

## An Analysis of the theme of "Life and Death" in Robert Frost's "Birches"

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### Abstract :

The purpose of this study is the poem "Birches" written by Robert Frost, describing the author's capability to take what appears to be the monotonous functions of life. After this, the poet changes it into something that grasps a profound meaning of life and death. The main aim of this study is to determine the interrelationship between imagination and reality in the poem "Birches". Robert Frost knows that the curve of birches can be lowered by ice storms, though he it is compassed by some of the energetic pranksters. The main problem regarding this theme of "Life and Death" is that both words are contradictory in manner, and presenting them in juxtaposition is quite challenging. The method used in this study to analyse the theme of "Life and Death" is the psychoanalytic literary criticism theory. This theory stated that the unconscious mind of the author connects him with his childhood experience. It is found that with the use of the selected theory, Birches by Robert Frost interacts with the desire of adults to hide adulthood's reality sometimes by the pleasure of a child's playing. The "author is nostalgic" for the unworried occurrence of "swinging from a birch tree", and experience as though children were capable to find fun in their most boring and leisurely times. It can be concluded that this poem is lyrical overall, yet it has some dramatic turns within its sudden alteration of images and ideas. This poem is full of deep thoughts with the inner feeling of the poet. This poem is full of deep thoughts with the inner feeling of the poet.

**Keywords:** *Childhood, Birch, Imagination, Reality, Life and Death*

### Introduction:

Robert Frost is the most prominent folk philosopher and the most adored nature poet of New England, America. New England or the north of Boston, gives the rural circumstances in which the poet represented the poem. He was born in the year 1874, on 26 March in San Francisco. The poet

takes the most familiar things as the main subject matter of his writings and makes them symbolic as well as suggestive to present the wisdom of the universe. Farming was the avocation of Frost, and poetry was the vocation of his life, as he spends most of his time doing farming. He has written many poems such as Mending Wall, Mowing, and The Pasture. The main theme of this poet's writings is self-knowledge acquired from his childhood experience; his poems mainly involved a moment of encounter or interaction between a natural phenomenon and a human speaker. The author's poems share a common theme, that it is our duty to welcome death and not attempt to question it, as by questioning it our lives might become unnecessary and complicated. Other common themes of his poems are everyday life, isolation, struggles of life, mortality, human love, and New England.

The researcher desired to study the element of life and death through the poem "Birches", by highlighting the purpose of a complicated life, in which burdens have to be there in life though there, is a chance to escape reality through imagination. The poet utilizes several figurative, imagery language, and implications to strengthen this theme.

The poet explores the ability of children to find wonder and joy in daily life through his poem "Birches". The poet mainly admires how a child is capable to find methods of fun even in boring situations (Tillotson & Victoria Thompson p.10-15). The speaker visualizes a boy was swinging from the branch of a tree, who resides too far from a town. It indicates that he can always keep himself amused with his own choices of games. The poem started with the simple scenarios of the Birch trees, which stand on the ground, and build juxtaposition along with other spread trees that are standing tall and straight. This presents normality as well as the monotonous side of daily life activity (Mishra & Rajendra Nath p.20-28). On the other hand, the birch tree presents more exciting and interesting activities, later on described in the poem. The sibilant sounds of these soft lines permits the poet's language as flowing and providing a smooth feel. This may even quietly evoke the branches sound swishing within the wind.

*When I see birches bend to left and right*

*Across the lines of straighter darker trees(1-2 )*

Birches- Poet started the poem with a scene of the birches tree bent right and left, which protrude the encompassing upright trees. The poet wishes to think that the branches of the tree bent this way due to a boy swinging onto their flexible thin branches (Kirk & Connie Ann p.30-38). After saying this, the poet quickly understood his mistake and again stated that swinging from the branches of the tree does not cause them to bend down, like the way ice-storm naturally does.

*As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them*

*Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning*

....

*Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells*

*Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—( 5-10 )*

The first split of the poem happens in line five of the poem. At the time poet stated that the bent of the branches is mainly due to the ice storms not due to the boy. The next lines illustrate vividly the birch trees, with all branches covered with ice in the early morning after the ice storm (Tillotson & Victoria Thompson p.10-15). The poet also stated that this scenic beauty would not stay long, as the sun warms up the ice-enclosed branches and the layers of ice break and “*lastly falls into the snow*”. This is the initial hint of demolition within the poem. These starting lines develop the poet’s iambic pentameter use in the poem that sounds more consistent and bouncy. This also gives the start of the poem a serene feeling which is both musical and lulling. The alliteration used in the poems gives a strong sense, by balancing the sibilant sounds' softness of the inner meanings.

*Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away*

*You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.*

...

*Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair*

*Before them over their heads to dry in the sun (11-19 )*

The second line in the aforesaid stanza anticipates the last line of this poem as well as signals the initiation of a withdrawal from reality. The language which is used in this poem becomes poetical for the first time with this stanza. The poet utilizes a simile, at the time contrasting the bowed of birch trees to the girls and their hair swinging in front of their faces. The branches of birches were weighed by the ice that the branches sink to the scraggly level and unhealthy ferns. They never collapse under the strain, yet they never go back to their righteous position after being bent down for a longer time (Mishra & Rajendra Nath p.20-28). This is the reason passersby will observe such trees bent toward the floor for years. The resemblance of a girl, captive and crouching before her captor is further illustrated.

