

Birches Summary

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Summary

The Bending Trees and Ice-Storm: The poem starts with the speaker watching birch trees bent down to the ground. He likes to think that a young boy has bent them by swinging on their branches. But he knows that it is not true. The real reason is the ice-storms of winter. In cold weather, rain freezes on the branches and covers them with ice. When the sun shines, the ice sparkles and breaks in the wind. Later, the ice breaks and falls on the snow like pieces of broken glass. The trees bend under the heavy weight. They do not break, but they never become straight again.

The Boy and His Game: The speaker imagines a boy who lives far from town. The boy cannot play games like baseball. So, he finds joy in swinging on birch trees. He climbs carefully to the top of each tree. Then he swings down with his feet first, touching the ground softly. He learns patience, balance, and control. His simple game gives him freedom and happiness. The boy's play becomes a picture of youthful energy and joy.

The Poet's Wish to Escape: The speaker says that he also used to swing on birches when he was a boy. Now he is grown up and feels tired of life. He feels lost in a "pathless wood," full of pain and confusion. He wishes to escape for a short time to climb a birch tree and rise above the earth. He wants peace and rest, not death. He just wants to be free from worries for a while.

Love for Earth and Life: The speaker asks that fate should not take him away forever. He believes that "Earth's the right place for love." He says that real love and joy can only be found on earth. He wants to climb toward heaven but come back again. He dreams of going up for peace and returning for life. The poem ends with his calm and wise thought, "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."