



UNIT - 5

What's the Evidence?

ACTIVITY - 1

Read the poem, “The Road Not Taken,” by Robert Frost. About this poem, Robert Frost said, “You have to be careful of that one; it's a tricky poem - very tricky.” So, read carefully!

The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

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.



Frost, shortly before the poem was published in 1916. This is how the poet looked when he wrote “long I stood and looked down one as far as I could”.



Frost, “ages and ages hence”?

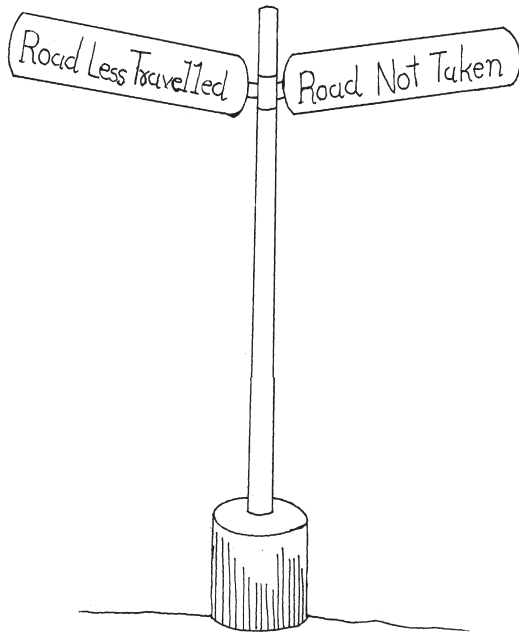
Help line

Teacher’s Note: A reading of “The Road Not Taken” by the poet himself can be heard at <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15717>. The poem, “The Road Not Taken”, has been interpreted in different ways. Allow students time to read and think about the poem themselves so that they can form their own ideas about the different interpretations they will read.



ACTIVITY - 2

Robert Frost said that “The Road Not Taken” is tricky, so let’s read carefully together!



Two Different Roads

Did you know that many people mistake the title of the poem? They think the title is “The Road Less Travelled”. What is the real title of the poem?

Where do the words, “The Road Less Travelled” actually come from in the poem?

In the second stanza, the poet expresses the idea that the two roads are very similar in two ways. What are they?

In the third stanza, the poet expresses the idea that the two roads are very similar again. What words do this?

In the third stanza, the poet indicates that he could have taken either road. How does he do this?

Most of the poem is in past tense. What tense is the fourth stanza in?

List the new words you find in the poem:

Ask classmates for help with the meanings of words you don't know and help your classmates with words you do know. Work with your classmates and teacher to make sure everyone understands all the words in the poem.

Help line

Students learn more vocabulary faster if the teacher allows them to share information about the words they know. In sharing the information, students also produce more language. Always try to let students collaborate on vocabulary first, then only spend teaching time on words that no one in the class is familiar with.



ACTIVITY - 3

Like the blind men and the elephant, everyone has a different point of view. People interpret poems in different ways depending on their points of view. **Work with a group of three to read some different interpretations of "The Road Not Taken".** Each student will choose one interpretation. Read your choice carefully, then tell your group a summary of the interpretation you read. Use the same ideas you learned about writing summary to **TELL** your group a summary of the interpretation you read. Reference the source, tell the main idea, and tell the details that express the main idea.

Interpretation #1

(The 1st student in your group reads and tells a summary of this interpretation.)

Sometimes the choices we make have far-reaching consequences. Have you made choices that are less "risky" or have you followed the "beaten track"? The poem "The Road Not Taken", by Robert Frost, is about the choices that one makes in life. It tells about a man who comes to a fork in the road he is travelling upon. He feels sorry that he cannot travel both paths as he must choose one.

Frost uses this fork in the road to represent a point in the man's life where he has to choose the direction he wishes to take in life. As he thinks about his decision he looks down one path as far as he can see trying to foresee what life will be like if he walks that path. He then gazes at the other and decides the outcome of going down that path would be just as pleasant. At this point he concludes that the trail that has been less travelled on would be more rewarding when he reaches the end of it. The man then decides that he will save the other path for another day, even though he knows that one path leads to another and that he won't get a chance to go back. The man then says that he will be telling this story with a sigh someday in the future suggesting that he will wonder what life would have been like if he had chosen the more walked path even though the path he chose has made all the difference.

– Adapted from a 9th Standard, CBSE textbook.



*Everyone has a
different
point of view.*



If you read this interpretation for your group, write down what you think the main idea is. If you listen to a summary from one of your group members, write down the main idea you hear. What is the main idea of Interpretation 1?

What information does this author use to express the main idea?

Interpretation 2

(The 2nd student in your group reads and tells a summary of this interpretation.)

