

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

By-:

Robert Frost



About the poet.....



Robert Lee Frost (March 26, 1874 – January 29, 1963) was an American poet. He is highly regarded for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech. His work frequently employed settings from rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes. A popular and often-quoted poet, Frost was honored frequently during his lifetime, receiving four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry.

POEM.....

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

MEANING

Line 1

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

Our speaker is describing a fork in the road.

The woods are yellow, which means that it's probably fall and the leaves are turning colors.

"Diverged" is just another word for split. There's a fork in the road.

Lines 2-3

*And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood*

The speaker wants to go down both roads at once, but since it's impossible to walk down two roads at once.

He has to choose one road.

The speaker is "sorry" he can't travel both roads, suggesting regret.

Because of the impossibility of traveling both roads, the speaker stands there trying to choose which path he's going to take. Because he's standing, we know that he's on foot, and not in a carriage or a car.

Lines 4-5

*And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

The speaker really wants to go down both paths – he's thinking hard about his choice. He's staring down one road, trying to see where it goes. But he can only see up to the first bend, where the undergrowth, the small plants and greenery of the woods, blocks his view. Since he can't really predict the future, he can only see part of the path. Who knows what surprises it could hold?

Line 6

Then took the other, as just as fair,

So after all this buildup about one road, which he's looked down for a long time, our speaker takes the other path.

In the metaphorical world of this poem, he thinks he made the fair, or right, choice.

But it's not fairer – it's just as fair. So he was choosing between two roads, or futures, that were different but potentially equally good.

Lines 7-8

*And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;*

The speaker still seems pretty uncertain when he explains that this second path is better. It is only "perhaps" better.

Then the speaker tells us why the path is better – it seems like it hasn't been walked on very much, because it's grassy and doesn't look worn.

Lines 9-10

*Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,*

The speaker of this poem really can't seem to make up his mind! Just when we think we've got a declaration about which path is better, he changes his mind and admits that maybe they were equal after all.

The "as for that" refers to the path being less worn.

"The passing there" refers to traffic, probably on foot just like our speaker, that may have worn the paths down.

Lines 11-12

*And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.*

Here, again, we hear that the paths are equal, but we find out something new, that it's morning. It's possible that our speaker is the first to travel to this place on that day.

The paths are covered with leaves, which haven't been turned black by steps crushing them.

Line 13

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

The speaker seems like he's already regretting his decision. He is rationalizing his choice of path by saying he'll come back to the one he missed later. This is a familiar way to deal with difficult choices; "you can always come back and try it again later," we think.

Lines 14-15

*Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

The speaker realizes that his hopes to come back and try the other path may be foolish.

He knows how "way leads on to way" – how one road can lead to another, and then another, until you end up very far from where you started. Because of this, he doesn't think he'll ever be able to come back and take that other path, as much as he wishes he could.

Lines 16-17

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

We don't know exactly when, but we know that it's ages and ages "hence," or, from now. So, we know that this choice is probably going to be important for the speaker's future.

Line 18

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

This line is a repetition of the first line of the poem. This repetition helps to bring the poem to a conclusion. It reminds us what's important in the poem – the concept of choosing between two different paths.

Line 19

I took the one less traveled by,

In this line, the speaker sums up his story and tells us that he took the road less traveled by. With the hesitation in the line before, this declaration could be triumphant – or regretful.

Line 20

And that has made all the difference.

At first glance it seems that this line is triumphant – the narrator took the path that no one else did, and that is what has made the difference in his life that made him successful.

Metaphor:

Line 1: This line sets the scene for the literal and metaphorical fork in the road that the speaker faces. The road splitting in the woods is a **metaphor** for a choice.

Lines 4-5: This description of the road is a **metaphor** for the future. Just like we can only see a path in the woods for so far, we can only see the consequences of our decisions for a short while into our future.

Line 6: Here, the speaker decides that, even though he's spent a long time looking down one road, he's going to take the other, which seems just as interesting. This is probably a **metaphor** for a sudden decision.

Lines 13-15: The speaker wants to be able to take both roads, but realizes that the nature of these roads is such that he probably will never be able to come back to this place. This is a **metaphor** for a decision that changes everything – once you've made it you can never go back.

In line 19, one of the roads is being affirmed as less traveled, even though the narrator seemed unsure before. And then we get the famous line "and that has made all the difference," which means taking the road that the speaker took, making the choice that he made, has changed his life.

Theme of the poem

The central theme in the poem 'The Road Not Taken' is about conformity versus individuality. The protagonist is faced with a choice in life, and he has to decide whether he will do as people have done before him, or if he should try something new. In the end of the poem he has decided to travel the path less travelled and he is happy with his decision.

Rhyme Scheme

- The rhyme scheme of the poem is as follows:
- (1) abaab,
- (2) cdccd,
- (3) efeef,
- (4) ghggh.

Imagery

- The poet has also used imagery as a literary device: "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood" (from the first stanza), and "And both that morning equally lay/in leaves no step had trodden black" (from the third stanza) to create a picture in the reader's mind.

Project Work

Apart from being a tribute to individualism the poem also has some lovely descriptions of the country side. Write your own poem in praise of nature. You now have two models "The brook" and "The road not taken" to follow but it is always better to keep to your own style.

- a) One word for 'diverged' is _____
- b) b) Why is the wood called 'yellow'?
- c) c) How many roads did the traveller see?
- d) d) Find a word closest in meaning to 'good' in stanza 2
- e) . e) Which road did the traveller travel on - the one, which turned into the undergrowth, or the one, which was grassy?
- f) f) When will the poet narrate the story of the roads?
- g) g) Why is the poet sorry?
- h) h) Find a phrase closest in meaning to 'used' in stanza
- i) 2. i) What did he put off for another day?
- j) j) Which line tells us that travelling on the road has changed the poet's life?