

**For Once, Then, Something**  
**Robert Frost**

*In Indian philosophy, there is a concept called “the veil of Maya.” It is a way of describing the illusory nature of the phenomena that we, from our limited, subjective perspective, think of as reality. This veil prevents us from seeing the true reality that lies beneath it, and enlightenment consists of piercing this veil and gaining insight into the illusory nature of our perceptions.*

Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs  
Always wrong to the light, so never seeing  
Deeper down in the well than where the water  
Gives me back in a shining surface picture  
5 Me myself in the summer heaven, godlike,  
Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.  
*Once*, when trying with chin against a well-curb,  
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,  
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,  
10 Something more of the depths—and then I lost it.  
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.  
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple  
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,  
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?  
15 Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

Describe the form and structure of the poem. Does it have a specific meter, and if so, what is it? Does it have a rhyme scheme, and if so, what is it? What significance do you think these choices by the author have? How is the poem structured in terms of lines and stanzas? Does this structure seem to have any particular significance?

What does the author’s use of the phrase “for once” imply? Why do you think the word “once” is italicized in line 7?

Why do you think the author uses the vague word “something” in the title?

What can we infer from the poem about the narrator’s character and personality? What do lines 4-5 indicate about people’s usual state of mind?

What literary device is used in line 11, and what is the narrator implying by describing the water in this way?

Why do you think the narrator juxtaposes “truth” and “a pebble of quartz” in line 15?

What does the well symbolize in the poem? What does light symbolize? What does it mean that the narrator is “wrong to the light” (line 2)?