"The Road Not Taken" is a narrative poem of four stanzas and is one of Robert Frost's most popular works. It's also one of the most misunderstood. The final lines "I took the one less traveled by / And that has made all the difference" are often taken literally and interpreted to mean the poet is an individualist with a spirit of adventure. It's doubtful that the poem has this meaning. Whatever difference the choice might have made, it was not made on the basis of a clearly understood difference between the two paths that opened up before the traveller. The poet admits in the second and third stanzas that both paths may be equally worn and equally leaf-covered, and it is only in his future recollection that he will choose to call one of the two roads, the one he took, "less traveled by."

The irony of the poem lies in the distance between what the speaker has just told us about the roads' being the same and what he says his later claims will be. Eleanor Sickels, a literary critic, says the poem is about "the human tendency to wobble illogically in decision and later to assume that the decision was, after all, logical and enormously important...." - Adapted from Wikipedia,

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Road_Not_Taken



Like the blind men and the elephant, everyone has their own "take on" things.



If you read this interpretation for your group, write down what you think the main idea is. If you listen to a summary from one of your group members, write down the main idea you hear. What is the main idea of Interpretation 2?

What information does this author use to express the main idea?

Interpretation 3

(The 3rd student in your group reads and tells a summary of this interpretation.)

...Many readers have overstated the importance of "The Road Not Taken" to Frost's work. [Frost's biographer tells us] ...in 1914 Frost arrived in England Settling in Gloucestershire, he soon became a close friend of Edward Thomas. Later, when readers persisted in misreading "The Road Not Taken," Frost insisted that his poem had been intended as a sly jest at the expense of his friend and fellow poet. For Thomas had invariably fussed over irrevocable choices of the most minor sort made on daily walks with Frost in 1914, shortly before the writing of the poem. Later Frost insisted that in his case the line "And that has made all the difference"—taken straight—was all wrong. "Of course, it hasn't," he persisted, "it's just a poem, you know."



What's your perspective? It's based on your experiences.

In 1915, moreover, his sole intention was to twist Thomas. ...Frost had frequently taken long countryside walks with Thomas. "Repeatedly Thomas would choose a route which might enable him to show his American friend a rare plant or a special vista; but... [then] Thomas would regret the choice he had made and would sigh over what he might have shown Frost if they had taken a "better" direction. ...[Frost teased Thomas] for those wasted regrets. ... Frost found something quaintly romantic in sighing over what might have been. Such a course of action was a road never taken by Frost...."

If we are to believe Frost and his biographer, "The Road Not Taken" was intended to serve as Frost's gentle jest at Thomas's expense.

- Edited from George Montier's book, Robert Frost and the New England Renaissance, via http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/frost/road.htm.

If you read this interpretation for your group, write down what you think the main idea is. If you listen to a summary from one of your group members, write down the main idea you hear. What is the main idea of Interpretation #3?

What information does this author use to express the main idea?

Help line

Students can benefit from collaborative reading and discussion. Help students to keep their attention on the text, to draw evidence from the text itself for their ideas of what it means. Help students to notice that each of the interpretations is different and uses different evidence as well. The central goal is to encourage students to think critically and to use language.

ACTIVITY - 4

Compare the past with the present. These sentences show situations in the past. Read them carefully and write a corresponding sentence about the same situation in the present.

	Situation in past	Situation in present
1.	There was a time when car parking was no problem at all.	Nowadays, car parking has become a big problem.
2.	There was no way to know which road was best back then.	
3.	Policemen wore long wool coats and tall hats, in those days.	
4.	In the past, leaving a fence unpainted was unheard of.	
6.	In earlier times, people believed in giants and fairies.	

ACTIVITY - 5

Look at the three interpretations of “The Road Not Taken”. They each have a different idea about what the poem means and they each give “evidence” for their idea. Interpretation 1 gives evidence from the poem itself. The writer of Interpretation 1 gives details from the poem to explain his idea. When a writer looks carefully at the details of something in order to understand the whole, we call this “analysis”. Interpretation 1 uses analysis of the poem as evidence for the interpretation. Interpretation 2 and 3 both use analysis of the poem, but they also use other sources for evidence. What are the other sources they use?

Write a paragraph giving your own interpretation of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken”. Reference the poem in your paragraph. For evidence of your idea, use lines from the poem and use information from at least one of the Interpretations 1, 2, or 3.



ACTIVITY - 6

Share your interpretation of “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost with a classmate. Listen the interpretation of a classmate. Fill out the table based on what you hear from your classmate.

