

# METAPHORS WITH ROBERT FROST

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN  
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,  
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.




IN THE POEM "THE ROAD NOT TAKEN"  
I USE A WALK IN THE WOODS AS  
A METAPHOR.



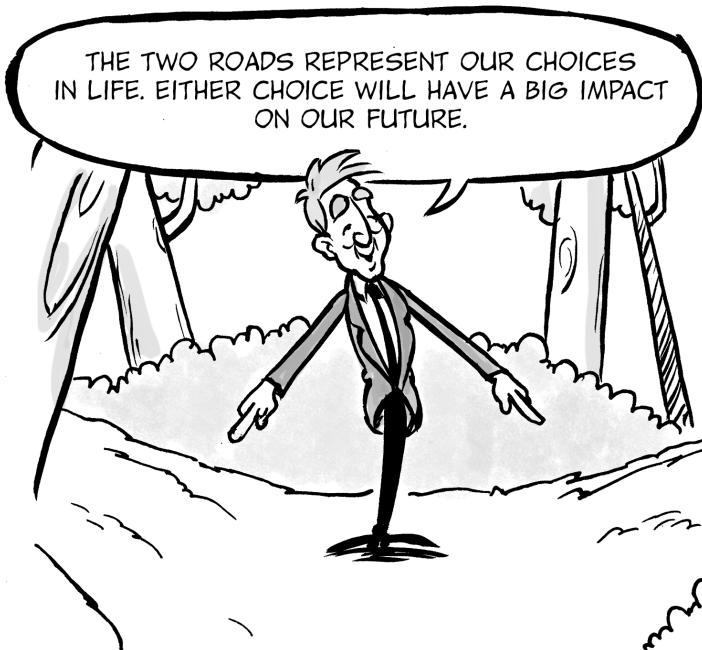
TAKEN LITERALLY, THE POEM  
IS ABOUT CHOOSING BETWEEN  
TWO PATHS IN A YELLOW WOOD.



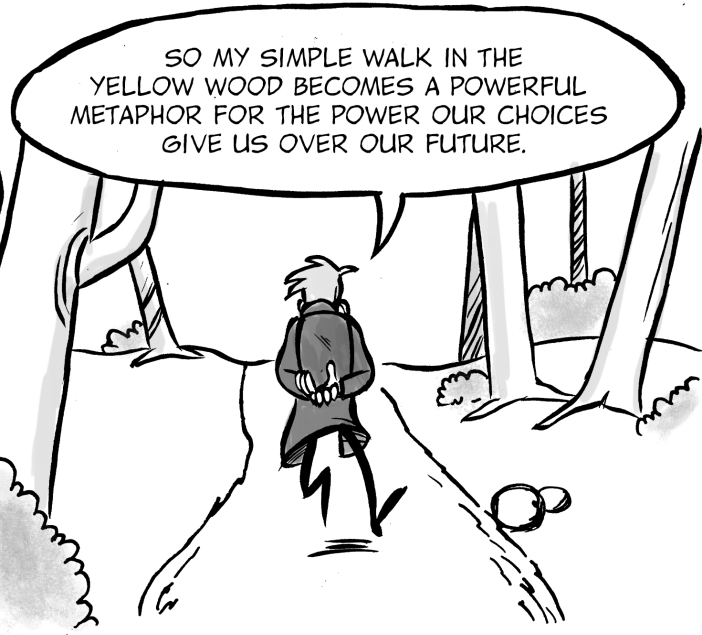
BUT AS A METAPHOR,  
IT MEANS MUCH, MUCH MORE.



IN LITERATURE WALKING OFTEN  
SYMBOLIZES AN INNER JOURNEY, AND  
WHERE YOU END UP IS NOT AS IMPORTANT  
AS WHAT YOU LEARN AS YOU GO.



"CHOICES LIKE WHERE TO GO TO COLLEGE, OR WHERE TO LIVE, OR WHOM TO MARRY. WE ARE ALL FACED WITH THESE MAJOR LIFE DECISIONS."



