



Photo by D. QUINCY WHITNEY

Robert Frost (1874-1963), class of 1896, by George Lundeen, 1948.

# Poetry, Coding and the Brain

## Can you program joy?

*"Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words."* – Robert Frost

Robert Frost: "Two roads diverged in a wood. ..."

Often, thinking outside the box and taking the other less travelled road leads to new visions and unexpected solutions that challenge what we thought we knew.

Meera Kurup, a Merrimack junior at Bishop Guertin High School, loves computing and poetry, so when she began volunteering to work with Alzheimer's residents in the Poetry Club at the Huntington, she began by reciting some well-known poetry to them. She was surprised to see residents perk up at the first line of a familiar poem – it was



D. QUINCY WHITNEY

as if they were reaching back to call up a lost tune they once played on the piano.

"I noticed they would suddenly pay attention, even start reciting the poem along with me, word for word. They

were suddenly engaged – and happy! They may not be able to use a fork or a spoon, but they could recite poetry! That got me thinking," explained Kurup, who merged her two passions to create ALZPoetry, an app allowing Alzheimer's patients to listen to poetry recorded by their family members to bring happiness and enjoyment while hopefully inciting old memories.

Kilmer: "I think that I shall never see / a poem as lovely as a tree. ..."

For her app, the National Center for Women & Information Technology awarded Kurup 2017 and 2018 Regional Awards and a National Honorable Mention in the Aspirations in Computing competition.

WHITNEY | PAGE A-5