February 3, 2010

“Mending Wall” & “Home Burial” by Robert Frost

Most of Robert Frosts articles all point out a similar theme. Isolation and Difficulty in understanding existence seems to be valid in “Mending Wall” and “Home Burial.” Both characters in each poem have an opposing view of the other: both farmers, and the husband and wife.

**Themes and Issues**

**Perceptual Differences:**

*“Mending Wall”*

The two farmers have different points of view on building the wall. One farmer wonders the reason for building the wall. “There where it is we do not need the wall: He is all pine and I am apple orchard. My apple trees will never get across and eat the cones under his pines, I tell him” (23-26). The other farmer has an explanation for the wall and simply answers that the wall seems to have a beneficial purpose. “He only says, ‘Good fences make good neighbors.’” The first neighbor doesn’t understand why the other farmer thinks separating two lands will create a union between them.

* Discussion Question: Why do you think the farmer believes that building a wall between the two farms will make better neighbors?

*“ Home Burial”*

The husband and his wife seem to have opposing views on how to grieve their son. “If you had any feelings, you that dug with your own hand—how could you? —His little grave”(72-73). Amy, his wife stared down from the window watching her husband dig the grave of their own son; hurt and upset, she is astonished at how he can manage to do such a thing with subtlety. His wife is offended by how the husband is so calm about the death of their son, and manages to talk about the weather as if nothing happened.

* Discussion Question: Should the husband be blamed for his way of grieving?

**Grief:**

**“***Home Burial”*

Both characters in the poem have a different way of grieving over their child. Amy, his wife, appears to be more emotional, while the husband appears more accepting, resulting in their argument and miscommunication. “‘Three foggy mornings and one rainy day will rot the best birch fence a man can build”(92-93). The Husband mentions the weather pretending that what he did was normal, which offended his wife because of not sharing similar feelings. The man also seems to be confused of why he offended his wife. “I don’t know how to speak of anything so as to please you.” He asks his wife on how should he grieve (46-48).

**Literary Elements**

*“Mending Wall”*

* **Paradox: “**Good fences make good neighbors.” (27) How does separation of land and property unite neighbors, when building a wall creates a barrier?
* **Sarcasm: “**My apple trees will never get across and eat the cones under his pines” (25-26)