

West Running Brook Full Poem

Writer: Robert Frost | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

West Running Brook By Robert Frost (1874-1963)

'Fred, where is north?'

'North? North is there, my love. The brook runs west.'

'West-running Brook then call it.' (West-Running Brook men call it to this day.) 'What does it think k's doing running west When all the other country brooks flow east To reach the ocean? It must be the brook Can trust itself to go by contraries The way I can with you -- and you with me -- Because we're -- we're -- I don't know what we are. What are we?'

'Young or new?'

'We must be something. We've said we two. Let's change that to we three. As you and I are married to each other, We'll both be married to the brook. We'll build Our bridge across it, and the bridge shall be Our arm thrown over it asleep beside it. Look, look, it's waving to us with a wave To let us know it hears me.'

'Why, my dear, That wave's been standing off this jut of shore --' (The black stream, catching a sunken rock, Flung backward on itself in one white wave, And the white water rode the black forever, Not gaining but not losing, like a bird White feathers from the struggle of whose breast Flecked the dark stream and flecked the darker pool Below the point, and were at last driven wrinkled In a white scarf against the far shore alders.) 'That wave's been standing off this jut of shore Ever since rivers, I was going to say,' Were made in heaven. It wasn't waved to us.'

'It wasn't, yet it was. If not to you It was to me -- in an annunciation.'

'Oh, if you take it off to lady-land, As't were the country of the Amazons We men must see you to the confines of And leave you there, ourselves forbid to enter,- It is your brook! I have no more to say.'

'Yes, you have, too. Go on. You thought of something.'

'Speaking of contraries, see how the brook In that white wave runs counter to itself. It is from that in water we were from Long, long before we were from any creature. Here we, in our impatience of the steps, Get back to the beginning of beginnings, The stream of everything that runs away. Some say existence like a Pirouot And Pirouette, forever in one place, Stands still and dances, but it runs away, It seriously, sadly, runs away To fill the abyss' void with emptiness. It flows beside us in this water brook, But it flows over us. It flows between us To separate us for a panic moment. It flows between us, over us, and with us. And it is time, strength, tone, light, life and love- And even substance lapsing unsubstantial; The universal cataract of death That spends to nothingness -- and unresisted, Save by some strange resistance in itself, Not just a swerving, but a throwing back, As if regret were in it and were sacred. It has this throwing backward on itself So that the fall of most of it is always Raising a little, sending up a little. Our life runs down in sending up the clock. The brook runs down in sending up our life. The sun runs down in sending up the brook. And there is something sending up the sun. It is this backward motion toward the source, Against the stream, that most we see ourselves in, The tribute of the current to the source. It is from this in nature we are from. It is most us.'

'To-day will be the day....You said so.'

'No, to-day will be the day You said the brook was called West-running Brook.' 'To-day will be the day of what we both said.'