

# Fire and Ice

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## Answers to NCERT Questions

### Thinking about the Poem

**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?**

**Ans:** Yes, I believe that this world will end some days but when nobody knows. Whether the sun gets hot or it gets colder, in both the situations, end of this world is sure.

**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		

**Ans:** FIRE: greed, avarice, lust, conflict, fury, intolerance

ICE: cruelty, rigidity, insensitivity, coldness, indifference, hatred

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

**Ans:** The rhyme scheme of the poem is: aba abc bcb. The two contrasting ideas, fire and ice are totally supported by the rhyme scheme of the poem as different alphabets carry different ideas expressed in the poem.

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## Additional Questions

### Extract Based Questions

**Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow: (4 Marks each)**

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.

a. What do people think about the ending of the world?

- b. What is the poet's opinion?
- c. What does 'desire' mean here?
- d. Name the poem and the poet.

**Ans:**

- a. Some people think that the world will end in fire. Others say that it will end in ice.
- b. The poet thinks it right that the world will end in fire.
- c. Here, 'desire' means man's passions and violence.
- d. The poem is 'Fire and Ice' and the poet is 'Robert Frost'.

**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.

- a. What does 'it' refer to here?
- b. How is 'ice' sufficient for destruction?
- c. What is the main idea of these lines?
- d. What is ice a symbol of?

**Ans:**

- a. Here, 'it' refers to the 'world'.
- b. 'Ice' symbolises hatred. So hatred is sufficient for the world's destruction.
- c. The main idea of these lines is that hatred can destroy the world.
- d. Ice is a symbol of hatred.

### **Short Answer Questions (30–40 words: 2 Marks each)**

**1. What are the two popular views in the society regarding the destruction of the world?**

**Ans:** The poem deals with the age-old belief about how the world will come to an end. Some believe that the world will end in fire, but to others, it will end in ice. It is shown in the poem that each of them has potential energy to bring about the destruction of the world.

**2. What do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for?**

**Ans:** In the poem, 'fire' is associated with greed, cruelty, and lust, whereas 'ice' is associated with rigidity, hatred, coldness, and indifference.

### **3. How does the use of language help in making the poem effective and meaningful?**

**Ans:** Frost chooses words from the everyday talk. The poem is full of colloquial tone and conversational language. The contrast between simple and precise vocabulary, and the vague gravity of its subjects makes the poem serious and meaningful. The abrupt beginning of the opening sets the tone of the speech and makes the poem vivid and lively.

### **4. Comment on the rhyme scheme of the poem.**

**Ans:** The rhyme scheme of the poem is: aba abc bcb.

This rhyme scheme is used to present the contrasting ideas associated with ice and fire. When the poet talks about fire, it can be understood that the fire of lust has the potential to destroy the world. At the same time, it is shown that the coldness of hatred is equally harmful to the peaceful existence.

### **5. “But if it had to perish twice”. Why does the poet use ‘if’ in the quotation?**

**Ans:** Nobody knows whether the world will end in fire or in ice. But the idea of the destruction of the world twice is somewhat complicated. The poet does not believe that the world will end twice. That’s why, he expresses his suspicion by using the term ‘if’.

### **6. Is the poet’s personal view regarding the end of the world clear enough?**

**Ans:** The poet in the poem represents the dominant views regarding the probable causes of the destruction of the world. It may end either in fire or in ice. In other words, both of them have the power to ruin the world. But the poet does not give his own stand in this regard, rather he leaves the question unanswered.

### **7. How does the poet keep himself at a distance from the controversies of the poem?**

**Ans:** The poet takes a unique mechanism to keep himself separate from the controversies of the poem. Here, he only gives an account of the belief of common men. Some people think that the world will end in fire while others believe that it will end in ice. The repetition of the word ‘some’ in the poem tells us about the aloofness of the poet from all the controversies.

### **8. When was the poem first published?**

**Ans:** The poem ‘Fire and Ice’ was first published in Harper Magazine in December 1920. It was later collected by the poet in New Hampshire, a collection of his verses.

### **9. Comment on the ending of the poem.**

**Ans:** The ending of the poem implies that ice has also the power to bring about the destruction of the world. So we should not bother about the matter that which one of the two (fire and ice) is stronger, rather we should keep in mind that both of them have

destructive power. We should not ignore the potential power of ice which is equally harmful.

**10. Comment on the structure of the poem.**

**Ans:** The poem 'Fire and Ice' is a simple poem which consists of nine lines. The poem is written in a new fashion with the help of simple and colloquial language. The poem is a combination of six octosyllabic lines and three tetra-syllabic lines. The rhyme scheme of the poem is— aba abc bcb.

**11. "I think I know enough of hate". What does the speaker know about hate?**

**Ans:** The poet says that he knows enough of hate, but we are not told he has first-hand knowledge about hate or he experiences it at a distance. But the poet's intuitive power reminds him that it is no less dangerous than the fire of lust. It can also play a trick upon anybody as it is a silent killer.

**12. What is enjambement? Why does the poet use this device in the present poem?**

**Ans:** Enjambement is a continuation of one line to the next line. There is a strong enjambement in the 7th line. The poet uses this to reveal the tension needed for the perfect disappointment. This disappointment generates from the poet's fear that ice is no less powerful than fire. It is generally ignored by the people as it works silently, but it can also appear to be a great threat to human civilization.

