



Poem and Explanation

Stanza 1

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;

diverged: separated and took a different direction

yellow wood: a forest with decomposing leaves

undergrowth: dense growth of plants and bushes means the forest)

Once the poet was walking down a road and then there was a diversion, there were two different paths and he had to choose one out of them. The poet says that as he was one person, he could travel on one road only. He had to choose one out of these two roads. Yellow wood means a forest with leaves which are wearing out and they have turned yellow in colour – the season of autumn. It represents a world which is full of people, where people have been living for many years. They represent people who are older than the poet. The poet kept standing there and looked at the path very carefully as far as he could see it. Before taking the path, he wanted to know how it was. Was it suitable for him or no. He was able to see the path till from where it curved after which it was covered with trees and was hidden. It happens in our life also when we have choices, we have alternatives, but we have to choose only one out of them, we take time to think about the pros and cons, whether it is suitable for us or not and only then, we take a decision on what path we should choose.

Stanza 2

Then took the other, 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.

The poet kept on looking at one path for a long time to check if it is the right path for him or not and then he decided and started walking on another path because he felt that the both paths were equally good. He says just as fair, so, he felt that both paths were equally good and started walking on one of them. He adds that maybe he felt that the path was better for him so he chooses it as it had grass on it which means that it was unused. Not many people had walked on this path earlier that is why this path was grassy. 'And wanted wear' means that it was not walked over by many people. After he walked on the path for some distance, he realized that both the paths had been worn out the same way. Both the paths were similar and worn out. Even in our life, we take any path or option but all of them have the same benefits, disadvantages,

problems, challenges and we must face them. We think that we are choosing a better option, but it is not that way.

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.

The poet says that both the paths were similar that morning. Both had leaves on them and no one had stepped on them as they were still green in colour. He decided that that day he would take one path and keep the other path for another day, although he knew that one way leads on to another way. He knew that he could not go back on the choice that he had made. Similarly, even in our life once we choose an option, we must keep on moving ahead with that option and we never get a chance to come back and take the other option that we had left earlier.

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 travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

He says that in the future, he will take a deep breath and say that once upon a time, he had reached such a point in life that there were two options for him and he travelled on that road which had been travelled upon by lesser number of people. That decision of his decided his future. Similarly, in future, when you grow up, then you will say that once upon a time, when you were young, you had two options. The choice that you made, made you what you became of it. This is a very strong message for all the students - that you should be wise and be careful while making choices out of the options that you have in your life because your future depends on the choice that you make today.

Literary Devices used in the Poem - The Road Not Taken

1. Rhyme Scheme: abaab
2. Symbolism: two roads which represent two or more choices in our life
3. Anaphora: 'and' repeated at the beginning of lines 2, 3 and 4
4. Alliteration: Wanted Wear 'w' sound is repeating
 - 'first for' – 'f' sound is repeating
 - 'though, that' - 'th' sound is repeating
5. Repetition: 'Ages' is repeated. 'Two roads diverged in a wood' - this sentence is repeated in stanzas 1 and 4.

The Road Not Taken Summary

The poet says that once, he was walking down the road and reached a fork. He could walk over one of the paths only. He took time to choose the right path. He inspected them to decide which

was a better option and then chose the one which seemed less walked over. He kept the other one for some other day although he knew that he would never get the chance to walk over it. He would go further on the chosen path and not get a chance to go back on it. As he walked on the chosen path, he realized that both the paths were similar. He felt that his future depended on the choice that he made.

Questions and Answers

1. Where does the traveller find himself? What problem does he face?

A. The traveller finds himself standing on a fork in the path. He is in a problem as he must choose one path and is unable to decide which one to choose.

2. Discuss what these phrases mean to you.

(i) a yellow wood

A. 'Yellow wood' refers to the forest which has withering leaves as in the season of autumn. It represents a world full of aging people.

