Exercise 18

A tuning fork may be regarded as a pair of vibrating flexible bars with a certain degree of stiffness. Each such bar is clamped at one end and is approximately modeled by the fourth-order PDE $u_{tt} + c^2 u_{xxxx} = 0$. It has initial conditions as for the wave equation. Let's say that on the end $x = 0$ it is clamped (fixed), meaning that it satisfies $u(0, t) = u_x(0, t) = 0$. On the other end $x = l$ it is free, meaning that it satisfies $u_{xx}(l, t) = u_{xxx}(l, t) = 0$. Thus there are a total of four boundary conditions, two at each end.

(a) Separate the time and space variables to get the eigenvalue problem $X'''' = \lambda X$.

(b) Show that zero is not an eigenvalue.

(c) Assuming that all the eigenvalues are positive, write them as $\lambda = \beta^4$ and find the equation for β.

(d) Find the frequencies of vibration.

(e) Compare your answer in part (d) with the overtones of the vibrating string by looking at the ratio β_2^2/β_1^2. Explain why you hear an almost pure tone when you listen to a tuning fork.