



1. What is the central idea of the poem ‘Fire and Ice’?

The poet has tried to bring the difference between the fire and the ice, which represent two different kinds of people. According to the poet, the world can perish by fire and also by ice. Thus it can perish twice- one by fire and then by ice. The poet feels that the ice of hatred is as powerful as the fire of desire to bring complete end of this world.

2. What is the Theme of the Poem "Fire and Ice"?

There are several themes in the poem "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost, including fear, love, hate and choices. The poem is packed with numerous emotions, such as humor, want, animosity and bluntness, and it leaves the reader with an ambiguous response to the choices presented. Frost equates fire with desire, a burning force that originates out of love and is equally destructive as ice, which he presents as similar to hate. In addition, Frost seems to feel no fear while referring to a daring question of how the world will end. He even finds humor and detachment in relating the different methods in which the world could be destroyed, further increasing the impact of the underlying message. In the end, the poem leaves the reader guessing as to which choice, fire or ice, is a better mode of destruction of the Earth, as they are both equally damaging.

3. What message does the poet give to the reader?

Once Robert Frost claimed, “my poem begins in delight but ends in wisdom”. The present poem echoes the above statement. In this poem, the poet considers the age-old question whether the world will end in fire or in ice. It is quite interesting that the poet does not give his own opinion in this regard. It is meaningless to ask which one is stronger as we know both of them are equally harmful to the world. We can associate fire with lust, greed, avarice and intolerance whereas ice can be associated with hatred and indifference. The fire of lust and greed gets publicity but the coldness of hatred is also dangerous as it is a silent killer. All of such black sides of human nature can obstruct the progress of human civilization.

4. Write a brief note on how Frost deals with the theme in his poems.

The poetic themes in Frost are beaten track but his handling of them is unique. To Frost, the incident is not so important but he gives importance to its dramatic possibilities. Truth for Frost is not a philosophical concept rather it is a rational observation of facts and their representation in a direct way with intimacy. This is why there is so little of philosophy in Frost and so much of wit and wisdom. The poet leads his reader towards wisdom by giving him some pleasure at the very outset.

5. Comment on the ending of the poem.

The ending of the poem implies that ice has also the power to bring about the destruction of the world. So we should not bother about the matter that which one of the two (fire and ice) is stronger rather, we should keep in mind that both of them have destructive power. We should not ignore the potential power of ice which is equally harmful.

6. “But if it had to perish twice”

Why does the poet use ‘if’ in the above quotation?

Nobody knows whether the world will end in fire or in ice. But the idea of the destruction of the world twice is somewhat complicated. The poet does not believe that the world will end twice. That’s why the poet expresses his suspicion by using the term ‘if’.

7. Is the poet’s personal view regarding the end of the world clear enough?

The poet in the present poem represents the dominant views regarding the probable causes of the destruction of the world. It may end either in fire or in ice. In other words, both of them have the power to ruin the world. But the poet does not give his own stand in this regard rather he leaves the question unanswered.

8. “I think I know enough of hate.” What does the speaker know about hate?

The speaker in the above line says that he knows enough of hate, but we are not told he has first-hand knowledge about hate or he experiences it at a distance. But the poet’s intuitive power reminds him it is no less dangerous than the fire of lust, greed, hatred. It can also play a trick upon anybody as it a silent killer.

7. Read the extracts given below and answer the questions that follow-

Some say the world will end in fire

Some say in ice.

From what I’ve tasted of desire

I hold with those who favour fire.

(a) What do people think of the world?

(b) What is the poet’s opinion about the world?

(c) Which two things will destroy the world?

(d) What is the prediction of the people about how the world will come to an end?

Ans. (a) The world will be destroyed with fire and ice.

(b) The poet thinks that we should check our growing desires and love our fellow-beings.

(c) Hatred and Desire.

(d) Some people say that the world will come to an end in a fire while others say it will come to an end in ice.

But if it had to perish twice,

I think I know enough of hate

*To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.*

- (a) Why does the poet feel that 'ice' is also great for destruction?
- (b) What is the rhyme scheme of this stanza of the poem?
- (c) The two things that the poet thinks are good enough for destruction are
- (d) What does 'it' stand for in the first line?

Ans. (a) Ice equates with 'hatred', which is enough to destroy the world.

(b) a b a b a.

(c) fire and ice which means 'hatred' and 'desire'

(d) 'it' here stands for the world.

VERY SHORT ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q.1, What is 'fire' a symbol of?

Ans. 'Fire' is a symbol of lust and endless desires.

Q.2. What is 'Ice' a symbol of?

Ans. 'Ice' is a symbol of hatred.

