

poetry perfect



knowing that we all experience times of depression and loneliness.

Another poem that I find very easy to identify with is *The Road Not Taken*, which was also written in 1916. Here the poet speaks about how two different roads opened up before him and how he would have liked to have travelled both: “And sorry I could not travel both/And be one traveller.” I find this appealing as there are many choices in life that I would like to pursue, and many times I am confronted with the dilemma about which road to choose.

Frost maintains a balanced structure in this very clever poem. He writes four stanzas all equal in length. I think that the technique here is very effective, as Frost seems to be outlining that both roads contain equal possibilities for progress. Again, as in all of his poems, nature forms the dominant backdrop. Here, Frost skilfully uses nature on a symbolic level. The autumnal setting gives the poem a mature feel. The speaker is writing the poem in the past tense, having presumably made his choices: “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood . . . and I - I took the one less travelled by, And that has made all the difference.” Both the tone and the structure certainly convey the impact that the speaker was pleased with the choice he made.

One of Frost’s poems, *The Tuft of Flowers*, was written in 1913 and described by himself as reflecting “my position between socialism and individualism”. I find a great honesty in all his writings, whether he is speaking about his own depression and bleakness of spirit or whether he is rejoicing in the world of nature. Here, in this lovely nature lyric,

Frost writes a wonderful allegory almost of the position of the modern poet. Frost describes how he sets out to “turn the grass” only to find that someone else has been there already before him. The speaker in the poem looks for the mysterious mower who has suddenly disappeared. Then unexpectedly “a bewildered butterfly” stumbles on the scene. The speaker has a sudden moment of epiphany when he beholds the sight of flowers that were left untouched: “A leaping tongue of bloom the scythe had spared . . .” This leads the speaker to the realisation that he is no longer alone, that somehow or another he is linked to this enigmatic mower: “And felt a spirit kindred to my own; So that henceforth I worked no more alone.” From an ordinary everyday experience Frost has moved to an appreciation of the need for fellowship in his life: “‘Men work together,’ I told him from the heart,/ Whether they work together or apart.”

There is no doubt that all of Frost’s work serves to inspire a reader about the wonders and power of nature. Where the poem *Acquainted with the Night* opens and closes in darkness, *The Tuft of Flowers* highlights how joy can return to the poet’s soul through work and companionship with other people. This topic of solidarity with humankind certainly helps me to appreciate the enormous power of bonding with my friends and fellow humans. Frost’s poetry has certainly had a huge power over me in enabling me to see the light at the end of the tunnel in times of darkness and bleak times. It shows me how life can offer many different possibilities for choice and human companionship, and how rich and glorious the whole world of nature is.

The A1 student



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At the start, I was intending to not count English – it was probably one of my weaker subjects, coming into the senior cycle. I didn’t have a huge interest in it at first. So I plugged away at it – I felt that I had to put in the work, and I knew I had done a lot of practice with my teacher, which would have helped, so I tried my best at the assignments that she gave us during the week. I didn’t put major work in at the start of the year, but I would have known that I had to put the effort in.

I didn’t plan out a schedule of study, but our teacher had set out a programme for the year, laying out what she wanted done. We’d worked on Paper I coming up to Christmas, that sort of thing. By myself, I went over poets and I put a lot of focus on *Macbeth*, and writing out answers to essay questions and then handing them up to be corrected.

I was more focused on my other subjects coming up to my mocks. I felt, with English, that if I could get a high enough standard in the mocks, then I would have a base and I could build on that coming up towards the actual thing. As far as I can remember, I got a B in the mocks, so I was delighted with that. But then, I thought, well, maybe I can do better. My grades had been going up since the previous summer, so I put in more time to see if I could reach a higher mark.

So after the mocks, I practised more answers. I also looked at a lot of material. Our teacher was great for giving us notes and different views on the questions. That was very helpful, to look at different ways of answering things, looking at the language in a new way.

With the past papers, it was really more Paper I that we concentrated on – I’d say we covered the whole book and the sample papers as well. Then we looked at Paper II as well, but not as much as the other. With English, I broke up the subject so that I was doing one thing at a time, whether that was *Macbeth*, or one poet and so on. I wrote out buzzwords for the poetry, to help me remember things, and coming up to the exam I would go over and over them.

Generally I studied at home, but maybe two weeks before my exams I went out to the library in the University of Limerick and I studied there. That was brilliant, I got a huge amount covered, not in a pressurised way, but because I knew that I had only weeks to go and there were no distractions; everyone kept their head down because we were all in the same boat.

I think the most important thing is that a lot of people burn themselves out by overdoing the study at the beginning. I know if I had done that I wouldn’t have done as well. I’d try to keep up as much as you can and do other things (I played hockey and choir) and it helped me relax. Keep your homework on track and follow your teachers; they’re the experts, so stick with them.

