

# Through the Eyes of Robert Frost

## Mount Holyoke Range State Park

### SELF-GUIDED INTERPRETIVE TRAIL

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#### Welcome

In your everyday hustle, have you ever just stopped to take a minute away from the busy world? The Mount Holyoke Range State Park invites you to do exactly that. Its natural, cultural, and historic treasures can take us beyond their stories and scenic views to a place of inspiration.

The younger we are the easier inspiration seems. It can come from almost anything; the sounds of crickets, climbing a tree, biting into a crisp apple. Think about what really inspires you now. The natural world inspired Robert Frost's (1874-1963) iconic poetry. He spent a lot of time outdoors, living in rural New England most of his life. Frost spent a good part of his life in Massachusetts, teaching English nearby at Amherst College on and off between 1917-1938. The Robert Frost Trail honors his Massachusetts connection.

Frost deeply understood both the environment and human nature. Through his words we see nature's details and feel its sensations. He reveals human reaction to natural processes in sometimes surprising ways. He puts these thoughts into verses with unique rhythm and rhyme. Life frequently challenged Robert Frost. Poetry gave him a purpose and the inspiration to carry on.

This hike is a chance to experience his vision. To better understand what nature gives back to you. Use this guide to join Robert Frost on a little journey. See the world from his eyes. Take in the beauty beyond hiking to a peak; you don't need a scenic view to find beauty in nature. Appreciate what is all around you, what you have here and now.

#### About the Trail

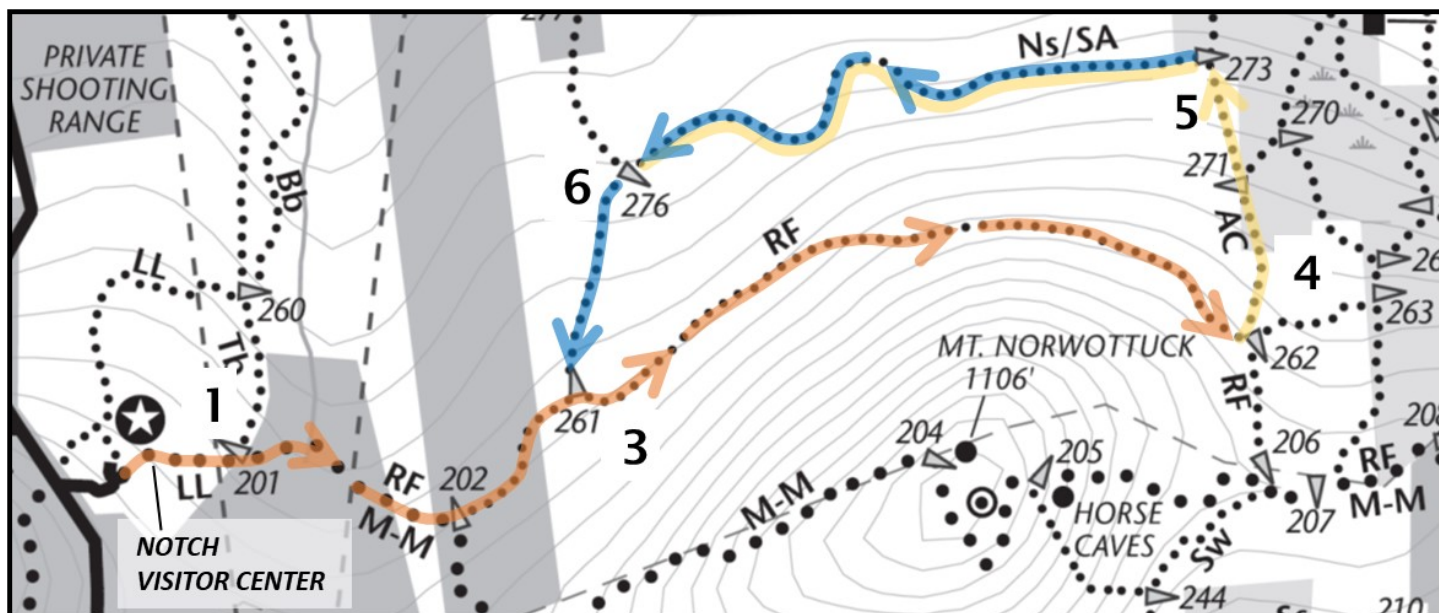
The trailhead is located at Mount Holyoke Range State Park, Notch Visitor Center, 1500 West St, Amherst, MA. Begin and end at the kiosk. The trail itself starts behind the shed. The trail is an **easy to moderate hike** (see map below). Total length is about **4 miles, round-trip**. Plan on spending about **1.5 hours** if hiking at a moderate pace. Elevation Gain is about **450 ft**.

**OPTION:** For a shorter hike, about **3.15 miles, round-trip** about **40 minutes**, stay only on the Robert Frost Trail. At LID 262 turn around and return back the way you came.

