

These first few lines describe the disagreement in general society on the topic of how the world ends. In a modern sense, "fire" and "ice" could well be stand-ins for "nuclear disaster" and "climate change." Frost's use of "fire" and "ice," however, is largely a metaphoric decision that opens the poem up to different kinds of interpretation. The speaker recalls their experiences with a strong desire and tends to believe that it is those kinds of emotions and impulses that lead the world down its irrevocable path. Ice and fire also represent two extremes which, on a grand enough scale, could cause immense damage, and are fitting metaphors for harbingers of death. Here the speaker provides their own opinion -- they equate fire with desire, which is to suggest that it is equal with passions, with greed, with rage. As an opposite to a burning flame, a chilling sheen of ice represents hatred to the speaker. Ice and fire, of course, are opposites of one another, suggesting that most people have entirely opposing views on the apocalypse -- after all, the world can't end in ice and fire at the same time. They believe the world will burn, in one form or the other, and that would end it -- but if it didn't end, and the fire wasn't enough, the remainder of the poem says, then they believe the ice could manage the feat as well. It is a fitting analogy -- in a candle or a fireplace, fire shows a person the way. Fire is being used as a metaphor for strong, consuming emotions such as desire. On a large scale, however, fire consumes and destroys, and so too does desire. It is warmth and light. For the speaker, the world will end in fire.