talk
to
me!

LET'S TALK EMPOWERMENT. LET'S TALK ENGLISH

Beehive
1: The Road Not Taken
by
Robert Frost

1.   **Summary**

The poem appears to be quite simple. The poet is standing at a fork in the road in a forest. He is trying to decide which road to take. However, there is a deeper meaning. The road symbolizes our life. The path which we choose, leads to other paths. Each choice, combined with the earlier choices leads to a different future. It is not possible to go back to the past (to that fork in the road) and make different choices. The poet realizes that when he chose the path that most others have not taken, it made a difference to his life. His life has probably turned out to be more interesting because he did not blindly follow others. So do not be afraid to follow your own path.

Click on the link below to hear and "see" the poem.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KUaQgRiJukA

2.   **Explanation Stanza by Stanza**

Two roads diverged in a 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;

The poet is walking through a forest whose leaves have turned yellow in autumn. He comes to a fork in the road. He realizes that he cannot travel on both roads since he is only one traveller. So, he has to make a choice. So he looks down one road to see where it leads. However, he can't see very far because the road bends and gets hidden among the bushes.

Then took the other, 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.

So he takes the other path, thinking that it would be just as good, perhaps even better than the first, because it seems to have more grass. However, as he starts walking, he realizes that both the paths are 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 onto way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

Both roads were covered in leaves, and nobody had walked on them hard enough to turn them black. The poet thinks, for a moment, that he might return to the first road one day. However he realizes that each choice will lead to another and those choices will end in different destinations. So he knows that he is not likely to come back to walk on the other path.

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.

The poet now imagines that he is in the future, looking back at the time when he was at the fork in the road, and he chose to walk the path that was less travelled by. That choice made a difference to the rest of his life.

3. **Vocabulary**

1. **Diverged** - separated, to go in different directions.
    When the roads **diverged**, I was confused; I did not know whether to turn left or right.

2. **Yellow wood** - forests that have turned yellow during autumn (between summer and winter).
    In Delhi we don't see **yellow woods** because we don't have a real autumn season here.

3. **Undergrowth** - plants that grow under trees
    Many small animals and insects hide safely in the **undergrowth**.

4. **Better claim** - more reason (to travel down that road)
I felt that I had the **better claim** to my father's money because I was the eldest son.

5. **Just as fair** - the same (Poetic usage)

6. **Wanted wear** - needed someone to walk on it (Poetic usage)

7. **The passing there** - those who had walked on that road (Poetic usage)

8. **Trodden** - walked upon
The carpet had been **trodden** on for over 50 years, so it looked faded.

9. **Sigh** - to take a deep breath
She s**ighed** with relief when she found her missing wallet under the bed.

10. **Ages and ages hence** - in the distant future
Humans will be living on Mars **ages and ages hence**.

4. **Questions**
   I.
   1. **Where does the traveller find himself? What problem does he face?**

   2. **Discuss what these phrases mean to you.**
      (i)   **a yellow wood**
      (ii) **It was grassy and wanted wear**
      (iii) **The passing there**
      (iv) **Leaves no step had trodden black**
      (v)   **How way leads on to way**

   3. **Is there any difference between the two roads as the poet describes them**
      (i) **In stanzas two and three?**
      (ii) **In the last two lines of the poem?**

   4. **What do you think the last two lines of the poem mean? (Looking back, does the poet regret his choice or accept it?)**

II.

1. **Have you ever had to make a difficult choice (or do you think you will have difficult choices to make)? How will you make the choice (for what reasons)?**
2. **After you have made a choice do you always think about what might have been, or do you accept the reality?**

5. Literary Devices

1. **Rhyme Scheme**: abaab

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

2. **Symbolism**: two roads which represents two or more choices in our life

3. **Anaphora**: the repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive lines

   'and' repeated at the beginning of lines 2, 3 and 4

   Two roads diverged in a 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;

4. **Alliteration**: when consonant sound is repeated

   (i) '**f**irst **f**or' – 'f' sound is repeated
   (ii) '**th**ough, **th**at'- 'th' sound is repeated

5. **Repetition**:

   (i) 'Ages' is repeated, 'I' repeated

   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.

(ii)   'Two roads diverged in a wood'- this sentence is repeated in stanzas
1 and 4.

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