(ii) it was grassy and wanted wear

A. It means that the path had a lot of grass on it. This means that it had not been walked over by many people. It had to be worn out by the steps of the people who walked on it.

(iii) the passing there

A. It means that when he walked over the path that he had chosen.

(iv) leaves no step had trodden black

A. It means that no one had walked over the leaves as they were still green. If they had been walked over, they would have turned black.

(v) how way leads on to way

A. It means that as we walk on a path, we come across more options and make choices further. We keep on walking ahead on that way.

3. Is there any difference between the two roads as the poet describes them

(i) in stanzas two and three?

A. The two paths were similar. In the beginning, the poet felt that one of them was grassy and had not been walked over by many people, but when he walked on it for some distance, he realized that it was like the other road.

(ii) in the last two lines of the poem?

A. Here, again the poet talks of his initial decision when he thought that the roads were different and chose the one that had been walked over by a lesser number of people.

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. 'The Road Not Taken' is a metaphor of life. Justify this statement. Justify the title.

Ans- 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.

2. Describe the two roads that the poet finds. Which road does he choose?

Ans: One day the poet comes to a bifurcation in the road and needs to decide which road he should take to continue his journey. One road was a beaten track. Many people had walked on it. It was lost in the small shrubs. The other road was grassy and seemed less trodden. Being adventurous in nature, the poet chooses the second road which was grassy and less walked on and left the first one for some other day.

3. What was the poet's dilemma in the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?

Ans: The poet faces a dilemma that every man faces in his life, i.e. making the right decision. One day during the walk the poet reached a bifurcation in the road. Out of the two roads, he had to take only one. He decides to take the second road which was less frequented. Hence the road is a symbol of the choice. It is just not possible to make more than one choice and to take both roads. So, the poet decides to take the road less travelled.

4. Why did the poet keep the first road for another day?

Ans: Once the poet had to make a decision as to which road, he should travel out of two in front of him. He examines both roads and finds the other road less travelled. He didn't want to follow a beaten track and decided to take the other road and keep the first road for some other day. But somewhere in his mind, he is troubled by the thought that he may not be able to do so.

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

Ans- The poet had the 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 about making his choice. 'I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence.' But he cannot do anything. His choice had altered the course of his life.

6. "I took the one less travelled by." What do we come to know about the poet from this line?

Or

7. What does the choice made by the poet indicate about his personality in the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?

Ans: This line reveals the adventurous nature of the poet because when he had to take a decision to make a choice, he did not take the beaten track. He chooses the path which is not frequented. He decides to leave the first road for some other day knowing that he will not get a chance to go back to it.

8. Write a brief note on the theme of Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken.'

Ans: Robert Frost is known for writing poetry which had philosophical streaks. The poem 'The Road Not Taken' is based on the theme of making a difficult choice which has a universal appeal. It concerns making the right choice, the right decision. Road is a symbolic word which stands for a choice. It is just not possible to make more than one choice, and to take both the roads. We have to make one choice; we have to take one road. While making our choice we do consider all the factors still it is not fool proof. So, the element of regret remains which takes away our contentment. This is the great tragedy of life.

9. Why did the poet doubt his coming back to the same intersection in life? Ans: This poem is about choices, decisions and their consequences. It is a fact that once the choice has been made, there is no going back. The traveller standing on the road of life is confronted with a dilemma when both the paths and choices look equally promising. Once a road is chosen, the traveller must move on. There is no rewinding. There would never be a befitting time or opportunity for coming back and exercising the choice again. Time has changed, so has the psychology of the traveller. It will never be the same again. So, one stick to the road one hastaken and make it lead to the destination already decided.

10. What does the divergence in the road signify in real life?

Ans- The divergence in the road signifies that many times in real life we have difficult choices to make. We take a long time thinking about which of the two would be a better option and only time can tell whether we were right in making the choice we made. The forking of one road into two is symbolic of the confusion or dilemma we face in life while confronting a problem and making a decision.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Which road does the poet choose? Why?

