



#3651

ROBERT FROST

Grade Levels: 10-13+

58 minutes

ANNENBERG/CPB PROJECT 1998

DESCRIPTION

Robert Frost (1874-1963) became "his own myth" and one of America's best-known and well-loved poets. Interviews with teachers, critics, other poets, and Frost himself offer insights into his work as he and others read excerpts from many poems. Old footage shows his personality and wit. Compares modern perceptions of Frost with the reality of the darker side of his work.

ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Subject Area: Language Arts

- ◆ Standard: Demonstrates competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of literary texts
 - Benchmark: Applies reading skills and strategies to a variety of literary texts (e.g., fiction, nonfiction, myths, poems, biographies, autobiographies, science fiction, supernatural tales, satires, parodies, plays, American literature, British literature, world and ancient literature) (See Instructional Goals #4, #6, #7)
 - Benchmark: Understands historical and cultural influences on literary works (See Instructional Goals #1, #3, #4, #5)

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

1. To present a biography of Robert Frost.
2. To dramatize selected excerpts from the poems and speeches of Robert Frost.
3. To examine Frost's works from a variety of perspectives, including critics', historians', biographers' and other poets'.
4. To identify Frost's style of writing and its impact on literature and poetry.
5. To illustrate dominant literary themes in Frost's poetry.
6. To stimulate critical thinking in the analysis of Frost's work in relation to his lifestyle and biographical information.
7. To motivate further reading of his work.

VOCABULARY

1. parable
2. myth
3. Yankee
4. scythe
5. epic
6. cantos
7. suites
8. lyric
9. sound of sense



BEFORE SHOWING

1. Select a variety of Frost's poems to acquaint students with his style, subject matter, and imagery.
2. Discuss how lyrical poetry differs from other forms of poetry.
3. Familiarize students with the works of other poets mentioned in this film, including: Keats, Shelley, Browning, Tennyson, Chaucer, Lascelles Abercrombie, Wilfrid Gibson, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, and Crane.
4. Locate a map of the world and find the following places:
 - a. Gloucestershire, England
 - b. London, England
 - c. Derry, New Hampshire

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. What was the myth that Robert Frost was trying to create for himself? Explain whether he was successful in his attempt.
2. Was Frost a naturalist, romanticist, or humanist? Explain.
3. How did his self-imposed isolation figure into his poetry? Did this isolation enhance his poetry?
4. What is a lyric? How does Frost make a "transition from delight to wisdom" in his poetry?
5. Hypothesize why the United States was unimpressed with Frost's poetry during his early years.
6. Describe what effect moving to England had on Frost's career. Could he have developed the same way in the United States?
7. Who was Ezra Pound and what effect did he have on Frost's career?
8. Debate the question of whether or not Frost was a regional poet.
9. Describe Frost's personality.
 - a. Explain what kind of man he was.
 - b. Describe the relationship with his wife.
 - c. Specify how his sense of humor is reflected in his poetry.
10. What were Frost's feelings on the New Deal planning and modernist despair?
11. Explain how the reoccurring tragic events in Frost's life affected his writing.



12. When America finally embraced Frost as its poet, what did they do for him? What was his reaction?
13. How did the Defense Department's issuance of "What We Are Fighting For" spur Frost's career?
14. How did the speech made by Trilling affect the public's perception of Frost?

Applications and Activities

1. Explain the sound of "sense."
 - a. How did Frost use this in his poems?
 - b. What other poets use it in their poetry?
2. Analyze these statements either made or embraced by Frost:
 - a. "Nature is always more or less cruel." – Matthew Arnold
 - b. "These poems are written in parable, so the wrong people won't understand and be so saved."
 - c. "Poetry is organized violence through language."
 - d. "It's [poetry] a way of taking life by the throat."
 - e. "Poets must have the kind of courage to start with insufficient knowledge."
 - f. "[Poetry] is the transition from delight to wisdom."
 - g. "That there are no larger solutions and truths are momentary."
 - h. "The poems I make are little bits of order..."
 - i. "Poetry is what gets lost in translation."
3. Lionel Trilling characterized him as a modernist "terrifying" poet. Describe in what ways this does and does not define him and his work.
4. How is the notion that Frost's poetry really deals with fear and hatred evident in his belief that nature is more or less cruel?
5. Research the relationship between Edward Thomas and Frost. Determine if Edward Thomas' poetry was influenced by Frost.
6. Debate, either oral or composition, whether Frost was a poet of pastorals or of fear and terrorism. Use examples from the video to support positions.
7. Obtain a copy of "After Apple-picking" and review the video-discussed imagery, displacements and multimeanings evident in the poem. Discuss whether it is about death, autumn, or hibernation.
8. Research Frost's works and put them in chronological order, noting the patterns and evolution of form and style.
9. Compare Frost's work, life and attitude with that of Mark Twain.
10. Obtain a copy of the poem "Mending Wall." Discuss how the most famous line in that poem, "Good fences make good neighbors" has been twisted from its original meaning.
11. Robert Frost was a poet laureate of the United States.
 - a. Explain what a poet laureate is or does.
 - b. Research how one is chosen poet laureate.
 - c. Identify other poet laureates.



RELATED RESOURCES



Captioned Media Program

- Creative Interpretation of Literature in Sign #2754
- Edgar Allan Poe: Terror of the Soul #3236
- Emily Dickinson: A Certain Slant of Light #6200
- Langston Hughes: The Dream Keeper #3625
- Sylvia Plath #3668
- Walt Whitman #3679

World Wide Web



The following Web sites complement the contents of this guide; they were selected by professionals who have experience in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. Every effort was made to select accurate, educationally relevant, and "kid-safe" sites. However, teachers should preview them before use. The U.S. Department of Education, the National Association of the Deaf, and the Captioned Media Program do not endorse the sites and are not responsible for their content.

- **VOICES AND VISIONS SPOTLIGHT: ROBERT FROST**

www.learner.org/catalog/literature/vvseries/vvspot/Frost.html

A Web site sponsored by the publishers of this video, presenting a short synopsis of the video and many links to other Internet sites related to Robert Frost.

- **INDEX TO FROST IN CYBERSPACE**

www.libarts.sfasu.edu/Frost/Index.html

Biographical, bibliographical and miscellaneous information regarding Frost. An excerpt describing Frost's theory of the Sound of Sense.

- **POETRY OF ROBERT FROST**

www.ketzle.com/frost/#frostlinks

Contains many of Frost's poems in text form. Includes biographical information and links to other Web sites.

- **ROBERT FROST—THE ACADEMY OF AMERICAN POETS**

www.poets.org/poets/poets.cfm?prmID=196

A site by sponsored by the Academy of American Poets containing a short description, selected poems, bibliography and other Internet Web sites relating to the poet.