This self-guided trail has six stops, each located at a designated LIDs sign (see Map and Wayfinding description below). Take a moment to read the poem and enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds you. While exploring these trails think about what inspires you. Maybe write a poem of your own!



*Robert Frost as a young adult about 1892 (left); gaining recognition about 1910 (middle); as elder poet about 1936 (right).*



*Follow the orange, yellow, yellow/blue, and blue trail blazes, and trail signage.*

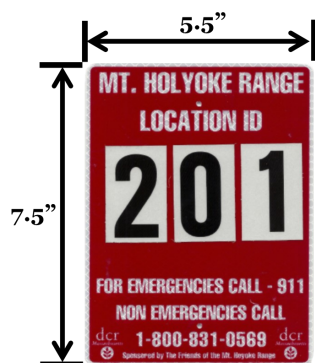
## Things To Know

- Before hiking please read the **Understanding Trail Signs** poster on the kiosk.
- Please stay on designated trails. Be aware there is a private shooting range nearby.
- Leave only footprints, take only pictures.
- Observe all posted rules and regulations.
- Be aware of hunting seasons and wear blaze orange when appropriate.
- Bug spray is recommended. Always check for ticks.

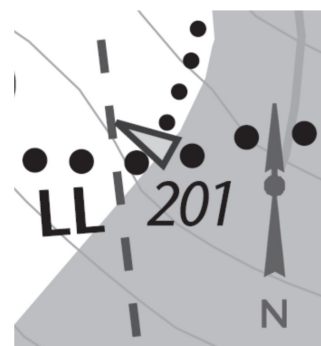
## Wayfinding

A **Location Identification (LID)** system is used at this park (see **right**). LID signs are posted on trees at key intersections. LID locations correspond to the park's trail map. There are also **painted trail blazes** that correlate to specific trail names and colors. These are mostly seen on trees, but may be on rocks too. Keep an eye out for these markers during your hike to keep you on your path.

This is only a short section of the larger 47-mile-long **Robert Frost Trail** through the Connecticut River Valley. Perhaps today's hike may inspire you to expand your horizons!



*Look for an LID sign at a trail intersection.*



*LID 201 shown on the trail map. You are facing west-northwest when looking at this LID sign.*



*Trail takes LEFT turn*

*Trail takes RIGHT turn*



*Trail blazes: Here you are following three overlapping trails marked in orange, white and blue.*

## 1.) Fountain of Life ( LID 201 )

Walk to your left on the blue trail for a few minutes. Take a closer look through the trees, to see a hidden pool, peaceful and still. This is where life begins for many creatures and some return, for here, a small world exists. Although Frost was born in San Francisco, California, his family was from New England. They returned to Massachusetts, to Lawrence, where he spent his youth, molded into the person he would become.

### Spring Pools

These pools that, though in forests, still reflect  
 The total sky almost without defect,  
 And like the flowers beside them, chill and shiver,  
 Will like the flowers beside them soon be gone,  
 And yet not out by any brook or river,  
 But up by roots to bring dark foliage on.  
 The trees that have it in their pent-up buds  
 To darken nature and be summer woods —  
 Let them think twice before they use their powers  
 To blot out and drink up and sweep away  
 These flowery waters and these watery flowers  
 From snow that melted only yesterday.



Return to the LID 201 intersection. Continue straight across the path from where you came, on the orange blazed trail.

## 2.) Take Nothing for Granted ( LID 202—stay to the left )

Look for some logs. Maybe take a seat for a moment. You never know when you'll meet your soul-mate. Frost met his future wife in high school. They married on December 19, 1895. But life isn't always fair, tomorrow isn't promised. Their countdown together began with only 43 years on that clock. So, take a moment and listen; for it is the little things you miss when they are gone.

### The Oven Bird

There is a singer everyone has heard,  
 Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,  
 Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.  
 He says that leaves are old and that for flowers  
 Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.  
 He says the early petal-fall is past  
 When pear and cherry bloom went down in  
 showers

On sunny days a moment overcast;  
 And comes that other fall we name the fall.  
 He says the highway dust is over all.  
 The bird would cease and be as other birds  
 But that he knows in singing not to sing.  
 The question that he frames in all but words  
 Is what to make of a diminished thing.

### 3.) A Fork in the Road ( LID 261 )

Every day you make decisions. You never know where they may ultimately lead you. Sometimes, all you can do is follow your heart.

Frost made many decisions in his life. He moved many times and taught at a few places. But he found a special connection teaching at Amherst. He continued giving his time to the college until the end of his life. The college's library is named in his honor.



#### The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

**Doing the loop:** Here you too have a decision to make. Choose left or right to follow the loop. You might be surprised to discover that going up and down the same path could look so different. You notice different things that you might not have seen going the other way. That could make all the difference!

**\*Please note:** this guide is designed to flow to the right, following the Robert Frost Trail (orange blaze). *But*, if you choose to go left (in reverse, following the blue trail blazes) then skip to stop numbers 6 then 5 and 4, and the corresponding LIDs.

