

## THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

► By Robert Frost

### Background of the Poem

Robert Frost claims that he wrote this poem about his friend Edward Thomas, with whom he had walked many times in the woods near London. Whenever they would come to different paths and take a particular road, he would always regret, at not having taken the other.

### Summary

The poem presents a dilemma that every man faces in his life. One day, going his way the poet comes to a fork in the road and needs to decide which way to go to continue his journey. He stands there for long. Then he decides to choose the road, which was grassy and needed 'to wear'. He feels this choice will make all the difference to his future life. He decides to try the other road, some other time, knowing fully well that he will not get a chance to go back to it. Later he wishes that he had taken the other road. This is the irony of life, we cannot travel on all the available roads, no matter howsoever we may wish to.

The poet feels that after ages from now he would be looking at this decision with a 'sigh'. He would tell that since he had taken the road less travelled, it made all the difference.

Thus the poet speaks of the basic problems of making the right choice. Many alternatives are available at the time of choice but man has to select one. It is only the future that will reveal, whether the decision is wrong or not. After taking decisions we cannot undo them, we can only regret them. Even if we wish, we cannot start all over again.

### सारांश

यह कविता उस असमंजस की स्थिति या धर्मसंकट का वर्णन करती है जो हर प्राणी के सामने आती है और प्रत्येक व्यक्ति को झेलनी पड़ती है। एक दिन, कवि एक दोराहे पर आकर खड़ा होता है। उसे निर्णय लेना है कि किस ओर मुड़कर अपनी यात्रा जारी रखे।

वह दोराहे पर बहुत देर तक खड़ा रहता है। अंत में वह उस पथ पर जाने की सोचता है जहाँ घास ज़्यादा है, और उस पथ से अधिक लोग चलकर नहीं गये। कवि को लगता है कि इस राह का चयन करने से उसके भविष्य पर अच्छा प्रभाव पड़ेगा। वह निश्चय करता है कि दूसरे पथ पर वह कभी और चलेगा। कवि यह भी भली भाँति जानता है कि उसको लौट कर आने का, उस पथ पर चलने का अवसर नहीं मिलेगा। बाद में कवि को खेद और अफसोस होता है कि उसने दूसरी राह क्यों नहीं चुनी। यही जीवन की विडम्बना है, मनुष्य जीवन में हर राह पर नहीं चल सकता, चाहने पर भी नहीं।

कवि को लगता है समय के बीतने पर उसे अपने निर्णय पर पछतावा होगा। पीछे मुड़कर देखने में उसे अपनी राह गलत लगेगी और वह यही सबसे कहेगा कि उसने वह राह चुनी जिसपर कम लोग चलते हैं और इसी निर्णय ने उसके जीवन को बदल दिया।

मनुष्य को जीवन में अनेक अवसर पर निर्णय लेने पड़ते हैं और उसके जीवन की यह सबसे बड़ी समस्या है – उचित निर्णय! निर्णय लेने के समय उसके सम्मुख चुनाव के अनेक रास्ते हैं पर उसे एक ही दिशा, एक ही राह चुनने का अधिकार है। यह तो भविष्य ही बता सकता है कि उसका चयन ठीक है कि नहीं। चुनाव के बाद हम उसे बदल नहीं सकते, केवल खेद ही कर सकते हैं। हमारे लाख चाहने पर भी हम अपने निर्णय को बाद में बदल नहीं सकते हैं।

### Word-Meaning

- **Diverged** – went in different directions
- **Undergrowth** – shrubs ● **Better claim** – preferable
- **Wanted wear** – had not been crushed or worn out under human feet ● **Trodden** – walked on ● **Sigh** – regret

## SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

### TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS (SOLVED)

1. On the basis of your understanding of the poem, answer the following questions by ticking the correct choice.

(a) In the poem, a traveller comes to a fork in the road and needs to decide which way to go to continue his

journey. Figuratively, the choice of the road denotes \_\_\_\_\_.