The adulthood's tedious reality- the poet structures adulthood as stressful bogged down and mundane by responsibilities and everyday struggles (Pack & Robert p. 8-12). This is the reason the author covers childhood's imaginative time when it is quite easier to avoid the hard work of daily life (Oster & Judith p.15-20). The poet also suggested that adult life's humdrum scrap away as they do not pause to cherish the creativity of the world.

*But I was going to say when Truth broke in*

*With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm*

...

*Whose only play was what he found himself,*

*Summer or winter, and could play alone ( 20-26 )*

The poet declines the idea that the ice storm is the reason for lowering down the birch's branches. He wanted to favour the situation of his aforesaid situation where the boy swinging from the branches caused the bending of the branches, despite the fact that he already knows the boy did not do that. The poet used the word "prefer" here in the aforesaid to signify his escape from reality (Pack & Robert p. 8-12). He dismissed the restriction of the external world in relation to his own vision of poetry. Furthermore, this world should significantly have its own constraints, for this reason, it occupies only within its own mind. As such the boy is isolated from other people and likes to play

alone. The poet is ineffectual to avoid reality in commendation of a more whimsical, and exciting worldview. The poet desired to anyhow recover a creative and light-hearted worldview, though there is something existing in the way, the tedious yet inarguable matters of reality.

*One by one he subdued his father's trees*

*By riding them down over and over again*

...

*Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise( 27-34 )*

Within these lines of the poem, the poet goes back to the conquest theme. The boy conquers his father's tree and swings onto them up to he takes the firmness out of them. Triumph of the poetic imagination of Frost over the practical world, for now, the poet's vision has totally displaced the ice storm as the main cause of the present condition of the birch tree (Oster & Judith p.15-20). The boy acquires the skill to get all the way to the tree top by not bending the branches. Childhood nostalgia gives a brief escape from the tedious adult life. It defines that he is accustomed to climbing the tree top and the poet perceivably grasps in these lines.

*To the top branches, climbing carefully*

*With the same pains you use to fill a cup*

...

*Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,*

*Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.(35-39 )*

Aforesaid lines comprise a brief description of the technique of the boy for bending and climbing the trees. He has taken meticulous care to attain the top of every tree, which the poet analyzes in the above poem as the same as the care one should take at the time fill a cup. The poet is here analyzing the restrictions of things to a kingdom beyond reality (Tillotson & Victoria Thompson p.10-15). This is not the inner world of his thoughts yet something greater than that. The clutch of the boy to reach the tree top is the same as the careful creation in writing the poem. The poet constructs the action of the boy in ascending the trees as analogous to his act of generating the poem.

Spirituality, Escape, Life and Death: To an extent, the poet is ready to hug death by expressing a specific desire to leave his life beyond (Mastendino & Alfred Charles p.28-35). After all of this, he also declines heaven's theoretical allure in favour of the earthly life. It stands clear that the poet desired to occur the mystical feeling of being left behind, that death might provide (Oster & Judith p.15-20). He also does not want to despair of the gratification of being alive along with the probability of again experiencing joy, love, and wonder.

*So was I once myself a swinger of birches.*

*And so I dream of going back to be.*

*It's when I'm weary of considerations,*

...

*From a twig's having lashed across it open( 40-46 )*

Robert Frost started this section of the poem with a nostalgic note which describes the desire for uncomplicated childhood days to withstand in sharp divergence with the pain of the present adult world (Pack & Robert p. 8-12). This describes in the poem by the word "*pathless wood*", this part also explains the differentiation between the real worlds with the imaginative world (Berton & Pierre p. 15-20). The birch tree being climbed by the boy is peaceful, imaginary, and playful as an individual can also restructure the world of his dreams (Mishra & Rajendra Nath p.20-28). In the context of the real world, that whipped the poet by making clear that he will not attain any triumph over this.

One of the significant themes of this poem is how the poet utilizes his poetic power to alter the real world's limit (Ruesch & Lora Ann p.30-35). He declines the real causes of the bending down the branches of the birch tree; rather he describes this with his fanciful narration (Pack & Robert p. 8-12). At some point, he stated that his imagination incorporates a huge truth and is a meaningful task; it should be developed with great diligence and care.

*I'd like to get away from earth awhile*

....

*Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:*

*I don't know where it's likely to go better.( 47-56 )*

In the aforesaid lines, the poet constructs the escaping idea into the imaginary world; furthermore, he also stated clearly that he really does not desire to indelibly escape the practical world (Kemp & John p.35-45). He nearly restricts the real world in order to develop the existence of his imaginative world. This is the same theme of Frost's poem contrasts with the poem "*Sunday Morning of Wallace Stevens*". A similar point is that this poet also termed that "*death is the mother of beauty*".

*I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,*

...

*That would be good both going and coming back.*

*One could do worse than be a swinger of birches( 57-62)*

In the last section of the poem, the poet links his ideas along with the poetic image of a birch tree. The tree's motion permits any individual to climb its top only by bending down and gain drop the person back on the floor (Mastendino& Alfred Charles p.28-35). The real world restrictions motivate Forst to construct his poetry, similar to a lucid. The poet desires that no one should misapprehend his wanting to escape from the earth. In the opinion of the poet, the earth is the proper place for spreading love and he does not perceive any better place for this respect (Kemp & John p.35-45). His thoughts will be good for him to come back and go from the earth by swinging.

### **Conclusion:**

From the poem it can be concluded that this poem is lyrical, yet it has some dramatic turns within its sudden alteration of images and ideas. His writing is rich in expression and eloquence, in the mainframe. It can be said that it is a descriptive or narrative poem which is full of fancy as well as fact. It has the ability to mix the imagination and observation. This poem is full of deep thoughts with the inner feeling of the poet.

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