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## Isolation of Individuals in the Poems of Robert Frost

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### **Abstract:**

The present research paper focuses on the isolation of individuals, which is vividly present in some selected poems by Robert Frost. The poet's personal life contributed to mending his overall thinking which results its reflection in his poems. The poems primarily focus, on the theme of individuality and loneliness that the poet had suffered due to the repeated loss of his kith and keens.

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was one of the most famous poets of the 20th century. He was given life in San Francisco, California on March 26, 1874. He is a notable poet. He is considered as a poet, educator, and a man of acuteness. Many Americans perceive his name, titles, and lines from his most popular poems and appraise his face and the sound of his voice. He was awarded with The Pulitzer Prize four times. The period of ten years Frost spent after the death of his granddad was the lone period of his life where he dedicated himself to cultivating and earning some money in school. He had a noteworthy enlightenment on writing, history, science as well as theory. Thus, he can be identified as a classicist of high request. Frost does not depict the circumstances and states of life of current culture. He neither expounds on political and economic issues of his age nor stands off himself from contemporary society. He has focused on scholarly issues in his life more than social activities. Robert Frost is in the

list of poets in English writing that will never become obsolete because poetry reverberates of each delicate man's experiences and limits. The fundamental theme of his poetry is the miserable condition of the man who feels lonely in his life.

**Keywords: Isolation, Nature, Barrier, Individual.**

## INTRODUCTION

Robert Frost is an American poet who made an influential and significant contribution to literature. Though he is enumerated as one of the most popular poets in the world, his personal life was not very joyful. He had faced much suffering. There was a list of constant bodily ailments that had left a lasting mark on the poetry of Frost that were consumption in the family, resulting in the death of his father, the insanity of his daughter Marjorie and his sister Jeanie, the suicide of his only son Carol, the suffering of Carol's wife from consumption, the death of his daughter in childbirth, his difficulties with Elinor who died in 1938 leaving him to lead a lonely life for 25 years.

He has depicted outward events and conditions and the essential spirit of twentieth-century isolation and loneliness. Throughout his poetry, the themes of loneliness and isolation become apparent as a necessary part of his world. As a poet of isolation and communion, Frost depicted that experiencing isolation and loneliness was a part of human life. "For him, the fear of loneliness and isolation is counter-balanced through man's persistent and metaphorical demonstration of difficulties overcome and through his attempts at reconciling himself with his physical surroundings, and the cosmos as a whole" (Mersch).

He talked with rhyme and meter of natural things, and in this manner he measured the profundities of feelings of individual on the whole different backgrounds. Louis Untermeyer

best portrays Frost's work as "poetry that sings and poetry that talks ... his poems are individuals talking".

In portraying a straightforward demonstration of nature and the sincere anguish of individuals, Robert Frost shows an understanding of the sometimes basic examples in the lives that united and established the actual lives. One part of life that contacts everybody becomes demise after the passing of a companion, neighbour, or darling one. A portion of Frost's most delightful work represents the loneliness and this distinct reality of life. Taking all things together in Frost's works, the reader enjoys a profundity and level of human feeling that is not effortlessly observed by the eye but instead felt in the heart. Frost utilizes nature to clarify life at its harshest. Robert Frost focuses on the concern with man. The central stage in his poetry is man's position and disposition, particularly his emotion. He reveals a decent arrangement of his origination of the universe and outer reality in his poetry. The suitable response is found to extent that man is strongly confined as Robert Frost sees him. Man is restricted not only in his scholarly power and his mindfulness but also in comprehension. He has a method of observing this universe. He is an individual in his ideas and his scholarly power. In his life, Frost battled stoutly with both internal and external evil spirits, and out of that battle, he created what many consider to be the most noteworthy work by any American poet of the 20th century. He utilizes conventional structures while investigating current themes of alienation and isolation. Throughout his poetry, the study discovers themes of seasons, variations of night and day, natural phenomena as well as provincial images.

