

# POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN – ROBERT FROST

**SUMMARY** :- The poet talks about two roads in the poem, in fact the two roads are two alternative ways of life. Robert frost wants to tell that the choice we make in our lives have a far-reaching result. The poem presents a dilemma that every man faces in his life. One day while walking in a wooded area full of trees with yellow leaves, the poet comes to a fork in the place and he has to decide which road he should take. He stands there for long and starts debating over the choice. He looks at the first road as far as he can see, till it bends in the undergrowth. It seemed to have been travelled by many people. Then he looked at the second road. It was grassy and wanted wear means less travelled. The poet is tempted to walk on it. He keeps on thinking for a long time and comes to a conclusion that he cannot walk on both. That is the irony of life. We cannot travel all the available roads no matter how much we may wish to. However, he decides to take the second path with the intention of walking on the first any other day in the future. At the same time he knows that the chances of his returning that way are very less. He also knows the manner in which one path leads on to the other. Finally the poet started moving on the second road. Then the poem shifts to the last stanza and the poet becomes completely philosophical and talks as if he has travelled for a long era and looks back at the choices that he made in life and their consequences. Now he feels that the life has been completely different. He feels that his life has been very different from the common people because he has always been tempted to take the path not generally followed by others. Here he advises to do something different also. It shows the poet as an adventurous man ready to take risks in life which everyone should be like.

### STANZAS FOR COMPREHENSION/ Extract Based Extra Questions

Read the following extracts and answer the questions that follow in one or two lines.

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

Q. Name the poem and the poet of these lines.

Answer.-The above lines have been taken from the poem 'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost.

Q. Why does the poet feel 'sorry'?

Answer.-The poet feels sorry that he can't travel on both the roads diverging in the forest before him.

Q. Where do the two roads diverge in?

Answer.-The two roads diverge in the wood where the leaves have turned yellow in the autumn.

Q. What is the mood of the poet in these lines?

Answer.-The mood of the poet appears to be serious and pensive.

Q. What does the 'yellow wood' mean?

Answer.- 'Yellow wood' means that the leaves have turned yellow because of the autumn season.

Q. Why does the poet stand long? OR '... long I stood'. What did the speaker do while standing for a long time?

Answer.-The poet stands long because he was in a dilemma about which road to take.

Q. What is the rhyme scheme of the stanza?

Answer.-The rhyme scheme of the stanza is: ab aa b.

Q. What choice did the narrator have to make?

Answer.-The narrator had to choose between the two roads.

## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

Q. What does the narrator regret?

Answer.-The narrator regrets the fact that he cannot travel on both the paths. He also regrets the fact that he cannot come back to the start once he makes a choice.

Q. What did the narrator see in the wood?

Answer.-The narrator saw two paths diverging in the forest.

Q. The poet here is using “roads” as symbols of:

Answer.-Choices one makes in life.

Q. Why did he feel like travelling both the roads?

Answer.-He felt like travelling both the roads as both of them looked equally fair and promising. Although they had been worn out equally, that morning both lay untrodden.

Q. Explain: ‘And be one traveller’.

Answer.-The expression means that he was an individual who couldn’t travel two roads at the same time.

Q. Why did the poet look down as far as he could?

Answer.-The poet was unhappy that he could not take that road as he chose the other one and, that is why, he looked as far as he could to evaluate the opportunities that road would offer.

Q. What is the meaning of the word ‘diverged’? What do the roads represent in these lines?

Answer. – ‘Diverged’ means separated. The roads represent the different choices that one has to make in his/her life.

B)“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,”

(a) How was the other road?

Answer. – The other road was as fair and beautiful as the first one.

(b) Why did the second road present a better claim than the first?

Answer. – The second road presented a better claim as it was still grassy and had not been used by many travellers.

(c) What is the rhyme-scheme of the given lines?

Answer. – The rhyme-scheme of these lines is: ab, aa, b.

(d) What does the poet mean by ‘as just as fair’?

Answer. – ‘As just as fair’ means that the second road was just as beautiful as the first one.

(e) How do you understand the expression ‘grassy and wanted wear’?

Answer. – The second road was grassy and green with its grass was not crushed and worn by the steps of the travellers.

(f) In which sense were the two roads similar?

Answer. – Both roads were similar in the sense that they both were appealing to the poet to travel on them.

## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

(g) What does “other” refer to in the above lines?

Answer. – In the above lines “other” refers to the road that was grassy and less travelled upon.

(h) Which road did the narrator choose?

Answer. – The narrator chose the one that was grassy and less travelled upon.

(i) Explain “grassy and wanted wear”?

Answer. – The road was covered with grass as not many people had walked this road so it was more inviting.

(j) How was the other road?

Answer. – The other road was as fair and beautiful as the first one.

(k) Explain: ‘... just as fair’.

Answer. – By ‘just as fair’ the poet means that the road that he chose to tread on appeared to be just as inviting and as beautiful as the other road that was chosen by the majority.

B) ‘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.’

