

Literary Reverberations

Robert Frost
"The Road Not Taken"

[PLAY]

Stanza 1

1

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

Summary

On the road of life, the speaker arrives at a point where he must decide which of two equally appealing (or equally intimidating) choices is the better one. He examines one choice as best he can, but the future prevents him from seeing where it leads.

Questions:

- (1) Do you think Frost intended the *y* in *yellow* (line 1) to suggest the diverging roads?
- (2) What is "undergrowth" (line 5)?

Stanza 2

2

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,

Summary

The speaker selects the road that appears at first glance to be less worn and therefore less traveled. This selection suggests that he has an independent spirit and does not wish to follow the crowd. After a moment, he concludes that both roads are about equally worn.

Question:

(1) Does curiosity motivate the speaker when he makes his choice?

Stanza 3

3

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.

Summary

Leaves cover both roads equally. No one on this morning has yet taken either road, for the leaves lie undisturbed. The speaker remains committed to his decision to take the road he had previously selected, saying that he will save the other road for another day. He observes, however, that he probably will never pass this way again and thus will never have an opportunity to take the other road.

Stanza 4

4

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.

Summary

In years to come, the speaker says, he will be telling others about the choice he made. While doing so, he will sigh either with relief that he made the right choice or with regret that he made the wrong choice. Whether right or wrong, the choice will have had a significant impact on his life.

Consider the Themes

CHOICES

Path of Life

Dreams, Hopes, Plans

Man and the Natural World

Exploration

Individualism

Caution

Commitment

Accepting a Challenge

Consider the Impact

The Road Less Traveled may refer to (Wikipedia):

“The Road Not Taken” (poem), a misattributed title of the Robert Frost poem, based on its final lines

Greatest Hits: The Road Less Traveled, an album by Melissa Etheridge

The Road Less Travelled (George Strait album), a 2001 album by country artist George Strait

The Road Less Travelled (Preston Reed album)

The Road Less Travelled (Triosphere album)

The Road Less Traveled (Unknown Prophets album), a 2006 album by Unknown Prophets

“The Road Less Traveled” (The Twilight Zone), an episode of the television series The New Twilight Zone

“The Road Less Traveled” (Battlestar Galactica), an episode of the science-fiction series Battlestar Galactica

The Road Less Travelled, a popular book of psychology and spirituality by M. Scott Peck

1960s – The Beatles

• PLAY



“The Long and Winding Road”

The long and winding road
That leads to your door
Will never disappear
I've seen that road before
It always leads me here
Lead me to your door.

The wild and windy night
That the rain washed away
Has left a pool of tears
Crying for the day.
Why leave me standing here?
Let me know the way.

Many times I've been alone
And many times I've cried,
Anyway you'll never know
The many ways I've tried.

And still they lead me back
To the long, winding road
You left me standing here
A long, long time ago
Don't leave me waiting here
Lead me to your door.

But still they lead me back
To the long winding road
You left me standing here
A long, long time ago (ohhh)
Don't keep me waiting here (don't keep me waiting)
Lead me to your door. (yeah yeah yeah yeah)

1970s – Seals & Croft

- PLAY



“We May Never Pass This Way (again)”

Life, so they say, is but a game and we let it slip away.
Love, like the Autumn sun, should be dyin' but it's only just begun.
Like the twilight in the road up ahead, they don't see just where we're goin'.
And all the secrets in the Universe, whisper in our ears
And all the years will come and go, take us up, always up.
We may never pass this way again. We may never pass this way again.
We may never pass this way again.

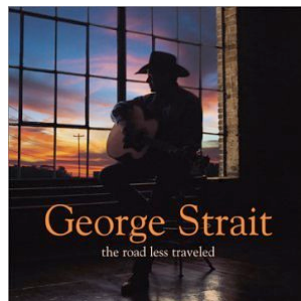
Dreams, so they say, are for the fools and they let 'em drift away.
Peace, like the silent dove, should be flyin' but it's only just begun.
Like Columbus in the olden days, we must gather all our courage.
Sail our ships out on the open sea. Cast away our fears
And all the years will come and go, and take us up, always up.
We may never pass this way again. We may never pass this way again.
We may never pass this way again.

So, I wanna laugh while the laughin' is easy. I wanna cry if it makes it worthwhile.
We may never pass this way again, that's why I want it with you.
'Cause, you make me feel like I'm more than a friend. Like I'm the journey and you're the journey's end.
We may never pass this way again, that's why I want it with you, baby.

We may never pass this way again. We may never pass this way again.
We may never pass this way again. We may never pass this way again.

2001 – George Strait

- [PLAY](#)



“Road Less Travelled”

There's a road a winding road that never ends
Full of curves lessons learned at every bend
Goin' rough unlike the straight and narrow
It's for those who go against the grain
Have no fear dare to dream of a change live to march to the beat of a
different drummer
And it all might come together
And it all might unraveled
On the road less traveled

For the road less traveled ain't for the faint of heart
For those who choose to play it safe and never stray too far
Me I want to live my life and one day leave my mark
And it all might come together
And it all come unraveled
On the road less traveled

I've chosen a pathway I may not endure
One thing's for certain nothing for sure
And it all might come together
And it all might come unraveled
On the road less traveled

For the road less traveled ain't for the faint of heart
For those who choose to play it safe and never stray too far
Me I want to live my life and one day leave my mark
And it all might come together
And it all come unraveled
On the road less traveled

There's a road winding road that never ends