

Nature's	First	Green	Is	Gold
	Initial (Sequence)	Green (Color)		Gold (Color)
	Best (Value)	Greenery (Foliage)		Gold (Precious Metal)
	Foundational (Growth)	Nature		Value
		Life		Money
		Growth		Beauty
		Fertility		Perfection
		Spring		Autumn
		Money		Death
		Value		God
		Luck		The Golden Age
		Jealousy		

Green is often associated with nature, life, growth, fertility, and springtime. It can also be connected to money, value, luck, and jealousy. Gold, like green, is also associated with value and money. Gold can also be connected to beauty, perfection, the Golden Age, god, autumn, and—through autumn—death. The word “first,” too, has multiple meanings. We usually understand the word “first” to mean the initial thing, but it can also imply best or foundational.

When you mix and match the various associations, possible meanings of the poem’s first line sprout up like so many saplings. For example, if you take “green” to be metaphorical for life or growth, you might say the line means that nature’s initial life or growth is gold-colored. This is true for a number of New England trees, like the birch and willow, which begin life not as green but as a yellowish gold. But it’s also possible to take the line in the opposite direction by imagining “gold” metaphorically and “green” literally. Then, the first line isn’t about the color gold at all: nature’s initial green-growth is valuable, beautiful, or perfect. If you take both “green” and “gold” as metaphors, then you might determine that nature’s initial life or growth, no matter its color, is valuable, beautiful, or perfect.

Regardless of which of these interpretations the reader settles on, the poem’s opening allows for the emergence of a whole network of growth. The opening line is beautiful precisely *because* of its seemingly infinite potential, an idea the poem will return to throughout its eight lines.