

## The Road Not Taken

### Introduction

This poem is written by Robert Frost, an American poet. This poem highlights the dilemma faced while making choices between available options. The poet advises the readers to choose carefully because once a choice has been made then we cannot revert back our decision.

### Summary

One morning while travelling the poet reaches a wood. It is an autumn morning and he sees two roads running in different directions. He could not decide which road he should take. The poet examines the two roads. He finds that the first road bends down in undergrowth. This shows that it is less travelled. Then he examines the other and it is also grassy and untrodden. Moreover, both the roads are covered with leaves, signifying that no one has walked over these roads that morning. The poet is not deterred by the fact that both these roads are less travelled. He has to move on and for that he has to choose one of the roads. The poet chooses the second road and says that he will travel down the first road on some other day. However, he also expresses his doubts as to whether he would ever be able to return back here because one road leads to another. By saying this the poet wants to convey that decisions once taken cannot be undone. The poet says that in the years to come he will be telling about his dilemma to others with a sigh. It can be a sigh of relief that he had taken the correct road or it can be a sigh of regret because of a wrong decision made. Whatever the result, the poet is aware that his choice will affect his future life significantly.

### Message

The poet wants to convey the message that choices and decisions should be made carefully because they have serious implications on our future life. He also says that one should not hesitate to make bold and wise decisions.

### Extract Based Questions

Read the following extracts carefully 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;
  - There was a diversion of two different roads in a .....
  - State whether the given statement is True or False.  
The poet did not think before choosing the road.
  - The poet was standing at the diversion of roads to look at:
    - which path was suitable for him
    - the two roads different from one another
    - the curveness of roads
    - whether the road was covered with trees
  - Complete the analogy with a word from the extract.  
tourist : sightseer : : forest : .....

### Answers

- yellow wood
- False
- (i) which path was suitable for him
- wood

- 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 chose another road as it was ..... and wanted wear.
  - The poet walked along the road ..... before deciding.
  - 'And wanted wear' means that:
    - the road was grassy
    - it was not walked over by many people
    - he walked on the road for some distance
    - the road had been worn out
  - Give an antonym of 'better'.

### Answers

- grassy
  - for some distance
  - (ii) it was not walked over by many people
  - Worse
- 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) 'Both' here refers to the .....
- (b) According to the poet, both the roads were similar that .....
- (c) The poet had a doubt whether:
- one way leads to another way
  - he should keep on moving ahead
  - he would get a chance to come back
  - his choice was right or not
- (d) 'Trodden' in this extract means the same as .....

### Answers

- (a) two roads
- (b) morning
- (c) (iii) he would get a chance to come back
- (d) walked over
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) The poet travelled on the road which had been travelled upon by .....
- (b) The message conveyed in this extract is that our future depends on the choice that .....
- (c) The poet told with a sigh to:
- travel safely in the future
  - be wise and careful in making choices
  - choose the easiest option
  - make a choice instantly
- (d) 'Wood' here means the same as .....

### Answers

- (a) lesser people
- (b) we make today
- (c) (ii) be wise and careful in making choices
- (d) forest

### Short Answer Type Questions

- Q 1. Where does the traveller find himself? What problem does he face?
- Ans. On an autumn morning, the traveller finds himself in a forest where two roads diverge. He faces the problem of choice between the roads, because he cannot possibly travel on both the roads.
- Q 2. What is intended by 'diverged'?
- Ans. The poet had come into a forest where the path had split into two roads, i.e., one path has 'diverged' into two paths. The word 'diverge' conveys 'choice'. In our life, we are constantly faced with the problem of choice. Immediately, the poet understood that as a traveller, walking on both the roads is impossible for him.
- Q 3. Why according to the poet, the second road has the better claim?
- Ans. The poet has a free and adventurous spirit. On first inspection, the second road appears to be less

travelled and hence more challenging for the poet's spirit. Therefore, he says that the second road has a better claim.

Q 4. Explain the phrase 'way leads on to way'.

