

STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is one of Robert Frost's finest poems. It was written in 1922 and was published in 1923 in his volume "New Hampshire". Robert Frost won Pulitzer Prize and vast recognition as an important American Writer for this collection. He wrote this poem while living in the village of Franconia in New Hampshire.

It seems that he was inspired to write the poem Stopping by Wood on a Snowy Evening by watching the woods near the village and the village mentioned in the poem is probably Franconia. Frost claimed that he wrote this poem in a single sitting one night, though it was a very tough task to do so.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening: Stanza Wise

Before we go for a line-by-line analysis of the poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening, there are some important points to note about the structure or form of the poem, the style in which the poem is written, and the rhyme scheme followed,

- Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening consists of four stanzas of four lines each. In each stanza the first, second and fourth lines rhyme but the third line does not. The third line rather determines the rhyme of the next stanza. For instance, in the first stanza 'know', 'though' and 'snow' rhyme, but 'here' rhymes with 'queer', 'near' and 'year' in the next stanza. As an exception, in the last stanza, all four lines are rhyming though. So the **rhyme scheme** is AABA-BBCB-CCDC-DDDD and it is written in Iambic tetrameter, having four stressed syllables in each line. These are all about the poetic elements used in the poem.
- Actually the poem looks very simple in its use of language and also in the subject matter. But what strikes us most is the use of a special form and rhyme scheme to express the theme so fluently.

To mingle the content with the structure is really a tough task. The poem is rich in its use of figures of speech like imagery, alliteration and personification. It also has an allegorical meaning. So this poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening has been highly acclaimed since its publication.

Line by Line Explanation of Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

“Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.”

— The narrator (may be the poet himself) of the poem Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening stops by some woods on his way one evening. The narrator knows the owner of the woods and even where he lives. He is a bit relaxed thinking that the owner of the woods lives in the village and so he won't see the narrator stopping here. Therefore he can continue watching the natural beauty of his snow-covered woods.

“My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.”

— In the second stanza, the narrator of the poem says that his dear horse, whom he is using as his carriage, must think it strange to stop here between the woods and the frozen lake in a dark evening, as he normally stops near a farmhouse. The narrator calls his horse “**my little horse**”, as it is very dear to him or may be the horse is a little one in the literal sense, i.e., a pony. It may also suggest that the speaker is a humble and ordinary citizen and cannot afford to buy an expensive horse. He also personifies the horse by indicating that it has a thought process and also referring it as “he” in the next stanza. In this stanza the narrator suggest that the weather is cold enough to freeze a lake. The expression ‘**darkest evening**’ could suggest several things. May be the narrator-traveller was very depressed due to his

long journey or the cold weather. Otherwise it may also refer to the longest night of the year – the night with the most hours of darkness. In that case, it is 21st or 22nd December, when the winter solstice occurs in the northern hemisphere.

“He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sounds the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.”

— The horse is shaking its head ringing the bell attached to its harness, as if ‘he’ is asking his master whether there is any problem, as it is unusual for him to stop by the woods in the darkness. And the important thing in this stanza of the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* is the sound imageries. There is only three sounds – the sounds of the harness bell, light wind and the snowflakes.

“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.”

— Here in the last stanza the narrator describes the woods using three adjectives – lovely, dark and deep. This indicates that he is enjoying the scene and wants to do so for long. But he has other responsibilities in life. He has to go a long way before he sleeps. So he cannot get the enjoyment for long. He has to move on. And the important thing here is that the poet repeats the last line to attract the attention of the readers. In this very last line lies the allegorical interpretation. Here “sleep” may refer to death. We, in our real life, have many things to look at with awe, many things to enjoy, but in most cases we cannot simply because we have other things to do in our short lifespan, so we have to move on.