

Fire and Ice

Summary of the Poem Fire and Ice

Dust of Snow by Robert Frost

Stanza 1 *Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.*

In these lines, the poet says that there are two theories held by the general people about how the world will be destroyed. The first group of people thinks that fire will cause the apocalypse to happen. It means that earth's core will heat up to an extremely high temperature, then the heat will eventually reach the surface of the planet, and then everything on the surface will be destroyed. It will be destroyed beyond repair. The second theory says just the opposite. Instead of destruction by heat, some people believe in the theory that the world will freeze till all the species of flora and fauna i.e. plants and wildlife inhabiting the earth become extinct once and for all. Hence, this theory is based on the power of ice which will change the living conditions on earth. The poet is aware of both these theories and will now proceed to compare them against each other.

Stanza 2

*From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.*

In these lines, the poet tries to outline the merits of the first theory. He praised the theory about the destruction of the earth by fire. He compares the fire with human passion and desire. He also says that he is quite familiar with this concept of desire. He also knows about the capability of desire which can be produced in human beings. With this knowledge in mind, the poet frankly confesses that he agrees with those people who believe that the world will be burnt to ash.

Stanza 3 *But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate*

*To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.*

In these lines, the poet stops discussing the first theory and goes on to talk about the theory about the destruction of earth by ice. Though, he does not discredit the first theory about fire, or withdraw his support for its greater possibility in causing the apocalypse. He simply considers what might happen if the earth were to be destroyed a second time. He is sure that the second time ice and the freezing temperatures will be enough to destroy the earth as nearly and effectively as fire previously had. The poet then compares ice with hatred. He says that hatred is also an emotion that he is familiar with, and that he knows what kind of danger can arise from hatred. With this knowledge, he comes to the conclusion that both an ice age and the coldness in man's heart can cause the apocalypse for a second time.

Quick Revision Notes

- The poet talks about the two different beliefs regarding the end of this world.
- He says that he is in the favour of those who say this world will end in fire as he has seen the effect and result of uncontrolled and unending desires of humans.
- He finds the human desires same as fire in its nature.
- On the other hand, the second belief tells that ice is sufficient for destroying this world and the poet compares the nature of ice with hatred of humans.
- As ice can make a part of body numb with its prolonged contact like hatred can also give numbness to our mind and thoughts and make us insensitive and cruel.
- The speaker brings us into the middle of an argument between people who think the world will come to a fiery end and people who think the world will freeze.
- Author is talking about the literal end of the world, but he's also talking about the power that human beings have to harm or "destroy" one another.