

### **The Gift Outright (1942) *By Robert Frost***

[1]       The land was ours before we were the land's.  
[2]       She was our land more than a hundred years  
[3]       Before we were her people. She was ours  
[4]       In Massachusetts, in Virginia,  
[5]       But we were England's, still colonials,  
[6]       Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,  
[7]       Possessed by what we now no more possessed.  
[8]       Something we were withholding made us weak  
[9]       Until we found out that it was ourselves  
[10]      We were withholding from our land of living,  
[11]      And forthwith found salvation in surrender.  
[12]      Such as we were we gave ourselves outright  
[13]      (The deed of gift was many deeds of war)  
[14]      To the land vaguely realizing westward,  
[15]      But still unstoried, artless, unenhanced,  
[16]      Such as she was, such as she would become.



Robert Frost reciting “The Gift Outright” at President John F. Kennedy’s inauguration, January 20, 1961

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