Questions :

(a) How did both the roads lie?

Answer. – Both the roads laid there with their leaves and grass not crushed by the steps of the travelers

(b) Why did the poet leave the first road?

Answer. – The poet left the first road in the hope that he would travel on it on another day.

(c) Why did the poet suffer from a doubt?

Answer. – The poet doubted if he would ever come back to the same place to walk on the road that he had left for another day.

(d) Who does ‘both’ refer to?

Answer. – ‘Both’ refers to the two roads that lay in front of the poet.

(e) Why does the poet doubt his coming back?

Answer. – The poet doubts his coming back because he knows his chosen road will lead to another road and he would go so far from the first road that he would not be able to come back to it.

(g) Why would the poet like to come back?

Answer. – The poet would like to travel by the first road (the road not taken) and, so would like to come back.

(g) Having chosen his road, what decision did the speaker take about the first road?

Answer. – He decided to stick to the chosen road for some more time and promised himself that he would travel the other one sometime later.

(h) Explain: ‘leaves no step had trodden black’.

Answer. – No traveller had trodden on either of the two roads. It was evident from the fact that the fallen and sodden leaves lay uncrushed there. No feet had trampled them.

## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

(i) Why is the poet not sure whether he will ever come back to the first road?

Answer. – The poet thinks so because in the journey of life one road leads to another and one can seldom relive the moments and undo the circumstances gone by.

(j) Who wrote the poem?

Answer. – Robert Frost

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D) I shall be telling this with a sigh

## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and  
I— I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

(a) What will the narrator tell “with a sigh”?

Answer. –The narrator will tell about the fork that he had come to in the woods and the choice he had to make. The fact that he had taken the road less frequented by people.

(b) Why does the narrator say, “And that has made all the difference”?

Answer. –The narrator said that later in life he shall be telling people how his life has been different due to the choices he had made long ago.

(c) What did the poet wish to do when he takes the road that he has not been able to do?

Answer. – The poet wanted to come back and take the other road.

(d) What is the theme of the poem?

Answer. –The theme of the poem is the various problems we face in life and the choices we make.

(e) Which poetic device defines the roads in the wood?

Answer. –A metaphor has been used to define the two roads in the wood.

(f) What is the tone of the poet in the last stanza?

Answer. –The poet adopts a reflective tone in the last stanza.

(g) Which road did the narrator finally decide to take and why?

Answer. –The narrator finally decided to take the road that not many people had walked on because it seemed more adventurous than the route everyone seemed to take.

(h) When will the poet look back on his life?

Answer. –The poet would look back on his life after a very long time — when he is an old man.

(i) Why do you think the poet says this “with a sigh”?

Answer. –The poet is regretful; he could not return and take the road he had left behind to travel on another day.

(j) Why do you think the speaker will sigh?

Answer. –He will ‘sigh’ wondering what would have happened to his life if he had travelled by the first road. His dissatisfaction with his decision also might make him sigh.

(k) Why does the poet say, ‘And that has made all the difference’?

Answer. –The poet means to say that it was the choice of that specific road that shaped his life in a particular manner. Had he chosen the other road life would have been different?

(k) As a symbol, what does ‘road’ signify in the poem?

Answer. – As a symbol, ‘road’ signifies opportunities in life and the decisions and choices one has to make in life.

(l) What do you mean by ‘sigh’? What will the speaker be telling with a sigh?

## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

Answer. –‘Sigh’ means deep breath of sorrow. The speaker will be telling about his decision to travel by the less travelled road, which has made all the difference in his life.

(m) Does the poet seem to be happy with his choice?

Answer. –The poet has left the end open on the readers. They may assume whatever suits them after making a choice.

### Short Answer Type Important Extra Questions – (to be answered in about 40 words each)

1) How does the poet resolve the dilemma? Which road does he choose and why?

Answer- The two roads represent two ways of life. They stand for two directions, two attitudes and even two careers in life. The dilemma is of making the right and the rewarding choice. Two roads diverge in different directions. They look equally beautiful and fair. The poet leaves the first road for another day. He opts for the road that was less travelled by and ‘wanted wear’. He opts for an option that is not very conventional, popular and risk-free.

2) ‘The Road Not Taken’ is a metaphor of life. Justify this statement. Justify the title.

Answer- In ‘The Road Not Taken’, Frost uses the fork in the road as a metaphor for the choices we make in life. Thus, the two roads are, in fact, two alternative ways of life. They represent two directions and two options open to the poet. He has made a choice. He has opted for the road which is ‘less travelled by’. He leaves the first ‘for another day’. It becomes impossible to come back on the road one has left. One’s choice makes ‘all the difference’ in one’s life. Hence, the title is appropriate and logical.

3) Did the poet repent for making his choice? Give an example from the poem to prove your point.

