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“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost ***Author Biography and Historical Context***

Robert Frost believed in the power of poetry. In an essay titled “Education by Poetry,” he wrote: “The person who gets close enough to poetry, he is going to know more about the word *belief* than anybody else knows.” Robert Frost must have been speaking about his own experiences with poetry, as it was a central part of his life.

Robert Frost lived from 1874 – 1963. Though he was born in San Francisco, he moved back to his family’s home in New England after his father died when he was a young boy. Both his mother and grandfather were teachers who made sure Robert read a wide variety of materials.

As a young man, Frost attended Dartmouth College and Harvard, but he didn’t graduate from either. Instead, he worked as a farmer, an editor, and a schoolteacher. As a young man, he wrote in his spare time, but his poems were rejected for publication. When his first poem was published in 1894, he was paid \$15 for it.

In 1911, he decided to move to England in hopes of getting his poetry published there. By this time, he was married and had children. In England, he met other poets. His first book of poetry was published in England in 1913, and it was well received. When he returned to the United States, he was surprised by the favorable American reviews of his poems. The same publishers who had rejected his poems years before were now asking him for his poetry! He continued to teach and received invitations to lecture and read his poetry throughout the country.

In 1924, 1931, 1937, and 1943, he won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. He was appointed the Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (which is called the Poet Laureate today). Additionally, throughout his life, he received forty-four honorary degrees and numerous awards including a Congressional gold medal in 1960 for his poetry. There is even had a mountain in Vermont named after him. In 1960, he was asked to read at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy – the first time such an invitation had been extended to a poet.

Robert Frost’s work is still extremely popular today. His poems deal with simple events and rural settings. Often the topics and dialect are unique to the New England region. While the topics of his poems may be simple, like a road in the case of *The Road Not Taken*, they contain insight into human nature and life.

Historical Background

What is the Pulitzer Prize?

Joseph Pulitzer was a man who embodied the American dream. He was born in Hungary, moved to America, and through hard work and determination, built a successful newspaper that created standards in journalism. In his will, he established the Pulitzer Prize. The prize would be awarded each year for journalism, history, and biography. Later, awards were added for poetry, music and photography. The Pulitzer Prize is considered a great honor by all who receive it.

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A Poet at the Presidential Inauguration

John F. Kennedy invited Robert Frost to speak at his inauguration on January 20, 1961. Like many people of the time, Frost was excited by the energy and enthusiasm the new president promised to bring to the country. Frost wrote a poem for the occasion called *Dedication*. However, Inauguration Day was bright and sunny, and an elderly Frost had difficulty reading the printed copy of the poem. After an attempt to read his new poem, Frost instead recited the poem *The Gift Outright* from memory.

Exploring Expository Writing: Author Biography and Historical Context

Directions: Use the information you learned in the article about Robert Frost to answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. When and where did Robert Frost live?
2. What kinds of careers did Robert Frost have in order to support his family?
3. How do you know that Robert Frost was dedicated to writing poetry?
4. What do you think might have been one of the best awards or honors Robert Frost received in his lifetime? Why do you think that?
5. Why do you think he chose to write about topics such as rural life and life in New England?
6. Read the quote at the beginning of the article. How do you think Frost felt about poetry? Why do you think that?
7. Analyze what you think the word *belief* in the quote at the top of the article means. Explain your answer.

“The Road Not Taken”

Vocabulary

diverged: branched off; moved in a different direction

undergrowth: small trees and plants growing beneath larger trees

fair: promising; favorable

claim: demand or right

trodden: walked on

hence: from this time

Comprehension Check

Part One

Directions: Paraphrase the poem using the graphic organizer below. Use the sentence prompts to help you.

Stanza 1	<p>The speaker is in the woods and comes to a spot in the road where the road is forked</p> <p>The speaker is sorry ...</p> <p>He ...</p> <p>Until ...</p>
Stanza 2	<p>The speaker takes the other road which is ...</p> <p>He chooses this road because ...</p> <p>Because grass is growing on it, and the road seemed ...</p> <p>Though ...</p>
Stanza 3	<p>Both roads were...</p> <p>The leaves...</p> <p>The speaker saves the first road for...</p> <p>But, the speaker knows that ...</p> <p>And the speaker doesn't think ...</p>

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Stanza 4	Sometime in the future, the speaker will be ... At a time ... That two roads ... And he... And that was ...
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Part Two

Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is the speaker in the poem doing? _____

2. What does the speaker encounter? _____

3. What decision does the speaker have to make in the poem? _____

4. Infer the season. How do you know? _____

5. Describe the conflict the speaker feels. _____

6. Explain why the reader doubts he'll ever come back to travel the first road. _____

7. Analyze the last stanza. What does the speaker mean by "Somewhere ages and ages hence"? _____

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8. Formulate an idea of what you think the road may represent. Explain why you think that. _____

9. Propose a reason for the “sigh” the speaker has at the end of the poem. What are some of the reasons he may be sighing? Explain your answer. _____

10. Propose a meaning for the line “that has made all the difference.” What are some of other meanings of that line? _____

11. Which interpretation do you prefer? Why? _____

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Directions: Use the graphic organizer below to help you find clues about the setting of the poem. After looking over the clues, what can you infer about each stanza? You may not find an answer for each column, but you should be able to make an inference in the last column. Some answers have been filled in for you.

What does it mean to infer?
 Use the information you learn from the text and add your own thoughts about that information.
 What conclusions can you draw? That is inference.

Stanza	Geographical location	Time period	Emotional condition	Occupation/daily life	What I can infer from this stanza?
Stanza 1	A yellow wood Two roads diverged		sorry	Traveler	It is fall because the leaves are yellow
Stanza 2				It wanted wear	
Stanza 3		morning			
Stanza 4		He is in the future			

Part Three

Directions: Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is the time setting of the poem? How do you know this? _____

2. What is the emotional state of the traveler? _____

3. Compare the time of the poem in stanzas 1 – 3 and the time in stanza 4. What is happening in stanza 4? _____

4. What conclusions can you draw by looking at the setting of the poem? _____

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5. What items of the setting might be symbolic of something else? _____

6. Look back at the first stanza and the last stanza. What line does the speaker repeat? _

7. Infer why you think the speaker repeats that line. Explain your answer. _____

8. Analyze the last line of the poem. What do you think the speaker means by the last line? _____

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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,

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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 yellow wood, and I –

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

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~~Section V: Prepare the final draft of your paragraph by checking spelling and sentence structure. You may want to ask a friend to proofread it for you. Be sure to add a title to your extended metaphor.~~

Part Three **Vocabulary**

Directions: Choose the correct vocabulary word to complete the paragraph below.

diverged undergrowth fair claim trodden hence

Last weekend, we went to the mall. The sales looked _____, and Ezra and I headed to the discount store. Ezra and I _____ once we got in the store because he was looking for socks and I was in search of a notebook. It was obvious that shoppers had been here. The aisles were littered with clothing. Walking through the store was like struggling through the _____ of a jungle. I found the notebook and made my _____ on it before any other shoppers could grab it. After searching through the store, I finally found Ezra who had _____ through the store with no success in finding socks. We left the store – Ezra was discouraged, and vowed that in the weeks _____, he would only wear sandals.