



Language Arts



Earth Day: Every
Day for Everybody



Below is a short poem by Robert Frost along with some discussion questions to get your students interested in doing close readings of literature. The poem was first published in 1923.

Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening **--Robert Frost**

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 sound's 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.

Suggestions for discussion questions:

1. Why does Frost repeat the last line?
2. Is there a paradox in the woods being both “lovely” and “dark and deep” (line 13)? What does this suggest about the woods?
3. Much of the language in this poem deals with secrecy: the owner of the land will not see the pausing traveler; it is the “darkest evening of the year”; and the woods are “dark and deep”. Combined with the bewilderment of the man’s horse and the



unknown “promises” he has to keep, this all seems to give the poem an eerie feeling. Should we believe that the traveler has stopped in the woods for a specific reason or is he merely enjoying the quiet of the night?

4. Compare and contrast the eeriness described in the previous question with the calming language Frost also uses, such as when he talks about the “easy wind and downy flake”, and the quiet that is only broken by the horse’s bells. Might we call the tone, as Wordsworth does in “Tintern Abbey”, the “still, sad music of humanity”?
5. Have you ever stopped to listen to the woods on a snowy evening? Does Frost do a good job of describing what it is like? What would you add to the description?

