

Ch 1.1 - Dust of Snow

Theme

The poem dust of snow tells us about the curative power of nature. Nature has the cure for everything whether it is a bad mood or illness. The poet is going through one such bad day when a crow suddenly shook down on him dust of snow from a hemlock tree. The snow instantly makes him happier.

In the poem "The Dust of Snow" Robert Frost talks about the importance of small things in our lives. These small things can change the attitude of the people at a target level. In the poem, the poet writes about a crow who shakes off the snow dust. The poet wants the readers to learn from the crow and shake off all the miseries and sadness in the same way. Such small imagery which are present around us have a lot to teach us. These images can change the mood of the people as they did to the poem poet in the poem.

Answer the following Questions

1. What is 'dust of snow'? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet's mood changed?

A The 'dust of snow' means the fine particles or flakes of snow. The sudden shower in the form of the dust of snow changed the poet's mood. The poet's mood changed from sad to happy. He felt refreshed and wanted to enjoy the rest of the day.

2. How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.

(i) What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think crow is often mentioned in poems? What image come to your mind when you think of crow?

(ii) Again, what is 'a hemlock tree'? Why doesn't the poet write about more 'beautiful' tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?

(iii) What do the 'crow' and 'hemlock' represent - joy or sorrow? What does the dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for?

A Frost presents nature in a very different manner in the poem,

- (i) Generally, poets take the birds and trees which are known for their beauty and good qualities like peacock, parrot, cuckoo, mynah and trees full of beautiful flowers and fruits, etc. But here Frost has taken a totally different approach. He chose a ~~crow~~ crow, which is not often used in poems. Crow is black in colour with very harsh voice and is believed to be a symbol of bad omen. Thinking of a crow brings very depressing and sorrowful pictures to our mind.
- (ii) A hemlock tree is poisonous plant with small white flowers. The poet, Robert Frost, didn't choose to use an oak, maple or pine tree. Instead, he chose the hemlock tree and left all the beautiful trees present in the world. Actually he did so to present his mood and feelings.
- (iii) The crow and hemlock tree represent sorrow and depression felt by the poet in this materialistic world. The dust of snow is the symbol of natural joy and energy. The dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree means passing through the sad and depressing moments the poet is entering into the time full of joy and optimism.

Answer the following questions

1. What is a "dust of snow"? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet's mood changed?

A "Dust of snow" refers to the tiny particles of snow. The particles are so small that ~~poet~~ poet referred to them as "dust". The poet was in an awful mood when particles of snow had fallen on him. This changed the poet's frame of mind instantly and his day got a lot better.

2. How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.

(i) What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think a crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?

A Birds like sparrow, nightingale and peacock and more than often named in poems. Unlike these birds, crows are often seen as the indicators of doom and fear. They are often used for negative references.

(ii) Again, what is "a hemlock tree"? Why doesn't the poet write about a more 'beautiful' tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?

A Trees are also seen as mighty creatures imparting wisdom as they're too old. They give out oxygen and absorb the carbon dioxide which is connected with absorbing all the negative energy. But there are trees that are poisonous too, like a hemlock tree. The poet does not mention a more 'beautiful' tree such as maple, oak or pine because he wants to indicate a sad scene. Being poisonous, a hemlock tree is considered bad and so, he refers to it.

(iii) What do the 'crow' and 'hemlock' represent - joy or sorrow? What does the dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for?

A Both crow and the hemlock tree represent sorrow. Frost has used both the negative creatures (crow and the hemlock tree) as the carriers of pessimism and strength that transformed his day for the better. By not using birds like sparrow and nightingale and trees like maple, oak or a pine, the poet has tried to break down all the preconceived notions we have about certain agents of nature. He has tried to make us understand that we see the world not as how it is, but as how we want to see it. Thus, the crow sitting and a ~~one~~ hemlock tree together made his day better. The dust of snow stands for joy.