

Example Explication Essays Second Drafts

Example

The Road Not Taken

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.

“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost (better draft that still needs work)

The narrator would have you believe this poem is merely about a walk in the woods and a path that divides in two. The conflict depicted in this rhythmic and lyrical poem is about personal struggle with decision making and the human nature of the wonder that is left afterwards. I would argue that the poem has a much deeper meaning about life and the decisions we make and how we choose to see them later. This poem can be divided into four sections just as there are four stanzas. This poem is separated into the following sections: 1) choices or a decision to make 2) evaluation 3) coming to a decision and 4) finally reflecting about that choice made.

The first section is about coming to a crossroads or diverged paths and knowing you can choose only one (lines 1-3). The next part of the poem depicts evaluating those choices as closely as possible trying to weigh out each direction fairly (lines 4-10). The third section is reaching a decision based on our close analysis of each of the choices we have (lines 11-15). The final section is about how we reflect and feel about the choices we made at that time in the road of life (lines 15-20).

When we first encounter the narrator and we are led to a fork in the road, which is really just a metaphor for a crossroads in life, an important choice or decision to be made. The speaker apologizes

for human nature and not being able to travel both as he or she is alone. No one person can truly have a decision and choose more than one direction or choice at one time.

The speaker indicates that after quite some time thinking about the directions, there is some closer inspection of one of the roads as to see as far as one can. He or she indicates that the road bends into the undergrowth (line 5). The real meaning of this is to say that when we have more than one choice or option at a point in life we need to try to predict what the outcomes of those choices may be as far as we can possibly see into the future. The next stanza of the poem the speaker goes into how the second road appeared. The speaker says "And perhaps having the better claim / because it was grassy and wanted wear" (lines 7 and 8) that perhaps this path was calling out to be taken more than the other although they were really quite equal. The poet also tells us that neither of the paths really looked to be less traveled by. "Though as for that passing there / had worn them really about the same" (lines 9 and 10).

The narrator indicates a decision has been made on which path to take or which direction to go. The speaker continues to say although the paths were equal and it would seem that neither of the roads had been taken one more than the other, he would save the other path for another day. "And both that morning equally lay / In leaves no step had trodden black, / Oh, I kept the first for another day!" (lines 11-13). The author indicates to us that through inspection or thought neither of the roads appeared the better choice, one just seemed to be more appealing to the narrator and then justifies by saying that the other can be saved for a later time. It is very unlikely to ever be able to return to that crossroads in life merely to justify one choice or the other. The poet then gives us the very important indication that this path is not just a path but a major life decision. Once one direction or choice is made it is unlikely that you could ever come back to choose the opposite since one way or path leads to the next and then another. If indeed the poet meant for us to believe this was merely a person at a path they could indeed come back and take the opposite road. To say that when you make a decision there is no going back is exactly the undertone of the next lines "Yet knowing how way leads on to way / I doubted if I should ever come back" (lines 14 and 15).

Finally the narrator comes to a point in life much further down the road and is looking back on this decision in either regret or happiness. The conflict comes in this stanza between the first line and the last. "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" (lines 16-20). The sigh indicates some heaviness to the choice that was made while stating that it has made all the difference indicates something positive. The narrator knowing the choices were basically equal still chooses to say that the road less traveled was chosen to further justify the decision made years ago. There is no way to know which path was truly the better choice as the narrator originally had apologized because both roads could not be taken.

This poem uses a diverging path in the woods as a metaphor for coming to a crossroads in life about decision making. I connected personally with this poem as I believe most people can. I have been at this crossroads too many times to count. Many of us have very important decisions in life and know that choosing one or the other could greatly alter the course of our lives. Human nature makes us want to believe that the choice we made was the harder or better choice. In reality it is okay to justify your choice because you could have only taken one path anyway. As long as we critically think out each decision before making our choice then we can rest knowing it was the best one for us.

Comments on Draft:

I think this essay has very good structure. Where I would work the most to revise it is in the introduction so that the writer gets to explicating right away. I would do away with the separate

paragraph announcing the structure and use those sentences describing each part as a kind of transition to start each part (with adjustments to make the meaning flow as needed). I think the analysis of the poem could go deeper, particularly in the conclusion of the poem. Why does the poet repeat the word "I?" What is its purpose? Effect? Also, I would like to see more explicit metaphoric analysis where the characteristics/qualities of the "vehicle" are used to make inferences regarding what the poet intends to communicate about the tenor. As a draft, it still has grammatical problems and is not set on using quotes yet. But it is a pretty good draft.

Example of a body paragraph doing a good job of exploring and interpreting the meanings of the poem (same poem "The Road Not Taken")

Although, worn down these paths may not have been approached today yet. Both paths "equally lay in leaves no step had trodden black," (11-12) no one had walked across either of the paths for a while. This is important since it's a decision for him, although the paths have been taken and worn, I feel the fresh leaves indicate that this is his first time approaching the decision and with that it was a "new" path for him although many have taken it before. In making his decision he shows some optimism towards the decision he was making is stating that would keep "the first for another day!" (13) This optimism was a bit unrealistic and even he "doubted" (15) that he would "ever come back" (15) to the beginning of these paths again. He knew how a "way leads on to way," (14) making it virtually impossible to ever come back to the spot that he is at now. He knows that once he makes this decision in the future other decisions will present themselves as well that will take him further and further from this original decision. Even if he had wanted to go back he would never be presented with the same decision because his various paths may make him more educated or something occurs that makes the contract of the decision vary in a way. He will never be able to make that decision the same way with the same terms once he has made other choices and taken other paths.