it, I am a lazy reader, disinclined to break my head over ambiguous phrasing and elusive meaning.

Marit.W15 says

It wasn't my favorite Poetry book i have read! But it wasn't to bad.

Timothy Muller says

It may seem strange to allot only four stars to such a great poet. However, for me, there are (more or less) two Frosts. Actually, there are three Frosts, but the third is not a very important consideration.

To take the third first, this is the Frost of lighter, often satirical poetry, as in, for example "A Case for Jefferson." This kind of verse is not really Frost's strong suit and I think his reputation might rest a little higher had he not published it. However, virtually all poets publish material not quite worthy of them and few readers hold that against them.

More typically though, Frost has two modes of writing: 1) rhymed verse with tauter rhythms, and 2) the generally much looser blank verse. I often like the first very much; indeed consider the best of his lyrics to be among the finest lyrical poetry in the language. There are very few poets to have written so many lyrics of such high quality. For the second mode, the blank verse (usually, not always) I can find very little affection.

It is important to note that in the first type (the rhymed verse as opposed to the looser blank verse) is often

symbolic, using harvest, night, sea, woodland paths, and other symbols to suggest larger (if vaguer) meaning. The blank verse is often quite literal. Poems like “Death of a Hired Hand” or “Home Burial” read more like short stories than poetry. And the blank verse lines, drifting so often from the strict iambic pentameter, lines do not gather energy. Blank verse is a very difficult medium for poetry in English. One must be extremely gifted to use it. Only Shakespeare’s and Tennyson’s really work for me, and these are two of the very best at handling the English language. Frost (along with Wordsworth e.g.) fails to bring it to life for me.

To illustrate, I will contrast two poems - “Home Burial” and “Acquainted with the Night.” Both are very dark poems.

First “Home Burial:” The poem involves the misunderstandings between a husband and wife following the death and burial (by the husband) of their child. I think that we have to admit that we are involved with two pretty dense people. The emotion is not nuanced; it is raw and even simplistic. Take the following where the husband finally realizes that his child’s burial mound can be seen from a window at which his wife has been seen looking out numerous times:

““The wonder is I didn’t see at once.
I never noticed it from here before.
I must be wonted to it—that’s the reason.
The little graveyard where my people are!
So small the window frames the whole of it.””

A husband who does not know that his child’s grave can be seen from one of the home’s windows is not credible - it really isn’t; the wife’s apprehension of things is hardly better:

““I can repeat the very words you were saying:
“Three foggy mornings and one rainy day
Will rot the best birch fence a man can build.”
Think of it, talk like that at such a time!
What had how long it takes a birch to rot
To do with what was in the darkened parlor?
You couldn’t care!””

She cannot understand that the unfortunate and pressing business of life goes on, that we cannot, in the normal course of events, stop to give things, including grief, their proper due. This is little more believable than her husband’s obtuseness. Painful and absurd as this seems, intelligent women understand it. Nor can she grasp that the husband’s mourning goes on at a different level from her own.

And the situation is too specific. Unless one happens to have had the same experience, we tend to remain uninvolved; we are placed in an uncomfortable voyeuristic position. I cannot but feel that this is closer to soap opera than poetry.

In addition, the lines in “Home Burial” so often deviate from the normative iambic pentameter that in my perception it is really not poetry at all. And when the meter returns to the strict iambic pentameter, it often feels forced and sometimes awkward. Frost is sometimes credited with having broken down the meter as a sort of analogy to the breaking down of the communication of husband and wife; but if the crumbling of communication means crumbling of prosody, then what we have is prose.

On the other hand “Acquainted with the Night” is a true work of art and a poem to which almost anyone can

relate because it is communicated symbolically. There are none but the very fortunate and the self deluding sentimentalist who are not acquainted with the “night.” Here are the last three stanzas of the poem:

“I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.”

The “night” is almost psychotically bleak. A cry is heard from streets away - is it real or an hallucination? in any case it’s terrifyingly hostile. The clock, normatively a helpful product of a coherent society is of no use; instead it is apparently a sinister, glaring eye.