Q..3. What will fire do to the world?

Ans. Fire will put the world to an end.

Q.4. What will the world end in?

Ans. The world will end in fire as well as ice.

Q.5. Why does the poet hold with those who favour fire?

Ans. The poet holds with those who favour fire because the lust for material things is increasing.

Q.6. Why do some people say that the world will end in ice?

Ans. They say so because hatred among people is increasing.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

1. What will the world end in?

(A) fire

(B) ice

(C) both (A) and (B)

(D) none of the above

Ans. (C) both (A) and (B)

2. What does violent desire refer to?

(A) fire

(B) ice.

(C) both (A) and (B)

(D) none of the above

Ans. (A) fire

3. What does 'ice' symbolizes?

(A) love

(B) hatred

(C) violent desire

(D) all of the above

Ans. (B) hatred

4. What do some people think, the world will end in?

(A) fire

(B) sun

(C) moon

(D) rain

Ans. (A) fire

5. What does the poet think, the world will end in?

(A) love

(B) ice

(C) both

(D) none of the above

Ans. (B) ice

6. Can hatred destroy the world?

(A) yes

(B) no

(C) maybe

(D) may not be

Ans. (A) yes

7. According to Robert Frost, what will end one day

(A) fire

(B) ice

(C) both (A) and (B)

(D) the world

Ans. (D) the world

8. Who is the poet of the poem 'Fire and Ice'?

(A) Robert Frost

(B) William Cowper

(C) Ben Jonson

(D) William Blake

Ans. (A) Robert Frost

Summary of Fire and Ice - Robert Frost

The poem 'Fire and Ice' is composed by Robert Frost. The poet talks about the two different beliefs regarding the end of this world. He says that he is in the favor of those who say this world will end in fire as he has seen the effect and result of uncontrolled and unbending desires.

He finds the human desires the same as a fire in its nature. On the other hand, the second belief tells that ice is sufficient for destroying this world and the poet compares the nature of ice with hatred.

As ice can make a part of body numb with its prolonged contact like hatred can also give numbness to our mind and thoughts and make us insensitive and cruel.

The poem has been written symbolically. The poet says that there are mainly two opinions about the end of this world. One by fire and another by ice. The symbols 'Fire' and 'Ice' have been used for human emotions like desire and hatred respectively.

As fire can spread very fast and cause great destruction in no time likewise our desires may also prove very destructive if they go out of control. Hatred causes slow destruction like ice but it is also very harmful.

RHYME SCHEME- ABA ABC BCB

FOR LITERARY DEVICES CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW

<https://ncerttutorials.com/poem-fire-and-ice-poetic-devices-class-10-english-cbse/>

LINE BY LINE EXPLANATION OF THE POEM-

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.*

These first few lines describe the disagreement in general society on the topic of how the world ends. In a modern sense, “fire” and “ice” could well be stand-ins for “nuclear disaster” and “climate change.” Frost’s use of “fire” and “ice,” however, is largely a metaphoric decision that opens the poem up to different kinds of interpretation. Ice and fire, of course, are opposites of one another, suggesting that most people have entirely opposing views on the apocalypse — after all, the world can’t end in ice and fire at the same time. Ice and fire also represent two extremes which, on a grand enough scale, could cause immense damage, and are fitting metaphors for harbingers of death.

**From what I’ve tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.**

Here the speaker provides their own opinion — they equate fire with desire, which is to suggest that it is equal with passions, with greed, with rage. Fire is being used as a metaphor for strong, consuming emotions such as desire. It is a fitting analogy — in a candle or a fireplace, fire shows a person the way. It is warmth and light. In the same way, small desires are no trouble at all and can guide a person to the things they want in life. On a large scale, however, fire consumes and destroys, and so too does desire. The speaker recalls their experiences with a strong desire and tends to believe that it is those kinds of emotions and impulses that lead the world down its irrevocable path. For the speaker, the world will end in fire.

**But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.**

As a close opposite to the burning desires the speaker sees as being so dangerous, the ice is also a concern in their mind. They believe the world will burn, in one form or the other, and that would end it — but if it didn’t end, and the fire wasn’t enough, the remainder of the poem says, then they believe the ice could manage the feat as well. As an opposite to a burning flame, a chilling sheen of ice represents hatred to the speaker. They think of it as something that would chill the world, slow it down, and isolate each individual enough that the human race simply couldn’t survive it. The potential for ice “would suffice,” and even though they tend to believe in the destructive power of desire, they see no reason to believe that hate couldn’t end the world just as easily.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS-

1. How does the poem depicts the two contrasting ideas— ‘Fire’ and ‘Ice’? Can hatred destroy us and the world? Explain bringing out values which can make this world a better place to live in.

