

Dust of snow

Read the extract given below carefully and answer the questions that follow:

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.

- (a) What do the 'crow' and 'hemlock' symbolise?
- (b) The mood of the poet changed because_____ .
- (c) What does the poet mean when he says and saved some part of the day?
- (d) Who shook the dust of snow?

Or

- (a) What is the dust of snow?
- (b) What mood of the poet is conveyed in these lines?
- (c) What did the crow do to the hemlock tree?
- (d) What did the tree have on it then?

Ans. (a) The 'crow' symbolises 'joy' and the 'hemlock' tree symbolises 'sorrow'.

(b) He saw a crow sitting on a hemlock tree shook off the dust of snow on him. Thus, the falling of dust of snow changed his mood.

(c) The poet has saved some part of the day as he did not waste the time in repenting and regretting.

(d) A crow shook the dust of snow.

Or

- (a) Dust of snow refers to the particulate matter of snow that settles on surfaces after a snowfall.
- (b) The poet's altered mood, one that changes from sorrow to joy is depicted here.
- (c) The crow shook the dust of snow from the hemlock tree.
- (d) The tree had snow on its leaves.

1. What is a "dust of snow"? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet's mood changed?

Ans: A "dust of snow" means the fine particles of snow. This "dust of snow" changed the poet's mood. The poet's mood changed from that of dismay to joy. He was holding the day in regret when this dust of snow fell on him and this simple little thing brought him some joy.

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?

Ans: (i) Frost has presented nature in quite an unconventional manner. While in other nature poems we come across birds such as nightingales or sparrows, Frost has used a crow in this poem. A crow can be associated with something dark, black, and foreboding. That is why other poets usually mention singing nightingales or beautiful white doves in their poems.

(ii) The poet has written about a hemlock tree, which is a poisonous tree. He has not written about a more beautiful tree such as a maple, or oak, or pine because these trees symbolise beauty and happiness. Frost wanted to symbolise the feelings of sadness and regret, which is why he has used a hemlock tree.

(iii) The crow and the hemlock tree represent sorrow. The dust of snow that is shaken off the hemlock tree by the crow stands for joy that Frost experiences. He has, therefore, used an unconventional tree and bird in order to contrast them with joy in the form of snow.