Any yet (and I consider this very important) the rhyme and controlled meter stand for coherence and meaning in which even the darkest place has a context, has a place in the scheme of things. There is a reason for the expression “neither rhyme nor reason.” Here we have rhyme (and more generally a prosody) which functions as a stand-in for reason, which however unavailable in the midst of the torment, is nevertheless insisted upon (albeit indirectly) by the poet. This is something poetry can do, that is, placing life’s varied and confusing events in some sort of context; indeed, it is one of its major functions, and Frost does it very well. The symbolic, as opposed to literal, representation allows for reverberating meaning and multiple context.

To take one more brief example of what Frost does so well - from “A Prayer in Spring:”

“Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;
And give us not to think so far away
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here
All simply in the springing of the year.”

How simple and unassuming is the verse at a literal level; yet how rich, replete with meaning, hopeful and ominous at once.

Lena says

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I’ve tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice

Is also great
And would suffice.

Robert Frost was a genius.

Nick says

He expertly articulates and captures those feelings inspired in us as children.
Wonderment and Beauty, Innocence, and Joyfulness, but also and equally, Loneliness Isolation and Desperation. Wisdom and Naivety.

Reading Frost is like traveling across New England With two people. The First incarnation a small enthusiastic and expressive child awe struck by the simple beauty of the landscape and changing seasons as he passes them by yearning to run ahead and spy what lay beyond the next bend.

The Second, a wiser and well traveled grandfatherly type, Who knows better than to openly advise against taking the short cut, though in a round about way counsels against the idea; lest we miss the point of the taking the back roads in the first place.

(If the above was confusing I apologize. Its late and Im trying to pay homage my favorite philosopher/poet.

I find Its like trying to explain why water tastes good when you've just crossed the Sahara. It should be obvious to all, but then what if the person has no idea what the Sahara IS?

Vicky Hunt says

Beautifully performed masterpieces!

(I read the Audible and Kindle version)

It was. a pleasure to discover more of the lovely poetry of one of my favorite poets. I'd memorized "Stopping by Woods" in grade school. I'd no idea what waited hidden among the rest. The Hired Man, The Impulse, and so many more jewels like hidden treasure saved for a later time in my life. Maybe I'd not have appreciated them as much as a child. But, many will certainly move you to tears.

My favorite was probably "In the Homestretch." It is a sweet story of an older couple who get a place out in the country, following their lifelong dream of living on a farm. All their belongings are in boxes and have been piled around the house. Chairs are upside down in chairs. And, as grown relatives leave them to their happiness, the man and woman talk back and forth about their dreams and their life together. It is very beautiful and heart-warming, about the joy of growing old together. I've included the last third of the poem below.

"It's nothing; it's their leaving us at dusk.
I never bore it well when people went.
The first night after guests have gone, the house
Seems haunted or exposed. I always take
A personal interest in the locking up
At bedtime; but the strangeness soon wears off."
He fetched a dingy lantern from behind
A door. "There's that we didn't lose! And these!"—
Some matches he unpocketed. "For food—
The meals we've had no one can take from us.
I wish that everything on earth were just
As certain as the meals we've had. I wish
The meals we haven't had were, anyway.
What have you you know where to lay your hands on?"

"The bread we bought in passing at the store.
There's butter somewhere, too."

"Let's rend the bread.
I'll light the fire for company for you;
You'll not have any other company
Till Ed begins to get out on a Sunday
To look us over and give us his idea
Of what wants pruning, shingling, breaking up.
He'll know what he would do if he were we,
And all at once. He'll plan for us and plan
To help us, but he'll take it out in planning.
Well, you can set the table with the loaf.
Let's see you find your loaf. I'll light the fire.
I like chairs occupying other chairs
Not offering a lady—"

"There again, Joe!
You're tired."

"I'm drunk-nonsensical tired out;
Don't mind a word I say. It's a day's work
To empty one house of all household goods
And fill another with 'em fifteen miles away,
Although you do no more than dump them down."

"Dumped down in paradise we are and happy."

"It's all so much what I have always wanted,
I can't believe it's what you wanted, too."

"Shouldn't you like to know?"

"I'd like to know

If it is what you wanted, then how much
You wanted it for me.”