### **Isolation of the Individual:**

This theme is firmly identified with the theme of communication in his poems. Most of the characters in Frost's poems are isolated somehow or others. Indeed, even the characters that do not indicate discouragement or depression, for example, the narrators in "*The Sound of*

*Trees*" or *"Fire and Ice"* are as yet identified as separated from the remainder of society, isolated because of their perspective. Sometimes, isolation is an undeniably dangerous power. As it is studied in *"The Lockless Door"* the narrator has stayed in a "cage" of isolation for such uncountable years that he is too frightened to even consider noting the door when he hears a little smack. This distressed isolation hinders the character from satisfying his potential as an individual and at last makes him a defendant through his effort. However, as Frost recommends, this isolation can be classified as a strategic distance from communications with different citizenry; if the character in *"The Lockless Door"* has been forced to uncage himself to open the door and face an intrusion of his isolation, he might have accomplished a distinguished degree of individual happiness.

It went many years,

But at last came a knock,

And I thought of the door

With no lock to lock.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, there are always psychological barriers and boundaries between man and God, man and his colleague, man and society, and man and himself. Those barriers are fabricated by the man himself, forcing him to be alone and separated physically as well as emotionally. Isolation is further enlarged by fears of being attached or connected to things or people; fears are the real hindrances that formulate isolation. In general, Frost depicts isolation as his ultimate destiny. Frost is inclined to share his experiences of loneliness with his readers; he works alone, walks alone, and lives alone. He aims to represent his identity in the community, as he gives importance to self-sufficiency and individualism by

living a single life. Frost is seen to introspect to his inner self not toward the community, and as a result, he suffers from a great deal of isolation.

Poirier (1977) emphasizes that many poems, like *Mending Wall*, seem to be about nature or backbreaking work, but their meanings go deeper than this. At the surface, “the poem talks about two farmers who keep a wall between their farms despite all circumstances which lead to it falling” (pp. 306-308). One of the farmers is manufacturing the falling wall as he says, “Good fences make good neighbours.” On the other hand, the other farmer questions the need for his boundary between the two neighbouring farms and says, “Why do they make good neighbours?” Indeed, this poem does not simply discuss the importance of a wall between farmers or neighbours. However, it discusses deeply the need to break the barriers separating people, minds, and nations, and it calls for getting rid of these barriers. Despite the dissimilarity in many aspects between people, like nationality, religion, culture, ideology, and race, people still share in their humanity, and barriers should be broken, not built.

Frost’s *Mending Wall* provides some perception of how this world is entire of barriers that separate and isolate people from one another. However, it also highlights the fact that these walls are distorted and tend to fall and it is only people’s desire to be isolated and detached from each other that keeps them in a state of repairing and rebuilding of these weak walls. It is evident, according to Frost in this poem, that maintaining these barriers that separate people is not easy, for despite the many differences among people, there is still a unifying factor that is attentive: our humanity. Yet, people wear themselves in trying to keep these walls up:

“We wear our fingers rough with handling them”

Breaking up barriers lessens the difficulty of going further forward in the relationships, habits, or thoughts, but most people prefer unalterable and keep staying in the same state of isolation. Faradiba Nst (2018) says that Frost in this poem exemplifies a group of isolated

people who get used to being isolated and want to be unbreakable or never want to break down the borders. The poet represents some parts of his isolation and engagement with the farmers who make borders and reconstruct the fallen-down walls (pp. 6-34). Nevertheless, Frost notifies of breaking relationships between people and cutting people off from their surrounding nature. He tries to make them understand that a balanced thought is necessary keeping up some limits between people and breaking the complex barriers that isolate them in total.

The reader is freed to create his world without breaking relations with others and being isolated.

“Something there is that does not love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

He says again, “Good fences make good neighbours”

Frost emphasizes that people have the right to keep boundaries, but not to reject change and be isolated. Another example of isolation in Frost’s poetry is seen in *Desert Places*. Deirdre (2007) states that “*Desert Places* is one of Frost's more horrifying poems because it shows us someone who is existentially alone” (p. 221). The beginning of the poem represents the speaker’s passing through a field where snow buries the weeds and stubble. This stands for the death of some creatures. The gloomy freezing scenes in the poem also constitute the loneliness of the woods and the speaker’s loneliness, and this is seen in empty spaces between stars. The lonely mind of the speaker is related to man’s inner thoughts and fears of ultimate loneliness.

