

Stopping by woods on a snowy evening by Robert Frost

1. How is 'woods' different from 'forest'?

Answer – A forest comprises of vast expanses of diverse vegetation, water bodies, and multitudes of living creatures that thrive in it. Woods on the other hand implies a small stretch of trees that can easily be owned by a private entity. The woods are smaller in scale compared to forests.

2. Where does the rider stop?

Answer – In the hours past twilight, the rider, mounted atop the back of his horse, was pacing swiftly along the solitary trails of some woods when he felt the urge to stop and look around his surroundings.

3. Why does he stop?

Answer – The speaker held fascination for the natural. He was enchanted by the tempting ambience created by the uncountable flakes falling off the sky en-route to his destination. The insurmountable pull towards the serenity of that environment overpowered his instinct to march ahead without break.

4. "He will not see me stopping here" – what does this expression mean ?

Answer – The speaker was familiar with the woods where he had stopped by. He was aware about the ownership of that landmass. He also knew that the owner was the resident of a village nearby and wasn't presently in his vicinity. As such, he was certain that his trespassing would go unnoticed by the owner.

5. Why does the horse give his harness bells a shake?

Answer – The sudden interruption in travel appears to have taken the horse by surprise. As he glances around, he finds himself in the middle of nowhere. He is bewildered at his master's strange decision to stop there in such ghastly weather without any shelter nearby. Thus, he gives his harness bells a shake to make the speaker aware of his feelings.

6. What is 'the only other sound' besides that of harness bells?

Answer – No other soul was present in the woods that evening besides the author and his horse. The site was experiencing snowfall as it happened to be the peak of winter at that time. Heavy winds accompanied the snowfall and as gusts of wind swirled past them, the friction of air particles generated the sound that the speaker talks about.

7. Why does the poet use the expressions "dark", "deep", "darkest"?

Answer – The poet is enamoured of the beauty of the woods that are dark and deep. It means that there are surplus sources of entertainment in this world that can bestow varying depths of gratification upon us. The term 'darkest' can be viewed as a reference to the extent of pleasantness he was able to experience that evening. As he became still and observant, his consciousness connected with nature, evoking the pinnacles of pleasing sensations within him.

8. How do the speaker, the owner of the woods and the horse react to the beauties of nature?

Answer – The author is highly receptive to the treasures that nature beholds for humans. He doesn't mind deviating from his goal for a while to encapsulate the surrounding beauty. The owner likely doesn't heed the woods he owns and perhaps, is blinded towards the beauty it possesses. The non-human horse needs to be approached differently. It is oblivious of the reason behind the break in his journey. Unlike the author, it is completely naked and exposed to the harsh weather. It probably wishes to reach its shelter at the soonest possible to get respite from the cold. It doesn't seem to be in a frame of mind to cherish the nature.

9. What picture of natural beauty do you get from the poem?

Answer – The poem depicts a beautiful evening in the woods near a remote village. Thick sheets of snow adorn the ground and while flakes resembling diamonds fall off the dark night sky creating a mystical atmosphere. The contrast of black and white are seen eliciting emotions of pure bliss in the heart of the observer.

10. In the final stanza, the speaker says that he is not yet ready to “sleep”. What has he to do before he can take rest?

Answer – On the surface, it means that he can’t afford to rest as he hasn’t reached his destination yet. But the line encompasses a much greater meaning if we observe closer. The speaker is representative of every individual on this planet. The horse, his ride, refers to the limited amounts of time we have to ourselves in our lifespan. ‘Miles to go’ means having dogged determination to overcome all obstacles that come our way without giving in. ‘Sleep’ means death, the ultimate rest. The poet wishes to tirelessly strive for the completion of his goals before departing from this mortal world.

11. What does the expression, “The darkest evening of the year”, suggest ? Does it mean ‘the longest night of the year’ or ‘ the most depressing state of his mind’ ? Give a reasoned answer.

Answer – It means ‘the longest night of the year’ as it happened to be winter solstice or peak winter in the location mentioned in the poem. The daytime gets shorter in the winters for the scantiness of sun rays and the period of nighttime grows.