Answer: (i) In this poem, Robert Frost refers to two contrasting ideas—Fire and Ice as predictions of how the world will end. According to him, some people say that the world will end in a fire while some others hold that this will end in ice. The poet equates desire with fire and hatred with ice. Both the desire and hatred are growing with such a rapid speed that the world will come to an end either of the ways.

(ii) Yes, hatred can destroy us and the world. Intolerance in behaviour creates hatred that leads to fury and cruelty. One becomes hard-hearted and insensitive to the feelings of others.

(iii) Love, brotherhood, tolerance, peace, contentment, sensitivity, benevolence, generosity among people can make this world a better place to live in.

2. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem?

Answer: The rhyme scheme of the poem in the first stanza is a, b; a band in the second stanza it is – ABA ABC BCB

The lines ending with the same rhythm have the same idea but the line that ends with a different note has the contrasting idea. In the first stanza, the first, third and fourth lines end with the words fire, desire, fire – same rhythm but the second line ends with the word ‘ice’, a different note, also it contrasts with ‘fire’.

Thus the poet has brought out the contrasting ideas in the poem by using different rhythms.

3. There are many ideas about how this world will come to an ‘end’. What are they? Do you agree with the poet and his understanding of the poet and his understanding of the issue in this regard?

Answer: Almost all think that this world will end at one time or the other. It is true that everything that has a beginning or origin will come to an end too. There are many ideas about how this world will come to an end. Some think that ‘fire’ will be the cause of the ‘end’ of the world. Others believe that ‘ice’ will bring the end of the world. Both of these ideas have their valid reasons. The poet sides and stands with those who believe that ‘fire’ will be the cause of the ‘end’.

The poet is well aware of how the ‘fire’ of unbridled passions, desires, lust, and fury can lead to the destruction of humanity and the world. But the other view is equally convincing. Cold and ‘icy’ reasoning can create insensitivity, rigidity, frigidity, and indifference in man. Ultimately, it breeds ‘hatred’ and contempt. This kind of ‘icy’ reasoning which is devoid of all human warmth, sympathy, love, and understanding will only bring destruction and death of this world. I believe that both ‘fire’ and ‘ice’ have strong potentialities to bring disasters and destruction to the world.

4. What do the metaphors of ‘ice’ and ‘fire’ convey to the readers? Don’t they represent the two extremes of human behaviour that can lead to the destruction and death of this world? What is the message that the poet wants to give to the readers?

Answer: The poet has touched the universal issue of the ending of this existing world. He gives a message as well as a warning to human beings. Man is swaying between two extremes — ‘fire’ and ‘ice’. Sometimes he is torn by his unbridled fire of passions, desires, lusts, longings, and fury. This results in greed, avarice and passionate love. All such extremes can lead to unavoidable conflicts and disasters. If not controlled, they can help in bringing an early end of this world.

The other extreme behaviour of human beings is born out of cold and ‘icy’ reasoning. When our cold reasoning becomes completely devoid of human warmth, feelings, love, and sympathy, it breeds hatred. Hatred born out of cold indifference, insensitivity and rigidity are strong enough to cause the end of this world. Humanity can redeem itself and possibly save or delay the end of the world by giving up such extremes of thinking and behaviour.

EXTRA QUESTIONS-

How does Robert Frost caution the common man?

Answer:

Man is selfish, avaricious, lustful, indifferent and hateful. Robert Frost cautions the common man and says that he should not forget the bitter reality that everything in this world is transitory and death is inevitable.

Why does the poet hold with those who favour fire?

Answer:

The poet takes side with those who believe that the world will be destroyed by fire. Frost connects fire with desire. According to the poet, desire is powerful and would be a quick end. Moreover, the fact that he has had personal experience with desire leads him to first conclude that the world will end in fire.

‘But if it had to perish twice’. How will the world perish twice?

Answer:

According to the poet, the world will end due to the ‘fire’, which symbolises desire. But if the world had to end twice then it will be due to the hatred symbolised by ‘ice’. The poet feels that there is enough hatred in the world that is spreading among the people. This hatred will end the world one day.

To say that for destruction ice is also great for the poet, what does ‘ice’ stand for? How is it sufficient to bring destruction?

Answer:

‘Ice’ symbolises hatred. Hate is just as powerful as desire. While desire consumes quickly, hate can occur and linger in people’s minds and hearts for years and sometimes even lifetimes. Hate consumes the hater perhaps even more than the person or group hated and it can ruin lives. Hate can, thus, be very destructive and sufficient to bring destruction.