The Road Not Taken (by Robert Frost)

HOTS: 1. Evaluating (=considering the advantages and disadvantages of things and making a judgment)

2. Problem solving (=identifying what the problem is and what the solution(s) should be.

Literary terms: Setting, symbolism, theme, rhyme

The theme of the poem is that choices are inevitable and the human tendency is to ask "what might have been if…" Frost calls the poem "The Road Not Taken" because he is thinking about the choice he didn't make and will always regret not knowing what he missed.

Background information: Robert Frost (1874-1963) was an American poet. When he was young, Frost lived on a farm in New England. It was there that he wrote some of his famous works. Frost's poems reflect a deep appreciation of nature. The simplicity of his images (taken from everyday life) and his language (which reflects the rhythms and vocabulary of ordinary speech) make his poems accessible, while leading the reader to understand deeper truths. Robert Frost spent many years in New England and was influenced by the beautiful natural surroundings. The poem is set in the autumn woods and describes the yellow leaves of the trees and the dense undergrowth. This is the type of countryside that Frost would have been familiar with.

Analysis and interpretation

The speaker stands at a fork in the road. The fork in the road represents a point in our lives where we have a choice and must make a decision. The two paths in the woods represent our alternatives. The road is a symbol of the paths we may take in life. The poet tries to see where the roads will lead. He looks down one road until it "bends in the undergrowth" and he cannot see any further. Similarly, it is difficult for us to see what will happen in the future. We can only see the immediate future, and then our vision becomes obscured by the unknown. The poet finally chooses the other road because it "was grassy and wanted wear". He chooses the other road because fewer people have walked that way, and he sees it as the less conventional and more adventurous choice. Yet, he knows that both roads are equally inviting – his decision to take one or the other is totally arbitrary. He tries to console himself with the thought that he will return and take the "other" road, but he knows that "way leads on to way" and one can never return to the same point again.

In the final stanza the poet projects himself into the future and sees the consequences of his decision. The poet's sigh might be one of relief and satisfaction with his decision, which has made "all the difference" in his life. However, it could also be one of regret that he will never know what he missed by not taking the other road, or that things didn't work out as he had hoped. It is appropriate that the poem is called "The Road Not Taken" as the poet wonders what would have happened if he had taken the other road.

The speaker is unsure about the choice he is making. His repetition of the word "I" may show this uncertainty. He is certain, however, that the choice he makes will have a major effect on his life because when he looks back at the past, he will say that his decision "has made all the difference". His "sigh", therefore, might be one of satisfaction, relief, regret or resignation. However, whether he feels satisfied or dissatisfied with his choice in the future, his sigh is one of regret that he will never know what he missed if he had chosen the other option. He would like to come back and try the other road, but "since way leads on to way", he doubts that will ever happen. He feels regret that he has to make a decision without knowing the full implications of both options, and therefore never knowing what he missed on the other path.

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**Analysis and Interpretation**

In the poem the speakers stands at a fork in the road. Frost uses the road as a symbol of life. The poet tries to see where the roads in life we will lead. He looks down on road until it "bends in the undergrowth" and he cannot see any further. Similarly, it is difficult for us to see what will happen in the future. The poet finally chooses the other road, justifying his choice by saying that it "was grassy and wanted wear". He chooses it because fewer people have walked that was and he sees it as the less conventional and more adventurous choice. However, he knows that both roads are equally inviting. He tries to console himself with the thought that he will return and take the "other" road, but he knows that "way lead on to way" and one can never return to the same point.

In the final stanza the poet sees himself in the future and weighs the outcomes of his decision. There are several interpretations of this stanza. The poet's sigh might be one of relief and satisfaction with his decision, which had made" all the difference" in his life. However, it could also be one of regret that he will never know what he missed by not taking the other road, or the things didn't work out as he had hoped. It is appropriate that the poem is called "The Road Not Taken", as the poet wonders what would have happened if he had taken the other road.

**HOTS to be used- Problem Solving**

The speaker (the poet) is faced with the dilemma of which road to choose (problem solving). He stands at a fork in the yellow wood (a metaphor for life) and knowing that he can't choose both ways, he has to make a decision to travel one of them. He reacts to his dilemma by looking at the options and then trying in solving his dilemma. He assesses the pros and cons of both options in order to choose this road or the other. The fork in the road represents those points in our lives when we have to make decisions that will affect our future. The two different paths in the woods represent the options we can choose or the path we can travel in life. The speaker in unsure about the choice he is making. His repetition of the word "I" may show this uncertainty. He is certain, however, that the choice he makes will have a major effect on his life because when he looks back at the past he will say that this decision "has made all the difference".