

## Robert Frost, "The Road Not Taken" Close Reading

**First read:** Follow along as I read the poem aloud.

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.

**Second Read:** With your group, re-read the poem, section by section. After each section, answer the corresponding questions.

Text	Targeted Task	My Thoughts
<p>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;</p>	<p>1. What is the setting of the poem?            Underline words and phrases            that help you make this inference.</p> <p>2. What is the conflict or dilemma            the narrator is facing in stanza            one?</p>	
<p>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,</p>	<p>3. Which road did the narrator            take? What line tells you this?</p> <p>4. Why did the narrator make this            decision?</p>	

<p>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.</p>	<p>5. What is the difference between the two roads?</p>	
	<p>6. What does the phrase “I kept the first for another day!” mean?</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p>7. Does the narrator believe s/he will ever return to take the other road? Why or why not?</p>	
	<p>8. When will the narrator reflect on this decision?</p>	

**Third Read:** Re-read the poem for a third time; this time to yourself. After you read, answer the following questions.

1. What is *literally* happening in the poem? Write a short summary. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What might the literal events *symbolize*? (What could the two roads symbolize?) \_\_\_\_\_

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3. In stanza 3, what does the narrator mean when he says, "Yet knowing how way leads on to way / I doubted if I should ever come back"?

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4. In stanza 4 the narrator says that one day in the future, he will be telling of this moment "with a sigh." Do you think the narrator's feelings about his decision are positive or negative? Why?

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5. How can taking the road "less traveled by" make a difference in any person's life?

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6. Why is the poem entitled "The Road Not Taken"? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What is the overall theme or message of this poem? \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Fourth (and FINAL 😊 ) Read:** Re-read the poem one last time, keeping in mind its theme. Use the graphic organizer below to help you trace the development of the theme throughout the poem. You should choose a **MINIMUM of 5 lines**.

Line Number	Copy the line EXACTLY from the text	How does this line help to develop the poem's theme?


**Final Assessment Task:** Complete a fully developed paragraph with the following assertion/topic sentence. Make sure to use the five pieces of evidence from the graphic organizer to support your argument. Remember to use AEC paragraph structure, including topic sentences, closing sentences, textual evidence, commentary, and transitions. Use MLA citations – (Frost Line #).

**Robert Frost’s poem “The Road Not Taken” uses an extended metaphor to develop his theme of \_\_\_\_\_.**

**“The Road Not Taken”  
Writing a Paragraph**

When you are given a prompt and asked to write a paragraph in response, first turn the prompt’s question into a statement and answer it. By doing so, you create an assertion, which is often called a topic sentence.

**Assertion/Topic Sentence**

Look at the following prompt:

In the poem “The Road Not Taken,” how does Robert Frost use an extended metaphor to develop the theme?

Turn the prompt into a statement:

In the poem “The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost uses an extended metaphor to develop the theme.

Okay, that is a good start, but it does not answer the question. What is the extended metaphor? What is the theme? Try adding this necessary information to the assertion.

**Assertion/Topic Sentence: In the poem “The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost uses an extended metaphor of \_\_\_\_\_ to develop the theme of \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Evidence/Back it up:**

Now that you have an assertion, you need to select evidence to back up your answer. Look back at your final reading of the poem and select the three strongest pieces of evidence. Copy the quotation into the following chart on the evidence side. To cite which line(s) the evidence comes from, put parentheses around the line(s) number at the end of the quotation; this provides the MLA citation.

Example: “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood” (1).

**Commentary:**

Notice that beside each quotation in the chart, you explained how the line helps to develop the poem’s theme. This should make good commentary. Copy your answers into the corresponding lines on the commentary side.

If you only have one sentence of commentary, you will need to add another, for it is always better to have more commentary than textual evidence. The commentary is where the writer proves that he or she understands how the evidence supports the assertion.

<b>Evidence:</b> <b>Back it up.</b> Quotation from text MLA citation Supports topic sentence/main idea	<b>Commentary</b> Your own words Explains or elaborate on how or why the quotation proves the topic sentence the assertion made in the topic sentence. Remember that the assertion is your opinion, so you should be able to connect your choice of the best evidence to your opinion.
<b>Example 1:</b>	<b>Comment 1:</b>
	<b>Comment 2:</b>
<b>Example 2:</b>	<b>Comment 1:</b>
	<b>Comment 2:</b>
<b>Example 3:</b>	<b>Comment 1:</b>
	<b>Comment 2:</b>

Finally, you will need a concluding sentence that links all the examples back to the main idea to show its importance. Read through what you have written before concluding: the assertion, evidence, and commentary. Remember that this is your last chance to convince your reader that you have proven your assertion. Just don't include unnecessary phrases like the following: As I have proved, I have just proved/written, As you just read, In conclusion, etc.

**Concluding Sentence:**

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### **Writing the Draft:**

Finally, write it all together as a paragraph. Remember to indent the first line and incorporate quotes into sentences by tagging, introducing, or embedding them. A helpful acronym for this is to TIE your quotes.

**T**ag: Add your own words (at least a subject and verb) after the quotation.

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,” observes the speaker (1).

**I**ntroduce: Add your own words (at least a subject and verb) before the quotation.

The speaker observes, “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood” (1).

**E**MBED: Incorporate the quotation into your own words. If someone was to hear rather than read the sentence, he or she would not know where the quotation begins and ends.

Traveling through a forest, the speaker encounters “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,” and he must decide which road to take (1).

### **Revise, Edit, and Submit**

Using the following rubric, assess yourself and revise your paragraph. Then, read it again to fix any errors. Finally, have at least one other person read your paragraph to ensure that there are no mistakes that you missed. Once you are satisfied that it is your best work, submit your paragraph and congratulate yourself on a well-written paragraph.