(i) the tough choices people face while deciding on the road of life.

- (ii) the time wasted on deciding what to do
- (iii) life is like a forest
- (iv) one must travel a lot to realize his dreams

**Ans :** (i) the tough choices people face while deciding on the road of life.

**(b)** The poet writes, 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood.' The word 'diverged' means \_\_\_\_\_.

- (i) appeared                      (ii) curved
- (iii) branched off              (iv) continued on

**Ans :** (iii) branched off

**(c)** The tone of the speaker in the first stanza is that of \_\_\_\_\_.

- (i) excitement
- (ii) anger
- (iii) hesitation and thoughtfulness
- (iv) sorrow

**Ans :** (iii) hesitation and thoughtfulness

**2. Answer the following questions briefly :**

**(a)** Describe the two roads that the author comes across.

**Ans :** One road was a beaten track. Many people had walked on it. It was lost in the small shrubs. The other road was grassy and unspoiled.

**(b)** Which road does the speaker choose? Why?

**Ans :** The speaker chooses the second road which was grassy and less walked on.

**(c)** Which road would you choose? Why?

**Ans :** To be on the safer side, I would choose the beaten time-tested track. Choosing a new course involves risk and demands an adventurous spirit, which may involve intense struggle.

**(d)** Does the speaker seem happy about his decision?

**Ans :** Perhaps not. He is sorry that he could not walk and how he once missed the opportunity to walk on the beaten track.

**(e)** The poet says "I took the one less travelled by. And that has made all the difference." What is 'the difference' that the poet mentions?

**Ans :** The poet adopted the less travelled road and faced problems. In his personal life, he had to go a long way and struggle hard to establish himself. This was all because of his choice of a new track.

**3. Write the rhyme scheme of the poem.**

**Ans :** The rhyme scheme of the poem is as follows :

a	b	a	a	b
c	d	c	c	d
e	f	e	e	f
g	h	g	g	h

**4. Fill in the blanks to complete the following paragraph that gives the theme of the poem. Use the words given in the box below :**

- |           |           |         |         |
|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| decision  | sorry     | foresee | choices |
| pleasant  | direction | fork    | trail   |
| rewarding | chance    | wonder  | both    |

The poem 'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost is about the (i) \_\_\_\_\_ that one makes in life. It tells about a man who comes to a (ii) \_\_\_\_\_ in the road he is travelling upon. He feels (iii) \_\_\_\_\_ that he cannot travel (iv) \_\_\_\_\_ paths as he must choose one. Frost uses this fork in the road to represent a point in the man's life where he has to choose the (v) \_\_\_\_\_ he wishes to take in life. As he thinks about his (vi) \_\_\_\_\_ he looks down one path as far as he can see trying to (vii) \_\_\_\_\_ what life will be like if he walks that path. He then gazes at the other and decides the outcome of going down that path would be just as (viii) \_\_\_\_\_. At this point he concludes that the (ix) \_\_\_\_\_ that has been less travelled on would be more (x) \_\_\_\_\_ when he reaches the end of it. The man then decides that he will save the other path for another day, even though he knows that one path leads to another and that he won't get a (xi) \_\_\_\_\_ to go back. The man then says that he will be telling this story with a sigh some day in the future suggesting that he will (xii) \_\_\_\_\_ what life would have been like if he had chosen the more walked path even though the path he chose has made all the difference.

**Ans :** (i) choices (ii) fork (iii) sorry (iv) both (v) direction (vi) decision (vii) foresee (viii) rewarding (ix) trail (x) pleasant (xi) chance (xii) wonder

**5. Roads are fascinating as metaphors for life, change, journeys, partings, adventure, etc. or simply as roads. This is probably why they, and all their attendant images, have permeated art, literature and song. In the poem, Frost uses the fork in the road as a metaphor for the choices we make in life. Thus the roads are, in fact, two alternative ways of life. What other nouns could be used to represent life?**

- Ans :**
- River
  - Stage
  - Flowers
  - Colours
  - Dream
  - Journey

## MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Read the following extracts and choose the correct option :

1. *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 travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*

(a) 'Sigh' means :

- (i) regret (ii) to hate  
(iii) not to feel sorry (iv) to be indifferent

(b) What has made all the difference in the poet's life?

