



**Analysis of Dust of Snow**

*Dust of Snow* with its short neat form, rhyming lines and rhythmic beat is simplicity itself. It reflects the rather bleak, minimalist imagery.

The speaker, under a tree. It's probably winter, there's snow on the tree, an evergreen pine called a hemlock, and a crow has happened to send some snow dust down on the man.

Whether it falls on to his head or down his neck is unknown because it's not really relevant to the poem. What is important is the *way* that crow makes it happen, but once again, the reader is left to imagine the bird's specific action.

Whether it be the crow preening, merely shaking, flying off, or landing, or readjusting its feet on a branch, somehow a light dusting of snow is the result, and it lands on the speaker.

The actual word is *shook*, so it could be that the crow is shivering in the snowy tree. For the speaker this must have come out of the blue; the crow's action caused an unexpected fall of snow dust. The first stanza is the speaker setting the scene but leaving a little bit of guesswork for the reader. The question has to be asked: In what way precisely did that crow shake down the dust of snow?

So the first stanza flows into the second which is the more intimate part of the poem as the speaker begins to confirm *a change of mood*. The crow, traditionally given a bad name as a harbinger of doom and fear, becomes a catalyst for positive change.

The speaker, because of the snow dust falling on him, finds himself partially relieved - his day just got a whole lot better - the event somehow allowing him to see life from a different angle.

There are two crucial words Frost uses here: *rue*d and *sav*ed, the former meaning to regret something which often cannot be undone and the latter meaning to rescue or keep safe.

The word saved signifies that only part of a day is saved, not his soul.

If the figurative heart changes mood, then this is quite a profound shift nevertheless and it illustrates the power that nature sometimes has over we human beings.

The speaker could well have been stressed out over something, gone for a short walk to try and think things through. Then whilst under the tree...down came the dust of snow to alleviate the symptoms.

- If anything there is a strong case for irony and comedy in this poem.
- Picture the troubled speaker, all serious, self-absorbed, worrying about what had happened to him a few hours earlier.
- Suddenly there is the crow flapping from a high branch; then down comes the freezing white dust to land straight on the speaker.  
And isn't it ironic that a creature usually linked with negative aspects of life should become the bringer of positive change?

The message is clear enough. Sometimes seemingly insignificant natural events do bring about change. Being outdoors in nature, with all its unpredictability, can benefit anyone, anywhere at any time.

### **LITERARY DEVICES**

1) Rhyme Scheme – abad cdcd

2) Alliteration – The occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of a adjacent or closely connected words. i) Has given my heart ii) And saved some part

3) Assonance – The prominence of a vowel sound throughout a line is called assonance. In stanza, line 2 – ‘shook down on me’ – ‘O’ Sound is prominent.

4) Enjambment – When the same sentence continues to the next line without the use of any punctuation marks, it is called enjambment. It has been used throughout the poem.

### **SUMMARY**

The poem dust of snow tells us about the curative power of nature. Nature has the cure for everything whether it is a bad mood or illness. The poet is going through one such bad day when a crow suddenly shook down on him dust of snow from a hemlock tree. The snow instantly makes him happier. The nature made him realise that his problems are petty and he should not waste his day like this. The crow usually symbolizes bad omen. Since the crow is not related to goodwill, it is ironic that in this poem he did an honest deed by shaking off the snow. The poet chose the hemlock tree which is related to poison and toxicity. The alluring snow that adorns the poisonous hemlock tree's branches is shaken off by a scary crow. The crow throws the snow on the poet. The feel of snow changes his mood. He decides to forget the regrets of his life and follow the path of healing of his inner soul. The poem conveys the message of positivity. It tells us that if we take things positively in life, situations do change for better. The poem teaches us that every small act in life can illuminate our soul and motivate us to do better.

## POEM AND EXPLANATION

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

In these line the poet is talking about a winter's day when all the treetops were covered with snowflakes. The poet is in a bad mood and walking by a tree, a hemlock tree. Hemlock tree is a poisonous tree. A crow came and sat down on this tree suddenly and because this sudden motion the mass of snowflakes from the top fell down on the poet. This shower of dust of snow from the hemlock tree is evidently the subject matter of the poem.

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

For reasons unknown, the poet was in bad mood. But the shower of dust of snow lifted his mood instantly. He had wasted his day being in bad mood but some part of his day was saved by the crow and the hemlock tree. Generally, hemlock tree and crow are used for negative references but the poet used them beautifully to portray that inauspicious things can bring joy and happiness too. One must not take things for granted and should be open and accept whichever way the nature chooses us to bless.

**Introduction & Theme of the poem** – Through the poem Dust of Snow Robert Frost is trying to shatter all the believes that humans have about the things that they consider ill – omens. He tells this through the example of a crow that is considered as a bad omen and signifier of darkness and gloominess. He also tries to put forward the view that sometimes even small things or incidents in life have big impact on us.

