The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

We are faced with numerous decisions on a daily basis. Some might be as easy as choosing what shirt to wear, where we don’t even have to think twice, while some might be more challenging such as what major to choose. Robert Frost gives us an example to what seems like a minor decision in “The Road Not Taken”. Frost explains that while walking in the woods, he is come across two paths and he must choose what road to take to continue his journey. Most people assume that Frost chose the road not taken, as he gives many indications of taking this road. However, in this paper we will talk why this poem is one of the most misinterpreted poems, and that Frost did not take the road less taken.

Many historians agree that The Road not taken was actually written about Frost’s friend Edward Thomas. Thomas and Frost used to take many walks as friends and Thomas often had a hard time making decisions. In addition, Thomas often had trouble making choices in life. It is because of Thomas’s indecision making that Frost wrote this poem as a joke to make fun of   
Thomas. After Thomas read the poem, he took Frost’s words into thought and enlisted himself into World War 1. He decided not to take the easy way out and wanted to take the path that not many others have taken.

In contrast, most historians disagree that Frost did end up taking the road less traveled. When Frost writes, “I took the one less traveled by” it is easy to say that he took “the road not taken”. On the contrary, many writers would point out a line in the second stanza when the Frost says, “Though as for that the passing there/Had worn them really about the same”. These two lines signifiy that the two roads are considered the same in terms of the number of people who have traveled on them. This would mean that the path that Frost took was not in fact the road less traveled as they were both traveled the same amount. We also see that in the second stanza, where it says “Oh, I kept the first for another day! /Yet knowing how way leads on to way, /I doubted if I should ever come back.” In these lines, Frost explains that even though he did not travel the other road, he knows where it ends up, which is essentially the same place as the road he took. The speaker did not know this at the time, however as he is reflecting back on his journey, he realizes that both of the roads lead to the same place.

One of the themes in this poem is choices and how the choices we make, define us. This poem explains this theme by saying a scenario about a man who has a choice of two paths in the woods. The whole poem is really just an extended metaphor for the choices we make in everyday life. The speaker examines both paths and then he must choose which path to take. Frost explains that he chooses to take the road the road less traveled on, signifying that he wants to stand out from everyone else. We later come to find out that this is false, but Frost’s point is that the choices we make in life will ultimately determine the next choice we make and the next choice and so forth. We also see this concept when the paths build on each other, just like our choices. When the speaker was first in the woods, he was walking on one path. He then came across two paths because of the path he was walking on. This is similar to what happens in life because the choices we make will lead other choices, depending on which road we choose.

Another theme in this poem is the idea of exploration. The speaker states that even though the paths look the same, he knows that they will ultimately lead him to two separate places. The only problem is that he doesn't know what is ahead and which path leads where. This is a metaphor to the choices we make in life, as we do not know what will come next. One thing that was interesting in my poem was the last two lines where Frost says, "I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." By saying this, Frost agrees that he took a risk instead of the easy way out, and for Frost it paid off. In the last line, he states that "it has made all the difference" sort of like a sense of relief to Frost that he is happy with his decision. Personification is one of the figures of speech in this poem when Frost refers to the two paths he must choose from. In line 8 when Frost says "Because it was grassy and wanted wear" this is a form of personification as the path is taking on human characteristics. We also see that Frost uses imagery when he says, "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood." This first line does a great job setting up the scene for the entire poem by using imagery. Frost does this to exemplify his point which is that he can only take one path as they are diverged. Each path will eventually lead to a different outcome, which is why Frost is careful about his choice instead of just randomly choosing one.

The tense of the speaker in different stanza’s is a key aspect of this poem that not many people notice. In the first three stanza’s, Frost is using a form of past tense as he uses words such as looked and kept, which are both in a form of past tense. This changes in the last stanza when he talks in the present tense. We know this because he says, "I shall be telling this with a sigh". In this line, it indicates that the speaker is from the future looking back on the choice he has made. Most people would say that the sigh in the last line indicates that he is unhappy with his choice as he is regretting the decision he has made. However other people have a different interpretation. The sigh can also be a sigh of relief and that Frost is glad that he chose the second path instead of the first. It is also important to point out that poems have many different meanings and it depends on how you look at it. For people who are optimistic, such as myself, I would say that this is a sigh of relief. However, people who are pessimistic will likely say that he is regretting his choice. This idea of interpretations has to do with our backgrounds as we all come from different places, and these places come from the choices we make during our lifetime.

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