“A troubled conscience!
You don’t want me to tell if I don’t know.”

“I don’t want to find out what can’t be known.

But who first said the word to come?”

“My dear,
It’s who first thought the thought. You’re searching, Joe,
For things that don’t exist; I mean beginnings.
Ends and beginnings—there are no such things.
There are only middles.”

“What is this?”

“This life?

Our sitting here by lantern-light together
Amid the wreckage of a former home?
You won’t deny the lantern isn’t new.
The stove is not, and you are not to me,
Nor I to you.”

“Perhaps you never were?”

“It would take me forever to recite
All that’s not new in where we find ourselves.
New is a word for fools in towns who think
Style upon style in dress and thought at last
Must get somewhere. I’ve heard you say as much.
No, this is no beginning.”

“Then an end?”

“End is a gloomy word.”

“Is it too late

To drag you out for just a good-night call
On the old peach trees on the knoll to grope
By starlight in the grass for a last peach
The neighbors may not have taken as their right
When the house wasn’t lived in? I’ve been looking:
I doubt if they have left us many grapes.
Before we set ourselves to right the house,
The first thing in the morning, out we go
To go the round of apple, cherry, peach,
Pine, alder, pasture, mowing, well, and brook.
All of a farm it is.”

**“I know this much:
I’m going to put you in your bed, if first
I have to make you build it. Come, the light.”**

**When there was no more lantern in the kitchen,
The fire got out through crannies in the stove
And danced in yellow wrigglers on the ceiling,
As much at home as if they’d always danced there."**

s.penkevich says

Robert Frost is the Thomas Kinkade of poetry.

Elizabeth says

Oh, if there were only the words to express how I feel about Frost. There aren't the right words nor near enough. However, I do enjoy reading his poems. They buoy me.

I am usually a lover of short poems, yet, even in his longer poems a line or two will reverberate.

Most will recommend "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening", "The Road Not Taken" or "Nothing Gold Can Stay". There are reasons why they would recommend these poems, as they have merit. Yet, these are not the only poems worth their keep. I recommend reading "Reluctance", "Into My Own", "Tree At My Window", "Wild Grapes" and "Devotion".

I may yet live, as I know others live,
To wish in vain to let go with the mind -
Of cares, at night, to sleep; but nothing tells me
That I need learn to let go with the heart.

from "Wild Grapes"

Julie says

It's not that I have a favourite Robert Frost poem -- he's not that kind of fellow. Yes, there are many "quotable quotes" that people bandy about; but again, he's not that kind of fellow. I dip into this collection again and again, when I want the world to slow down a little, and I just want to dream away a few hours, an afternoon. These are especially good on snowy, blustery, mid-winter afternoons when there is nothing to do, and nowhere to go. And in the evening, you stop by a wood, ... lovely, dark, and deep.

He's the kind of fellow with whom you could have had long, interesting conversations, whether or not the discourse took you anywhere on that particular day; but to never make the mistake, in that conversation, of confusing his simplicity of language with simplicity of thought -- for he is more than "a considerable speck"

in the universe and he has allowed me to take many roads, in my mind, not taken in the physical world.

This is a well-thumbed, well-loved collection.

Madeline says

I liked Robert Frost a lot more when I thought he was just writing about farms, and taking nice walks, and stopping in various wooded areas on nights of inclement weather.

After three class discussions of his poems, I am dismayed to learn that it's all a hell of a lot more complicated than that. *Dammit*.

But he's nice when I don't have to worry about the deep philosophical meaning of birches and can just enjoy the nice comfortable feeling his poems give me. Here, have a random excerpt.

From "Birches":

"I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
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."

Read for: Modern Poetry

Charles says

My November Guest

My Sorrow, when she's here with me,
Thinks these dark days of autumn rain
Are beautiful as days can be;
She loves the bare, the withered tree;
She walks the sodden pasture lane.

Her pleasure will not let me stay.
She talks and I am fain to list:
She's glad the birds are gone away,
She's glad her simple worsted grey

Is silver now with clinging mist.

The desolate, deserted trees,
The faded earth, the heavy sky,
The beauties she so truly sees,
She thinks I have no eye for these,
And vexes me for reason why.

