

# Responding to "Birches," "Mending Wall," or "After Apple-Picking"

## I. Introduction - Four Quotations & Concepts to Consider about Frost's Poetry

1. In "Education by Poetry," Robert Frost wrote: "Poetry begins in trivial metaphors, pretty metaphors, 'grace' metaphors, and goes on to the profoundest thinking we have."

2. According to critic R.L. Rosenthal, Robert Frost's poetry illustrates "the modern mind in search of its own meaning."

3. The *Poetry Foundation* website says this about Frost's choice of concrete details and the way Frost imbues his details with larger metaphorical dimensions:

"The austere and tragic view of life that emerges in so many of Frost's poems is modulated by his metaphysical use of detail. As Frost portrays him, man might be alone in an ultimately indifferent universe, but he may nevertheless look to the natural world for metaphors for his own condition. Thus, in his search for meaning in the modern world, Frost focuses on those moments when the seen and unseen, the tangible and the spiritual, intersect."

## II. Assignment - Respond to either "Birches," "Mending Wall," or "After Apple-Picking"

1) Choose one of these three longer poems from the packet: either "Birches," "Mending Wall," or "After Apple-Picking."

2) Carefully read your poem multiple times and complete the Four-Step Analysis of it by marking up the poem accordingly.

3) Then write a well-organized response to the prompt below of at least 500 words.

- Be sure to incorporate at least five significant quotations from the poem to illustrate your ideas, and smoothly incorporate all quoted evidence in a way that maintains the clear flow of your ideas.
- Moreover, when you discuss quoted evidence, identify the specific literary techniques involved and the important effects that these techniques create.
- You may structure your written response based on the structure of the poem itself, or you may structure your written response on the 2 parts of the prompt below.

**WRITING PROMPT: In the poem that you chose, how does Robert Frost accomplish both of these tasks:**

**(1) Focus our attention on concrete details and observations about the physical world, and**

**(2) Move our attention and thinking so that the physical details and observations become transformed into metaphors for the human condition, metaphors that reveal "the profoundest thinking we have" about what it means to be human?**

**In other words, how do Frost's chosen details and observations end up becoming a metaphor for a larger and more complex aspect of human life?**

**Moreover, how does Frost's use of imagery, choice of detail, diction, and even figurative language help him accomplish this task?**