

Analysis of the hidden meaning of “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” poem through figurative languages

Hesti Wiranota^{1*}, Muhammad Nur Arifin²

¹Department of Indonesian Language, Faculty of Oriental Languages, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing, China; email: hestiwiranota.unib@gmail.com

²Department of English Literature, Faculty of Languages and Cultures, AKI University, Semarang, Indonesia; email: 77m.nurarifin@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening is a popular poem written by Robert Frost in the 20th century, which reflected the social aspects of human existence. The researchers used the library research to analyze the figurative languages, the hidden meaning, and their correlation in poetry. The authors considered the hidden meanings in the poetry studied, namely that people should not be lulled by the promise or beauty of the surrounding environment; instead, they must complete their tasks before their lives end. The hidden meaning could be seen in the following stanzas: the stanza 1 depicted somebody stopping in a snowy forest, the stanza 2 revealed the small horse questioning a stop in a forest far from the farmhouse, the stanza 3 described the small horse shaking its harness bell as a warning, and the stanza 4 showed the speaker's determination to continue his journey and fulfill his duties before the end of his life. The correlation between the hidden meaning of "the long journey of a human life" and the figurative language in the last two lines of the fourth stanza, an "allegory" that reads "and miles to go before I sleep" outlined the idea of a lifelong journey to complete one's task before the rest eternal.

Keywords: Figurative Language; Hidden Meaning; Poem, Social Aspect.

INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest literary genres in history is poetry. Poetry is about poems written in artistic value with the careful arrangement in the form (sound, rhyme, rhythm) and content (meaning) as it was highlighted from literature (Ferdinal et al., 2013; Memon et al., 2021; Laimena & Que, 2022). Mostly, poem is imaginative which is associated with connotative meaning. Pradopo (1999) and Sharma (2022) also affirmed that poetry is an indirect expression, which means the poem states one thing with another meaning. Meanwhile, person who makes poem is a poet, one of well-known poem in the 20th century is Robert Frost. Robert Frost is widely recognized as a poet who skillfully intertwines themes of social aspects and the personal connection of humans with nature (Tyagi, 2015; and Husaini & Dewi, 2021). "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" stands as one of his renowned poems from the 20th century that delves into both the personal and social aspects of nature (Tyagi, 2015). Wijayanto (2020) also stated that Robert's work Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening was one of his greatest work, it revolves around the beauty of a forest in the winter. Further, Frost is one of the notable craftsmen of the 20th century and he is often regarded as one who is clever at rewriting the conversions of classical pastoral poetry and capable of the

*Corresponding Author:
hestiwiranota.unib@gmail.com

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depiction of fields and farms of his surroundings and overusing the details of rural life (Wang, 2013; Jumino, 2019; Bokhari, 2020).

Furthermore, "The snow in the forest" which was stated by Wijayanto (2020) also a scope of nature. The personal aspect of human connection with nature in the poem has been further elucidated by Baym (1965), who labeled Frost as a "nature poet" and assumed that he embodied a variation of Emerson or Wordsworth, as if there was only one approach being a nature poet. Furthermore, Tyagi (2015) has demonstrated that Frost's poems also contain a social dimension, as exemplified by his statement, "In his poetry, we find a skillful combination of outer lightness and inner gravity. Frost is of the view that a poem begins in delight and ends with a wise idea". Tyagi's idea also supported by another researchers who also delivered that Robert Frost has been called a poet of humanity. Frost sees humanity from an interesting perspective (Makhbubakhon et al., 2022), and then providing warning and inspiration to people in modern society (Cao, 2023). Those ideas are correlated to Muzaffar's value where Robert Frost's poetry represented the themes that are still relevant to humanity today (Muzaffar, 2022).

Understanding from the perspectives of these two researchers, it became evident that Robert Frost's poems, including the one in question, encompass both natural and social dimensions, intending to resonate with readers. One of examples from natural and social dimension poem made by Robert Frost is *Stopping by woods on a snowy evening* where this poem has been examined by the previous researchers. The result showed that this work contained elements of nature personal and social aspect of human beings (Tyagi, 2015). Also, figurative language in which this language style made expressing meaning through writing easier and more relatable to the reader (Wang, 2013).

Based on the findings above, we can conclude that Robert frost's focus remained on man in nature and the beauty of language usage. This idea is line with Allen (1978) who stated that the unique of Frost's nature poetry represents his way of presenting man and nature along the usual lines of a contemporary poet.