Not yesterday I learned to know
The love of bare November days
Before the coming of the snow,
But it were vain to tell her so,
And they are better for her praise.

Ted says

I'm currently working my way through this book, which is the standard edition of his collected poetry.
Should be done some time in 2018.

Frost in 1941

Below are the nine collections of poetry the book contains, the year the collection was published, and links to separate reviews of the collections, for those I've read and reviewed. These reviews will primarily be comprised of quotations of some of the poems I enjoyed most, with perhaps some additional comments.

(1) A Boy's Will, 1913 - review

(2) North of Boston, 1914 - review

(3) Mountain Interval, 1916 - review

(4) New Hampshire, 1924

(5) West-Running Brook, 1929

(6) A Further Range, 1936

(7) A Witness Tree, 1942

(8) Steeple Bush, 1947

(9) In the Clearing, 1962

The book also contains two plays Frost wrote:

(10) A Masque of Reason, 1945

(11) A Masque of Mercy, 1947

Finally (not in the book), I've reviewed the following:

Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays, edited by James M. Cox. See the link for Previous library review below.

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Previous review: Basil Street Blues

Random review: Understanding Power

Next review: North of Boston

Previous library review: Robert Frost *critical reviews*

Next library review: A Boy's Will *see above*

Grey853 says

Robert Frost wrote some stunning and thought provoking poems. Almost everyone has heard of "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" or "The Road Not Taken", but one of my all time favorites is "Desert Places". The last verse:

"They cannot scare me with their empty spaces
Between stars--on stars where no human race is.
I have it in me so much nearer home
To scare myself with my own desert places."

Jody says

I think it's this version I have an old copy of this book. My grandma gave it to me for Christmas many years ago. I love Robert Frost. He's my first favorite poet and my favorite poem will always be The Road Not Taken. "And I, I took the road less traveled by and that has made all the difference." RF is my reason for loving words I think.

J.Aleksandr Wootton says

Beauty and genius have rarely drawn so light a veil across the face of joy and hollow of darkness as with the pen of Robert Frost.

Jack Wolf says

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

Ah those classic lines are music to my ears

Amy says

Robert Frost has the most beautiful poetry! My dad used to read to me from this book every night before bed and it has been a favorite ever since. When I was little my favorite one was The pasture. Now I love "Reluctance"

OUT through the fields and the woods
And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
And looked at the world, and descended;
I have come by the highway home, 5
And lo, it is ended.

The leaves are all dead on the ground,
Save those that the oak is keeping
To ravel them one by one
And let them go scraping and creeping 10
Out over the crusted snow,
When others are sleeping.

And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
No longer blown hither and thither;
The last lone aster is gone; 15
The flowers of the witch-hazel wither;
The heart is still aching to seek,
But the feet question 'Whither?'

Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason 20
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,

And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?

Asha Seth says

An anthology of Frost's best poems. My favorite among all:

In A Disused Graveyard

*The living come with grassy tread
To read the gravestones on the hill;
The graveyard draws the living still,
But never anymore the dead.
The verses in it say and say:
“The ones who living come today
To read the stones and go away
Tomorrow dead will come to stay.”
So sure of death the marbles rhyme,
Yet can't help marking all the time
How no one dead will seem to come.
What is it men are shrinking from?
It would be easy to be clever
And tell the stones: Men hate to die
And have stopped dying now forever.
I think they would believe the lie.*

E says

Lines from Frost seem to stick in my mind forever since studying him in high school and college and graduate school. And one of my favorite of his poems is "The Death of the Hired Man," which is about work, family, compassion, forgiveness, and home. When Warren and Mary disagree about the definition of "home," it is the second definition of home below (Mary's) that always brings tears to my eyes.

" 'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in.' "

'I should have called it/
Something you somehow haven't to deserve.' "

Images from this poem are also so Frost-sharp:

"Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw it/
And spread her apron to it."

Somehow, the older I get and the more I have lived, the more Frost gives to me.

LJ says

I've loved Frost's poems for years. "Birches," "A Road Not Taken," a version of which I've sung, "Time to Talk," are just a few of my favorites.
