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The Road Not Taken

Robert Frost is regarded as one of the most famous poets of his time during the modernist era. One of his most famous poems he wrote was the Road Not Taken which has been widely speculated over as most people never analyze it correctly and interpret it wrongly. This poem is about a someone who encounters a fork in a path and must choose the right direction to take. Growing up, Frost had to deal with a lot of loss and death and in that sense, he had many difficult choices to make in his life. His upbringing and his past experiences shaped who he was as a person by allowing him to choose what he wanted to do with his life. His past is reflected in this poem as the reoccurring theme in his life of making the right decisions is the main focus.

While analyzing this poem it is easy to get confused with the message that Frost is trying to convey. Frost himself used to boast about how “tricky” his poem was and how he bet that not a lot of people would be able to interpret the Road Not Taken correctly (Orr, 2017). The poem has an obvious truth to it, where it is about making decisions and sometimes wondering if the wrong one was taken, but it also leads to different, more in-depth interpretations such as who the author was talking about in the story, and if the story is literal or figurative. When discussing Frost’s ambiguity, “… considerable merit which results in an openness to a wealth of interpretive analyses and leaves it “to readers to construct divergent meanings”” (Moosavinia and Morteza, 2018). Frost purposefully uses a confusing style of writing in order to allow the reader to make their own assumptions as to the meaning of his poems. In the Road Not Taken, the seemingly obvious meaning to the poem distorts readers perception of the true meaning.

Frost not only was well known for the ambiguity in his writing, but he is also one of the most well-known modernist poets of his time. While emerging into the world of poetry, Frost looked up to other well recognized authors such as T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound. His ability to emulate the way they wrote their poems allowed him to thrive in his writing ways and become big figure in modernism. He became self-conscious of his language and his claims on coherence (Poetry Foundation, 2019). The modernism form of poetry is an excellent insight as to his writing style. The confusing writing style that allows for deeper interpretation allowed for Frost to become well-known with his poems as they left many confused with the real meaning of each one. Frost first develops the confusion in his poem in the first line, “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood” (Frost, 1916). This sentence leaves the readers wondering who is standing at the two roads, the author or another person, and also leaves the setting unknown. The confusion allows for the reader to develop their own decision in their head about what Frost was trying to mean.

While first reading the poem, it is easy to think the poem is just about a man who needs to make a decision about what road to go down. Although, with further reading and analyzing, it is easy to develop an understanding that the poem is about choices a person must make in their life. Decisions always lead to some form of regret, thinking about what would have happened if a different decision was made. In the poem, Frost develops this by saying, “I shall be telling this with a sigh somewhere ages and ages hence: two roads diverged in a wood” (Frost, 1916). The sigh that is written into the story informs the reader that there was regret about what was on the other side of the road that was not taken. This development confirms Frost’s writing style of trying to confuse the reader and make them develop different understandings of the Road Not Taken. Frost writing style also includes a simplistic and upfront style. The meaning of his poems is not woven in and made to be difficult, like most poems, they are put in the words allowing for the writing to affect the reader more. His poems are also very short, with the Road Not Taken being only four stanzas. The short, simplistic reasoning of writing the poem like this is so that the meaning comes across fast and simple.

The Road Not Taken is a perfect example of how poets are able to incorporate the meaning of the poem into a short four stanzas. Modernists poets purposefully make the reading harder to interpret so that the readers are able to come up with different analyzations of the meaning of the work. This poem analysis the effects of contemplating on a decision and then acting on it and showing the regret that could result from not knowing what would have happened if another decision was made instead. The ambiguity in the writing challenges the readers to develop a better understanding on how to recognize the theme or lesson behind the poem, and Frost does this and knows as he claims it is a very tricky poem. This poem digs into the readers emotions as it allows them to remember what it was like to make a difficult decision, and also allows them to think about what could have happened if they chose another path. The real meaning behind this poem was not meant to make readers confused, because once the real truth is uncovered, the poem becomes clear once read again. Frost’s past of travelling all over the place and having to deal with the deaths of loved ones exemplifies how he has had to make many decisions himself. This poem could also be an example of his own life as he is pondering what could have happened if he did anything different in his life. The Road Not Taken is a literary art that is an example of how poems can be mentally stimulating and also provide life lessons for the future.

Works Cited

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