The poem "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" by Robert Frost carried a deeply personal nature, with hidden meanings expressed throughout the poem's paragraphs. These concealed meanings can be deciphered through content analysis and an understanding of figurative language. According to Aprilianingrum (2019), figurative language employs non-literal meanings, often used by authors to convey their thoughts in diverse ways. These diverse ways may have different effects on readers as stated by Rohani et al. (2018), highlighting that figurative language is a language aspect in which an expression is stated in the opposite way than its usual way. This style may influence each reader to conclude the value of poem in different thought.

Figurative language encourages readers to move beyond the literal words on the page and is commonly employed in poetry, drama, and song lyrics, simply like contrast to literal language in which Its primary purpose is to force readers to imagine or intuit what an author means with an expression or statement (Sala-Suszyńska, 2016). A notable example of this is found in Robert Frost's "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*". Previous research conducted by Pambudi (2016) delved into the types of figurative language used in Robert Frost's poems and aimed to uncover the implied meanings within them. The researchers identified six types of figurative language and four implied meanings, which include conceptual, connotative, stylistic, and affective meanings.

However, it is important to note that these prior findings on figurative language and implied meanings may not fully capture the comprehensive meaning of the poem. Furthermore, a study by Ahmad et al. (2019) titled "*Stylistic Analysis of Robert Frost's Poem 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'*" revealed that the researchers identified five types of figurative language to elucidate the hidden meaning of the poem. However, these findings may not have fully unraveled the intricate connection between figurative language and the poem's concealed depths. Thus, this study endeavoured to build upon these foundations, offering a deeper exploration into the synergy of figurative language and the elusive meanings within "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*".

Additionally, Adi, (2020) presented the next set of findings, which focused on the symbols and themes within "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*". The symbols in

the poem were associated with nature and everyday life, while the theme revolved around a journey. However, this research did not specifically address the figurative language; it concentrated solely on uncovering the hidden meaning within "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*." To fully grasp the concealed meaning of the poem, it is essential to analyze its figurative language. Meanwhile, Wijayanto's (2020) research presented another discovery, revealing that the poem was more than just a descriptive portrayal of a man appreciating the beauty of nature. On a deeper level of comprehension and interpretation, it became a story of a man's struggle with nature. On the other hand, Bhat (2017) concluded that the poem "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" discussed the journey of lives, limits, and boundaries that humans normally go through. Different findings were found by Candilas (2016) where the researcher explored the new idea reflected Frost's frustrations and downfalls as drawn in the speaker's choice of a moment of solitude and isolation as he ventured to rediscover himself by observing and meditating on the scenic beauty of nature. It also revealed Frost's worth-emulating character of being a responsible father to his children and a husband to his wife. Previous researchers have found many different interpretations regarding the hidden meaning of Robert Frost's poetry based on their points of view which are supported by the thoughts of experts to reach conclusions. Based on the previous research studies mentioned above, it proposed the evident that prior examinations of "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" tended to focus either on its thematic meaning or its use of figurative language. In this study, the authors have chosen to delve into the hidden meaning of "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" by analyzing its figurative languages. The authors aim to establish connections between the figurative languages used and the poem's concealed meaning. Furthermore, in line with the principles outlined by Lestari in her book entitled "*Paradigma Penelitian*" (Lestari, 2019), considering that research is a scientific endeavor, it must be repeatable by other individuals or researchers in an effort to verify its validity. Research reports should be created systematically and with clarity so that they can be easily understood and accepted by others. In conclusion, the researchers have decided to expand their research to provide a more in-depth analysis of the hidden meaning of "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" through the exploration of figurative languages. Meanwhile this study would assist the other researchers to know the reasons deeper in this studied poem and aid the next investigators to investigate the hidden meaning of poem through analyzing the figurative languages.

METHODS

Library research is a research that utilizing library sources to obtain research data. This kind of research limits its activities only to library collection materials without the need for field research (Sari, 2018). Library research is usually used to collect information through the use of various materials from libraries such as documents, books, magazines, history, and so on. The researchers wrote down every stanza of the literary work then afterwards the authors described every part of the stanzas meaning based on symbol in the poetry (Girsang et al., 2023). Therefore, analyzing the hidden meaning in the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* which is conveyed by the writer implicitly tend to take advantages of materials from library to find the meaning of figurative languages. At this stage, the investigators collected the resources to analyze the hidden meaning of the studied poem through the figurative languages specifically. Figurative language uses words to imply another meaning. Wulandari (2015) asserted that figurative language is a stylistic element employed by poets to articulate and convey their emotions. It can be concluded that figurative language is frequently utilized in poetry and novels, as noted by Basuki & Saputri (2021), who stated that figurative language is prevalent in literary works, including novels and poetry. Additionally, according to Sihite (2016), figurative language consists of twelve categories, including simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, symbol, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, and irony. These categories convey various meanings: simile compares dissimilar entities using "like" or