### 4.) Obstacles ( LID 262 )

Every feel like your luck is down? It may seem like the world is against you. Remember the difference between an obstacle and an opportunity is all about your attitude.

Frost spent his first 40 years an unknown poet. He was constantly met with criticism and rejection. But he never gave up. He kept finding inspiration and writing. His reputation as a poet was finally established by 1915.

## On a Tree Fallen Across the Road

The tree the tempest with a crash of wood  
 Throws down in front of us is not bar  
 Our passage to our journey's end for good,  
 But just to ask us who we think we are

Insisting always on our own way so.  
 She likes to halt us in our runner tracks,  
 And make us get down in a foot of snow  
 Debating what to do without an ax.

And yet she knows obstruction is in vain:  
 We will not be put off the final goal  
 We have it hidden in us to attain,  
 Not though we have to seize earth by the pole

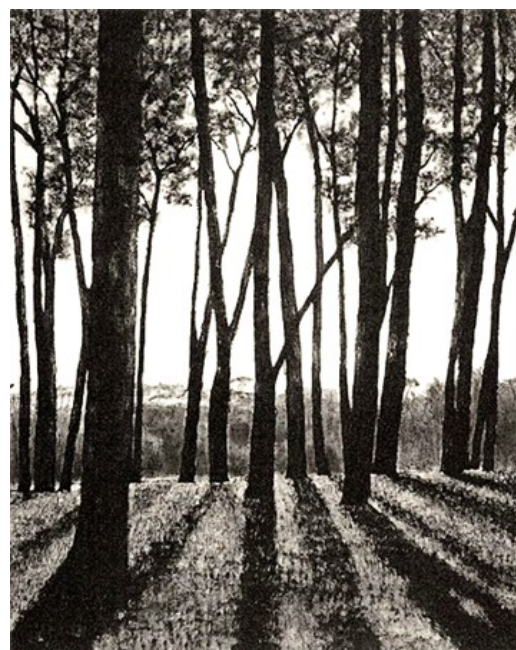
And, tired of aimless circling in one place,  
 Steer straight off after something into space.

## 5.) Everything Has Its Time (LID 273)

Take a look around. You probably notice the flowers first if there are any blooming, or maybe the big trees. But keep looking. See the green peeking through the dead leaves? Look up at the individual leaves attached to branches. Then try looking down, maybe you see a mushroom or two hiding?

There is so much that makes up this world that each and every part is important—and has its time. Spring flowers, summer growth, fall foliage, the rainfall brings mushrooms, even winter brings out the trees bark and unique textures of each species. Not everything gets to shine all at once.

After persevering to do what Frost loved for so long his time had come. He was finally heard, seen, and recognized as a writer. He was honored and celebrated. His poems have touched millions of people since.



### Leaves Compared with Flowers

A tree's leaves may be ever so good,  
 So may its bar, so may its wood;  
 But unless you put the right thing to its root  
 It never will show much flower or fruit.

But I may be one who does not care  
 Ever to have tree bloom or bear.  
 Leaves for smooth and bark for rough,  
 Leaves and bark may be tree enough.

Some giant trees have bloom so small  
 They might as well have none at all.  
 Late in life I have come on fern.  
 Now lichens are due to have their turn.

I bade men tell me which in brief,  
 Which is fairer, flower or leaf.  
 They did not have the wit to say,

Leaves by night and flowers by day.  
 Leaves and bar, leaves and bark,  
 To lean against and hear in the dark.  
 Petals I may have once pursued.  
 Leaves are all my darker mood.

## 6.) Impermanence ( LID 276 )

Time comes where our journey together ends. Just as many things in life end; some may challenge us more than others. Allow it to help you grow. Let it remind you to appreciate what you have today— even if it is for just this moment. Take a deep breath...and just exist in this moment.

Frost did not have an easy life. Aside from his growth as a writer, his wife passed away in 1938 at an early age. Of his 6 children, only two survived him. He was a strong man and learned the hard way—from experience. And he let that part of him keep moving him forward.

### Nothing Gold Can Stay

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.



We hope you enjoyed this self-guided tour. But it doesn't need to end. Take this thought with you— sometimes in order to see what you have been missing you need to see it through someone else's eyes.

**TO RETURN:** Continue to the left and follow the blue blazes back to LIDs 261 and then 202 (stay right if you finished the loop) and return on the orange blazed trail. This brings you back to the start of the trail at the Notch Visitor Center.

To further explore the poetry of Robert Frost visit: [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-frost](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-frost).

Imagery sources: [www.robertfrost.org/](http://www.robertfrost.org/); Photos/Illustrations: Terri Windling, April Gornik, E Lewis Hedley, John Fullwood, Janet Andrews, and Paolo Gheri.

Mount Holyoke Range State Park is managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). DCR oversees over 450,000 acres of state parks, forests, beaches, bike trails, parkways, watershed lands, and dams across the Commonwealth. DCR's mission is: *To protect, promote and enhance our commonwealth of natural, cultural and recreational resources for the well-being of all.*

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