

GOVERNMENT DEGREE COLLEGE, RAVULAPALEM



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
LECTURE BY
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THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



BY
ROBERT FROST

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN



Pre-Reading Activity



- 1. What do you understand by the title of the poem?
- 2. Can you guess what the poem is about/What is the theme of the poem?
- 3. Did you ever find it difficult in making choices? Give some examples.
- 4. When you are given two choices, which one do you choose?
- 5. Will you choose the routine path or a different path?
- 6. Discuss the above with your friend

Reading the Poem

1. 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;

2. Then took the other, as just as fair,

And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

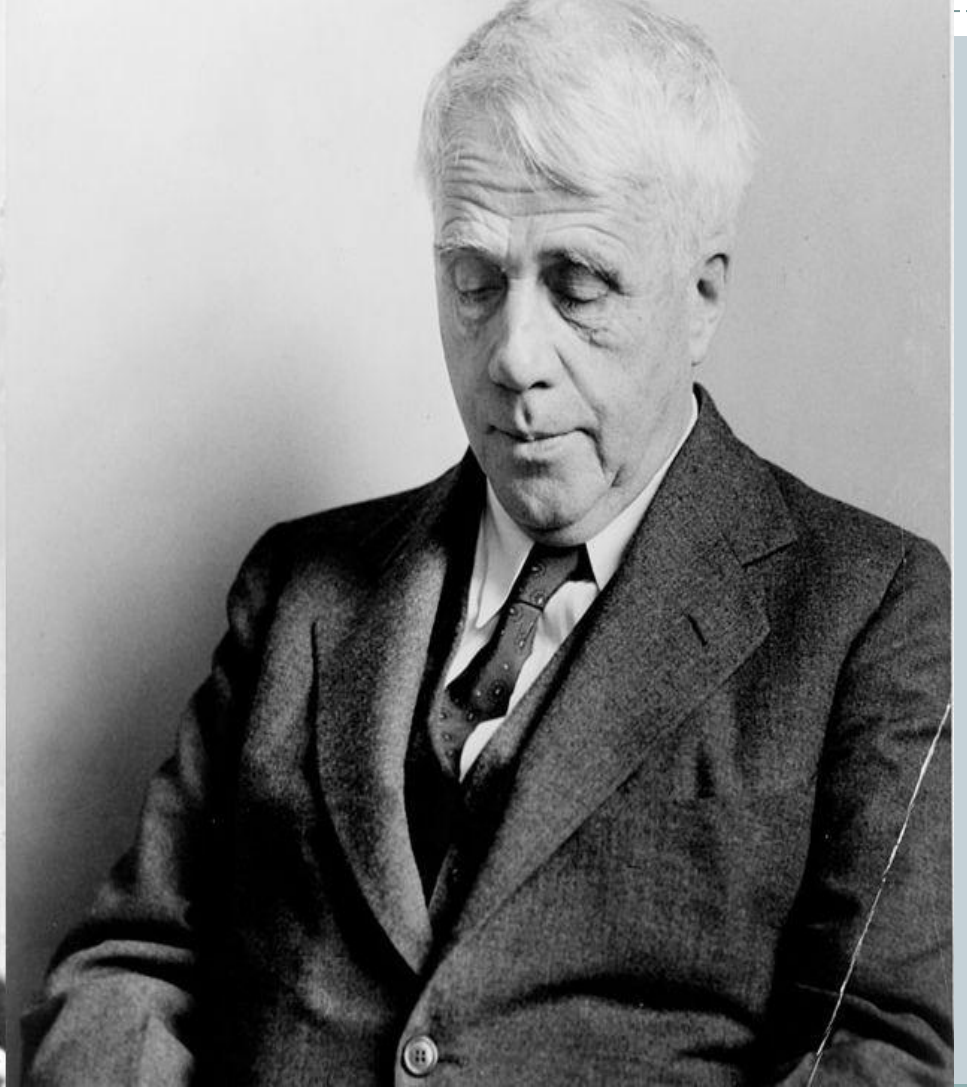
Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

3. And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black

ROBERT FROST



ABOUT FROST

(March 26, 1874- January 29, 1963)



- Robert Lee Frost was an American Poet
- Themes of his work – related to rural life in New England
- A Popular and oft quoted poet
- Won many awards and rewards
- He says, “ in three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life- it goes on”

