

Dust of Snow

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

ROBERT FROST

Glossary

hemlock: A poisonous plant (tree) with small white flowers

rued: held in regret

Thinking about the Poem

This poem presents a moment that seems simple, but has a larger significance. [Compare this other quotation from Robert Frost: “Always, always a larger significance... A little thing touches a larger thing.”]

1. What is a “dust of snow”? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet’s mood changed?
2. How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.
 - (i) What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think a crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?
 - (ii) Again, what is “a hemlock tree”? Why doesn’t the poet write about a more ‘beautiful’ tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?
 - (iii) What do the ‘crow’ and ‘hemlock’ represent — joy or sorrow? What does the dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree stand for?
3. Have there been times when you felt depressed or hopeless? Have you experienced a similar moment that changed your mood that day?