

Date 1 / 25 PV Log: (circle one) Poem / Movie / Picture / LyricTitle "Fire and Ice"Author / Director / Robert Frost

## Context (Where Found / Viewed / Read?)

I first heard "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost back in middle school at Our Lady of the Assumption and again last year when someone brought it in to share in Mr. O'Connor's English IXL class, and so, when I found the poem on Shmoop, I decided to do a log on it.

## Content / CD / Summary / Precis (Say? "Plot? Setting/Situation? Key lines/phrases scenes, etc? )

"Fire and Ice" begins in the middle of a discussion/argument on whether the world, when/if it comes to its end, will be destroyed in fire or in ice. The speaker of the poem claims that fire gets all of the acclaim and that he himself would "hold with those who favor fire." Nevertheless, the speaker also states that he, if he was to have to die twice, would not look over and underestimate the power of ice because "for destruction ice / Is also great / And would suffice."

## Content / CM / Meaning? / Theme(s)?

Robert Frost's "Fire and Ice" appears to be talking about the literal ending of the world or doomsday, the destruction of the entire planet earth, suggesting that that decimation will occur either by fire or by its polar opposite, ice. Nevertheless, Frost isn't just pointing out natural disasters that could end life on earth; rather, he is also suggesting that humans themselves possess a destructive capacity similar to that of natural disasters, and that they can bring as much or even more terror among each other and the world itself. The speaker's experience with romance, desire, and love makes him believe that "hot" emotions can result in the destruction of humanity, but he has also experienced the other extreme, hatred, of which also contains a destructive power that he does not disregard. Passion is able to consume people and make them become irrational, especially when one's passionate pursuits become halted in the process, and hatred can consume people via grudges and almost keep them in a state of immobility, as if they can't move on with their lives. Frost wants the reader to realize that it's not natural phenomena that will destroy life, but it is humans themselves. Duality is a big part of this destruction.

## Form (Diction? Construction Terms? Symbolism?)

"Fire and Ice" is somewhat formless, but most lines have eight syllables and four iambs each with a changing rather than constant rhyme scheme. The first two lines, however, do not have the same rhythm and syllable count as the rest of the poem. Fire, obviously, is not literal because it would almost be impossible for the whole entire earth to catch on fire; rather, it symbolizes a burning passion and desire for something, which can leave people disillusioned and upset. Ice, too, is not literal in this poem, but instead represents the stone hard, cold feeling that hatred evokes, causing people to envy each other and "freeze" the world.

## Commentary (What do you want to say? Why like? Questions? Synthesis / Allusions-Connections / Relevance to personal experience, to literature, 20Q's? etc.)? "Poetic" Traits?

"Fire and Ice" is quite a simplistic, almost childish poem, but it speaks to a much greater issue than outwardly appears. Despite relative international peace for now, the end of the world is eventually inevitable, whether it be by natural disaster or by the work of human hand, and this poem seems to prepare for the worst. By anticipating the unavoidable future, the poem has a truth to it that makes it so genuine and likable. I also sincerely like this poem because it presents two completely opposite ends of the spectrum as causes of the destruction of humanity, rather than taking into account a synthesis of the antitheses. By doing so, the poem distinctly breaks down the natural evil acts of humanity into two clear-cut categories, ones that are seemingly hot and burning and others that are sharp, bitter, and cold. This brings clarity rather than ambiguity to the poem. Duality, or things that are directly opposing like fire and ice within this poem, is also seen prominently in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which Victor Frankenstein contrasts significantly with his wretched creation. Both of these characters play off of each other as their contrasting natures try to find a balance throughout the course of the novel. Charles Johnson also expresses the constant presence of duality in his novel *Middle Passage* in the conversation between Captain Falcon and Rutherford Calhoun about the residing problem on the *Republic*, which Falcon claims is caused by the unavoidable contrasting beliefs of humans in general. I find this concept of duality poetic it suggests that nothing is ever in complete balance; rather, there are always two sides opposing each other, keeping things interesting and lively. Something is never the final answer, which is both unsettling but poetic at the same time.

**over (do not mix logs; e.g., no poem log in front, and movie log on back)**