



▲ Frost's poetry draws upon life in rural New England, USA.

## 'OUT, OUT —' ROBERT FROST

### BACKGROUND

Robert Frost (1874–1963) was one of the major American poets of the 20th century. His poetry is based mainly on the life and scenery of rural New England. 'Out, Out –' was published in the collection *Mountain Interval* in 1916.

The setting of this poem is a farm. The scenery around the farm is beautiful. Life is too hard for it to be enjoyed fully by the family, even by the young son, who has to work all day cutting up wood with a buzz saw. It is believed that Frost based the poem on a real incident that he read about in a newspaper.

### BEFORE YOU START READING

- 1 You can find out more about Robert Frost and his poetry from reference books or on the internet. You could read some more of his poems, which will help you to understand the sort of subjects that he wrote about. These include 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', 'Mending Wall', and 'Meeting and Passing'.
- 2 Think about the way a newspaper would describe this tragic event in comparison with how the poet presents the incident.

### ▼ 'OUT, OUT —' BY ROBERT FROST

The buzz saw snarled and rattled 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  
 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  
 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,

5

10

15