



IMPACT OF DECISION MAKING IN ROBERT FROST'S 'THE ROAD NOT TAKEN'

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Article Info:

Article Received 25/6/2015

Revised on: 20/7/2015

Accepted on: 27/8/2015

ABSTRACT

Robert Frost's poem, "*The Road Not Taken*" is about making a decision when confronted with two possible choices. It was initially published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1915 and incorporated a year later in the little volume entitled 'Mountain Interval'. It is among Frost's best, most riveting, and most complex and is still cited by speakers, scholars, and ordinary individuals. Robert Frost utilizes symbolism through nature to analyze one's decision making through life. Life is not simple; a man is never confronted with a choice that simply has one limited way. In "*The Road Not Taken*," the narrator hopes that his decision will not trouble him for the rest of his life. In this paper, I would like to interpret the decision making analysis with the help of, Robert Frost's "*Road Not Taken*".

Keywords: *Choices, Decision Making, Peer Pressure.*

Citation:

APA Avula, P. (2015). Impact of Decision Making in Robert Frost's '*The Road Not Taken*'. *Veda's Journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL*, 2(3), 34-36.

MLA Pavani, A." Impact of Decision Making in Robert Frost's '*The Road Not Taken*' " *Veda's journal of English Language and Literature- JOELL* 2.3(2015):34-36.

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Substantial evidence, however, suggests that the idea of the poem antedates Frost's acquaintance with Edward Thomas, of England. In 1914, when Frost and Thomas lived in Gloucestershire, they frequently took long strolls through the field. Thomas would pick the way which he thought may demonstrate his American companion an uncommon plant or any sort of exceptional hobby. Be that as it may, before the end of the walk, Thomas would lament the decision he made. He would "murmur" over his choice on the

grounds that he thought he could have taken the "better" course. Frost would tease Thomas for each one of those second thoughts he would have. In a 1912 letter to Susan Haves Ward, Frost writes of "two lonely cross-roads" that he walked frequently during the winter. After a snowfall, he would observe the road lying trackless for days, showing that "neither is much traveled." Frost goes on to describe how one evening he was surprised to see a figure in the distance walking towards him. Oddly, he felt he was approaching his own image in "a slanted



mirror,"or as if two images were about to "float together."In the end, Frost writes, "I stood still in wonderment and let him pass by" (Selected Letter 45).That experience sheds substantial light upon the ambiguities that have perplexed readers of the poem. "*The road not taken*" dramatizes the narrator's encounter with his own self. On the other hand, Frost also referred to the poem merely as "My rather private jest" (Bassett 42).

The sound effect in "*The Road not Taken*" makes it interesting and helps everyone understand the poem better. Robert Frost uses assonance to help his readers imagine "The Road Not Taken" more thoroughly. For example, he used this sound effect by saying "fair and wear." Also, "lay, day, and way."

Life often finds us at one crossroads or another, faced with having to make a choice. The speaker is at a crossroad in his life where he has to make an important decision that could change his future. The poem is a beautiful metaphor about standing at a crossroads, a critical junction in one's life and a decision that must be made. The choices that we are presented with will surely produce different endings. We know that and it makes our choices more difficult.

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.

The poet reached a point where the road bifurcated into two. He could not decide which road to take. He chose one because it appeared a little less frequented to him.

In truth it was not so: "the passing there had worn them really about the same." Yet, even at the moment of choice, the poet was of the view that the choice was important, that he would someday tell himself he look the less travelled road.

Robert Frost's "*The Road Not Taken*" depicts an image of a solitary traveller who has come to a fork in the road in his journey and must make a decision on which way to proceed. The much anthologised work has become the subject of numerous arguments. Many scholars believe that Frost was too ambivalent in his descriptions of the

difference between the two roads, and have therefore challenged the existence of a less travelled road. The subtraction of a less travelled road from "*The Road Not Taken*" produces an equation with an infinite number of interpretations for answers. The interpretations, however, seem to be as diverse and original as the explicators themselves.

Patrick Bassett, contributor to the literary journal *The Explicator*, believes in the spiritual nature of the poem and contends that it represents spiritual choices of the soul. Bassett proposes that the soul will go where it wants to, and this random journey of the soul is what most humans perceive as individuality.

The human condition is that we can travel only one road at a time. What makes all the difference in the end, we are left to ponder. And what difference it makes, we are left to wonder. In psychology, decision making is regarded to be the cognitive process resulting in the selection of a belief or a course of action among several alternatives, which are possible to take decision in a satisfactory way. In this poem, Robert Frost is pointing out the fact that one should have to make choice of one's own life.

"*The Road Not Taken*" is an ironic poem that deals with a choice in a world governed by instincts and limited possibilities (Faggen).Most people end up taking the "road" that others want them to. This happens when peer pressure comes along. However, in this poem, Frost implies that he had made the decision by himself.

In the last stanza, Robert Frost takes a "sigh". That could truly perplex individuals. Frost might be implying that it was a sigh of relief, or possibly a sigh of regret. He could be completely happy about the path he chose, or he could be regretful for it. This poem could be interpreted in many different ways. Frost never really told anyone what the "sigh" at the end of the poem really meant.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:

The poem is basically a reflection on the decision that Frost had made. He explains at first what his situation was, however, towards the end of the poem, the reader realizes that he is in the



present, expressing how he feels about the decision that he had made. The poem goes through the past, present, and future about Frost's decision.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The repetition of "Two roads diverged" in the first and the last stanzas is the reminder of the opportunity to decide and to make a choice. As Mark Richardson writes, "Our paths unfold themselves to us as we go. We realize our destination only when we arrive at it, though all along we were driven towards it by purposes we may rightly claim, in retrospect, as our own" (182).

"A close analysis of the poem reveals that it stands not only for his courage to be oneself, but also presents an unique example of man's self-encounter and self-division" (Triakha 113). Robert Frost shows how a person's everyday decisions determine the rest of his life.

Frost's poem invites us to forget peer pressure. If we choose to lead our life simply like other people, we will never permit ourselves to make a difference.

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