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Lesson 11

The Road Not Taken

• Poem

Heads Up As you read, you focus on the plot of the story—what is happening. *Themes* are more than just what happens. Themes are the ideas, morals, or lessons that you find within a text. A theme is a message that the author wants you to find while reading. Poems often contain themes.

Poems can seem intimidating if you don't know how to approach them. It helps your understanding if you first do a quick "preview" of the poem. Quickly glance through the poem on page 109, taking note of the title first. Make sure to also look for any repeated words or phrases. Notice what the first and last lines say. Then fill in the chart below.

Title
Repeated words or phrases
First line
Last line

As you read "The Road Not Taken," begin to think about the deeper message the author wants you to discover. The Think-Along Questions will help you focus. Also, as you read, circle or highlight any words you don't know.

The Road Not Taken

by Robert Frost

- 1 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;

What do you think the author is considering at this point?
Predict what you think the author wants the two roads to represent.

- 2 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,

What might it mean that the road "wanted wear"?

- 3 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.

Why might the author think he would never again have
the chance to try the road he didn't choose?

- 4 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.

What questions might you ask the author about why he chose
the road he did? Think of a time when you had a choice to make.
How did you make your decision?

Make Sense of Words

Poems, especially those that are not very long, rely on their words to accomplish the purpose of the poem—to entertain, to make readers think a certain way, or to make readers feel an emotion. Obviously, words are then chosen deliberately and with much thought. The word **diverged** shows up twice in this fairly short poem, once at the beginning and once at the end. Below, define **diverged**. Then list three synonyms that Frost could have used instead. Finally, write why you think he chose **diverged**.

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

Definition of **diverged**

Synonyms Frost could have used instead

Why do you think Frost chose **diverged**?





Read with Understanding

Theme within a piece of writing is the author's message. It is most often implied rather than stated directly. Choose the statement that best describes one possible theme for "The Road Not Taken."

- ① Some roads are long and hard.
- ② Sometimes it is best to make the less popular choice.
- ③ We can never change our mind about our choices.
- ④ We will always make the right choice.



Understand by Seeing It

Think about what you have learned about *theme*. Remember, the theme is the author's implied message. State the theme of "The Road Not Taken" in your own words in "The author's message" box below. Then think about the information provided in the poem that pointed you to the author's message. Complete the graphic organizer below. An example has been provided for you.



