

MAHESH PUBLIC SCHOOL

STUDY MATERIAL

Subject- English Language & Literature (184)

Book – First Flight

Poem 1- Dust of Snow by Robert Frost

About the author: Robert Frost was born in 1874 at San Francisco, California. In his lifetime, he won more than one Pulitzer Prize. The president John F. Kennedy had also honoured him with a speech, for his poem written in the honour of Kennedy. He passed away in the year 1963. His poems have relevance even today.

Introduction: The poem “Dust of Snow” by Robert Frost is a simple and short poem, yet with a deeper and larger meaning. The poet explains how an act as petty as experiencing snow on one’s body can brighten one’s day up. The message of the poem is put into words by Robert Frost:

*“Always, always a larger significance...
A little thing touches a larger thing.”*

Theme: Dust of Snow is a beautiful poem written by the famous American poet Robert Frost. It depicts a simple moment, but it has great significance. The poem is set on a wintry day. The snow is falling heavily. The poet is depressed and has lost all hope. He is sitting under a hemlock tree. A small natural incident changes his sad mood into a happy mood. The poem teaches us that one should never be desperate and hopeless. There is always scope for a change.

Dust of Snow Poem and Explanation



The way a crow
Shook down on me

The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Shook- shake

Hemlock- a poisonous tree with small white flowers

The poem is set in a scene where the poet is in a bad mood and is walking by a tree, a hemlock tree. Hemlock tree is a poisonous tree. As he passes by, a crow happens to throw some snow dust on him. Whether it falls on his head or shoulders is unknown as there is no specific mention in the poem. Also, the readers are left in doubt about the bird's specific action. Whether the crow was landing, shivering with cold, re adjusting itself on the branch or taking off, it happened to send some particles of snow upon the author. Here, the two agents of nature, the hemlock tree and the crow are signifiers of sadness and gloom just like the poet's mood was in the opening scene.



Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

Rued- held in regret

For reasons unknown, the author was having a terrible day. But the falling of the snow on his head lifted his mood instantly. He had already spent his day in a bad mood but the rest of it was saved by the crow and the hemlock tree. Generally, hemlock tree and crow are used for negative references but the poet used them beautifully to portray that inauspicious things can bring joy and happiness too. One must not take things for granted and should be open and accept whichever way the nature chooses to bless us.

Literary Devices

1) **Rhyme Scheme-** abab cdcd

2) **Alliteration**- the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words. The instances of alliteration are as follows-

- a) **Has given my heart**
- b) **And saved some part**

3) **Inversion** - when the structure of a sentence is changed by the poet to create rhyme, this poetic license is called inversion. In stanza 1, inversion can be seen.

4) **Assonance** - the prominence of a vowel sound throughout a line is called assonance. In stanza 1, line 2 - "Shook down on me" - 'o' sound is prominent.

5) **Enjambment** - when the same sentence continues to the next line without the use of any punctuation marks, it is called enjambment. It has been used throughout the poem.

6) **Symbolism** - Both crow and the hemlock tree represent sorrow. Frost has used both the negative creatures (crow and the hemlock tree) as the carriers of positivism and strength that transformed his day for the better. By not using birds like sparrow and nightingale and trees like maple, oak or a pine, the poet has tried to break down all the preconceived notions we have about certain agents of nature. He has tried to make us understand that we see the world not as how it is, but as how we want to see it. Thus, the crow sitting and a hemlock tree together made his day better.

Dust of Snow Summary

The short poem by Robert Frost throws light upon the unimaginable healing power of nature and tiny things. From a bad mood to ill-health, there is nothing that can't be cured by nature. The author was experiencing one such bad day when a crow's movement near a hemlock tree dusted snow upon him. The snow instantly makes him happier. His day gets a lot better. Thus, the supremacy of nature as a whole made him realize how petty his problem was. The fact that hemlock tree is poisonous combined with crow being the indicator of doom and fear are used in the poem as the carriers of happiness in the life of narrator is ironical. The poet, through these objects has tried to highlight that sometimes creatures linked with negative aspects of life can be the bringer of change and happiness. Being outdoors in nature, with all its unpredictability can benefit anyone, anywhere at any time.

Extract based Questions:

1. The way a crow

Shook down on me

The dust of snow

From a hemlock tree.

a) The crow and the hemlock are considered as _____ symbols of nature.

i. Positive ii. Negative iii. Pleasant

b) What did the crow do to the hemlock tree?

c) Where do you think the poet was then?

d) What is the rhyme scheme of the given stanza?

2. Has given my heart

A change of mood

And saved some part

Of a day I had rued.

a) How did the poet's mood change?

b) What had the poet thought of the day?

c) What do you understand by the word 'rued'?

d) Name the poet and the poem?

Short answer questions (30-40 words)

1. What mood of the poet is reflected in the poem?

2. What do the crow, hemlock tree and dust of snow represent in the poem?

3. What is the message given by the poem?

Long Answer Question [100-150 words]

1. It is our attitude towards a situation that makes it positive or negative. Do you agree with it? Express your views with reference to the poem 'Dust of Snow'.