- (i) Choosing a travelled road  
(ii) Choosing a less travelled road  
(iii) By not choosing any road  
(iv) By not being weak

(c) 'Road' is a metaphor for :

- (i) travelling wisely  
(ii) good health  
(iii) choices we make in life  
(iv) morning walks

Ans : (a) (i) (b) (ii) (c) (iii)

2. *And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden back.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back*

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

(a) 'Both' in line one refers to :

- (i) leaves  
(ii) roads  
(iii) steps  
(iv) the poet and his friends

(b) The poet chose to travel on another road because :

- (i) it was easier  
(ii) it was shorter and easier  
(iii) it was grassy and wanted wear  
(iv) he was sure of his success on that way

(c) The poet doubted if :

- (i) he could ever finish his journey  
(ii) he could meet his family again  
(iii) he could join his friend  
(iv) he could ever come back to travel the first road

Ans : (a) (ii) (b) (iii) (c) (iv)

3. *Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;*

(a) The poet didn't take the first road as :

- (i) It had worn out by continuous use  
(ii) It had been tried and tested  
(iii) It was expected of him  
(iv) It looked shabby

(b) The second road had better claim as :

- (i) It had been lying waste  
(ii) It was attractive with green grassy carpet  
(iii) It needed to be explored  
(iv) It was full of surprises

(c) The poet's decision to take the other road indicates that he is :

- (i) Adventurous (ii) Calculative  
(iii) Opportunist (iv) Careful

Ans. (a) (i) (b) (iii) (c) (i)

4. *Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

(a) In this extract, the poet is describing,

- (i) a road  
(ii) his love for trekking  
(iii) two roads, the one he chose and the reason for his choice  
(iv) his tastes

(b) The poet doubts his comeback because

- (i) he continues to follow the road he chooses  
(ii) he is very lazy  
(iii) he is a man on the move  
(iv) he never repeats himself

(c) The first line of the extract can be explained as

- (i) the world is round  
(ii) all roads have a dead end  
(iii) all roads join at an intersection  
(iv) all roads lead to other roads

Ans. (a) (iii) (b) (i) (c) (iv)

5. *Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
To where it bent in the undergrowth*

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

(a) The poet is standing :

- (i) at a crossing  
(ii) at a crossing in autumn season  
(iii) where two roads cross  
(iv) in a forest

- (b) He sees before him :
- a yellow forest and roads
  - two roads crossing
  - a dense forest
  - two roads diverging in a forest
- (c) His desire at this moment is to :
- cross the road
  - travel further
  - travel on both the roads
  - see the forest

Ans. (a) (iii) (b) (iv) (c) (iii)

6. *“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.”*

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

- (a) The poet decided that :
- he would take the second road and leave the first one for some other day
  - he would take the frequently trodden road
  - he would go back and decide later on
  - he would take the first road
- (b) ‘Leaves no step had trodden black’ implies :
- that the road was not taken by anyone
  - that it was not a safe road
  - that the poet was not interested in taking the road
  - None of the above
- (c) ‘Should ever come back’ shown that the poet was :
- confident
  - indecisive
  - optimistic
  - pessimistic
- Ans. (a) (i) (b) (i) (c) (ii)

## NON-MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Read the following extract and answer the questions given below.

1. *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.*

(a) What decision does the speaker take of the ‘first’ road ?

Ans. When the poet sees two roads diverging in a forest, he decides to take the second one and leave the first one for some other day.

(b) Explain : “In leaves no step had trodden black.”

Ans. It means that the leaves on the other road were intact. There were no marks that anyone had trodden on them.

(c) What doubt crops up in the speaker’s mind ?

Ans. The poet was in a dilemma as to which road, out of the two, he should follow.

