Joyce Kilmer wrote the most famous poem about trees, copied below. It first appeared in print in 1913, *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse*, the oldest monthly magazine devoted to verse in the English-speaking world. When the U.S. entered World War I in 1917, he enlisted in the U.S. army, at the age of 30. According to military records, Kilmer died on the battlefield near Muercy Farm, beside the Ourcq River near the village of [Seringes-et-Nesles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seringes-et-Nesles), in France, on July 30, 1918 at the age of 31 (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joyce_Kilmer>). He left behind a wife and five children.



**Trees**

I think that I shall never see

A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest

Against the earth’s sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,

And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear

A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;

Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,

But only God can make a tree.

It’s beautiful and sentimental, as was lots of Kilmer’s poetry, but some people parodied it. Ogden Nash, that famous author of humorous poetry, wrote the little poem to the right.

**Song of the Open Road**

I think that I shall never see  
A billboard lovely as a tree  
Indeed, unless the billboards fall  
I'll never see a tree at all.

Ogden Nash

The poem that Gries learned as a kid appears below. A little searching on the internet uncovered the fact that it is a modification of a poem written by William Carlos Williams in “The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: 1909-1939”. Gries likes his version better than the original.

Of all the things I hadda be  
I hadda be a lousy tree.

A tree who lifts his arms to pray  
In hopes the dogs will go away.

A nest of robins I do wear,  
And what they do gets in my hair.

That’s all I am, alack, alas  
A comfort station in the grass.