"as" (e.g., "beautiful like an angel"); metaphor directly compares distinct entities without "like" or "as" (e.g., "The rain falls overnight"); personification endows non-human entities with human characteristics (e.g., "Her voice was as soft as silk"); apostrophe addresses absent or non-human entities as if animate and responsive (e.g., "the wind runs well when all the birds fly"); synecdoche refers to entities by material or container's name (e.g., "young leaves" symbolizing youth); metonymy uses elements closely related to the intended meaning (e.g., "he loves books so much" signifying a fondness for reading).

The second class includes: symbol imbues entities with meanings beyond literal definitions (e.g., "the old leaves will fall soon" suggesting decay); allegory involves narratives with concealed meanings (e.g., the cautionary tale of Icarus); paradox features seemingly contradictory statements containing truths (e.g., "all animals are equal, but some are more equal than others"); hyperbole employs exaggerations for rhetorical impact (e.g., "I am so hungry I could eat a horse"); understatement conveys less than intended (e.g., "I have only been married once," implying limited experience); and irony expresses meanings opposite to explicit statements (e.g., saying "How nice!" in response to working all weekend).

After completing the analysis of the figurative languages in the studied poem, the authors proceeded to discern the hidden meaning within it. Subsequently, the researchers sought to establish connections between the hidden meaning and the figurative languages employed in the poem. The last step was making the conclusion (Sonia, 2020) in which the researchers provided further explanations of the poem's content and the context of the figurative languages to establish their interrelation. Finding out the hidden meaning of the poem by analyzing the figurative languages could be done as follow. First and foremost, the authors analyzed what kind of symbol which was embedded in each sentence of stanza. After the kind of symbol was found, then the investigators concluded the meaning of the sentence. That procedure was done until the last sentence of the poem and some of the sentences may had the same symbol and some of them may had different symbols, however each sentence had different content. After all the meaning of every sentence had been discovered, finally the authors concluded the overall hidden meaning of the *Stopping by Woods on A Snowy Evening*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The poem of "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*" holds various meanings that can be interpreted differently by researchers, as they bring their own knowledge, perspectives, disciplinary backgrounds, and life experiences to their readings. For instance, Candilas (2016) emphasized that the poem is a multi-faceted literary work, allowing each reader to derive their own interpretation based on their literary preferences, comprehension, culture, and background knowledge. This implies that the exact meaning of a poem can be elusive, but the researchers in this study employed the library research method by analyzing the figurative languages embedded within the poem to find out the potential meanings in each stanza.

In this section, the authors presented the results of their analysis of the figurative languages used in Robert Frost's poem "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*." The poem showed a rich array of figurative language, and the following section delineated their findings:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village, though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,
But I have promise to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Table 1. Analysis of the poem

Analysis of Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening		
Sentence	Figurative Languages	Meaning
Whose <u>woods</u> these are I think I know	Symbol	In the first line, "woods" served as a symbol, indicating that the speaker is referring to a forest, and he assumed that he knew who owned these woods.
<u>His house</u> is in the village, though	-	-
He will not see me stopping here	-	-
To watch <u>his woods fill up with snow</u>	Hyperbole	The speaker mentioned that the woods were covered in snow, signifying that the woods had turned white due to the snowfall.
My <u>little horse</u> must think it queer	Personification	The speaker explained that the little horse's behavior indicated something was amiss, causing them to stop in the forest.
To stop without a <u>farmhouse near</u>	Symbol	The little horse believed that they were still a long way from the farmhouse.
Between the woods and frozen lake	Symbol	The speaker described the environment of that night, where he and the little horse stood between the woods and a frozen lake.
The <u>darkest evening of the year</u>	Hyperbole	The speaker noted that the night was the darkest of the year.
<u>He gives his harness bells</u> a shake	Personification	The little horse shook its harness bell, signaling the speaker.
<u>To ask</u> if there is some mistake	Personification	The little horse wondered why the speaker had stopped in that location.
The only other sound's the sweep	Apostrophe	The sweeping sound is like the wind sweeping the fallen leaves on the ground.
Of <u>easy wind</u> and downy flake	Apostrophe	The term "easy wind" suggests that the wind at that time was gentle, akin to silk.
The woods are <u>lovely, dark, and deep</u>	Symbol	The speaker portrayed the woods as dark yet enchanting.
But I have promise to keep,	Symbol	The speaker mentioned having a promise to fulfill.
And miles to go before I	Allegory	The speaker conveyed that he had a

sleep		long journey ahead before he could rest. There is a hidden meaning here; some people interpreted it as a reference to death, while others interpreted it as a need for rest.
And miles to go before I sleep	Repetition	The speaker conveyed that he had a long journey ahead before he could rest. There is a hidden meaning here; some people mentioned it as a reference to death, while others considered it as a need for rest.

