



Please Return to:
Mrs. Mary Mueller / 4930 – 138th Circle / Apple Valley, MN 55124

Nothing Gold Can Stay

by Robert Lee Frost

Nature's first green is gold
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Literary Elements

Rhyme scheme is AABCCDD

Alliteration

- "Nature's first green is gold,"
- "Her hardest hue to hold," and
- "So dawn goes down to day."

Meter -- This is iambic trimeter. Interestingly, the first word, "Nature," inverts the iambic structure, which is commonly used when authors want to bring a particular word to the reader's attention.

Allusion -- "So Eden sank to grief" -- This refers to the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve brought death into the world by giving in to the temptation of the serpent, in the Old Testament. This allusion shows how fleeting the perfect and the ideal are in our world.

Personification -- referring to Nature as a female. This is a long-standing association with the idea of "Mother Nature" providing sustenance to our world.

Theme: "Nothing Gold Can Stay" addresses the fragility of nature – the cycle of nature is such that all good things must pass away. What is ideal (or innocent & pure) is fleeting in this world and gives way to suffering, grief, eventually death.

- "leaf subsides to leaf" ("leaves leave") = green leaves do not last forever
- "Eden sank to grief" = the innocence & purity of Eden eventually ended and humanity was thrust into the world where suffering exists.

The poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" in the novel *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton

Robert Frost's poem "Nothing God Can Stay" is an important part of the novel *The Outsiders* by S. E. Hinton. It is the primary vehicle by which one of the main themes of the novel is revealed to the reader.

In the following excerpt, the protagonist Ponyboy and his friend and fellow gang member Johnny are hiding out from police in an old abandoned church....

Excerpt from Chapter Five:

One morning I woke up earlier than usual. Johnny and I slept huddled' together for warmth--Dally had been right when he said it would get cold where we were going. Being careful not to wake Johnny up, I went to sit on the steps and smoke a cigarette. The dawn was coming then. All the lower valley was covered with mist, and sometimes little pieces of it broke off and floated away in small clouds. The sky was lighter in the east, and the horizon was a thin golden line. The clouds changed from gray to pink, and the mist was touched with gold. There was a silent moment when everything held its breath, and then the sun rose. It was beautiful.

"Golly"--Johnny's voice beside me made me jump--"that sure was pretty."

"Yeah." I sighed, wishing I had some paint to do a picture with while the sight was still fresh in my mind.

"The mist was what was pretty," Johnny said. "All gold and silver."

"Uhhmmm," I said, trying to blow a smoke ring.

"Too bad it couldn't stay like that all the time."

"Nothing gold can stay." I was remembering a poem I'd read once.

"What?"

"Nature's first green is gold, Her hardest hue to hold. Her early leafs a flower, But only so an hour. Then leaf subsides to leaf. So Eden sank to grief So dawn goes down to day. Nothing gold can stay."

Johnny was staring at me. "Where'd you learn that? That was what I meant."

And then near the end of the novel, Frost's poem is referenced again....

Excerpt from Chapter Nine:

We ran through the lobby and crowded past people into the elevator. Several people yelled at us, I think because we were pretty racked-up looking, but Dally had nothing on his mind except Johnny, and I was too mixed up to know anything but that I had to follow Dally. When we finally got to Johnny's room, the doctor stopped us. "I'm sorry, boys, but he's dying."

"We gotta see him," Dally said, and flicked out Two-Bit's switchblade. His voice was shaking. "We're gonna see him and if you give me any static you'll end up on your own operatin' table."

The doctor didn't bat an eye. "You can see him, but it's because you're his friends, not because of that knife."

Dally looked at him for a second, then put the knife back in his pocket. We both went into Johnny's room, standing there for a second, getting our breath back in heavy gulps. It was awful quiet. It was scary quiet. I looked at Johnny. He was very still, and for a moment I thought in agony: He's dead already. We're too late.

Dally swallowed, wiping the sweat off his upper lip. "Johnnycake?" he said in a hoarse voice. "Johnny?"

Johnny stirred weakly, then opened his eyes. "Hey," he managed softly.

"We won," Dally panted. "We beat the Socs. We stomped them--chased them outa our territory."

Johnny didn't even try to grin at him. "Useless... fighting's no good...." He was awful white.

Dally licked his lips nervously. "They're still writing editorials about you in the paper. For being a hero and all." He was talking too fast and too calmly. "Yeah, they're calling you a hero now and heroizin' all the greasers. We're all proud of you, buddy."

Johnny's eyes glowed. Dally was proud of him. That was all Johnny had ever wanted.

"Ponyboy."

I barely heard him. I came closer and leaned over to hear what he was going to say.

"Stay gold, Ponyboy. Stay gold..." The pillow seemed to sink a little, and Johnny died.

You read about people looking peacefully asleep when they're dead, but they don't. Johnny just looked dead. Like a candle with the flame gone. I tried to say something, but I couldn't make a sound.

Johnny now senses the uselessness of fighting; he knows that Ponyboy is better than the average hoodlum, and he wants Ponyboy to hold onto the golden qualities that set him apart from his companions. Johnny urges Ponyboy to remain true to himself and thereby 'stay gold' in spite of the gang violence around him.