

The process of
decision making in
the road not taken by
robert frost



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Every aspect of one's life is determined by the decisions he makes. Some are life altering, such as deciding what college to go to, while others are inconsequential, such as deciding what to have for breakfast in the morning. Whether they are big or small, these decisions are what progresses one from day to day, week to week, and year to year. In his poem "The Road Not Taken," Robert Frost examines the process and affects of such decision making.

First of all, there is a dual meaning associated with the symbol of the road in this poem. Literally, Frost is describing two tangible roads that someone must physically walk down. Obviously the reader knows this from the vivid imagery Frost gives when beginning the poem with "two roads diverged in a yellow wood" (Frost). The reader is given a mental image of a fall forest with two roads disappearing in to the trees, but, as always, there is an underlying meaning, and it is implied that these roads are not totally physical. In actuality the entire poem is focused on the narrator's decision regarding which road to travel and the consequences that will come as a result of his choice which emphasizes the claim that Frost is trying to make. He uses the concrete example of the two roads in order to highlight the basis of decision making in one's life and how every decision one makes affects everything else from there on out. Terry Andrews writes that the popularity of this poem is due to the "simplicity of its symbolism" and that Frost sees choosing between the two roads "as a metaphor for choosing between different directions in life." Andrews is right in saying that this is a simple connection that can be made about this poem, but although the symbolism may be easy

to understand, the underlying development of the metaphor is what really composes the poem.

Although they lead to two different places and they wind down two different paths, in reality, each road is ultimately the same. They each have pros and cons associated with them, meaning that for every asset one road carries, the other has one equally as beneficial. The narrator asserts that travelers before them “ had worn them really about the same” (Frost), revealing that although one may have grass while the other does not, they have both been equivalently traveled for the most part. When making a decision, it is important to grasp the fact that whichever one is chosen is going to have just as many advantages as the one being left behind. A decision would not be a decision if that weren't the case. If something is easy to decide and there is nothing else for it to compete against, then it is not a decision. He also writes that when he is observing the two paths they “ equally lay in leaves no step had trodden back” (Frost). Basically, the narrator is saying that both paths are covered with leaves that haven't been crunched by the foot of a traveler, which shows that neither path has been taken in quite some time once again proving their equality. This also reenforces the fact that the narrator, who is the new traveler, is starting from scratch and gets to make the decision by himself and himself alone. Throughout life there are many decisions to be made that no one else has had to make before. When this time comes, it is important to realize that both decisions have their own advantages and disadvantages, essentially making either one a favorable choice. Dan Brown writes that “ Frost seems to want things both ways in this poem” since it is obvious that he is faced with a struggle while trying to

make up his mind. This is the classic you-can't-have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too kind of situation. As nice as it would be to reap the benefits of both roads, sadly the narrator is unable to do so; therefore, it is important to spend an ample amount of time visiting with the advantages identified with both options so as to make the best choice.

Decisions take time, especially for the kind alluded to in this poem: a life changing one. Frost touches on the fact that every possibility must be weighed when making a decision. The narrator fully acknowledges the first path and writes that he stood there and “looked down one as far as I could,” (Frost) which shows that he was truly pondering that path and trying to soak up all it had to offer. When one is in the process of making such an important decision, it is crucial to go over all the benefits and downfalls of each, which is exactly what he is doing here. It is obvious that the narrator is being pulled in both directions. He spends a decent amount of time observing the first path, while on the other hand he is drawn to the second path due to its unworn nature. The narrator says that he took the second path due to its grassiness and comments that the path “wanted wear” (Frost) The alliteration used here draws specific attention to this phrase and the personification of the path that he ends up taking. Attributing this physical need of “wanting wear” to the path somehow gives a sense of validation for the narrator making the decision he made. It's almost as if he feels sorry for this path because it appears to have been neglected by travelers before it.

There is a sense of regret throughout Frost's poem. Accompanying every decision are the opportunity costs one gave up when they decided against the other option. The title is a dead giveaway with how the narrator views <https://assignbuster.com/the-process-of-decision-making-in-the-road-not-taken-by-robert-frost/>

the decision he made. The poem is entitled “ The Road Not Taken,” emphasizing the road that was not chosen. Due to the title, before one even reads the poem there is an emphasis put on the alternative decision and the one that the narrator did not choose to make. One critic, Jennifer Bouchard, writes that this title “ emphasizes the mystery that surrounds the choices that people make; specifically, the path not chosen” (Bouchard). She makes a good point in highlighting the fact that there is a sense of mystery surrounding the choices that people make. No matter who or what tries to influence a person, the final decision is in the hands of the one making it, which will always leave others pondering the choice made. At the beginning of the poem he tells the reader that he is “ sorry [he] could not travel both” (Frost). This shows that he is admitting that each path has a great deal to offer, so picking one to travel down will cost him the benefits of the other and vice versa. Simply put, it is impossible to have your cake and eat it too. As nice as it would be to experience the benefits that both choices have to offer when making a decision, that is quite impossible. In the last stanza of the poem, the narrator admits that he is “ telling this with a sigh” (Frost). When someone is sighing while telling a story or revealing something about themselves, it comes with the grounds that they are not necessarily completely content with the decision they made at the time. The tone that this phrase creates and the exasperation associated with the narrator’s voice at this point go to show that the right decision is not always going to be chosen. No matter what one does or how much time one spends on making a decision, sometimes it just isn’t going to go as planned and there isn’t much to do about it. Frost finishes the poem with the narrator divulging that choosing the road that he chose “ has made all the difference” (Frost). The <https://assignbuster.com/the-process-of-decision-making-in-the-road-not-taken-by-robert-frost/>

narrator says this with a longing, nostalgic approach, as if he is wondering what would be different in his life if he had made a different decision. After making an important decision, it is completely natural to have this sense of speculation about what could have been.

There is quite the domino effect associated with decision making. Almost every decision made in one's life will affect the next one he makes. Once the narrator has made up his mind, he is at a point of no return. When discussing his decision he mentions that "way leads on to way" (Frost), meaning that when he chooses that specific road, it will lead on to the next one, and the one after that, and so on. When one stands at a fork in the road during his or her life and is forced to make a choice, the one that he or she chooses will influence every other decision from there on out. The narrator also adds that he "doubted if [he] should ever come back" (Frost). The narrator is restating the fact that once he chooses one road and heads on his way, he will never be able to come back and head down the opposite road. When a life altering decision has been made, there is no going back and changing your mind. The uncertainty shown in the narrators words and tone at this point also reiterates the sense of regret that he feels.

Overall, Frost's poem deeply reflects the developments and consequences of decision making on the life altering level. Life would go nowhere without the decisions people choose to make day in and day out. Every decision reaps its own benefits; they take time; regret will always be a some kind of issue; and every single decision affects the next one from there on out.