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ENGLISH

CHAPTER 2: FIRE AND ICE



FIRE AND ICE

~Summary~

-by Robert Frost

Stanza- 1

Some say the world will end in fire
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favour fire.

Explanation: The poet is analysing about the end of the world. The poet provides and deals with two possible causes for the end of the world. He considers the age-old question of whether the world will end in fire or in ice. Both the two reasons contrast each other and are equally opposite to each other. On one side of the debate are those people who are in favour of fire. They believe that it will be the heat and the passion, which will lead the humanity, the world, to end. On the other side of the debate are those people who favour ice and feel that it will be the 'ice which will freeze the world.

Frost is providing a powerful statement on the subject of greed and jealousy. He is saying that above anything else, even hatred, which is the trait of humanity, is most likely to lead the world to its demise.

Stanza- 2

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.

Explanation: The poet is very much sure of the destruction of the humanity. He first talks about the destruction caused by fire and in case this fails, then ice will result into hatred that will end humanity one day. Frost goes on to discuss, in a more understated manner, the power of hate, which is symbolised in the poem by ice. Hate, according to the speaker, is just as powerful as desire. While desire consumes, quickly, hate is just as great and powerful. Infact, by ending the poem with the concept of hate.

'Frost directs the reader to the shy yet restrained devastation that hate can produce. Hate can occur and linger in people's minds and hearts for years', sometimes even lifetimes. Hate is presented as having the ability to lead to the destruction of the world if it were to happen for a second time, again providing a powerful warning against this human fallacy (misunderstanding).

Conclusion of Fire and Ice

The poem is revolving around the theme that human emotions are destructive, and has two possible forms.

NCERT SOLUTION

Questions (Page No. 15)

(THINKING ABOUT THE POEM)

Question 1: There are many ideas about how the world will 'end'. Do you think the world will end some day? Have you ever thought what would happen if the sun got so hot that it 'burst', or grew colder and colder?

Answer: There are multiple theories about how the world will 'end'. Yes, I do believe that the world will end someday as we all know that every particular thing which begins also has an end to it. This holds true for the world too that if the Sun got so hot and it bursts, the entire life on Earth would perish immediately as the planet would not be able to tolerate the intensity of heat. On the contrary, if the Sun grew colder and colder, it is obvious that life will come to an end without sunlight. We are aware of the fact that sunlight is a rich source of energy to all the planets in the solar system.

Question 2: For Frost, what do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for? Here are some ideas:

greed	avarice	cruelty	lust
conflict	fury	intolerance	rigidity
insensitivity	coldness	indifference	hatred

'Fire' stands for greed, avarice, lust, conflict and fury. 'Ice' stands for cruelty, intolerance, rigidity, insensitivity, coldness, indifference and hatred.

Question 3: What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem?

Answer: The rhyme scheme of the poem is: a, b, a, a, b, c, b, c, b.

This rhyme scheme helps in projecting the contrasting ideas of 'fire' and 'ice' that are presented in the poem. The poet, Frost mentions both fire and ice as the probable ends of the planet Earth. He talks about how 'fire' represents desire and might be a possible cause of the end of the world. The poet also mentions 'ice' in the poem to symbolize that the coldness and indifference that people might have towards one another will be a reason good enough to end the world. In the second stanza of the poem, the poet says that he knows of enough hate in this world and is sure that even destruction through ice would be sufficient and adequate to bring about an end of the planet Earth.