### **The central idea of the ‘Dust of Snow’.**

The poem expresses the significance of small things in changing one's attitude. The poet appreciates the beauty of the snowflakes, which changed his mood and saved many precious moments from being wasted away. The crow shakes off the snow dust from the hemlock tree. The same way one can shake off the sadness from one's heart.

### **SHORT AND LONG QUESTIONS**

#### **1. What is the Tone of the Poem Dust of Snow?**

**Answer:** The tone of “Dust of Snow” is light and cheerful. It reflects the change that has already taken place in the poet's heart from sullen to joyful, after the shower of snowflakes upon himself. It is thus clear that this poem has been written post that experience. The poet has almost forgotten what a bad day he had been having and has embraced the brightening of his mood fully. He now feels lucky to be alive and able to watch such beautiful sights

as that of the snowfall.

**2. How many symbols do you find in this poem? What is the purpose to use those symbols?**

**Answer:** In this poem, the poet has introduced three symbols; the hemlock tree, the crow and the dust of snow. Hemlock is the name of the poison that was used to kill Socrates. Hence, the hemlock tree is a symbol of death. Walking by the hemlock tree could, in fact, have seemed like an ill omen to the poet, and could have upset him further on this unpleasant day. Again, the crow is an ambiguous symbol and could stand for many things. Generally, the crow is considered to be the ugliest among all birds. Hence, it could be another sight to degrade the poet's mood once again. The dust of snow is the symbol of natural joy and energy.

The poet uses two negative symbols to represent the negative aspects of mind. The shower of snow created by the crow certainly improves his mood. Perhaps the poet is saying that even something that one usually associates with negativity can have a positive impact. Hence, Frost's use of symbols is very profound and meaningful.

**3. What does the poet want to convey through the poem 'Dust of Snow'?**

**Or**

**What is the central idea of the poem 'Dust of Snow'?**

**Ans.** In the poem 'Dust of Snow', the poet wants to convey that sometimes certain moments or actions which are simple have larger significance. They can change the mood or life of a person. The way a crow shakes down dust of snow on the poet inspires and gives him the idea to shake off his depressive thoughts, become cheerful and do something useful.

**4. Why does the poet use such poetically uncommon bird and tree? What does it reflect?**

**Ans.** The poet seems to be in a depressive and sorrowful mood. In such a mood, one cannot think of a sweet and beautiful side of nature. The harsh, bitter and poisonous images come to his mind. That is why he uses an uncommon, harsh, ugly crow and poisonous tree like hemlock.

**5. Write a note on the setting of the poem.**

**Ans.** The poem presents a perfect setting. There are four elements in the poem. All these four elements match one another. The snow stands for depression. The hemlock tree is a symbol of sadness. The crow considered ominous. The poet's mood was also sad. But suddenly the way in which the crow shook the hemlock tree and falling off the dust of snow. change the poet's mood.

**6. Our attitude towards a situation evokes both negative and positive response. Analyze this with reference to the poem, 'Dust of Snow' to bring out the inherent valuable lessons.**

**Ans.** Whatever situation life throws at us, it evokes both positive and negative responses. The poet, in the poem 'Dust of Snow,' was in a sorrowful mood. However, when a crow shook down the 'dust of snow' on him, his bitter mood changed into a more optimistic

one. Now, being in a sorrowful or bad mood already, the poet could have got angry at the crow also. However, the dust of snow becomes a positive medium of change for him. It made him cheerful to some extent and helped him forget his sadness, at least for a few moments. Thus, we see that instead of seeing the negative aspect of a happening, one should see the positive aspect, and one's response may greatly affect the outcome of incidents.

### **REFERENCE TO CONTEXT**

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

**1. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow-**

- i. Where was the crow sitting?  
**Ans. The crow was sitting on a branch of a hemlock tree.**
- ii. What did the crow do?  
**Ans. It shook off the dust of snow on the poet.**
- iii. What does the dust of snow stand for?  
**Ans. It stands for the poet's sadness.**
- iv. Name the poet and the poem.  
**Ans. Dust of Snow is the poem and Robert Frost is its poet.**

**2. Read the extract given below and answer the questions that follow-**

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

- i. What was the poet's mood in the beginning?  
**Ans. The poet's mood was of sadness in the beginning.**
- ii. What changed the mood of the poet?  
**Ans. Sudden fall of dust of snow on him changed his poet.**
- iii. What does the poet mean when he says that 'And saved some part/Of a day'?  
**Ans. The poet's mood changed from sadness to happiness. It saved the rest of his day.**
- iv. Write the synonym of the word 'rued'.  
**Ans. regretted**

**3. 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) Where was the crow?
- (b) What did it shake on the poet?
- (c) What does the word, 'rued' mean?
- (d) What is the poet's state of mind?