“The woods around it have it-it is theirs.

All animals are smothered in their lairs.

I am too absent-spirited to count;

The loneliness includes me unawares.”

Fagan says that man’s fear of being homeless and alone is due to some natural force. The ‘home’ in this poem is not only a place to live in, but also a sense of being and existing, a sense of not being alone (Fagan, 2007, p.85).

“I have it in me so much nearer home

To scare me with my desert places”

According to this poem, a person has to alter and avoid their own inner ‘desert places’ to overcome stagnation, fear, and isolation. The imagery of the snowstorm reveals lonesomeness familiar to all people, in addition to their ultimate return to recession and depression. The snow falling and the land engulfed are noticed by the speaker by the night; the trees and the animals disappear into the darkness, and this reminds the speaker of his loneliness.

The empty landscape screams of human loneliness. It also depicts the ‘desert places’ of man’s thoughts. We can see that Frost unconsciously brings in some of his own experiences of this particular notion of inner isolated, deserted places into the poem:

“Snow falling and night falling fast, oh, fast

But a few weeds and stubble showing last.

"The woods around it have it –It is theirs

The loneliness includes me unawares.”



Fagan (2007) also states that the speaker sees the absence of life forms around him as the absence of life itself, or the absence of a world around him (p. 221). The speaker feels extreme loneliness and does not know how to cope with it:

“And lonely as it is that loneliness

With no expression, nothing to express”

The speaker intensifies his depression and loneliness by perceiving the falling snow at night and the disappearance of all life forms around him:

“They cannot scare me with their empty spaces

....

To scare me with my desert place”

It is clear that the previous lines depict that the scene around the speaker influences him and this reminds him of his own ‘desert places’. It is claimed by him that the empty spaces around him are nothing contrary to his internal emptiness. According to the poem, isolation is depicted as unpopulated places devoid of human habitation, and the falling snow only serves to increase the speaker's isolation. The everyday use of the word ‘lonely’ puts further stress on the kind of depression created by being alone or isolated.

Another example of self-isolation and solitude is seen in the other poem *The Lockless Door*. The speaker lives alone in a house with a lockless door, and he hears an unpredicted knock; he blows out a lit candle, invoking that no one will come in and interrupt his silent loneliness, and then proceeds to answer hesitantly, “Come in.” The poem takes down the poet's childhood memories: he used to be afraid of the dark, so he would not sleep without his mother.

The poem also recollects this experience, presenting his inner fears and sense of being isolated in the lines:

“I went many years, but at last, came a knock

And I thought of the door with no lock to lock.

Back over the skill I bade a “come in”

To whoever the knock at the door may have been”

Frost uses the word ‘whoever’ to express his feeling of fear of the unknown, the unknown being the origin of his abstract nature of fear. The speaker may choose to leave the house as a result of this simple interruption on the door, but he has still no courage this knock might entail, so he misses out on the opportunity to get out of his isolated situation and refuses to communicate with others to stay alone in his ‘cage.’ He hesitates and tells the knocker to ‘come in’ despite the disconnection between himself and the world outside his house; he tries to be hospitable, knowing full well that he won't meet the person who knocks on the door because he is forced to make contact with others. Because of his mature age, he has to accept others more than himself. The speaker is obliged to respond to the knock on the door, and the person knocking enters the house, thus forcing the speaker to get out of his isolated cage:

“So, at a knock I emptied my cage

To hide in the world and alter with age”

This poem gives us a window through which study reveals the speaker’s psyche, who has a deep, inner fear of coming out of the self-made cage and a state of isolation from being familiar with the outside world. He augments his psychological problem by bubbling himself inside, detached from others. A negative and self-destructive habit of shutting off others due to

aversion is created by loneliness, as the speaker's long years of solitude make it horrifying for him to establish any sort of communication with society. The deficiency of social support, communication, and interaction is immensely mutilating the individuals and their psyche, and this poem presents one example of an individual's psychological dilemmas which manufactures a case of disparity between self-safety and social communication. The poet indicates his self-isolation and his sense of insecurity and danger that is due to the want of communication, which either arises from his personal experiences or from the nature of the society in which he lives.

