The Road Not Taken

By Robert Frost

1916

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was one of the most popular and critically respected American poets in recent history. His poems often employ rural scenes from the New England countryside. "The Road Not Taken," published in 1916, is one of the most frequently cited and complex of Frost's poems. As you read the poem, take notes on the metaphorical meaning and the speaker's perspective.

Two roads diverged\(^1\) 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

Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted\(^3\) 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\(^4\) black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

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.

---

\(^1\) Diverge ((verb)): to separate from another route or go in a different direction

\(^2\) Undergrowth (noun): a dense growth of shrubs and other plants, especially under trees in woodland

\(^3\) Wanted (adjective): lacked

\(^4\) Tread (verb): to walk or step
Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following statements best describes the imagery used in the poem to depict the two roads?
   A. The imagery used between them is heavily contrasted; the second is described as much more beautiful and full of life, the first as twisting and decaying.
   B. They are described as looking exactly the same.
   C. The first road is described as being wilder and darker than the second, which is lighter and more pleasant-looking.
   D. At first the speaker believes the second road appears less traveled, but he then realizes that the two roads are not actually that different in terms of imagery.

2. PART B: Which phrase best supports the answer to Part A?
   A. “Then took the other, as just as fair,/ And having perhaps the better claim”
   B. “Because it was grassy and wanted wear”
   C. “Though as for that the passing there/ Had worn them really about the same”
   D. “In leaves no step had trodden black”

3. What is the significance of the word “sigh” in line 16?

   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

   [RL.3]
   [RL.1]
   [RL.4]
4. This poem is famous for its ambiguity, and some even argue that Frost contradicts himself throughout the poem. Find one example of this ambiguity and interpret its meaning.

5. Which of the following best describes a central idea of the text?  
   A. Some decisions cannot be undone so we must come to terms with the consequences.  
   B. There will always be more than one choice in life, so think carefully about your decision.  
   C. Following your heart is easier than following your head.  
   D. Go against what is expected, even if it means following a different direction in life.
Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. In your opinion, is the speaker in the poem satisfied with his decision? Why or why not?

2. Do you think this is a poem about regret or appreciation? Explain.

3. What is an example of taking “the road less traveled”? Have you ever done this? Explain.

4. Do the decisions in your lifetime make you who you are? Can you change who you are by making different choices? Use evidence from this poem, your own experience, or other art and literature to answer this question.