



Robert Frost

(March 26, 1874 – January 29, 1963)

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Robert Frost was a high school teacher, college professor, and world-renowned poet. He was born in San Francisco, California in 1874. When his father died in 1885, he moved with his mother and sister to Lawrence, Massachusetts. Frost published his first poem in his high school's magazine in 1890. He graduated at the head of his class, alongside his co-valedictorian and future wife, Elinor White. Frost sold his first poem, "My Butterfly: An Elegy," in 1892 to the magazine *The Independent* for \$15. He believed this was the beginning of a successful career as a poet. He celebrated by asking Elinor to marry him. She declined, explaining that she wanted to finish college first. Frost himself never completed college, but he did receive many honorary degrees in his lifetime. He and Elinor married after her graduation in 1895.

Despite the early success of "My Butterfly," it was many years before Frost succeeded as a poet. In the meantime, Frost and Elinor taught school and worked on the farm they bought in New Hampshire. Frost had spent much of his early life in California, but he grew to love New England. He was deeply inspired by the countryside and culture of the rural northeast. Although he wrote many of his best poems during his time on the farm, he still could not find a publisher for his work. In 1912, Frost and Elinor sold the farm and moved to England. He hoped to have more luck with English publishers. His plan paid off when his first book was published in 1913. In 1914, World War I broke out. Frost and Elinor decided to leave England. When he returned to America in 1915, Frost finally had a career as a poet. He would continue writing and teaching for the rest of his life.

Considered a regional poet, much of Frost's work is flavored by rural New England. Frost was writing at a time of change in poetry. Traditional poetry used precise meters and rhyme, and formal, flowery language. It often involved heavy themes like love, beauty, or death. Modern poets used free-verse and moved away from rhyming. New poetry had a simpler style and concerned everyday topics. Frost was not like modern poets because he didn't write in free-verse. Still, he wasn't like traditional poets either, because his poetry was written in the informal language of rural New England. He wrote in a conversational style and his themes explored nature and daily life.

In 1924, Frost won his first Pulitzer Prize for his book *New Hampshire*. He went on to win three more Pulitzers over his lifetime. He was also awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1960. In 1961, Frost was asked to read a poem at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy. The following year, he was sent on a diplomatic 'goodwill' mission to the Soviet Union. Frost died a year later from complications after surgery.