

Road not taken

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“ Two roads diverged in a wood and I -/ I took the one less traveled by/ and that has made all the difference” (Frost 9). Robert Lee Frost was one of the most renowned poets of the twentieth century, and his work often effectively incorporated complex philosophical themes and values subliminally within the text. His most popular poem “ The Road Not Taken” published in 1916 is a parable of decision-making, advocating the importance of carefully evaluating decisions.

In the poem, the first person point of view is thought to incorporate the poet’s own views of American society. The poem is a paradox, and the appeal is often misunderstood by the majority of society in terms of its superficial context, underlying meaning, and the poet’s own values. Frost’s writing is often considered very straightforward, and therefore is seldom properly analyzed. However, many of the poet’s writings incorporate dark parables that may only be understood when closely examined. In this poem, many readers are led to believe the poem is literally referring to a traveler who approaches a diverged path in the woods. However, those who perform a more in-depth analysis may recognize the poem as a metaphor pertaining to making crucial decisions at certain times in life.

The most common mistake in reading occurs during the evaluation of the concluding lines of the poem, “ two roads diverged in a wood and I - I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference” (Frost 9). Unaware readers may be influenced by the misleading context to believe the poem in its entirety is referring to taking the road less travelled, which essentially is a superficial expression of nonconformity by portraying the importance of going against the crowd. “ Contrary to the popular belief of

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many high school students and much of the general American public, "The Road Not Taken" is not a poem about nonconformity toward societal norms and common ideas and practices" ("Robert Frost's The Road Not Taken"). Instead, vivid examples and descriptive explanations are used to show that in fact, there was no road less traveled, and both paths were quintessentially identical. This is supported by "both [paths] that morning equally lay/ in leaves no step had trodden black" (Frost 9).

In these lines Frost is saying neither path has recently been utilized, nor is it possible to see which path is more or less travelled as they are too similar to one another. The commonly misinterpreted underlying meaning of the writing is to explain one should make a decision and stick with it, rather than second guessing and having doubts. Robert Frost was a New England man fond of incorporating his own values into underlying meanings. He was often criticized for this attribute that made him so loved and hated by American readers. Supported by the opening lines "two roads diverged in a yellow wood/ and sorry I could not travel both," (Frost 9) this part of the poem shows both the speaker and reader should understand only one path can be taken and the speaker is trying to evoke an emotional response by being sorry they could not travel both. The traveler shows overthinking is pointless because one can never make multiple major decisions at once.

Frost's values of reality and verity become apparent here where other readers misinterpret the situation. The theme of realism is presented once again when the traveler mentions leaving the other path for another day with doubts of ever coming back. The doubts of the traveler tell the audience sometimes, there is no going back and once a major decision is made, it may

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be too late to ever go back. In hindsight, this seemingly very simple and direct poem about a traveler who is presented with an important decision to make is actually an analogy to describe to readers in reality, many decisions cannot be changed and one should just choose and stick with it. The poem "The Road Not Taken" is often misinterpreted due to the way Robert Frost chooses words and injects his own values and themes. The main theme of the poem is apparent as the speaker is approached with this divide in the road and must make a choice as to which road to take.

The narrator can only choose one side, and must abide by that decision. Frost emphasized humans as fundamentally defined by the challenges they face and the choices they make. While many wish to avoid these choices, the speaker and Frost show the tortuous element of choice is inevitable. There is very little to alleviate this burden; we must face the divide in the road and must choose.