

## STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Robert Frost

*ROBERT FROST (1874 -1963), often called the 'New England Poet', was born in San Francisco but moved at an early age to New England on the East coast. Returning to the States he devoted himself to poetry and teaching. He also worked as a newspaper editor, cobbler and farmer. His poems describe ordinary people and simple settings in a very simple and lucid language, but his apparently simple themes often contain complex meanings. He bears a close resemblance to Wordsworth in his love for nature. His works include A Boy's Will (1913), North of Boston (1914), Mountain Interval (1916), New Hampshire (1923), West-Running Brook (1928), and A Further Range (1936). Frost won numerous awards, including two Pulitzer Prizes, and by the time he delivered his poem 'The Gift Outright' at the inauguration of President John F Kennedy in 1961, he had achieved the status of unofficial poet laureate of America.*



**A. Work in small groups and discuss the following:**

1. You are going somewhere for a very important work. On the way you come across a beautiful landscape. You wish you could spend a day or two there. What would you choose - the landscape or the work?

### STOPPING BY WOODS ON A SNOWY EVENING

Whose woods these are I think I know,  
His house is in the village though,  
He will not see me stopping here,  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.



My little horse must think it **queer**  
 To stop without a **farmhouse** near  
 Between the woods and frozen lake  
 The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his **harness bells** a shake  
 To ask if there is some mistake  
 The only other sounds the **sweep**  
 Of easy wind and **downy flake**.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
 But I have **promises** to keep,  
 And miles to go before I sleep,  
 And miles to go before I sleep.



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**B.1.1 Write T for true and F for false statement :**

- (i) The speaker is passing through a jungle.
- (ii) The speaker is riding a horse.
- (iii) He sees a farmhouse in the jungle.
- (iv) He certainly knows the owner of the jungle.
- (v) It is snowing.
- (vi) The speaker is riding the horse in the morning.
- (vii) The speaker shakes the harness bell.
- (viii) The wind is blowing hard.
- (ix) The horse is very big.

**B.1.2. Answer the following questions briefly :**

1. Why does the horse find the situation strange?
2. The speaker refers to the owner of the woods in the opening stanza. Who does the owner stand for here?
3. Does the speaker like the scene? Which words or phrases suggest this?
4. How many times does the speaker use the word 'woods'? Which adjectives does he use for woods?
5. What does 'sleep' mean in this poem?
6. Which promises is the speaker talking about?
7. What does 'And miles to go before I sleep' suggest?
8. Find out the rhyme scheme of the poem.
9. Which words evoke the sense of sound? Make a list of such words.



**GLOSSARY AND NOTES**

**woods** (n): forest, jungle

**queer** (adj): strange, perplexing

**farmhouse** (n): cottage

**harness bells** (n): bells hanging from saddles

**sweep** (n): soft clear sound suggesting the continuous motion of the wind

**downy** (adj): soft, feathery, fluffy

**flake** (n.) fleck, snowflake

**promises** (n): responsibility, task, mission

**C. 1. LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS**

1. Does the horse in the poem suggest anything about the speaker? What and how?
2. What function does the repetition in the last two lines of the poem serve?
3. What does 'harness bell' suggest here?
4. 'The woods are lovely, dark and deep'. Explain.
5. The path of life abounds in temptations of every sort; you cannot carry out your mission unless you overcome these temptations. Do you agree? Illustrate with examples.
6. If you have to choose between worldly pleasures and the goal of your life, what will you choose? Why? Give reasons.

**C. 2. GROUP DISCUSSION**

Discuss the following in **groups** or **pairs**:

- a. Resolution and determination lead us to our goal but deprive us of worldly pleasures. Do you agree? Give examples in favour of your arguments.
- b. Can work and pleasure go together? Why or why not? If yes, how?

**C. 3. COMPOSITION**

Expand the ideas contained in the following in about 100 words:

- a. Work is worship
- b. The world is too much with us

**D. GRAMMAR****E. ACTIVITIES**

1. Try to compose a poem in six lines on your experience of a beautiful evening. Read it aloud to your friends and ask for their comments.
2. Organise an inter - section debate on: 'Pleasure is entirely subjective interpretation'

Request your teacher to preside over the function.