Ans. He chose the road not frequented, which had not been trodden so far; reflecting and arguing with himself the poet wishes that maybe someday he would come back, find that road and walk on it. But somewhere in his mind he is troubled with the thought that maybe he would not be able to do so. Life does not deal in rewinding and coming back to end one's decisions or undo mistakes. We must continue with the decision we once make whatever the outcome.

1. What is the moral presented by the poet in the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?

Ans. This is an inspirational poem and quite tricky. The poem presents an antithesis. The traveller comes to a fork and wishes to take both roads to travel, which is impossible. One of the roads is described as grassy and 'wanting wear', then he says that both the roads look the same. This represents the eternal dilemma of man: he finds the grass greener always on the other side. This poem is a call for the reader to forge his or her way in life and not follow the path that others have taken. This poem encourages self-reliance, reinforces the power of independent thinking and sticking to one's decisions. The poet does not moralise about choice, he simply says that choice is inevitable as one will never know till one lived the 'difference'. So, there is nothing right or wrong about a choice, it is all relative. Whatever direction one takes one must pack it with determination and zest because one can never turn the clock back or relive that moment.

2. Bring out the symbolism in the poem 'The Road Not Taken'.

Ans- The poem, 'The Road Not Taken' concerns a choice made between two roads by the poet. The poet decides to explore one road and then come back and explore the other, but this might not be possible. The choice of roads in the poem symbolises the choices that one must make in life. All the choices appear to be equally attractive. They are confining too as one cannot foretell the eventual result of one's choice. Through the years, however, we realize that the choices we make and the paths we choose will make all the difference in our lives.

3. Why was the poet in a dilemma while making a decision?

Ans-The poet was in a dilemma while making a decision because he had no idea what any of them had in store for him. He was going through a difficult time in his life, to remain in the USA where he was not given recognition or to migrate to England. Only the future could tell. It was like taking

a leap in the dark. Who could tell its result? It was difficult to say how he would be received in England as his experience of his birthplace, the USA, was bitter.

4. What is the moral presented by the poet in the poem ‘The Road Not Taken’?

Ans: This is an inspirational poem and quite tricky, according to Robert Frost himself. The poem presents an antithesis. The traveller comes to an end where two roads are making a fork and the traveller wishes to take both, which is impossible. One of the roads is described as grassy and ‘wanted wear’, then he says that both the roads look the same. This represents the eternal dilemma of man. He finds the grass greener always on the other side.

This poem is a call for the reader to forge his or her way in life and not follow the path that others have taken. This poem encourages self-reliance, reinforces the power of independent thinking and sticking to one’s decisions. The poet doesn’t moralise about choice, he simply says that choice is inevitable and you will never know till you have lived the ‘difference’. So there is nothing right or wrong about a choice, it is all relative. Whatever direction one takes, one must pack it with determination and zest for one can never turn the clock back, or relive that moment.

READ THE FOLLOWING EXTRACTS AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS THAT FOLLOW: -

*“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;”*

i. Why does the poet feel ‘sorry’?

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

ii. Where does the two roads diverge in?

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

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

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

iv. What does the ‘yellow wood’ mean?

Ans- ‘Yellowwood’ means that the leaves have turned yellow because of the autumn season.

v. Why does the poet stand long?

OR

What did the speaker do while standing for a long time?

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

vi. Explain: ‘And be one traveller’.

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

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

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

*“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,”*

i. Why did the second road present a better claim than the first?

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

ii. What does the poet mean by ‘as just as fair’?

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

iii. How do you understand the expression ‘grassy and wanted wear’?

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

iv. In which sense were the two roads similar?

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

v. What does “other” refer to in the above lines?

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

vi. Which road did the narrator choose?

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

vii. Explain “grassy and wanted wear”?

Ans– The road was covered with grass as not many people had walked that road, so it was more inviting.

*‘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. Why did the poet leave the first road?

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

ii. Why did the poet suffer from a doubt?