Inspirational poet to many



- The following lines from the poem “Stopping by woods on a snowy evening” are favourite lines of Pandit Nehru

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

(Read the poem “Stopping by woods on a snowy evening”)

Popularity of the Poem



- It was a very famous poem related to decision making
- Was published in 1961
- Was the first poem in the collection “Mountain Interval”
- Frost wrote this poem for his friend Edward Thomas

Major Themes of the Poem



- Problem of Choices
- Decision Making
- Irreversibility of a decision made
- The path chosen makes all the difference

Stanza-wise Analysis



- 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;

Meanings:

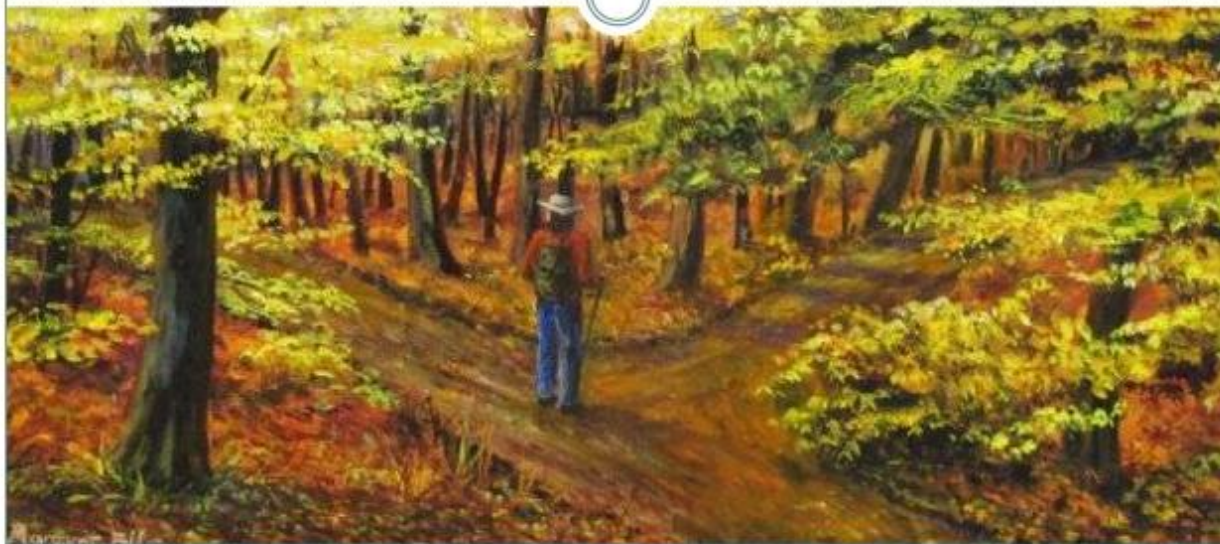
Diverged : deviate, depart, move away

Undergrowth: a dense growth of shrubs and
other plants

Pictorial Representation



The Road Not Taken



Stanza 1: Analysis



- Introduces us to the dilemma of choice
- This dilemma is experienced by all of us at some point of time or the other
- The traveller in the poem is in a meditative mood as to which road to choose.
- Frost emphasizes that we all try our best to guess what lays ahead
- We think a lot before treading a path

Stanza - 2



- 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,

Summary



- In this second stanza, lines six through eight: the individual in *The Road Not Taken* finally makes a decision and chooses a road that he *thinks* he believes is better, because it looked like not many people had walked on it before. However, in lines nine and ten, he is quick to add that the other road looked equally used in comparison to the one he chose, so it really wasn't as less traveled as he was telling himself.

Analysis



- **This stanza clarifies the common misunderstanding that one road was less travelled than the other, since the character clearly states that both roads were “really about the same”.**
- **The diction in this stanza portrays the uncertainty of the traveller**
- **He tries to justify to himself that his decision is the right one for him; and much like anyone else, he is clearly trying to realistically weigh the outcomes of both roads.**
- **He felt that the road he chose “wanted” to be walked on by him.**
- **This underlines the nature of people in general, that we will always choose the path which seems attractive and is of interest to us, even if both paths have equal potential of getting us to wherever it is we are headed. No matter where we end up, and how informed, tempting and satisfying our choices were, we will always wonder the what if-s and the could have been-s of the other opportunities that we left**

Stanza - 3



- 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.

