**Out, Out Deconstruction**

Questions

1. Summarize the narrative of the poem.
2. Describe the narrative voice used in the poem. Consider the one use of the first person pronoun “I”.
3. What is the historical/geographic setting of the poem and how does this link to the event in the poem?
4. Describe the poems atmosphere.
5. Explain the personification of the saw.
6. What is the significance of the poems title and how does it link thematically to the poem?
7. How does Frost effectively reveal the fragility of life in this poem? Identify FOUR techniques/quotations with explanation/analysis.
8. What is your personal response to the poem? Write a paragraph, using some analysis about HOW this poem impacted upon you.

Answers

1. The poem is about a boy in a farmyard, who is chopping wood on a buzz saw at sunset. He is distracted by his sister and severs his hand on the saw. A doctor is called and he is put into the ether, but he dies, and everyone moves on with their lives.
2. The voice is very descriptive with use of literary techniques throughout the poem, but it is void of most emotion. The use of “I” is at a particularly confronting part of the poem, where the narrator wishes the events were different. It is through this single use of emotion - in contrast to the recount style of the rest of the poem - that Frost gives readers an insight into the feelings of the events to come.
3. The poem is set in a rural farm outside of Vermont. It is in a time before effective medicine, where injuries like the loss of a limb were often fatal. The death of the boy in the poem was partially due to the rural nature of the setting, meaning the doctor took long to get there, as well as to the primitive medicine and practices they would have unsuccessfully used to help the boy.
4. The poem has a peaceful rural atmosphere, which is promptly interrupted by the eventful nature of the injury. It then becomes detached and dark, before reflecting how the people moved on after the death.
5. The saw is personified to be like a wild animal, with the narrator mentioning how it “snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled” in the yard. He also talks of how the saw “leaped out at the boy’s hand”, which shows the animalistic nature and the speed of the accident.
6. The title refers to the fragility of human life, and also to how the characters in the poem moved on after the boy’s death. It refers to how the boy left this world as well. It is links to the theme of short-lived grief, and how quickly human lives can be lost.
7. He reveals fragility of life through literary techniques such as litotes. Frost, when talking about the boy’s death, says “-and that ended it”. The short sentence refers to how quickly human lives can be lost. He also uses caesura to emphasise the abruptness of the incident. His reference to “ashes to ashes, dust to dust” indicated how we all revert back to dust, and life is short lived and part of something we can’t control i.e. time. The iambic pentameter of the poem is linked to the rhythm of human life, mimicking a heartbeat, and the fragility of life is brought to life when he interrupts the meter, “Don’t let him sister!”