**EXEMPLAR OF AN ANSWER ON THE THEME OF IMAGINATION AND FANTASY- POEM-BIRCHES (10 Marks)**

Robert Frost's poem "Birches" explores the theme of imagination versus the real world through the speaker's reflections on the birch trees and their bending under the weight of ice after a winter storm. This poem is an interplay between the speaker's longing for escape into the world of imagination and the harsh realities of life.

The poem begins with the speaker reminiscing about his childhood when he used to climb birch trees. “I like to think some boy’s been swinging them” symbolises a sense of youthful freedom and imagination, an escape from the constraints of the real world. Frost highlights the idea that childhood is a time when the imagination is more vibrant and when one can escape the troubles of adulthood.

As the poem progresses, the speaker acknowledges the harsh reality of life. He mentions that "ice storms" often bend the birch trees down to stay. ‘Drags to the withered bracken by the load reflects the idea that life is not always idyllic, and the weight of responsibilities and hardships can bring us down. The image of the bent birch trees can be seen as a metaphor for the burdens and pressures of adulthood.

The speaker expresses a desire to escape from the real world when he is ‘weary of considerations’. He describes the act of swinging on the bent birch trees as a way to "get away from earth awhile" and "get back to the real reason why." This suggests that the speaker sees imagination as a means of coping with the challenges of life and finding solace in moments of fantasy.

Ultimately, the poem suggests that while the real world may be filled with hardships and responsibilities, but “Earth is the right place for love.” The speaker acknowledges that the birch trees bend naturally under the weight of ice but also describes how they "straighten themselves up" when the speaker climbs them. This balance between bending and straightening can be seen as a metaphor for finding a middle ground between the demands of reality and the solace of imagination.

The poem suggests that while the real world may be filled with challenges and responsibilities, the human capacity for imagination and the ability to find moments of escape are essential for navigating the complexities of life. With ‘ good both going and coming back’, Frost encourages readers to recognize the value of both worlds and find a balance between them.