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## A Study of Major Themes in Robert Frost's Poems

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research article is to highlight Robert Frost's love towards nature. According to Frost Nature is not only a background for poetry, but it is the soul in his works. Communication or lack of communication is an important in many of Frost's poems. In rural areas of New England, duty is the most important value. So it is not surprising that Frost applies this as one of the major themes in his poetry. Frost has more chances to find metaphysical meaning in everyday tasks and explore the relationship between mankind and nature the glimpses of rural life in his poetry.

**Keywords**

Nature; Pastoral; Duty; Rationality; Isolation; and Imagination.

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Frost puts nature in supreme position in all of his writings. Since he spent most of his life time in New England, we can visualize the influence of this in his descriptions about the pastoral scenes. As a pastoral writer, he does not bind himself to the stereotypical pastoral themes such as sheep and shepherds. But Frost concentrates on the dramatic struggles that affect the real world events such as the conflict of the changing of seasons and the ruining side of nature. “The clouds were low and hairy in the skies, / Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes” (“Once by the Pacific” 5,6). He emphasises that the natural world inspires deep metaphysical thought in the individuals. According to Frost Nature is not only a background for poetry, but it is the soul in his works.

**Communication**

Communication or lack of communication is an important in many of Frost’s poems. He uses this theme only to escape from isolation and loss of hope. According to him communication is very difficult to achieve. For example, in “Home Burial”, he describes two events: the death of a child and the destruction of a marriage. The death of the child is a natural one and it is a tragic movement but the breakup of the marriage is due to the lack of communication between the husband and wife and it causes them grief. Frost expresses this kind of lack of communication by writing his poem in free verse dialogue; each and every character speaks to the reader clearly, but neither is able to understand other. Frost uses a same kind of theme in “Acquainted with the Night”, in this he does not come away from the depression due to the lack of eye contact with those around him. “Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right. / I have been one acquainted with the night” (“Acquainted with the Night” 13, 14). In all these situations, reader knows that the communication

could have saved the characters from isolation. He does not take any effort to make a relationship between the characters, so the characters are doomed.

### **Everyday Life**

Frost is fond of the activities of everyday life, because this is the one of the major signs of humanity and is real. Regular basic activities of life may have many hidden meanings and that can be explored only by the poetic mind. For example, in the poem “Mowing”, the simple act of mowing hay with scythe is transformed into a discussion of the value of hard work and the main custom of the New England people. In his poems Frost argues that by concentrating on reality, the real activities of the real people can be shifted through the proper elements of fantasy and can discover ‘truth’. “To the earnest love that laid the swale in rows, / Not without feeble-pointed spikes of flowers / (Pale orchises), and scared a bright green snake” (“Mowing” 10-12). Frost’s strong belief is that the focus on everyday life is more important to communicate with his readers more clearly; the readers can empathize with the struggles and emotions that are expressed in his poems and come together to a greater understanding of ‘truth’ themselves.

### **Isolation of the Individual**

This theme is also closely related to the theme of communication. Most of the characters in Frost’s poems are isolated characters in any particular way. The characters who do not show any sign of depression or loneliness, such as the narrators in “The Sound of Tress” or “Fire and Ice”, are still away from the rest of the society, due to the peculiar perspective, they were isolated. In many places, the isolation is one of the main decomposing factors. For example, in “The Lockless Door”, the narrator was kept in a cage of isolation for many years and he was terrified.

It went many years,  
But at last came a knock,  
And I thought of the door

With no lock to lock. (“The Lockless Door” 1-4)

This kind of isolation keeps the character from fulfilling his potential as an individual and makes him a prisoner of his own writing. So Frost suggests that this isolation may be avoided by the interactions with the other members of the society; if the character in “The Lockless Door” could have brought the character to come out of the cage and face the society, the character could have achieved a greater level of personal happiness.

### **Duty**

In rural areas of New England, duty is the most important value. So it is not surprising that Frost applies this as one of the major themes in his poetry. He describes conflicts between desire and duty in the way that the two must always be mutually exclusive; in order to support his family, a farmer must acknowledge his responsibilities rather than indulge in his personal desires. This is clearly seen in “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”, while the narrator discloses his intention to stay in the forest and observe the snow continue to fall.

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. (“Stopping by Woods” 13-16)

But he does not reject obligation to his family and his community; he cannot stay in the forest because of his ‘promises to keep’, and so he moves on. Similarly, in “The Sound of Tree” Frost describes the character who wants to follow the advice of the trees and make the strong decision to leave his community. But at the end of the poem, the character does not want to leave his society, because the society serves as the root for him and he has a bond with it.

### **Rationality versus Imagination**

This theme and the theme of duty are nearly the same, but rationality and imagination cannot exist simultaneously. The adults feel rationality as a burden in many of the poems of Frost, but imagination is almost a seductive element to bear in some cases. For example, in 'Birches', the narrator wants to climb a birch tree as he did in his childhood and leave the rational world behind, if for a while.

May no fate wilfully 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. ("Birches" 40-43)

Thus the theme is limited to the years of childhood. In adulthood, life requires rationality and an acceptance of responsibilities are major customs of New England. As a consequence this conflict Frost makes the poem 'Out, Out - even more tragic, describing a young boy who is forced to work at man's job and ultimately dies in the work.

### **Rural Life versus Urban Life**

This theme is related to the themes of nature and everyday life. His life in New England exposed him less complicated and more meaningful than of a city life. The farmers of Frost's poetry have a unique perspective. He is not averse to examining urban life in his poetry, in 'Acquainted with the Night', the narrator is described as live in city. Frost has more chances to find metaphysical meaning in everyday tasks and explore the relationship between mankind and nature the glimpses of rural life in his poetry. Urban life is real, but it lacks the quality and clarity of life that is so fascinating to Frost in his work.

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