**Questions:**

What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

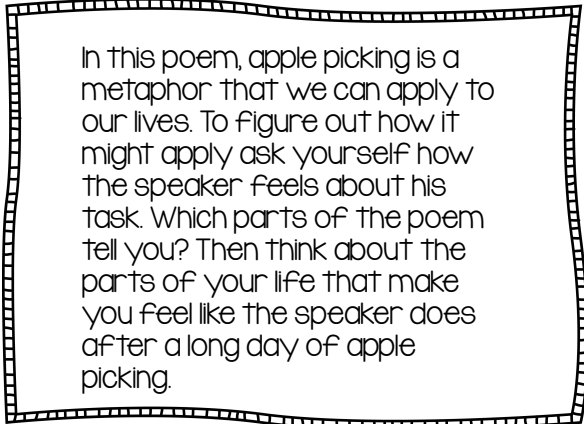
Many readers see the two roads as a choice between a good path and a bad path. However, you can make the claim that both roads are equal in value. What parts of the text support this idea?

Think about the different reasons the speaker might "sigh" while thinking back on his journey. How does each reason offer a different perspective on the speaker's attitude toward his choice?

# After Apple-Picking

by Robert Frost

My long two-pointed ladder's sticking through a tree  
Toward heaven still,  
And there's a barrel that I didn't fill  
Beside it, and there may be two or three  
Apples I didn't pick upon some bough.  
But I am done with apple-picking now.  
Essence of winter sleep is on the night,  
The scent of apples: I am drowsing off.  
I cannot rub the strangeness from my sight  
I got from looking through a pane of glass  
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough  
And held against the world of hoary grass.  
It melted, and I let it fall and break.  
But I was well  
Upon my way to sleep before it fell,  
And I could tell  
What form my dreaming was about to take.  
Magnified apples appear and disappear,  
Stem end and blossom end,  
And every fleck of russet showing clear.  
My instep arch not only keeps the ache,  
It keeps the pressure of a ladder-round.  
I feel the ladder sway as the boughs bend.  
And I keep hearing from the cellar bin  
The rumbling sound  
Of load on load of apples coming in.  
For I have had too much  
Of apple-picking: I am overtired  
Of the great harvest I myself desired.  
There were ten thousand thousand fruit to touch,  
Cherish in hand, lift down, and not let fall.  
For all  
That struck the earth,  
No matter if not bruised or spiked with stubble,  
Went surely to the cider-apple heap  
As of no worth.  
One can see what will trouble  
This sleep of mine, whatever sleep it is.  
Were he not gone,  
The woodchuck could say whether it's like his  
Long sleep, as I describe its coming on,  
Or just some human sleep.



In this poem, apple picking is a metaphor that we can apply to our lives. To figure out how it might apply ask yourself how the speaker feels about his task. Which parts of the poem tell you? Then think about the parts of your life that make you feel like the speaker does after a long day of apple picking.

## ANSWER KEY

### What is the rhyme scheme of the poem?

The rhyme scheme is ababa cdccd efeef. Point out to students that this is kind of weird. Five lines?

Robert Frost also famously said that writing poems that don't rhyme is like playing tennis without a net. We like structure - it gives us some guidelines to follow when we are creating something. Ask your students how they would like it if they had to write an essay on a poem that was about whatever they wanted. Most of them would prefer to have some options to guide their decisions.

### Many readers envision the road as a choice....

"Then took the other as just as fair"  
"had worn them really about the same"  
"equally lay"

On "Orange is the New Black" Piper went off about how people get this poem wrong.

### Think about all the different reasons someone might "sigh" on a journey.

It could be a sigh of regret. After all, he'll never get to go back and take the other path. Kind of depressing. However, it could be a sigh of contentment. He's happy with his choice, so the other one doesn't matter. Either works.

## APPLE PICKING

The picking of apples represents something that the speaker longed for, but no longer desires. He says "I have had too much of apple picking," so much so that he feels the rung of the ladder on his foot long after he is done picking and even dreams about apples. He further states that he is "overtired/of the great harvest I once desired." He doesn't care about the apples that fall to the ground, and his task seems insurmountable.

When I teach this to seniors, I relate this to the process of applying to colleges. By the time they get to November, they are "overtired" of the process, almost to the point where if they don't get into a college, they cease to care. What are the apples for them? All the things they have to do, and sometimes they get so worn out by the process that they don't spend as much time on it as they should. And let's not get started on all the dreams they probably have about it!

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Thanks,

David Rickert

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