**13. Do you think that either of fire and ice has the power to ruin the world?**

**Ans:** Yes, I do believe that either of fire and ice has the power to ruin the world. We believe that the world will come to an end someday, but nobody knows when and how. The world may destroy if it becomes hot by the heat of the sun. It may also ruin if it gets colder. In both cases, the destruction of the world is certain.

**14. What do you think would be enough to destroy the world? Can fire and ice contribute to it?**

**Ans:** Our desires and hatred would be enough to destroy the world. According to the poet, 'fire' represents 'desire' and 'ice' represents 'hatred'. Desires like fire spread rapidly and engulf one's whole life. Similarly, 'hatred' fills life with poison.

**15. What is the underlying idea of the poem, 'Fire and Ice'?**

**Ans:** The poet equates fire with 'desire' and ice with 'hatred'. Both of these are growing with enormous speed. If we don't check them from growing, the world will perish. So we must restrain our desires and love our fellow beings.

**16. Which two ideas about how the world will end have been mentioned in the poem? Which idea does the poet support more?**

**Ans:** The two ideas mentioned are that the world will end in fire or in ice. Though the poet thinks both are great for destruction, yet he seems to favour with the idea of destruction of the world in fire a little more than in ice.

**17. According to the poet, what do ‘fire’ and ‘ice’ represent? Do you agree with him?**

**Ans:** According to the poet, ‘fire’ represents desire and ‘ice’ represents hatred. I do agree with the poet. Desires like fire spread rapidly and engulf one’s whole life. Similarly, ‘hatred’ fills the whole life with poison. It makes one hard-hearted and cruel.

**18. What do people think about the ending of the world? What does the poet think?**

**Ans:** Some people think that someday the world will end in fire. On the other hand, some people say that it will end in ice. The poet has tasted both the fire and the ice. He thinks that the world will end in fire. Here, fire stands for the fire of desire.

**19. How will the world end twice?**

**Ans:** The poet says that both fire and ice are destructive. Here, fire stands for the heat of desire and ice stands for hatred. He thinks that our violent desires will end the world. If it survives, it will be ruined by hatred.

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## **Long Answer Questions (100–150 words: 8 Marks each)**

**1. What message does the poet give to the reader?**

**Ans:** Once Robert Frost claimed, “my poem begins in delight but ends in wisdom”. The poem ‘Fire and Ice’ echoes the above statement. In this poem, the poet considers the age-old question whether the world will end in fire or in ice. It is quite interesting that the poet does not give his own opinion in this regard. It is meaningless to ask which one is stronger as we know both of them are equally harmful to the world. We can associate fire with lust, greed, avarice and intolerance, whereas ice can be associated with hatred and indifference. The fire of lust and greed gets publicity, but the coldness of hatred is also dangerous as it is a silent killer. All of such black sides of human nature can obstruct the progress of human civilization.

**2. Write a brief note on how Frost deals with the theme in his poems.**

**Ans:** The poetic themes in Frost’s poems are beaten track but his handling of them is unique. To Frost, the incident is not so important, but he gives importance to its dramatic possibilities. Truth for Frost is not a philosophical concept, rather it is a rational observation of facts and their representation in a direct way with intimacy. This is why, there is so little of philosophy in Frost and so much of wit and wisdom. The poet leads his reader towards wisdom by giving him some pleasure at the very outset.

**3. How does the poem depict the two contrasting ideas— ‘Fire’ and ‘Ice’? Can hatred destroy us and the world? Explain in detail.**

**Ans: (i)** In this poem, Robert Frost refers to two contrasting ideas—Fire and Ice as predictions of how the world will end. According to him, some people say that the world will end in a fire, while some say that this will end in ice. The poet equates desire with fire and hatred with ice. Both the desire and hatred are growing with such a rapid speed that the world will come to an end either of the ways.

**(ii)** Yes, hatred can destroy us and the world. Intolerance in behaviour creates hatred that leads to fury and cruelty. One becomes hard-hearted and insensitive to the feelings of others. Love, brotherhood, tolerance, peace, contentment, sensitivity, benevolence, generosity among people can make this world a better place to live in.

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## Self- Assessment Test

### Extract Based Questions

**Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.**

**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.

- Name the poem and the poet.
- Which poetic device is used in the third line of stanza?
- What does the poet favour for?
- What are the meanings of ‘fire’ and ‘ice’ here?

**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.

- What is ‘it’ referred to?
  - What does the poet know enough?
  - According to the poet, what is great for destruction?
  - Which poetic device is used in the third line of stanza?
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### **Short Answer Questions**

1. What do 'fire' and 'ice' stand for and what is the general opinion regarding the world?
  2. What is the main idea of the poem?
  3. Why does the poet compare hate to ice?
  4. Why does the poet hold with those who favour fire?
  5. How will world perish twice?
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### **Long Answer Questions**

1. What is the rhyme scheme of the poem? How does it help in bringing out the contrasting ideas in the poem?
2. In this world, nothing is immortal. Explain, with reference to the poem, 'Fire and Ice'.