Another indelible, narrative poem by Frost that illustrates the idea of isolation is *Storm Fear*. It presents the feelings and doubts of a man who tries to conceal himself inside his own home and protect his own family from a storm successfully. In addition, he has a fear of isolation. The poem's beginning describes the windy, dark night which is personified by attacking the speaker's home and family. The family comes out because of the storm which is a perilous proposition; the poem portrays the storm as an enemy who threatens the family's safety, and the speaker and his family must struggle to resist it. The storm, so to speak, is forcing them to get out of their home and their state of isolation from others, and a storm is breaking their boundaries. The study reveals the speaker's fear appears to originate from his fear of walking straight towards his defeat by the dark forces of nature. Juhnke (1964) states that the speaker in his poetry keeps alive the possibility that something more significant than him sustains order and purpose in the universe (pp. 153-164). In *Storm Fear*, Frost tries to highlight the isolation of man away from God and nature, he insists on isolating himself from his sins and fears. However, God or the forces of nature are personified in the poem to try to help him to come out of his isolation; to defeat and overcome his fears. It is also notable that despite the presence of his family, the father still experiences a sense of isolation from them. Nevertheless, he feels that his house and his family are his only world, and he doesn't want

to move away beyond this small world; he doesn't want to tackle nature and the world outside waiting for him. The father tries his best to deter any forces that might endanger the safety of his isolated universe. *Storm Fears* is a poem of complex physical, psychological, and spiritual relationships between man's inner apprehension, the relationship between man and the natural world, as well as the relationship between man and God. The poem also pronounces in a way that combines all of Frost's previously mentioned experiences of isolation, and it invokes the reader to compare and relate their own experiences to those of the poet who expresses everything in the poem.

“When the wind works against us in the dark,

The beast,

“Come out! Come out!”

It costs no Inward struggle not to go,

Ah, no!

Barn grows far away

And my heart owns a doubt

Whether it is in us to raise with day

And save ourselves unaided.”

Thompson (1966) highlights that Frost's poem *Servant to Servants* discusses the theme of isolation. In the poem, the wife of a broken farmer is overworked as if she is a servant to servants. She is the woman whom the poet knew in Northern Vermont, he recollects the memories with her. The woman has to live alone and suffer greatly due to her isolation, hard

work, and lack of appreciation from her husband (p. 352). The overworked woman struggles throughout her difficult working days due to her isolation; she is so exhausted that she cannot communicate with anyone around her, and no one close to her enough can understand her tragic isolation. She has failed to get any real human relationships. The experience of an individual's hopeless struggle to survive is depicted in this poem. She can't feel any beauty of natural scenes around her or get any rest. She is separated from nature and society as a result of her being overworked.

The poet uses the technique of the stream of consciousness by depicting the woman's monologue. She is not able to communicate with the man who arrived at the farm, she moves from one point to another in her mind to make excuses. She always spends days working, and she is unable to be friendly and social with others. The woman narrates her thoughts, which flow through her conscious mind, deriving from her unconscious mind, and relates them to her present situation. She feeds a lot of hungry men and delineates herself as a servant. Involving herself in overloaded work all the time, she lost the desire to communicate with others; she is broken and has no will to break her state of isolation. Throughout her monologue, the woman reveals the lack of an appropriate relationship with her husband, the farmer; she is not able to arouse her husband to take an interest in her and her family life. She doesn't feel any intimate feelings for him anymore, or rather the other way around. There is an inner voice inside her that exhibits her feelings toward her state of isolation. The woman is also seen to be confined in her life; she can't go beyond the limitations of her circumstances. When she tries to cut out the limitations in her relationship with her husband, he is too busy and concerned about his work more than anything else and does not pay heed to her. In serving others, the woman has no sense of self, and by the end, she is not well both physically and psychologically. She is detached from herself and is trying to improve her life despite her lack of power and will. The woman is profoundly alone, and she wants rest and security. She is surrounded by people, but

only a few connect with her. She has anxiety and is isolated from herself, her husband, and the world around her:

