



CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION About the poet: Cecil Day Lewis was born in Ballintubber, in Ireland, in 1904 and died in 1972. He was educated at Wadham College, in Oxford, and later became a lecturer at the University of Cambridge. He also taught poetry at Oxford and Harvard universities. Lewis was named Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom in 1968. His poetry is characterised by the introduction of modern diction and often addresses relevant social issues of the time, as well as the nature of relationships. About this poem: This poem describes the appearance of a hard frost that formed overnight. Think of the patterns that frost forms on glass, and how it sparkles in the early morning sunlight. The speaker comments on how the world's appearance has been radically altered by the layer of frost, and in such a way that suddenly the surroundings seem almost spring-like (although the absolute opposite is the case). The glittering and sparkling of the reflected frost creates a bright image but, as the speaker admits, this is 'too brilliant to be true' (line 3). The speaker notes that as opposed to this fake appearance of spring, the 'real' spring is beginning to make itself felt unnoticeably underground. The poem suggests that life is ever-changing and that change and growth starts within a person him or herself and comes to the fore at the right time when needed.	IMAGERY METAPHOR – 1. 'A frost came in the night and stole my world/And left this changeling for it – a precocious/Image of spring, too brilliant to be true;' a changeling is a creature that is deceiving and this is the metaphor of the frost the poet creates, to be distrustful of it and its beauty. 2. 'But blossomers in crystal, stems of the mist' and 'The sun looks out, and the fields blaze with diamonds.' The mist is a metaphor for the ephemeral, those dreams that do not turn into reality and yet appear real. The diamonds appear to be a metaphor for the materialistic nature of people. EXTENDED METAPHOR – The poet uses 'frost' as an extended metaphor to compare the image of frost formed ice crystals to represent the superficial in the world which by appearance holds a lot of promise but prove to have no lasting value. SIMILE – 'blind tissue whence creation formed' is a comparison of the mist which is impenetrably thick, which limits sight. This is also indicative of the primitive matter from which nature formed. PERSONIFICATION – • 'came in the night and stole my world' – frost is personified to be like a sneaky thief. • 'the sun looks out' – the sun is compared to person who is looking out of a window observing the world that lay beneath. • 'mockery spring', 'bridal gear' and 'raw country maid' is a personification of the 'frost' as one who creates a wonderful but deceptive image that does not deliver on promise. • '... the stiff clods unclenches their/Grip on the seeds and lets out future breathe' the personification of soil as being a restrictive force broken by the frost is effective as the promise of new life is released. ALLITERATION - The alliteration of 'flounce and filigree' (line 15) suggests the disapproving tone of the speaker
STRUCTURE • The poem consists of two stanzas written in free verse of 9 and 10 lines each respectively. • The first stanza describes the scene and the second stanza gives a deeper insight and meaning of the first. • The use of enjambment creates a smooth flow as if the poet is thinking aloud describing the magical theme and its deeper meaning.	THEMES • Appearance vs reality – the beauty of frost is deceptive as it can be destructive too and life threatening too. However, given the right conditions it can facilitate a new beginning under the surface. • Personal growth and development - the scene is a metaphor for quiet personal growth that people undergo in adversity. Much of what we see as beautiful and worthy is actually an illusion, and truly important things in life are often things that are unseen and unappreciated.

TONE/MOOD

Mood: Contemplative and introspective

Tone: Distrustful/Dismissive/Uneasy/Disapproving/Positive/Satisfactory

1. The **distrust** is created by the image of the changeling, which looks attractive but is too good to be true.
2. The **dismissive** tone is evident in the knowledge that the beauty of the frost is not lasting.
3. The description of the mist makes him **uneasy** as he does not know what is hidden in it.
4. In lines 11-14, the tone becomes **disapproving** as the frost is indicative of a 'mockery' of a 'raw country maid' into thinking that beauty has been given to her but it will disappear and leave her disappointed and upset.
5. The ending is more **emphatic with a positive** tone at the realization of where the real change in nature is happening.
6. The last line has a **satisfactory** tone as he realizes that real change and transformation happens unseen.

DICTION

- Hard frost occurs when temperatures drop below freezing (-2 degrees celcius) and everything is coated in crystals, overnight. This is very beautiful, but also damaging to plants.
- The most prominent imagery created was snow, for example, 'brilliant', 'white', 'diamonds', 'bridal gear'....
- Things used to describe the hard frost were beautiful, shiny and bright. These were used to portray a beautiful scene of white snow spreading all over the forest. Usually the forest in winter gave people a sense of cruelty, harshness and lifeless, but after having a white frost coating on the dead trees, mountains, everything seemed to become glamorous and attractive.
- The imagery suggests spring flowers and the freshness of new growth, such as 'maydrift loading the hedge' (line 5) or 'blossomers in crystal' (line 7). Despite the glittering beauty, from the outset the speaker points out that this appearance is deceiving. He accuses the frost of theft as it has stolen away the expected scene and replaced it with a fake. The frost is given almost magical, mystical powers in its ability to accomplish this transformation.
- The personification of the last two lines crates an image of a contest of strength taking place beneath the ground where the earth is surrendering its frozen hold to the power of spring. This allows the seeds the chance to sprout, grow and break out of the soil to promise future life and growth.