Ans – 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.

iii. Having chosen his road, what decision did the speaker take about the first road?

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

iv. Explain: ‘leaves no step had trodden black’.

Ans – 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.

v. Why is the poet not sure whether he will ever come back to the first road?

Ans– 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.

MULTIPLE CHOICE EXTRA QUESTIONS-

1. The word 'sigh' in the poem means:

- (i) regret (ii) to hate
(iii) not to feel sorry (iv) to be indifferent

2. What has made all the difference in the poet's life?

- (i) Choosing a travelled road (ii) Choosing a less travelled road
(iii) By not choosing any road (iv) By not being weak

3. 'Road' is a metaphor for:

- (i) travelling wisely (ii) good health
(iii) choices we make in life (iv) morning walks

Ans : (1) (i) (2) (ii) (3) (iii)

4. The phrase 'yellow wood' refers to _____

- i. wood painted yellow ii. **autumnal forest**
iii. trees with infected flowers iv. wood which is yellow in colour

5. The poet regrets that

- i. he could not travel on both roads simultaneously
ii. he has become old
iii. the roads are covered with thick undergrowth

6. The paths are not clearly visible. The poet finally chooses the road

- i. which has been travelled by many.
ii. which looks more attractive.
iii. which very few have trodden on
iv. which has less grass

Ans: Which very few have trodden on.

7. What do the words 'Long I stood' mean in the poem?

- (a) poet's dilemma
(b) poet was in a relaxing mood
(c) poet was enjoying the nature
(d) poet was thinking

Ans: (a) poet's dilemma

8. What does grassy mean in the poem?

- (a) the road which is not used by anyone
(b) the comfortable road
(c) the road with all the luxuries
(d) well-built road

Ans: (a) the road which is not used by anyone.

Additional Questions:

1. List common dilemmas that teenagers face involving the choice or one or more ‘roads’.

Give examples of ‘roads’ that you must travel (e.g. Facing peer pressure, choosing friends, observing rules laid down by school and parents acting on your own values)

Facing Peer Pressure:

Many a time our friends see to be having all the freedom they want and you feel that without following in their way one will be left without friends or support. This is a false judgement and baseless. It is one’s fear that is dictating such thoughts. The best way to overcome it is to think things out for oneself and with the help of elders and teachers, at times. To counter the fear of ridicule, one can tell these ‘so- called’ friends that you are allowed many things by your parents and only a few things are not allowed and that you prefer to keep your freedom and forego some indulgences in deference of your parents’ wishes and your greater freedom.

Choosing Friends:

I like to choose friends after interacting with them personally rather than joining the gang and trying to be friends with everyone. This is because I feel that a friend is someone I can rely on to help me make the right decisions, a person who has the same sort of likes and dislikes and is willing to be honest in his relations with me rather than a flatterer who has a motive behind his friendship with me.

Observing Rules:

I find observing rules a far more comfortable way of living rather than being a rule breaker. As a rule breaker, I have to think of several ways in which I can cover up my actions, tell lies and remain tense. Of course, rules are not always pleasant things to keep but they are made for our safety and protection and obeying them gives me a free mind and the feeling of being cared for.

Acting on the values:

Acting on my values is the best way to respect the values that I have chosen to make. If it is I who am breaking and bending the rules then how can I expect others to follow them?

2. Robert Frost highlights the contemplation one undergoes whilst making tough choices in the poem ‘The Road Not Taken’. Can we say that the poet made a right or wrong decision by the end of the poem?

‘The Road Not taken’ talks about the temptation of experiencing both the options whenever given a choice. If it had been possible, it would have been very convenient to know beforehand how actions would benefit or harm us in the future. The poet stands for long at the fork and weighs both choices equally. He later decides that he will travel the path which looks grassy and less trodden by previous travelers. The poet foreshadows that one day he would be recounting his decisions in the future for taking an offbeat path, which made all the difference for him. He leaves it there without telling his readers if it was fruitful decisions or not.

