



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Symbolism in the poem The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

Alisvipina Albertpushparaj

MA English Literature

Bharathiar University

Abstract

The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost is a poem narrated by a lone traveler confronted with two roads, symbolizing the journey of life and the decisions we make on that journey. It says that we must carefully decide as there is no looking back after we have chosen one way, we have to move ahead in that way. The poem is concerned with a choice made between two roads. The poet tells himself that he will explore one and then come back and explore the other, but he knows that he will probably be unable to do so. The poem is about more than a choice of paths in a wood, for that choice must be relatively unimportant. We interpret the choices we make and the paths we choose will make a difference in our lives. The poem is fundamentally about indecision and the futility of choice. The decision of which road to take becomes an irrelevancy by the end of the poem. The poet defines standing at the crossroads of life choices as an epitome of frustration. He decides to live the sunny side of life which seems fresh with uncertainty and although it could give chance to new possibilities. At the end of the poem, the poet tells that if people do look up to his life as inspiration it's all because of his choice of choosing to strive yet it is obvious as common knowledge to him so he tells it with a sign. The poet uses two roads diverging inside the wood as the dominant symbol of the poem. He uses yellow wood as a symbol for the larger chaos of life into which one enters once a choice is made.

Keywords: woods, journey, decision, road.

The Road Not Taken

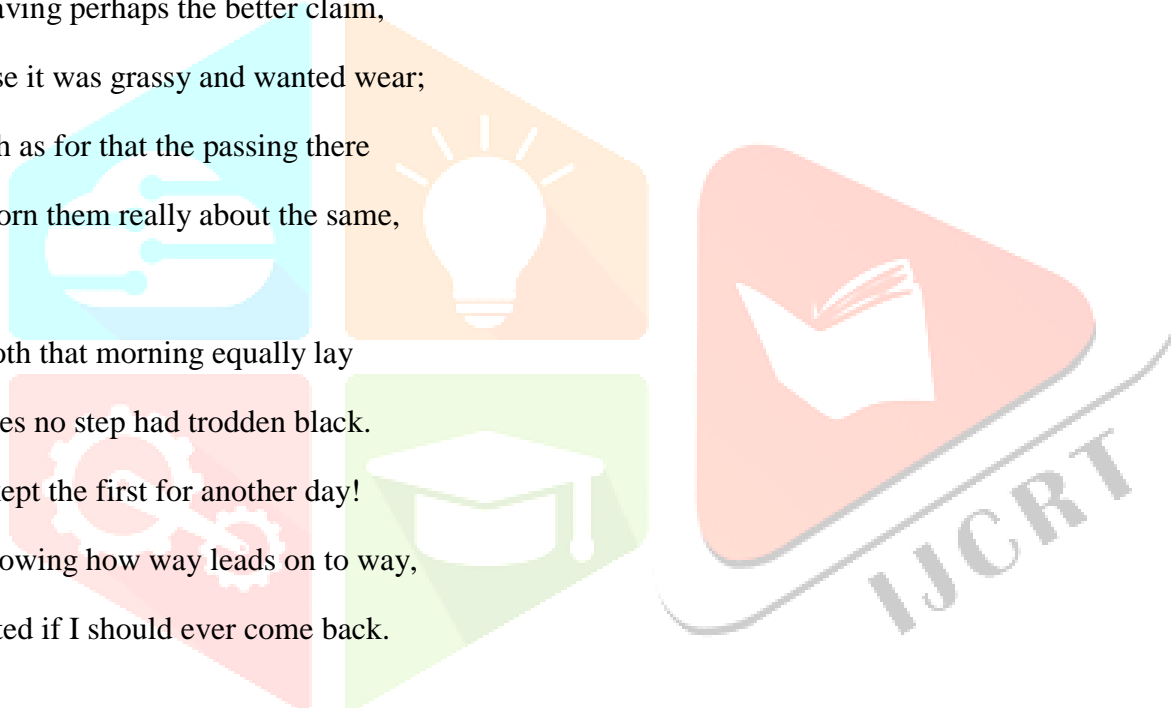
BY ROBERT FROST

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;

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,

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.

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.



In the poem *The Road Not Taken* by Robert Frost, the symbol of the road has been mainly used to specify the journey of life. It signifies not only journey but also the destination. The crossroad functions as an evocative metaphor for vital decisions. The popular perception of the poem is that Robert Frost takes one of the two roads he describes, the title puts more emphasis on the idea that the poet has not taken any of the specified roads, but he traverses the middle path. Frost was always caught between two worlds that of being a teacher and a poet, between reality and imagination. In the poem he ruminates over which vocation to pursue, a poet or a teacher. He finally arrives at the decision that one can be a poet and yet teach. So he does not take any of the roads as described, but forges his own path. The poem can also be taken as Frost shifting between imagination and reality. He adopts a middle stand, he lives a practical life but his imagination manifests itself in his writings. The poet tries to tell that the decisions in life cannot be specifically organized into logical alternatives or mathematical unit, sometimes life is beyond logic, categorization and mathematical division. The decision is indeed unique, he states:

“And that has made all the difference.

The image of the woods in the poem signifies indecision as the poet is lost searching for answers. The image can also symbolize instinct as opposed to social norms. The yellow color of the woods points to the season of autumn. Autumn is symbolic of incipient decay and stagnation. The poet also feels a sense of stagnation as he cannot progress forward to make a decision.

The image of the road that is caught in the undergrowth indicates entanglement with obstacles. He says that the first road was what people took and the second one was all grassy. Frost says that the practice of teaching has been made crude by teachers themselves, they did not attend to profession out of love for the vocation and sincerity in their duties. The path was taken just for the sake of it. The poet says sometimes the journey itself is the destination.

Reference:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/>

The poem thus reveals a major turning point in the life of the poet Robert Frost. It ends on a note of satisfaction, with a sigh. Frost maintains that his decision based on self reliance has made all the difference. The journey is the journey of life. The traveler in the poem is the poet Frost himself.