**Answer:**

- (a) **The crow was on a hemlock tree.**

- (b) **It shook dust of snow on the poet.**
- (c) **The word 'rued' means held in regret.**
- (d) **The poet was in a sad, depressive and hopeless mood that time.**

4. The way a crow Shook down on me The dust of snow From a hemlock tree
- (a) Where did the crow sit?
  - (b) We can say that the poet was .....
  - (c) How did the crow change the poet's mood?
  - (d) What fell off from a hemlock tree?

**Answer:**

- (a) **The crow sat on a branch of hemlock tree.**
- (b) **..... in a sad mood.**
- (c) **The crow changed the poet's mood by shaking down the dust of snow from a hemlock tree.**
- (d) **Dust of snow fell from a hemlock tree.**

5. Has given my heart A change of mood And saved some part Of a day I had rued.
- (a) Of what change does the poet mention here?
  - (b) Whose part of the day has been saved?
  - (c) What is the rhyme scheme of the passage?
  - (d) Who is the poet?

OR

- (a) What had given the poet 'a change of mood'?
- (b) What did the poet think of that day?
- (c) What did the crow do to the hemlock tree?
- (d) Name the poet of the poem.

**Answer:**

- (a) **The poet mentions the change of mood here.**
- (b) **The poet's part of the day has been saved.**
- (c) **The rhyme scheme of the passage is ab ab.**
- (d) **Robert Frost is the poet.** OR
- (a) **The falling of dust of snow gave the poet 'a change of mood'.**
- (b) **The poet earlier wasted that day, but later revived the spirit to realize the rest of the day.**
- (c) **The crow shook the hemlock tree.**
- (d) **The poet is 'Robert Frost'.**

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS**

1. Who shook down the hemlock tree?
- (A) crow
  - (B) cuckoo
  - (C) mynah
  - (D) parrot

Ans. (A) a crow

2. Which tree did the crow shake?

- (A) mango (B) mapple  
(C) hemlock (D) oak

Ans. (C) hemlock

3. What fell on the poet?

- (A) dust of tree (B) dust of snow  
(C) dust of rain (D) dust  
of crow Ans. (B) dust of snow

4. In what mood was the poet earlier?

- (A) happy (B) good  
(C) pleasant (D) sad

Ans. (D) sad

5. What was the effect of the fall of the dust of snow on the poet?

- (A) changed his mood (B) changed his luck  
(C) changed his job (D) changed his colour  
Ans. (A) changed his mood

6. What was saved for the poet?

- (A) crow (B) tree  
(C) some part of the day (D) snow

Ans. (C) some part of the day

7. Under which tree was the poet standing?

- (A) oak (B) hemlock  
(C) maple (D) pine

Ans. (B) hemlock

8. Who is the poet of the poem 'Dust of Snow'?

- (A) Robert Frost (B) Robert Browning  
(C) William Wordsworth (D) John Keats

Ans. (A) Robert Frost

### Thinking about the Poem

Question 1.

What is a “dust of snow”? What does the poet say has changed his mood? How has the poet’s mood changed?

Answer:

The ‘dust of snow’ means the fine particles or flakes of snow. The sudden shower in the form of the dust of snow changed the poet’s mood. The poet’s mood changed from sad to happy. He felt refreshed and wanted to enjoy the rest of the day.

Question 2.

How does Frost present nature in this poem? The following questions may help you to think of an answer.

1. What are the birds that are usually named in poems? Do you think crow is often mentioned in poems? What images come to your mind when you think of a crow?
  2. Again, what is ‘a hemlock tree’? Why doesn’t the poet write about more ‘beautiful’ tree such as a maple, or an oak, or a pine?
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1. 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?

Answer:

Frost presents nature in a very different manner in the poem,

1. Generally, poets take the birds and trees which are known for their beauty and good qualities like peacock, parrot, cuckoo, mynah and trees full of beautiful flowers and fruits, etc. But here Frost has taken a totally different approach. He chose a crow, which is not often used in poems. Crow is black in colour with very harsh voice and is believed to be a symbol of bad omen. Thinking of a crow brings very depressing and sorrowful pictures to our mind.
2. A hemlock tree is poisonous plant with small white flowers. The poet, Robert Frost, didn’t choose to use an oak, maple or pine tree. Instead, he chose the hemlock tree and left all the beautiful trees present in the world. Actually he did so to present his mood and feelings.
3. The crow and hemlock tree represent sorrow and depression felt by the poet in this materialistic world. The dust of snow is the symbol of natural joy and energy. The dust of snow that the crow shakes off a hemlock tree means passing through the sad and depressing moments the poet is entering into the time full of joy and optimism.