Summary



- The traveller realizes that both the paths are identical
- Both the paths are untrodden that morning
- Line three of the stanza makes his choice clear
- He leaves the other road for another day
- He honestly confesses his doubts of ever coming back to the road that he has left(it doesn't happen in life)
- He knows the fact that the path he has chosen will take him further and further without leaving him a possibility to come back and follow the other

Analysis



- The traveller makes his decision
- Reflects his honesty
- After making his decision, he exclaims that he will leave the first choice for another day, and then he honestly tells himself that if he lets this road go now, there is no coming back. There are many defining decisions in a person's life that shape their futures and sometimes when we select an option in these moments, they change the course of our life and there's no turning back. That is where the regret of not exploring our other options disturbs us.

Stanza 4



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.

Summary



- In this last stanza, lines sixteen and seventeen, the individual predicts that one day far into the future, he knows will tell the story of this decision that he is now making.
- Lines eighteen and nineteen expose that he intends to lie, and claim he took the road that was less travelled (in reality both were equally travelled).
- Finally, the last line expresses that the individual is also planning to claim that his choice to take this less travelled road made all the difference, in where he will be standing at the time.

Analysis



- This last stanza really highlights the nature of our regrets. When it comes to tough decisions in our lives, we always know that no matter what we finally choose, eventually, we will regret not being able to try the possibility that was left uncharted by us.
- In this stanza, the traveller is already imagining the regret he will feel, and decides that he will not be honest when he retells the story of his decision, as it will not validate his selection of the road if he showcases his regret by stating that an equal opportunity could have landed him elsewhere in life. Hence, he decides he will tell people he chose the road that was “less travelled by” to come across as a person who took a chance and succeeded in life. In reality the character is trying to convince himself that when he does share his life experiences and distorts the truth that it will seem at that point that taking this road “made all the difference”.

Conclusion



- This teaches us that you never know where life will take you, so preplanning what the end of the road looks like for yourself, and building regret is silly especially if you haven't even started the journey in the first place. Life is about the paths you *do* choose to walk through, *not* about the road not taken.

Literary Devices



- Metaphors: road symbolizes life, fork in the road means the choices that we come across in our lives
- Images: sights – yellow wood, leaves etc.,
- Simile :
- Assonance : Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds such as the sound of /a/ and /o/ in quick succession in “though as far that the passing” and in “Somewhere ages and ages hence.”
- Consonance : Consonance is the repetition of consonant sounds
- Personification : road is personified in the third stanza

Poetic Devices



- **Stanza:** A stanza is a poetic form of a fixed number of lines. In this poem, there are four stanzas with each stanza having five verses or lines.
- **Quintain:** A quintain is a five-lined stanza borrowed from Medieval French Poetry. Here, each stanza is a quintain such as the first one or the second one.
- **Rhyme Scheme:** The whole poem follows ABAAB rhyme scheme. There are four beats per line, employing iambic tetrameter. The rhymes in “The Road Not Taken” are end rhymes which are also perfect rhymes.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE POEM



- Context: Hard times
- Lines from the poem :
- “I shall be telling this with a sigh / somewhere ages and ages hence.”
- Context: Decision Making
- “I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

Comprehension



- Who does the speaker symbolize?
- What does the roads symbolize?
- Which road do people normally choose? Why?
- Why does the poet chose the less trodden path?
- What difference does it make for the poet?

Post Reading Activities



- List the rhyming words in the poem
- Do the exercises in page 30 of your textbook
- Read the poem “ Stopping by woods on a snowy evening”
- Write critical appreciation of the poem “ The Road not Taken.
- If you can, write a poem in telugu about choice making or draw a picture on the theme of the poem

Some videos/audios on the poem



- <https://youtu.be/KUaQgRiJukA>
- <https://youtu.be/ie2Mspukx14> (audio of the poem – rendition by Robert Frost)
- <https://youtu.be/bGRkXuvoZqo> (animation of the poem)
- <https://youtu.be/LVx4ykuBKpo> (Hastings college singing Road not taken)
- https://youtu.be/fUn_SvcY1k8 (another song)

THANK YOU

"Iamque quoniam dolor atque aetas, coniecturae adparuerunt, ut
pallidus, infans visceribus matris, matrem dolor ventrisque iuocet,
vel volupatibus inest vixit enim, magis membra potest
interdum. Aeneas, laboris ac regis in ardua."