2. *Two roads diverged in yellow wood  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth*

(a) Why did the poet feel like travelling both the roads ?

Ans. He wanted to do so because both the roads looked equally fair and promising.

(b) Why did the poet choose the other road ?

Ans. He chose the other road because it was grassy, less travelled and wanted wear.

(c) What was the doubt in poet’s mind ?

Ans. The poet doubted if he would ever be able to come back to travel the first road.

## SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the significance of the title ‘The Road Not Taken’.

Ans. It depicts the feeling of regret. After making a choice, he was plagued with the idea of not making the other choice. He regrets not adopting the other cause, the other road, the other choice. Even when we do well often making a choice we keep thinking of the games and success which could have been ours if we had taken the other choice.

2. Describe the two roads that the author finds. Which road does he choose ? [CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

One day the poet comes to a bifurcation in the road and needs to decide which road he should take to continue his journey. One road was a beaten track. Many people had walked on it. It was lost in the small shrubs. The other road was grassy and seemed less trodden. Being adventurous in nature, the poet chooses the second road which was grassy and less walked on and left the first one for some other day.

**3. What was the poet's dilemma in the poem 'The Road Not Taken' ?** [CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

The poet faces a dilemma that every man faces in his life, i.e. making a right decision. One day during the walk the poet reached bifurcation in the road. Out of the two roads, he had to take only one. He decides to take the second road which was less frequented. Hence the road is a symbolic of the choice. It is just not possible to make more than one choice, and to take both the roads. So the poet decides to take the road less travelled.

**4. Why did the poet keep the first road for another day ?** [CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

Once the poet had to make a decision as to which road he should travel out of two in front of him. He examines both the roads and finds the other road less travelled. He didn't want to follow a beaten track and decides to take the other road and keep the first road for some other day. But somewhere in his mind, he is troubled with the thought that he may not be able to do so.

**5. "I took the one less travelled by." What do we come to know about the poet from this line ?**

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

Or

**What does the choice made by the poet indicates about his personality in the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?**

This line reveals the adventurous nature of the poet because when he had to take a decision of making a choice, he did not take the beaten track. He chooses the path which is not frequented. He decides to leave the first

road for some other day knowing fully well that he will not get a chance to go back to it.

**6. Write a brief note on the theme of Robert Frost's poem 'The Road Not Taken.'**

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

Robert Frost is known for writing poetry which had philosophical streaks. The poem 'The Road Not Taken' is based on the theme of making a difficult choice which has a universal appeal. It concerns making the right choice, the right decision. Road is a symbolic word which stands for a choice. It is just not possible to make more than one choice, and to take both the roads. We have to make one choice, we have to take one road. While making our choice we do consider all the factors still it is not foolproof. So the element of regret remains which takes away our contentment. This is the great tragedy of life.

**7. Why did the poet doubt his coming back on the same intersection in life ?** [CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

This poem is about choices, decisions and their consequences. It is a fact that once the choice has been made, there is no going back. The traveller standing on the road of life, is confronted with a dilemma when both the paths or choices look equally promising. Once a road is chosen, the traveller has to move on. There is no rewinding. There would never be a befitting time or opportunity for coming back and exercising the choice again. Time has changed, so has the psychology of the traveller. It will never be the same again. So one sticks to the road one has taken and makes it lead to the destination already decided.

## LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

**1. What is the theme of the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?**

**Ans.** The regret in life when we do not make the right decision. Life is full of challenges and difficult decisions have to be made on which depends our future life and success. When even this happens and we make a choice out of many or two then the choices or choice not made keeps haunting us making us ponder what could have happened if we had made that choice which we did not, if we had taken that road, which we did not take.

**2. Which road does the poet choose? Why? Is he happy about his decision?**

**Ans.** He chose the road not frequented, which had not been trodden so far; reflecting and arguing with himself that maybe some day he would come back, find that road and walk on it. But somewhere in his mind he is troubled with the thought that maybe he would not be able to do so. Life does not deal in rewinding and coming back to end one's decisions or undo mistakes. We have to continue with the decision we once make whatever the outcome.

