

Acquainted with the Night

Robert Frost

When reading this poem, keep in mind that there is nothing inevitable or accidental about any of the details that the speaker chooses to include; all of them are very deliberate choices intended to convey information to the reader about the speaker's psychological state.

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
5 I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

10 But not to call me back or say good-by;
And further still at an unearthly height
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

Questions for Discussion and Writing

1. 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? How is the poem structured in terms of lines and stanzas? Do these structural aspects of the poem contribute to its effect in any way?
2. Describe the overall **tone** of the poem.
3. What do “night” and “light” **symbolize** in the poem? What does the speaker intend “acquainted with the night” to mean? What is the effect of the narrator’s choice of the word “acquainted”? What **rhetorical devices** does the phrase “acquainted with the night” contain?
4. What does “rain” symbolize, and what is the meaning of line 2?
5. In what sense(s) do you think the city lane mentioned in line 4 can be sad?
6. What do you think the speaker is “unwilling to explain” (line 6), and why?
7. What is the significance of an “interrupted cry” (line 8) from far away, and how does this detail add to the **tone** of the poem? What does the comment “but not to call me back or say good-by” (line 10) imply about the speaker’s state of mind?
8. What do you think the term “clock” (line 12) represents? (Consider the significance of the narrator’s choice of the words “unearthly” and “luminary” when describing it.) Why do you think the narrator feels that according to the clock, “the time was neither wrong nor right” (line 13)?