“I didn't make you know how glad I was  
To have you come and camp here on our land  
I promised myself to get down some day  
And see the way you lived but I don't know!  
With a houseful of hungry men to feed  
I can't express my feelings, any more  
Kept them at home; and in it does seem more human.  
But it's not so the place is the asylum,  
And you aren't darkening other people's lives  
Worse than no good to them, and they no good”

The poem *The Death of the Hired Man* highlights the isolation and lack of communication between men and women and the outsider world. The lack of communication and isolation sharpen the feeling of alienation between man and man, even between husband and wife. The study reveals different ways in which the husband and the wife in the '*West-Running Brook*' think. The poem highlights the problem of one man's concern for the sorrows and misfortunes of another. There are three characters in the poem- Mary, Warren, and Silas- but the central character, Silas, does not appear throughout the poem. The death of Silas is the centre of action in the poem. Mary is more emotional than Warren, her husband, who is more tied to practical considerations. As the poem opens, Mary is seen, waiting for her husband,

anxious enough to convey the news that "Silas is back". Silas is lethargic, unreliable, and selfish yet also engaging and sometimes lovable. Mary and Warren feel no moral imperative towards him. Warren has no reason to take back the man who again and again has hired himself to work on their farm only to leave them, for his betterment at the time of harvest, when his services were badly needed. Warren does not want Silas to live with them, he thinks that Silas had better go to his own brother instead of coming back to Warren and Mary.

### **Man in Frost's poetry:**

Robert Frost while contemplating man as an individual stresses that he is fundamentally single and alone with his destiny. To him, life counterbalances both the chance of fear and the capability of magnificence. Man should instruct himself to know which is to be and which is not to be. It turns into the endeavour of a man to get himself and his place in this world. This can be accomplished by self-perception and self-examination. Inside the frightfully restricted period of presence, he is destined to resist the progressions that occur in nearly everything around him.

The nature cycles man that there is no unavoidable end, which breaks apart the entirety of his deepest desires. What can't be modified ought to be perceived and acknowledged. Frost emphasizes in acknowledgment, that man should decipher how to bow and admit the 'end'.

Among the different themes in Frost's poems, man's relationship with his colleagues can be identified as an inquisitive enormous one that involves both apartness and fellowship. Frost firmly approves of individualism. Man got inside the limits laid by nature, and endeavours to accomplish with whatever abilities he has been allowed. Frost thinks if man is not isolated, he can be an achiever. This isolation may lead man to both egocentrism and to forlorn franticness. Frost continually being a moderator attempts to accomplish an ideal compromise and relationship between the individual and the gathering.

Frost's perception in regards to man's relationship to man is considered contradicting. For example, *The Turf of Blossoms* discusses the real bond that lies between the individuals exert influence on general fraternity:

Men work together, I told him from the heart,

Whether they work together or apart.

In most of his poems, study reveals Frost's people are quite willing to offer a friendly hand. *A Time to Talk* represents the farmer who accepts and responds to the invitation of his neighbour for a friendly talk, without any inhibitions.

When a friend calls to me from the road

-----

I don't stand still

-----I go up to the stone wall

For a friendly visit.

## CONCLUSION

Frost's selected poems seem simple while reading, but when one starts interpreting them in depth, one finds profound psychological meanings. The concepts of death and isolation are illustrated through his use of terms like dark and cold nights, far away woods, dead people and animals, desert places, and branched roads and empty landscapes, among others. Frost has special compliance to the rural language, yet the language of his poems is rich in psychological complexity; it is full of ambiguity, and imagery to indicate his themes in a matchless style of presenting and employing his poetic language. The topic discussed in this study is similitude



for people's dilemmas of death, isolation, and loneliness found in the selected poems. The poet uses nature metaphorically to show its strong connection to the psychology of humans in society. Frost makes use of nature in an exotic unfavourable way to provide a psychoanalytic representation of isolation from a specific point of view. Furthermore, Frost's dealing with isolation and death has a strong relationship when dealing with his personal experiences.

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