**3. Why was it so difficult for the poet to make a decision? Give reasons.**

**Ans.** It was difficult for the poet to make a decision as he had no idea what any of them had in store for him. He was at a difficult time in his life, to remain in USA where he was not given recognition or to migrate to England. Only the future could tell. It was like taking a leap in the dark. Who could tell its result? It was difficult to say how he would be received in England as his experience of his birthplace USA was bitter.

**4. What is the moral presented by the poet in the poem 'The Road Not Taken'?**

**Ans.** This is an inspirational poem and quite tricky, according to Robert Frost himself. The poem presents an antithesis. The traveller comes to a fork and wishes to take both, which is impossible. One of the roads is described as grassy and 'wanting wear', then he says that both the roads look the same. This represents the eternal dilemma of man : he finds the grass greener always on the other side.

This poem is a call for the reader to forge his or her way in life and not follow the path that others have taken. This poem encourages self-reliance, reinforces the power of independent thinking and sticking to one's decisions. The poet does not moralise about choice, he simply says that choice is inevitable and you will never know till you have lived the 'difference'. So there is nothing right or wrong about a choice, it is all relative. Whatever direction one takes one must pack it with determination and zest for one can never turn the clock back, or relive that moment.

**5. As the poet who took the road not taken by many people, write a letter to your friend stating how "it has made all the difference". [CBSE 2010 (Term I)]**

Dear Smith,

As you know that I have established myself as a poet but this journey of life had not been very simple. I must tell you about the day when I was facing a dilemma to choose between the two roads to walk upon and I chose the one which was less frequented, leaving the first one for some other day. I knew fully well that I will not get a chance to go back to it. Now I wish I had taken the first road. But friend, this is the irony of life, we cannot travel on all the available roads, no matter howsoever we wish to. The basic thing is to make right choice because after that we can't undo them. It is only the future that will reveal whether our decision was right or wrong. Since I took the road less travelled by, it has made all the difference—The outcome is known to you.

Rest in next letter.

Yours

Robert Frost

**6. Based on your understanding of the poem 'The Road Not Taken', write a diary entry of the speaker in the poem about the day he had to make a choice.**

[CBSE 2010 (Term I)]

Dear Diary

24 Sept. 2011

After a long time, I got a chance to reveal my inner feelings to you. Today although I am a well established poet, I cannot forget the day when I was standing at a place where I had to make a choice of profession. I decided to choose the one which was not followed by many. Although I considered all the factors, even then I was unsure whether it was foolproof. I knew fully well that once the choice is made I have to move on, there is no rewinding or opportunity for coming back and exercising the choice again. Now I wish that I had taken the other road as I had to go a long way and struggle hard to establish myself. But, this is the irony of life, we cannot travel on all the available roads, no matter howsoever we may wish to. The grass is always greener on the other side. We have to continue with the decisions we once make whatever the outcome. I should also not regret mine. I am quite contented with my decision.

**7. Describe the two roads the author finds.**

**Ans.** One day during his walk, the poet reached a point of bifurcation. There were two roads and he had to take only one. He stood there surveying the pros and cons and looks at both the roads with great care. The poet looked at the road, as far his eyes could see till it bent in the undergrowth. He saw that the other road was more grassy and needed to be travelled upon. But when he had gone a little ahead, he saw that the other road was also grassy.

## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

### (A) READING/WRITING

Write a short note beginning with the following lines :

That one moment sealed my fate forever. \_\_\_\_\_

### (B) CONVERSATION SKILLS

There are many moments in our life which we regret.

There are many others which make us proud.

- Share some of them with your neighbour.
- Share with others.

### (C) SPEAKING / CREATIVE WRITING

Prepare a speech to be delivered in the morning assembly on the topic "Planned action leads generally to a positive consequence."

- Write it down
- Practice
- Feel confident and ready for the day.