Ans. The poet says that one road leads to another, and then another, until you end up very far from where you started. Metaphorically, the poet realises that his desires of coming back and trying the other path some day may not be fulfilled.

Q 5. 'Once a road is chosen, the traveller has to move on.' Explain.

Ans. The poet says that once we choose a road we have to travel on it. We are all travellers in this journey of life. At every junction or at any stage in life, we are confronted with a dilemma when both the choices look equally promising and yet we have to choose one. Once a choice has been made then we have to stick with it. We cannot go back and choose something else.

Q 6. What do you think are the chances that the poet will come back some day and try the other path?

Ans. I do not think that there are any chances that the poet will be able to come back and try the other path. Life does not offer us a second chance. The poet had already made his choice and has chosen a road for himself. When he travels on that road, he will find that one road leads to another and it would be impossible for him to return to the starting point and start his journey on the other road. The poet wants to convey that choices or decisions, once made, are irreversible. We are stuck with them. We cannot go back and choose something else.

Q 7. Why does the poet say he shall tell people 'this with a sigh'?

Ans. The poet says that he would at some time in future, talk about his decision about taking the less travelled road with a 'sigh'. This 'sigh' could be of regret on making a wrong choice or it could be of relief because the choice that he made was correct.

Q 8. Which decision has made all the difference in the poet's life?

Ans. The poet had to choose one road which would help him in achieving his aims. The road chosen by the poet was less walked upon and less trodden. The poem does not clearly indicate whether the choice made by the poet made him happy or sad. However, if we examine the way of the world, we find that the individuals who have achieved recognition and fame have always taken an unconventional path. So, we can say that the poet's decision helped him to become famous and successful.

Q 9. After you have made a choice do you always think about what might have been, or do you accept the reality?

Ans. It's human nature to think what might have been if we had selected some other path. But it's also a fact that once we choose a path and cover some distance, there is no going back. One should think before making a choice. One should weigh all the



pros and cons of the choice. But once we make a choice we should be determined to move on. Regretting the choice does not help. Acceptance of reality motivates. I will definitely accept the reality.

**Q 10. The title 'The Road Not Taken' is an appropriate title for the poem. Comment.**

**Ans.** The title brings out the theme of the poem in which every person at some stage of life comes across situation where he or she has to make a choice. The decision taken to do things differently makes one stand out of the crowd. The title is figurative as the roads symbolise the dilemmas of life. The title 'The Road Not Taken' hence is fully justified.

**Q 11. What is the central theme of the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?**

**Ans.** The poem gives a clear understanding of the dilemma a person faces while making choices in life. The traveller in the poem faces two diverging roads. These roads are symbolic of the choices that a man has to make in life. His decision or choice of future action is of the utmost significance since the choices made by him shape his destiny. The poet, Robert Frost, through this poem, asserts the importance of the taking the right decision at the right time.



## Long Answer Type Questions ↘

**Q 1. Have you ever faced a dilemma in life where it had become difficult to choose between the two options? Describe the situation and the decision you finally took.**

**Ans.** Last year, I wanted to attend a summer camp with my school friends. My father promised me that I could go if I saved my pocket money to bear all the expenses. So, I stopped spending money on trivial things such as video games and fast food and saved five thousand rupees, in a three-month time. The amount was enough to pay for the camping trip. But just a day before the camp, my best friend lost his father. I was keen to go for the camp but I also knew that my friend needed me more. Ultimately, I decided to let go of my summer camp plan to stand beside my friend in his difficult times. Taking this decision was not tough but sticking to it was. I proved a common saying that a friend in need is a friend indeed.

**Q 2. Do you think that the poem is about regret? Support your answer with instances from the poem.**

**Ans.** Yes, I think that the poem is about regret. The poet has titled it as 'The Road Not Taken'. It seems to imply that the poet is regretful about the path that he has chosen or the choice or the decision that he had made. The poet conveys that in our life we have to constantly make choices and decisions that affect our future. When we choose something, we forego the other options available. There is a possibility that the foregone options were promising and if chosen would have made us successful. So, the poet regrets in not choosing such options and making a choice which has not given him as much success as he anticipated.

