Blurred Vision: “For Once, Then, Something”

Have you ever lost your train of thought? Did you think hard about something, then it just disappears into the blankness in your mind? You try to search for a purpose, a meaning of depth, but you slowly lose it. In the poem “For Once, Then, Something” by Robert Frost, the speakers search for truth gets lost in his reflection on the water’s surface. However, the author uses the image of the well water to show the speaker’s true colors. The author is proving that society and people have a huge effect on what you see in yourself, as well as fate and the environment around you.

In order to analyze the poem, we have to discuss the author first. Robert Frost is a writer of poetry and one of America’s leading 20th century poets (Frost). He has written and published many poems and children’s books, and Robert is also a four time winner of the Pulitzer Prize (“Frost”). Frost’s poems are centered on feelings of love and wonder forgotten in the pressures of day to day responsibilities (Robert Frost). In the poem “For Once, Then, Something,” the images that Frost shows cannot be easily perceived and the poem cannot be willingly understood (Frost 860). All the speaker can do is ask questions that have no certain answers (Frost 860).

In the poem “For Once, Then, Something,” Robert Frost uses the surface and depth as signifiers. Society and people have a huge impact on how you see yourself. Many people judge you on how you look and seem to be on the outside. They never really look further beyond you. If you ever heard the metaphor on to never judge a book by its cover, this is what the speaker
faces in their everyday life. People constantly judge him. The speaker encounters something that makes him almost finally see deep within himself but he never fully reaches it. In the poem, the first line shows how society and people judge him. As stated “Others taunt...Surface picture” (Frost ll. 1-4), this means that others taunt him because he is different and he only sees things one way which is the surface of his surroundings. He doesn’t see the truths, so because of this he cannot explore into the depths others claim to know. Viewing life in the way he does makes him wrong to the light. He never sees deeper down inside himself; he just sees what is looking back at him and what people are telling him to see. We also see in life mainly appearance, which is the surface that may not show what is reality or truth and the depth of our being (Robert Frost).

Never seeing what is deep down inside can lead you to question not only yourself, but life as well. If you spend your days just looking at the surface of things, it can lead to you wondering what is really beyond the reflection of the water. In the poem, the speaker then tries to think beyond the picture. As stated in the poem, the quote “Once… Beyond the picture” (Frost ll. 7-8) means that he finally chooses to see himself in a different view. The speaker then sees something white, which is pure, but he is still uncertain of what he sees. He doesn’t really know who he is; the whiteness he doesn’t recognize. As he is looking down the well, he feels Godlike, like he is looking down at the well from the sky. The speaker begins to feel bigger than anything. Then, a drop from a fern falls into the water, ruining his reflection in the process. He then loses what he began to see in himself. The speaker starts to question the whiteness and the truth that once was.

The environment around you can affect what happens in your life. Just like the drop of water that fell from the fern in the quote “Water...For once, then, something” (Frost ll. 11-15). Fate is what changes you and makes you wonder about the questions of life. If you are at a
certain place at a certain time, there can either be positive or negative outcomes. When the water fell into the well, blurring the speaker’s reflection, this is what happens in everyday life. Life makes you question yourself and who you really are. You never really know the answers though; you just have to keep trying to see what lies inside of you.

In conclusion, the speaker’s true colors are almost reached but lost. The author proved that society and people have a huge effect on what you see in yourself, as well as fate and the environment around you. When you lose your train of thought, don’t let it get you down; keep reaching for the truth within yourself. Don’t question what was there or what wasn’t. Life gives you questions that you will never know the answers to. Just remember to always look deep down within your being when life gets hard, just like the speaker did in the poem. Look past the surface. Do not let people taunt you and make you believe that you are something that you are not. Always remember that something good can come from a small drop of water blurring your reflection in a well.
Works Cited


