



Mending Wall

by Robert Frost

In a Nutshell

[Robert Frost](#) is one of America's most beloved poets, and "Mending Wall" is one of his most popular poems. This poem tells the tale of a rock wall which sits between two properties in the countryside. Something continually destroys this rock wall. A compelling aspect of "Mending Wall" is the Frostian sense of mystery and loneliness. What begins as a quest to discover the identity of the wall-destroyer, ends in a meditation on the value of tradition and boundaries.

"Mending Wall" is the first poem in [North of Boston](#), Frost's second book of poetry. This book was published when Frost was in England, rubbing elbows with the likes of [W.B. Yeats](#), [T.S. Eliot](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1948/eliot-bio.html), and [Ezra Pound](#). Frost was a contemporary of many modernist poetic movements, but he isn't associated with any particular group of poets. He marched to his own drummer, and as a result, he garnered a good deal of criticism from the literary world. But, it is precisely because he was such an individual and his voice so original that Frost became so beloved.

Born in [San Francisco](#), Frost moved to Massachusetts at age eleven following his father's death. He attended both [Dartmouth College](#) and [Harvard University](#), but never earned a college degree. He was, however, often invited to teach at Dartmouth and Harvard later on in his life. You know you're good when you get to teach college students without having a diploma yourself. After spending some time in England, Frost befriended a lot of poetic giants, including William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound. Frost won four [Pulitzer Prizes](#) in his lifetime, and he was asked to read a poem at [President John F. Kennedy's](http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/jk35.html) inauguration. If you are to randomly choose one of Frost's poems and read it aloud on a busy street, we bet that a bunch of people will recognize the poem instantly as Frost's - his sound and style is so unique.

Why Should I Care?

We just can't get enough of walls, can we? People love a good boundary. We love them when we're little, protecting our precious toys from our nosy, destructive siblings. As we get older, we begin to throw around the gentle term "personal space," as in "GET OUT OF MY ROOM!" In college, we REALLY learn how the "mi casa es tu casa" philosophy doesn't always result in happy roommate relationships. After we become adults with steady jobs and a lot of cool things in our garage, we often put up fences, gates, walls, or doors to protect our stuff and keep the peace. Walls help us protect ourselves, but their dratted downside is that they often keep people from communicating with each other.

"Mending Wall" makes us take a look at how we use our walls and boundaries, and why we use them the way we do. This poem sends a wake-up call to the universe. Think of it like a spring-cleaning project in which Frost, with broom and dust pan in hand, hopes to reevaluate the habits that humans can't seem to shake. Boundaries aren't necessarily a bad thing, this poem seems to tell us, as long as we occasionally question the purpose of our walls, or maybe just as long as we *question*.