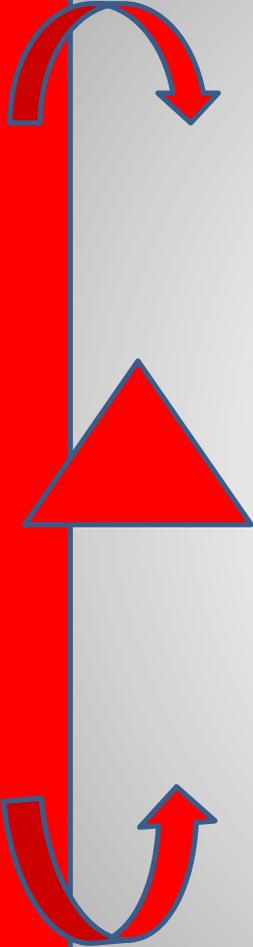


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EC – 1 (B)
American Literature
Unit - III

[PPT]

Design
(A Critical Study)

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Robert Frost: Introduction

❑ **Born :**

March 26, 1874 – California , US

❑ **Died:**

January 29, 1963– Massachusetts, US

❑ **Occupation:**

Poet & Playwright

❑ **Awards & Honours:**

Pulitzer Prize for Poetry

Congressional Gold Medal

Robert Frost is the most celebrated poet in the history of American literature. He has always been considered as an “*author of searching and often dark meditations on universal themes*” and a *quintessentially modern poet*” in his adherence to language as it is actually spoken, in “*the psychological complexity of his portraits, and in the degree to which his work is infused with layers of ambiguity and irony*”.

Design

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—
A snow-drop spider, a flower like froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being
white,
The way side blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that
height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the
night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

“Design”: An Introduction

- ❑ A fourteen lines sonnet.
- ❑ Two Stanzas: Octave & Sestet
- ❑ Explores the notion the nature and the whole universe has been designed by a malevolent intelligence.
- ❑ Based on observation of a spider on a flower holding a dead moth.
- ❑ Form a first person scenario and slowly turns into complex narrative.
- ❑ The speaker uses paradox, allusion and other devices in the poem.
- ❑ Published in “[American poetry 1922: A Miscellany](#)”.

Design: An Explanation

(Published in 'A Further Range' in 1936)

The poem “*Design*” starts very simply as we notice that the first three lines introduce us with all important characters: we see a big white spider on a white flowers, preparing to eat a white moth.

The poet or speaker introduces us with this conspicuous meeting of them as some “weird witches’ brew”, as the all three (including the white flower) have been brought there for some awful reason.

This observation of the speaker leads him to a number of questions like:

Why is this flower white, when it should usually be blue?

Why has the Spider come to this flower?

What particular motif has driven the Spider to be there only?

What compel the Moth to flutter there by right then?

Continue...



...continue

The poet comes to a conclusion that if it is “design or destiny” that has brought them (three) there, it must be considered as ‘*pretty dark design*’.

In other words, the speaker’s use of the expression “*design of darkness to appall*” cannot be termed as a confronting thought against the will of God who has brought the moth there to make sure this moth got eaten. But it is the crucial ‘if’ of the last line:

“*If design does govern these small thing.*”

At the end of the poem, the poet leaves the readers with as many questions as the speaker himself.

Finally to conclude, I can say that the poem, “Design” invokes a simple little thought and convinces us to question the very nature of creation and life as we know it.

Design

Structure & Poetic Device

Structure:

- ❑ **Petrarchan/Italian Sonnet** with changed Sestet.
- ❑ **Stanza:**
Octet (8 Lines) – 1st Stanza
Sestet (6 Lines) – 2nd Stanza
- ❑ **Rhyme Scheme:**
Octet: abbaabba
Sestet: acaacc
- ❑ **Rhythm:**
Iambic Pentameter
(A few lines are in Mixed meter which change the stress and rhythm)

Poetic Devices:

- ❑ **Simile:**
In Line 3rd.
- ❑ **Alliteration:**
In Lines 2nd, 7th, & 13th.
- ❑ **Anaphora:**
In Lines 9th, 11th, & 13th

“The poem is the expression of the poet’s surprise over the mysterious existence of the world surrounded by omens and evils designs”.

..the end.