MY CLASSMATE'S INTERPRETATION OF “THE ROAD NOT TAKEN”					
Writer's name (classmate)	Does the writer reference the poem?	What is the writer's main idea (interpretation)?	What evidence does the writer give for the main idea?	What is the source of the evidence?	How is the writer's interpretation different from mine?

ACTIVITY - 7

Many people have interpreted “The Road Not Taken” since it was published in 1916. The next poem is a new poem. Use the questions to help you look carefully at the poem in order to understand it. Remember that looking carefully at the details of something in order to understand the whole thing is “analysis”. As you use the questions to help you read the details of the poem in order to think about its meaning, you will naturally begin to “analyse” the poem.

After the Boom by Jerry D. Mathes II

A sleepless father. Head on a folded pillow.
Hears the murmuring of water from the tap
like the voices of spirits flowing down generations
old pipes. His thirteen-year-old daughter opens
the water faucet more to release the pressure
of the elemental weight.

The water stops and she shuffles back to bed.
School in the morning and all. What keeps her mind
occupied as she slips under the covers to fall... where?
To what dreams? Does she really have a notion
of a far future over half her remembered life away?

The father wants to show her all the paths of possibility,
knowing he can't tell her what to do, but only guide
her to her passion. He's watched her concentrated
over pads drawing and sketching the world outside
and inside her mind, but wonders if it's a childhood
hobby to fall away like dolls or can it be something

to animate a life? He searches her... For what ?
He's not even sure. He wants to protect
her from life's continental shifts that rupture
plans and futures, but knows he can only show

her how to be filled with a curious life, to cherish
wonder. What did his parents see in him? Go to college,
but the subtle words of his father who said,
No one helped me.... And never left the dirty mines,
the rock crushing factories of dull labor.

The sleepless father tries to remember thirteen
and what he knew and pretended to know.
In his dark bed he recalls the desires of the boy
on the edge between kid and teen: sailing for distant

space. Ride the rocket higher toward the void
and break the sound barrier and after
the boom, escape the tides of gravity, the blue earth,
this worry and all his parents' expectations of him
and sleep in weightless nights.

Whose point of view is the poem
told from: the father or the
daughter?

The poet describes actions as well
as thoughts and feelings. Underline
words that express actions.

The poem mentions paths of
possibility? Are these like the roads
in "The Road Not Taken" or are
they different?

How does the father express the
way plans change and futures are
uncertain?

Whose future involves college in
this stanza? Who is the father in this
stanza?

Who is thirteen in this stanza?

What is the boom?

Who dreamed of weightless nights?



ACTIVITY - 8

In the poem, “After the Boom”, by Jerry D. Mathes II, the “sleepless father” asks about his thirteen year old daughter,

“... What keeps her mind
occupied as she slips under the covers to fall... where?
To what dreams? Does she really have a notion
of a far future over half her remembered life away?”

The “sleepless father” has seen his daughter “concentrated over pads drawing and sketching” but he does not know if this is only a “childhood hobby”.

Imagine that you are the daughter’s friend and she tells you about her dreams and future plans, her passions and hobbies. Describe what she is thinking about as she falls asleep while her father wonders.

Share your paragraph with your classmates. Listen for new ideas. Write one idea you heard from a classmate that you think is interesting.

Help line

The poem, “After the Boom”, is about a 13-year-old and the relationships parents have with children. It includes a common action that is familiar and has many concrete words that students will understand. It was chosen deliberately to be slightly challenging so that students can come up with varied interpretations. The exercise is designed to stimulate critical thinking and language, so teachers may resist the urge to interpret the poem for the students. The poem is relatively new so will not have any texts for students to draw on for their ideas. This is intentional so that students may think of their own ideas and feel free to share them.

My classmate, named _____, had an interesting idea. It is

ACTIVITY 9

When the “sleepless father” was a boy, his parents had expectations of him. What did they expect him to do?

What did the “sleepless father” dream of doing as a boy?

The “sleepless father” wonders what his daughter will do, but he does not say what he expects. Why do you think he does not do this?

Write a paragraph giving your own interpretation of “After the Boom” by Jerry D. Mathes II. What is the poet’s main idea in the poem? Reference the poem in your paragraph and use lines from the poem as evidence for your idea. You may also wish to use evidence from other things you have read or experienced to help explain your interpretation.



ACTIVITY - 10

Share your interpretation of “After the Boom” by Jerry D. Mathes II with your group. Listen to the interpretations of at least two other classmates. Fill out the table based on what you hear from your classmate.

MY CLASSMATES' INTERPRETATIONS OF “AFTER THE BOOM”					
Writer's name (classmate)	Does the writer reference the poem?	What is the writer's main idea (interpretation)?	What evidence does the writer give for the main idea?	What is the source of the evidence?	How is the writer's interpretation different from mine?