The Road I Should Have Taken Essay, Research Paper

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

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.

Robert Frost

The Road I Should Have Taken

Robert Frost s The Road Not Taken has long been hailed as a testimony to individuality and an inspiration to take chances. Instead of conforming to society s rituals, the speaker chose to be different to take the road less traveled by.

However, many readers and critics alike have neglected to consider the perils of choosing a path that is seldom tread upon. The consequences of selecting a road that is noticeable more unkempt and perhaps even hazardous could be devastating; it is a miracle in its self that the speaker is still alive or even sane enough to recall his precarious adventure through the uncharted territory. Does no one remember the legend of Little Red Riding Hood, who against her mothers warnings, wandered off the trail only to fall victim to the wolf? As the story goes, Little Red Riding Hood was sent forth with a basket of goodies to visit her ailing grandmother. (Take notice that the traveler has no mention of a grandma or a basket which can lead to only one conclusion. The speaker selfishly neglected poor old Granny and, being a little less innocent than Little Red Riding Hood, was actually seeking trouble to satisfy his bad-boy complex and fulfill some empty void in his life.) Consider the consequences of Little Red Riding Hood s supposed tranquil journey. She was confronted by the conniving wolf who coaxed her to wander through the woods while he traveled the designated road, enthralling her into a friendly little competition of who could arrive at Grandma s house first. Being as meddlesome as any little girl immersed in a cluster of wild flowers, Little Red Riding Hood loitered just long enough for the wolf to eat her poor grandmother only minutes before he finished off Little Red Riding Hood herself. And the moral of the story is, whether you are going to Grandmother s house, cruising to the Seven-Eleven, or taking a walk in the woods, stay on the designated path; it will be much faster, without harmful temptations, and above all safer.

So why, after having the story of Little Red Riding Hood drilled into our brains, can t we see the speaker s decision to take the road less traveled by as blatantly senseless? It remains a mystery as to how readers derive a euphoric ambiance from a poem that is rather vague. We must not entirely blame Robert Frost for the reader s indiscretions while analyzing his poem. After all, The Road Not Taken is one the most ambiguous poems ever composed, thus presenting readers with a considerable amount of open interpretation.

For instance, the first half of the poem offers limited insight to the speaker s actions, yet readers, either because of apathy or foolishness, accept the inane reasoning of the speaker. Basically, the speaker came to a division in a road and chose the one less traveled because it was grassy and wanted wear. It is unfathomable how people could equate the degree of a trail s verdancy with having the better claim on account of it being entirely irrational. In the entire spectrum of factors that influence decisions grass has never held even the lowest prestige.

Furthermore, it is incomprehensible that readers could assume that the speaker s choice to walk on the grassy trail could procure him immense wisdom and individualism. Even the most imperceptive readers should be able to notice the incongruities between the superficial interpretation of Frost s poem (people who refuse to conform to society s customs lead completely satisfying lives) and the speaker s actual reactions to the situation. Perhaps the most insightful comment, which honestly clarifies very little, is the speaker s confession that after years of reflection, the road he traveled made all the difference. The speaker is presumable referring to his journey on the grassy path as a life-altering event, but to assume that the journey yielded a positive outcome is nothing but wishful thinking. There is absolutely no evidence to support this idea, and with a closer study of the poem the negative aspects of the speaker s journey become increasingly obvious.

Frost, not unintentionally, mentions the speaker s premonition of danger (the doubt that he should ever come back to travel the other road which undoubtedly symbolizes the righteous path of life) as a foreshadowing of the trauma the traveler will later face. The only consequence that can logically be inferred from the poem is that the speaker shows remorse for his actions; he specially states that he is sorry he never had the chance to travel the other road (referring to the road that was well maintained and not sprouting weeds), and reflects with a sigh of apparent regret that taking the grassy path has changed his life forever.

The most positive outcome I can conjure is that he escaped the ugly wrath of the wolf and lived to tell about it.