Based on the results of the figurative language analysis of the "*Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*," the authors provided the interpretation of each stanza within the poem. To uncover the poem's underlying significance, the authors initiated their analysis, starting from the first stanza and progressing through to the last stanza, as outlined below:

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

According to the analysis in Table 1, the first stanza described the speaker who was stopping in snowy woods, while the owner of the woods lived in the village and was unaware of the speaker's presence in the forest to witness the snow-covered landscape. This stanza conveyed that the owner of the woods would not be aware that someone was stopping in his woods to admire the snow-covered forest at night. Moving on to the second stanza as follows:

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

Based on the analysis presented in Table 1, the second stanza illustrated that the speaker's small horse was apprehensive about stopping in the woods on this evening, especially when they were still some distances away from the farmhouse. This stanza showed that the small horse understood that the speaker had not chosen the right place to stop, as they were in the middle of the forest and near a frozen lake. This realization prompted the horse to remind the speaker to continue their journey until they reached their final destination. The subsequent conclusion can be found in the third stanza, which is as follows:

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The third stanza suggested that the little horse shook the harness bells, perhaps as a way to signal that something was amiss. The horse wondered why the speaker had halted in the forest, where only the sounds of the wind and falling snowflakes could be heard. To conclude the meaning of this stanza, the horse tried to urge the speaker not to stop in this comfortable place (the woods), where only the sounds of the sweeping wind and gentle snowflakes were present. The small horse thought that stopping here was a mistake. Moving on to the last stanza, it revealed the final hidden meaning of the poem:

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The fourth stanza explained that the speaker could not linger for an extended period to fully savor the snowy woods at night due to prior commitments, symbolized by the term "promises." In this context, the authors interpreted the "promise" mentioned in the fourth stanza as the responsibilities or tasks that a person must fulfill before their eventual demise. Additionally, the word "sleep" is interpreted as a metaphor for death. This interpretation aligns with the analysis by Tyagi (2015), which suggested that the speaker may desire to pass away in the midst of nature, becoming one with it.

In essence, the authors proposed that the speaker reflected on the journey of life before facing death, as indicated by the word "promise" that must be honored before entering into the "sleep" stage, symbolizing the act of dying. In this stanza, the speaker began to leave the woods because he realized he had a promise to fulfill and a long journey ahead before he could rest in "sleep".

Based on the results of the analysis of figurative languages and hidden meaning, the authors concluded that the poem explored the journey of life, emphasizing the importance of not becoming overly absorbed in the beauty of one's surroundings to the extent of forgetting the overarching life journey that must be completed. The line "And miles to go before I sleep" was interpreted as a representation of the long journey one must undertake before leaving this world, thus imbuing the last two lines of the fourth stanza with an allegorical expression and a deeper implicit meaning. These two lines also reinforced the researchers' ideas that this poem carried a concealed meaning, one that the author wanted to deliver implicitly to the readers: the necessity of completing essential tasks before facing death. This idea is further supported by the figurative languages found by the researchers in each stanza (Table 1).

Additionally, the authors conveyed, "Initially, the speaker, accompanied by a small horse, stopped in a woods filled with joy, loveliness, and darkness, illuminated only by the night's snowfall. The small horse shook its harness bells, questioning the reason for stopping in the woods, which remained distant from the farmhouse. Ultimately, the speaker decided to continue the journey for miles before resting." The researchers suggested that the speaker was attempting to convey a message: "Humans should not be seduced by the ephemeral beauty of existence but must fulfill their obligations before leaving this life." This sentence emphasized the idea that one's life journey should be fulfilled before it ends, without becoming too engrossed in fleeting beauty, and that individuals should not forget their essential responsibilities while avoiding excessive indulgence in the beauty they may encounter along the way to completing their mission.

The overall conclusion drawn is that this poem served as a reminder to individuals to fulfill their duties before their return to the divine, a conclusion supported by Tyagi (2015), who stated that "Sleep symbolizes death as an eternal slumber. It can be alluring, offering respite from worldly worries and responsibilities. Another researcher also confirmed that sleep winter again close to the power of death (Setiawan, 2014). For some people, sleep serves as a brief escape from life, while death represents the ultimate escape." This interpretation is further reinforced by the correlation between the third and the fourth lines of the fourth stanza, "And miles to go before I sleep" serving as allegory, and the human journey before death as a hidden meaning.

