The road not taken - Poem

Class-9

This well-known poem is about making choices, and the choices that shape us. Robert Frost is an American poet who writes simply, but insightfully, about common, ordinary experiences.

Robert Frost

Robert Frost in 1941

**Born**
Robert Lee Frost
March 26, 1874
San Francisco, California, US

**Died**
January 29, 1963 (aged 88)
Boston, Massachusetts, US

**Occupation**
Poet, playwright

**Alma mater**
Dartmouth College
Introduction to the Poem

In the poem - ‘The Road Not Taken’, the road symbolizes our life. The poet says that the path that we don’t choose in our life is ‘the road not taken’. He describes his feelings about that choice that he had left in the past. The path which we have chosen, decides our future, our destination. The important message that the poet wants to give is that the choice that we make has an impact on our future and if we make a wrong choice, we regret it but cannot go back on it. So, we must be wise while making choices.

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 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.

fair: As good as the other one,
claim: Better option
grassy: unused
wanted wear: had not been used

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 them 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.

trodden means walked over.

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.

sigh: deep breath
hence: here, in the future

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

Assonance: It is the repetition of vowel sounds in nearby words

Line 1 Two roads diverged in a yellow wood
(The ‘o’ sound is repeated in ‘roads’ and ‘yellow’)

2. Personification: A figure of speech which is used for an inanimate object or animal\birds look or feel human.

Line 8 Because it was grassy and wanted wear.

3. Imagery: Imagery means to use figurative language to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.

Line 1,11 AND 12
4. **Alliteration**: the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words

Wanted Wear 'w' sound is repeating

1. ‘first for’ – ‘f’ sound is repeating
2. ‘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.

6. Metaphor: A device which compares two things or qualities which are unlike.

The poem as a whole is a metaphor, because the poet is metaphorically comparing the paths in the wood to the choices one must make in life.

**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.

**Question and Answers**

1. 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.

Reference to context
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;
   (i) Explain 'yellow wood'.
   (ii) The speaker is feeling sorry because_____.
   (iii) Why is the poet confused?

Answers of the rtcs
(i) The poet is standing amidst a jungle where the leaves of the trees have yellowed.
(ii) he can't travel both roads.
(iii) The poet seems to be confused about which road will have more potential. He is not able to make a decision.

Reference to context (second stanza)
   (i) What does the poet mean by the ‘the other’
   (ii) Which road did the poet opt for?
   (iii) Find a word from the extract meaning ‘damaged by use or wear’

Reference to context (Third stanza)
   (i) Why were the roads in equal state that morning?
(ii) What was the poet’s doubt?

(iii) The expression ‘In leaves no step had trodden’ means

Long answer type question (100-150)

Describe the two roads that the speaker comes across. or Describe the two roads that the author finds. Which road does he choose?