

Robert Frost

Robert Lee Frost was one of America's best-known and best-loved poets. He was born on March 26, 1874, in San Francisco, California. His father was a journalist. His mother, who was Scottish, was a schoolteacher. She loved poetry and sometimes recited it to Robert and his sister.

When Robert's father died in 1885, the family went to live with Frost relatives in Lawrence, Massachusetts. They moved to Salem, New Hampshire, when Robert's mother began teaching school there. Robert went to his mother's school and then to Lawrence High School. His first poetry was published in the Lawrence High School Bulletin. Robert and his high-school sweetheart, Elinor Miriam White, were at the head of their class when they graduated in 1892. They both gave valedictory speeches at graduation, and Robert wrote the words for the class hymn.

Robert was given a fellowship for Dartmouth College, but he found he did not like the routine of college life. After a few months he returned home. He helped his mother at school and worked in a mill. His first poem published professionally was "My Butterfly," printed in the weekly newspaper *The Independent* in 1894.

Robert and Elinor were married in 1895, and both taught in the private school Robert's mother had just started. A child, Elliott, was born in 1896. The next year Robert entered Harvard, planning to earn his teacher's certificate. In his sophomore year he became ill and left college. A second child, Lesley, was born in 1899. Elliott died in 1900.

Elinor persuaded Robert's grandfather to buy a farm for them in Derry, New Hampshire, where Robert could write poetry. After three more children were born, Robert began teaching part time at Pinkerton Academy. He also taught for a year at the New Hampshire Normal School in Plymouth. Then he made an important decision. He would leave teaching in order to have more time to himself. He and his wife also wanted to travel. Robert chose Vancouver, and Elinor chose England. They tossed a coin, and England won. So in 1912 Robert Frost took his family to England.

A Boy's Will was published in London in 1913. *North of Boston* followed a year later. Both books were given very good reviews. Edward Thomas, whose review in the *London Daily News* was most important in pointing out Frost's worth, became the closest friend Frost ever had. They spent long hours walking and talking together in England.

The Frosts returned to America in 1915 and bought a farm near Franconia, New Hampshire. American editions of Frost's first two books appeared in 1915, and in 1916 *Mountain Interval* was published. Frost was invited to read and lecture in schools and colleges. In 1917 he began teaching at Amherst College. In 1920 he helped found the Bread Loaf School of English at Middlebury College. In 1921 he became poet in residence at the University of Michigan. All the rest of his life he was to keep in close touch with college students, either as teacher or as visiting poet. He received honorary degrees in 1924 from Yale University and Middlebury College. Many more followed. That same year he received the first of his four Pulitzer prizes for poetry.

In 1938 Elinor Frost died. Frost sold the house in Amherst, Massachusetts, where they had most recently been living and a year later moved to Boston. For the next 3 years he taught at Harvard as the Ralph Waldo Emerson Fellow in Poetry. He bought a house in Cambridge and a farm in Ripton, Vermont. Many visitors came to see him, and he had many invitations to read his poetry. His description of a

poem—"it begins in delight and ends in wisdom"—describes his talk, too. He wrote and spoke in simple language with quiet humor, yet he was wise in the ways of the world.

Robert Frost died on January 29, 1963. At the time of his death he had 11 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren. His farm home at Ripton, Vermont, was bought in 1966 by Middlebury College to be kept as a memorial to the great poet.

Directions:

1. Read the biography of Robert Frost two times. Don't worry if you don't understand it all, just read it two times slowly.
2. Write down three things you learned from the parts that made sense:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
3. Circle all the words that you did not understand in the whole biography.
4. Make your best guess using details from the text. Where do you think Frost might have gotten the idea to write a poem about stopping by woods while riding a horse on a dark evening?

Write your answer below: