

Road Not Taken - Robert Frost

I. THINKING ABOUT THE POEM

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

Ans: The traveller finds himself in the yellow woods at a point where the road forks into the forest. He is unable to decide which road to take to continue his journey, since it is not possible to take both the roads at the same time.

2. Discuss what these phrases mean to you.

(i) a yellow wood

(ii) it was grassy and wanted wear

(iii) the passing there

(iv) leaves no step had trodden black

(v) how way leads on to way

Ans: (i) a yellow wood—The yellow woods symbolise the autumn season which is synonymous to old age. The poet may be referring to the middle ages of life.

(ii) it was grassy and wanted wear— It means that the road was full of grass and had not been used by travellers as it did not seem to be disturbed or crushed.

(iii) the passing there—The road is frequented by travellers.

(iv) leaves no step had trodden black—The leaves did not seem to have been crushed by the footsteps of travellers [for fear of the unknown and uncertainties].

(v) how way leads on to way— This expression means that the decisions we make in life leads us on to the future roads or paths that we have to take as we move on in life.

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

(i) in stanzas two and three?

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

Ans: (i) In stanza two, the poet explains that the only difference between the two was that the one he chose was grassy and wanted wear. It seemed to be less worn out by travellers. However, on second thoughts, it seemed to be equally worn down in a similar manner. However, in stanza three, he says that on that morning, both the roads seemed to be equally covered with the autumn leaves and it seemed no traveller had so far walked the paths.

(ii) In the last two lines of the poem, the poet says that he took the road less travelled by people and that has made all the difference in his journey of life.

4. What do you think the last two lines of the poem mean? (Looking back, does the poet regret his choice or accept it?)

Ans: The poet says that he made a decision at the fork to take the challenging path and stood by his decision and has accepted the reality of his life. He has titled the poem, 'The Road Not Taken'. The last lines, "I took the road less taken, and that has made all the difference, means that his choice to be different was the cause of his life changing for the good or for the bad. He has only said that it made a difference, and not specified the nature of the difference. Therefore, he could either be regretting or rejoicing the aftermath of his choice.

II. THINKING ABOUT THE POEM

1. Have you ever had to make a difficult choice (or do you think you will have difficult choices to make)? How will you make the choice (for what reasons)?

Ans: I have not had to face a situation where it was required for me to make a choice with regard to my life. It would come up sooner or later, when I would have to make a choice of a career. It would be wise not to succumb to peer pressure, or the prevailing trends, but to follow my aptitude and interest. My choice would also depend on future prospects offered, my financial credibility, and the novelty or uniqueness of the specific career. It is important that I follow my passion and be happy with what I am doing. I would therefore, assess all options before I take the final plunge, and will not make hasty decisions.

2. After you have made a choice do you always think about what might have been, or do you accept the reality?

Ans: Once I have made a choice after pondering over the issue of what I want to achieve, then there will be no scope of looking back or changing my decision. The reason being the choice I make will not be an impulsive one. I know that the journey to reach the goal will definitely have unexpected hurdles. Some pleasant and some unpleasant. But challenges are a part of growth, and failures are stepping stones to success.

Additional Questions

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow: (4 Marks each)

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;

- (a) What do the roads symbolise?
- (b) Find a word from the extract which means the same as 'separated from another'.
- (c) Why did the poet take a long time to decide which road to take?
- (d) What does 'yellow wood' signify?

Ans:

(a) The roads symbolise the different choices in a man's life which when taken will make a difference in his life.

(b) Diverged

(c) He took a long time as he wanted to be sure of his choice, so that there is no regret in the future.

(d) The 'yellow wood' signifies that the forest is covered with the yellow leaves as it is autumn season. However, metaphorically it means the season of his life in which he made his decision.

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.

- (a) What does the expression 'just as fair' signify?
- (b) What does the expression 'wanted wear' mean?
- (c) Which road did the poet not take?
- (d) Name the poem and the poet.

Ans:

(a) The expression may mean just as welcoming and enticing as the first road or just as right or good.

(b) The expression means that the other road was less walked upon or used.

(c) The poet did not take the road that was much walked on by travellers.

(d) The name of the poem is 'The Road Not Taken' and the poet is 'Robert Frost'.

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.

(a) What does the poet mean when he says 'no step had trodden black'?

(b) What was the doubt the speaker had?

(c) What does 'both' refer to in the above lines?

(d) Why does the poet exclaim, 'Oh, I kept the first for another day!'?

Ans:

(a) The poet means to say that when he went there the following day, both the paths appeared to be the same as no decay had been caused to the fallen leaves.

(b) The poet was doubtful whether he would ever be able to walk the other road in the future.

(c) The word 'both' refers to the two roads that fork into the forest.

(d) Here, the poet is either consoling himself, or gratified that he has eventually taken a decision. He adds that he would perhaps tread the other road on another occasion.

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.

(a) Who is 'I' in the above lines?

(b) Which expression in the above lines means 'after many years'?

(c) How will the poet tell his story?

(d) Which road did the poet choose from the fork in the forest?

Ans:

(a) 'I' in the above lines is the poet who is also the traveller.

(b) The expression is 'ages and ages hence'.

(c) The poet will tell his story with a 'sigh'. The sigh could be a relief as the choice was right, or of sadness because it was wrong.

(d) The poet chose to take the road less walked on.

Short Answer Questions (30–40 words: 2 Marks each)

1. Describe the two paths at the crossroad in the forest.

Ans: The poet comes across a path in the forest that was diverged into two directions after a particular point. One path seemed to have been well travelled upon as the leaves seemed blackened or crushed under footsteps of the passersby. The other seemed less walked on as the grass was green and undisturbed.

2. Which road did the poet take to travel and why?

Ans: The next morning, when the poet came back to the same spot, he noticed that more leaves had covered both the paths, and this added to his confusion as they looked very similar then. He therefore, decided to take the second path, and leaves the first to be taken, if required at some time in the future.

3. What is the significance of the two roads in the poem?

Ans: The two roads symbolise the diverse and confusing situations we have to confront during our journey of life. The narrator chose the path that was 'grassy and wanted wear,' perhaps because he did not want to follow the crowd and wanted to do something unique with his life.

4. Do you feel the poet was happy with his decision in the choice of road to be taken?

Ans: The poet at first seems to be happy with his choice of taking the untrodden path. However, he says that he will talk about his choice "with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence. It is not clear whether the sigh would be of relief or sadness.

5. What does the poet want to signify when he says 'the road bent in the undergrowth'?

Ans: The road bent in the undergrowth obstructs the vision of the traveller and prevents him from seeing any further. Metaphorically, the undergrowth speaks of the future that was not very clear in his mind.

6. Why did the poet take long to ponder over his decision?

Ans: The poet knows that a decision once taken will influence and affect his whole future, so he takes a long time to decide. He wanted to choose the path that would lead him successively from one to the other and another.

7. 'I took the one less travelled by,

And that has made all the difference'

What is the speaker trying to convey?

Ans: The poet took the path less travelled as he was of independent spirit, and did not want to follow the crowd. He is trying to convey that the choices in the present influence our future life. Personal contentment is more important than to be influenced by the crowd.

8. Why was the poet doubtful of being able to walk 'The Road Not Taken' in the future?

Ans: The poet is not too sure as to whether he would need to or be able to walk the other road. There is a tone of melancholy because he is unsure about the appropriateness of his choice, or perhaps he might be experiencing a sense of excitement in the event of the choice being right, for then, he would not have to walk the path he had abandoned.

Long Answer Questions (100–150 words: 8 Marks each)

1. Write a paragraph on your understanding of the poem, "The Road Not Taken."

Ans: "The Road Not Taken" is a poem that has a significance in the life of every human being, big or small, rich or poor, male or female, all over the world. The poet has dealt with a very important issue of making choices. And every moment of our life requires us to make a choice. The poet, however, is referring to the bigger and more important choices that eventually decide one's future. It may be the choices that would decide our career, our family, our future. Therefore, it is essential that we are not too hasty in making a choice, neither should we be over cautious while doing so. Life is a challenge and we need to have the courage to face it. I wish to interpret the last line as being a sigh of relief, that he would be taking as he had been fortunate in having taken the right road.

2. Show how the poet uses metaphor, imagery and personification, illustrating that there are challenging choices which may initially seem equal but once those decisions are made, they can actually make all the difference.

Ans: In 'The Road Not Taken', the poet employs extended metaphor, making the reader to imagine several comparisons. The poet states the two roads diverging in a yellow wood. Literally, there are two roads that fork out in the forest. The roads represent the challenges people have to make in the journey of life. The forest represents life.

The forest is yellow indicating the autumn season. The season is a personification of the middle age, when man is mature to make decisions. The fallen leaves represent the opportunities waiting for us to take in the journey of life. Since, autumn is followed by winter, the poet wants to show that autumn is a time when decisions should be made wisely as we may not get an opportunity to retrace our steps to take the other paths we

could have taken but did not. He uses imagery while saying, "And both that morning lay, in leaves no step had trodden."

3. Ann had completed her class 12 examinations and had secured a distinction..... Complete the story and provide a suitable title.

Ans:

I Had a Dream

Ann had completed her class 12 examinations and had secured a distinction. She was the topper in her school. She was the first person to have been educated in her family. Ann's father was a poor scavenger, while her mother had died while giving birth to her 4th sibling. Along with her studies, the young teenager, would work in the neighbouring houses as a maid, and took care of all the needs of her younger siblings like a mother would.

She had reached a stage in her life, where she had to make a choice between continuing her studies and abandoning it. Life would be tougher, and more demanding as the cost of living was becoming higher and all the younger one's had to be educated. Ann was very focussed and mature. She decided that it was necessary that she moves ahead with her education and career. The smart girl, secured admission for MBBS on her merit, in a Government Medical College. She worked very hard, at home and at college and stood first in the University in the final year. The young doctor did not regret the road she chose, nor did she forget her roots. She succeeded in making all her siblings professionals, and is now one of the best physicians in the state of Goa. Her father leads a comfortable life, thanks to his dynamic daughter.

Self- Assessment Test

Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully and answer the questions that follow.

1. And be one traveller, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth:

(a) Name the poem and the poet.

(b) 'And be one traveller long I stood'. Why was the traveller standing for so long?

(c) What does 'it bend in the undergrowth' imply?

(d) Identify the rhyme scheme used in the above lines.

2. 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 shall ever come back.

- (a) Why does the traveller find the road untrodden?
 - (b) What does 'I kept the first for another day!' mean?
 - (c) What did the traveller know about the road?
 - (d) What is the rhyme scheme used in the above lines?
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Short Answer Questions

1. What is the dilemma of the poet?
 2. How are the two roads described in the poem?
 3. What is the message of the poem, 'The Road Not Taken'?
 4. How would you handle the dilemma that the poet faced?
 5. What was the poet's opinion about both the roads?
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Long Answer Questions

1. One should be wise and mature while taking decisions in life. Answer with reference to the poem, 'The Road Not Taken'.
2. Make a diary entry as Robert Frost, of the day he reached the pinnacle of glory or made an utter failure of his life, as a result of the choice he had made.
3. You made a wrong decision and want to desperately get back to the other road. Explain how would you make the attempt at retracing your steps.