Answer- The poet had freedom to make a choice. The two roads were, in fact, two alternatives in life that lay before him. The poet left the conventional and less risky way of life. He opted for the road that was less travelled by and ‘wanted wear’. He left the first road for another day. The choice he made brought all the difference in his life. He seemed to be unhappy for making his choice. ‘I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: ‘But he couldn’t do anything now. His choice had altered the course of his life.

4) Which road does Robert Frost choose and why?

Answer- Robert Frost chooses the second road which was less travelled by the travelers. He chose the second road because it was more inviting and wanted wear’.

5) “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood.” What do the two roads indicate here? What was the poet’s dilemma?

Answer- The two roads indicate the choices or decisions one has to make in one’s life. The poet has presented the dilemma that one goes through while taking a decision regarding one’s future. The poet, too, is faced with the dilemma of which road to choose for the course of his travel.

### Important Long/ Detailed/ Comprehension Answer Type Extra Questions- to be answered in about 100 -150 words each

1) Bring out the symbolism in the poem “The Road Not taken”.

Answer- The poem is about something more than the choice of paths in a wood. We can interpret the narrator’s choice of a road as a symbol for any choice in life between alternatives that appear almost equally attractive. It is only after the passage of years, that we can really evaluate the decisions and choices that we make based on the result of these choices. If we find success, the choice is the right one but if the result is failure and pain then the choice has obviously not been the right one.

## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

- 2) The road is used as a metaphor for life in this poem. Can you think of another metaphor and explain why that has been used to describe life.

Answer- A puzzle can be another metaphor for life. A puzzle requires one to constantly keep figuring out the answers and right after one decision has been made, there are other problems awaiting solution. Similarly life is also full of doubts and questions. When we are able to figure out solutions and make decisions accordingly another predicament often comes up. We are constantly figuring out things. hence, life is a puzzle .

### EXTRAPOLATORY QUESTIONS

- 1) “Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear.”
- Robert Frost chose a road that was less travelled by. What does this choice show about his character?
  - Do you think people should regret their choices or decisions once they have been made? Why not?

Answer- Robert Frost’s choice shows that he is an adventurous individual who doesn’t like to take up the trodden paths. He studies the situation and takes his time to reach his own conclusions. Not afraid of taking on the challenges in life, he decides to explore the unexplored. He knows full well that the choice once made cannot be undone, so he chooses the comparatively difficult option. He knows that this choice would affect his life and he is ready to accept as it comes. He knows that if he had taken the other road, his life would have been very different than what it has turned out to be. I don’t think people should regret their choices or decisions once they have been made. First, life has in its store countless opportunities and possibilities so that nobody ever needs to regret. Second, it is not possible for human beings to do everything that is there to be done because they are bound by time and space. So I think instead of regretting, it is more important to keep moving ahead in life without looking back Whether the choice of paths taken is right or wrong will be decided by time. Third, we must own the responsibility for the decisions and choices we make in our life.

- 2) One of the lessons the poem “The Road Not Taken” teaches is the importance of making the best use of time and opportunity. Taking ideas from the poem, together with your own ideas, draft a speech to be delivered in the morning assembly emphasizing the need of making the best out of available time and opportunities. In your speech you should describe how time and opportunity once lost cannot be reclaimed
- explain the effects such losses have on the quality of our lives inspire students to make the best of time and opportunity by being proactive and action oriented

Answer-

Good Morning Everyone.

Today, I would like to share my views on the importance of making the best of time and opportunity that we get in life. The other day I was reading Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken”, which is about making choices in life and the difference they make in our life. Since we have only one life to live and we cannot possibly have and do everything in life, it is really very important to make choices judiciously and once we have made them, we must stick to them and do all we can to achieve what we want to achieve in life.

We all know that time once gone can never be reclaimed and an opportunity knocks at our door only once. If there is another knock, that is another opportunity, not the first one So, instead of wasting time and being torn in all sorts of ‘ifs’ and ‘buts’, we must be proactive and make the best of time and opportunity that we have.

What if we don’t? Well, if we fail to respect time and honour opportunities, Time and circumstances may shape our life in ways we do not expect or do not like. There may be consequences we would find hard to



## POEM – THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

---

bear. We may be left regretting ever after, if we do not make the best of our time and opportunities. So, let us make hay while the sun shines, for time and tide wait for none. And on that note, I would like to conclude my speech, for time is up for me.

Thank you!

OR

3) As the poet who took the road not taken by many people, write a letter to your friend stating how “It has made all the difference”.

Dear Keshav

Hope you are sailing smooth.

As you know that I have established myself as a poet but this journey of life had not been very simple. I must tell you about the day when I was facing a dilemma to choose between the two roads to walk upon and I chose the one which was less frequented, leaving the first one for some other day. I knew well that I will not get a chance to go back to it. Now I wish I had taken the first road. But friend, this is the irony of life, we cannot travel on all the available roads, no matter howsoever we wish to.

The basic thing is to make right choice because after that we can't undo them. It is only the future that will reveal whether our decision was right or wrong. Since I took the road less travelled by, it has made all the difference-The outcome is known to you.

Rest in next letter.

Yours Ravi