In addition, Sharma (2016) stated that series of concrete images which echo Robert Frost's poetry and intensify clarification of human life on the conceptions of the world of nature as well as Ambreen et al. (2020) concluded that Frost's poetry themes are realism, isolation, love for nature, and observation of human life. Therefore, the researchers figured the stopping by woods on a snowy evening is a poem which related to human life through nature love. Additionally, this poem reminds people that they should not be seduced by the beauty of their surroundings, which might lead them to lose control and neglect their unfinished journey. This underscored that "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" explores someone's journey and the obstacles encountered along the way before reaching the final destination. This poem taught us that the promise to keep is more important rather than enjoying the beauty around us.

This idea is in line with Elfira's value, the last two sentences not only warn the author but also remind us that keeping promises is more important than enjoying timeless. Therefore, we conclude that this poem told us about the journey should be continued and to be accomplished before life leave us.

CONCLUSION

As the researchers carried out a step-by-step analysis to arrive at their final result, the hidden meaning of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" conveyed a message that people should not forget their responsibilities and should not be seduced by the beauty of their surroundings. Instead, individuals should diligently complete their tasks before their eternal rest. The poem can be interpreted as an urging to uphold promises and fulfill one's duties as a human being. These interpretations can be discerned throughout the stanzas of the poem, as the speaker, who embarked on a journey, momentarily halted in a snowy wood to appreciate its captivating beauty. Nevertheless, he made the decision to continue his journey, driven by the obligation to complete a long task before life's end. This conclusion was reached by the researchers considering that the speaker still had a long way to go to accomplish his task; therefore, he decided to continue the journey despite the alluring surroundings at night. This poem contained the hidden meaning of one's journey to be fulfilled before facing death, as they stated, "in this poem, which embraced the archetypes of death and life, Frost envisioned the idea of death as a simpler, yet more approachable conception, which is "sleep". Based on the findings and ideas from previous studies, it can be said that this poem contained the moral value that one should not forget the main task of life to accomplish before life ends.

Clarifying the hidden meaning was derived from the findings of the figurative language analysis, as presented in [Table 1](#). The phrase "And miles to go before sleep" in the final two lines of the fourth stanza served as a symbolic indicator of an individual's extensive journey before attaining the eternal rest. The hidden meaning and the figurative language, specifically the allegory presented in the final two lines of the fourth stanza, were intertwined, reinforcing each other's significance. This hidden idea can be absorbed through analyzing the word "sleep", in which the researchers interpreted this word as a symbol for death because the speaker desired to stay longer in the forest that night but couldn't because he still had a long journey to accomplish before facing his final rest (death). Furthermore, this poem also delved into themes of life, nature, and journey, which can be observed through the figurative languages found in each stanza. Starting from the stanza 1, which reflected the speaker's fascination with the forest that night, the stanza 2 described the horse's surprise at stopping in the forest still far from its destination, and then the stanza 3, where the horse gave the signal by ringing a bell to urge the speaker not to stop in the middle of the forest but to continue his journey. Finally, the stanza 4 highlighted that the speaker had to continue his journey, despite the beautiful atmosphere in the forest that night, because he had a promise to fulfill before facing death (eternal sleep).

The Frost's poem focus on themes related to social aspects and the personal connection of humans with nature. Thus, it is evident that "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" delved into themes of nature, social aspects, and human existence, as the researchers discovered through their analysis of the figurative language. This research holds the potential to make significant contributions to both the realms of English literature and English education. Within the domain of English literature, this study promises to empower readers with the tools to explore the nuanced subtext and concealed messages woven within poetic works. In the field of English education, it assumes paramount importance as it underscores the notion that English students possess the ability to elevate their grasp of figurative language by immersing themselves in the analysis of poetry. Additionally, it offers invaluable resources for English educators, equipping them with the means to impart the skill of unraveling concealed meanings embedded within the figurative language employed by authors. Conversely, this study is poised to be highly advantageous for students, providing

them with insights on how to engage deeply with English literature, particularly poetry, to unearth hidden meanings. Future studies should address the behind reasons of poem writers wrote the researched poetry and dictions and aesthetics of poem.

CONFLICS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Wiranota, H.: Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), writing – original draft (lead), review (supporting). Arifin, M.N.: writing – original draft (supporting), review, (lead) editing (lead)

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