

Out, Out-
By Robert Frost

The buzz saw rattled and snarled in the yard
And made dust and dropped stove length sticks of wood,
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.
And from there those that lifted eyes could count
Five mountain ranges one behind the other 5
Under the sunset far into Vermont,
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.
And nothing happened: day was all but done.
Call it a day, I wish they might have said 10
To please the boy by giving him the half hour
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.
His sister stood beside them in her apron
To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw,
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant, 15
Leaped out at boy's hand, or seemed to leap—
He must have given the hand. However it was,
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!
The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,
As he swung toward them holding up the hand 20
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—
Since he was old enough to know, big boy
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—
He saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off—
The doctor when he comes. Don't let him, sister!" 25
So. But the hand was gone already.
The doctor put him in a dark of ether.
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.
And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.
No one believed. They listed at his heart. 30
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.
No more to build on there. And they since they
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

listed = listened

The title of this poem is an allusion to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Macbeth, when hearing about the death of his wife, delivers these lines:

Out, out brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more.
It is a tale, told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

To prepare for class discussion:

1. Read the poem seeking to understand it.
2. Go back and paraphrase the poem, explaining what is happening from the beginning to the end. Hint: Break poem into logical segments and paraphrase each segment separately using line numbers. For example, the first logical segment is lines 1-3.
3. Using poetry analysis techniques learned this year, identify elements you could discuss in class.
4. Additionally, consider how this poem relates to the *Macbeth* passage.

