

The Road Not Taken

Robert Frost (1875-1963)

*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.*

Analysis:

Robert Frost considered the farm his home and its activities remained the focus of his poetry. He is known for the use of colloquial language and symbols taken from common life. Most of his poems are about farming.

In this poem, Frost uses a fairy tale to expose his theme. He wants to tell us that we must make a decision. We must decide when, where and why to set off doing anything. It is a universal problem, which he turns into poetry of gentle words. There is nothing local in the poem; his message is worldwide.

How is Frost's idea developed?

The poem opens with two roads separated in the wood. Thus, he shows indecision as to which road to take. He wishes to travel down both roads. This is not possible, so he looks down one of them as far as he can see. However, the road bent into the trees and he could not see further.

One of the two roads is chosen. It is attractive and seems untrodden. He has to wear it down. This, however, was not true since both roads were equally unworn.

In the morning, he finds that both roads are covered with fallen leaves and show no sign that anyone had walked there before him. Trying to overcome and make up his indecision, he comforts himself with the thought that he has made a decision. "I doubted if I should ever come back" shows that he knows that one road leads to another. He knows that as he gets further and further away, he will never come back.

In the last stanza, he describes ironically how he will be telling this story in the future. He shall say that two roads separated in the woods and he took the one which fewer people had taken, and that made all the difference in his life.

The diverging roads can be taken at one level as symbols of two possible ways of life. He tries to convince himself that he could come back and choose again. Of course, we know that this is not possible. The important thing is that the road he chooses changes his whole life. Indeed, nobody can travel your road for you, no matter how this person loves you.

Comment:

The first stanza describes the poet's indecision and hesitation to which road to take. In the second stanza, the speaker decides on a certain road and justifies his decision. In the third stanza, the poet says that both paths were equally untrodden because the leaves were not blackened by being trodden. In the last stanza, he describes ironically how he will be telling this story in future. The symbol of the road is that of the difficulties of modern life. The rhyme scheme is abaab, cdccd, efeef, ghggh. He uses a lot of symbols which are found between the lines.