



**NORTH NORFOLK FESTIVAL OF
LITERATURE & LANDSCAPE**

**Poetry reading 4: Choices & Decisions
(Ages 8 –14 - adaptable by age)**

Text: *The road not taken* by Robert Frost



**Teaching notes for upper primary and lower
secondary classes**

The road not taken (1915)

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;

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.

by Robert Frost (1874 - 1963)


Reading Prompts (differentiate by age)

Younger:

- What choice does the person have?
- Which road do they take?

Older:

- List the **similarities** and **differences** between the two paths by **selecting words and phrases** from the descriptions. Start by writing 'Path 1 is...' then 'Path 2 is...'
- **Track** each separate thought / feeling in the speaker's thinking process. **Mark** beside each line whether you think it shows the speaker preferring the first path (1), the second path (2) or both paths equally (1&2)
- Why might the speaker say that his choice has 'made all the difference'?

 Key insight (for older pupils):

What do you think the poem is really about?

Activity


Human Decision Line

- Give students simple choices (e.g. "stay or explore")
- They physically choose sides of the room

Discuss:

- Was it easy or hard to choose?

Writing

- Write about a choice you made
- Two paths: one safe, one unknown—what happens?
-  **Challenge** (older):
- Include a moment of doubt or reflection

Literary facts for older children:

The poem was inspired by American poet Robert Frost walking with his friend - English poet Edward Thomas - in Gloucestershire, where Thomas would often regret not taking a different path.

Frost sent the poem to Thomas in 1915 before it was published. In 1915 Thomas signed up to fight in the First World War.

Frost wrote in a letter that same year that he did not himself know if he liked the war or not.

Discussion

- Do these facts change the way you might read the poem?

Bringing It Together (Comparison)

Discussion Prompts

- Which poem is about walking to think?
- Which poem is about noticing small things?
- Which poem is the most mysterious?
- Which poem is about choice?

Mixed media activity (younger students)

Create a page with:

- a drawn path
- words/phrases from all four poems
- their own lines added

Which poem do you like best and why?

Which path would you like to explore?

Deeper (older students):

- How are *paths* different in each poem?
 - a thinking space (Rosen)
 - crossed briefly (Harrison)
 - hidden (Kipling)
 - chosen (Frost)

Stretch:

- Compare poets' messages
- Write using metaphor (path = life)

Final touch: reading path poems

Read all three poems aloud in one lesson and ask:

 “Are these poems really about woods and footpaths... or something else?”

That question alone can unlock deeper thinking across the whole age range.

IT'S TIME TO WALK AND THEN TO WRITE YOUR POEMS