

Green Roads

The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost (n.d.) is an eloquent depiction of the choices made in life. He describes two different roads, explaining that each is equal, and neither is more traveled. Frost highlights how humans tend to magnify the choices they made in life, despite them being less significant than they realize. *The Road Not Taken* has always been one of my favorite works, taking on deeper meaning with each read. This time around, it especially resonated with me. Specifically, that the emphasis on the decisions we make now are not as important later on as they seem in the moment. Yet, they still have such a great impact on us.

Choices often feel overwhelming, particularly in youth. This should provide peace of mind, as there is less gravity pulling on every decision when you are young. Nevertheless, every choice made in life feels crucial. Frost (n.d.) describes a moment where “long I stood / And looked down one [road] as far as I could...”, analyzing the details, attempting to decipher which path would be most beneficial. Many times in my life, I have felt foreboding anxiety, and the weight of decisions gradually lowering onto my mind. One example in particular, though, always emerges.

The August evening was cool for Oklahoma, a slight breeze lightened the stuffy air. My friends and I, freshly turned sophomores, wandered across our school’s campus, greeting people we knew as we went. We collected our syllabuses for the new school year, met our new teachers, introduced ourselves to new students. I laughed a little, watching the elementary kids run around squealing. No doubt they were sugared up and would crash later that night. Everyone’s face was painted with a lovely glow, all of their eyes bright as they chatted with each other. Some part of me sank a little whenever I saw it, choking back a couple stray tears. The last year had been rough, just like every year before it. Shifting the weight I was carrying to the other shoulder, I plastered on my best fake smile and continued drifting across the parking lot.

Suddenly, I found myself face to face with some guy I had never seen before. His eyes were the most interesting design; soft blue at the very center, fading into an emerald green, ringed by hazel. Something like recognition washed over me. I doubted I could ever forget those eyes. Then he introduced himself, and I did the same. Smiling,

we chatted for just a moment before we both went our separate ways. Later that night, falling asleep felt as if I was crashing. I had not eaten any sugar.

Quickly, we grew a curious connection. Conversation was easy, games were fun, every glance felt weighted and light. Yet the world around me hated love, and it delicately laid out traps, trying its hardest to disable me. Despite the pain, with this one person, nothing hurt. Our memories acted as pavers, guiding the way to a field coated in wildflowers. The road we took “was grassy and wanted wear” (Frost, n.d.), and it was soft and easy on our feet.

A year ticked by, and a series of firsts and lasts passed with it. If my memories of us were physical, I would have a closet of them. It would have floor-to-ceiling shelves, and it would be completely full. They are random things: a chess piece, a purple scarf, a pair of skiing sunglasses. I collected them from choices made during my sophomore, then junior year of high school. Quietly, the months passed away, the seasons coming and going, and taking us with them.

Then senior year came in as a rush and a whisper all at once. Time ran smoothly away from me. I spent every week breathlessly running to catch up with the last one. Somewhere between working long, relentless hours, folding laundry, and writing papers, I forgot what his eyes looked like. Green was all I remembered. November swirled in, bringing deadlines and expectations with it. Lifting my dreary head, I suddenly met my favorite pair of eyes. Then it became quite familiar, and I renovated my closet to make more room for memories. Peace settled over me in such a strange way, because all I could see was green.

He and I sketched our dreams out in the dust, brimming with hope. I went to look at them the other day, and I noticed they faded away. Days, then weeks ran by. We argued about some minor things, and we agreed on some key points. We traversed one path for a mile or two, then took a split at the next chance we received. It was our best attempt to walk every road.

It was at one of these points that I remembered something Robert Frost (n.d.) said, “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...”. Then I realized we could not travel both paths. Something whispered to me: here is where I have to make a choice. Now, choose one path or the other. Maybe we continue on, switching roads,

looking as far down into the undergrowth that we can (Frost, n.d.). Or perhaps we truly travel a path, meaning that we reach the end, we arrive wherever it has taken us.

Unfortunately, I cannot say where the road we chose has led us, as we have not ourselves yet arrived. What I will say, however, is that I know that every path I walked shaped me. Each path affected me differently, shaping parts of my character I hadn't realized needed growth. It is clear to me which mistakes were made once and not twice. As I review the journey that led me to arrive here, recounting it to you, waves of nostalgia, guilt, and relief wash over me. Frost said it best, I believe: "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."

References

Frost, R. (n.d.). *The Road Not Taken*. Poetry Foundation. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken>