

# Activities for Teaching “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost

from *Practical Poetry: A Guide to Teaching the Common Core Text Exemplars for Poetry in Grades 6-8*

by  
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Item No. 20558PT8

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## ***“The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost*** ***Author Biography and Historical Context***

Robert Frost believed in the power of poetry. In an essay titled “Education by Poetry,” he wrote: “The person who gets close enough to poetry, he is going to know more about the word *belief* than anybody else knows.” Robert Frost must have been speaking about his own experiences with poetry, as it was a central part of his life.

Robert Frost lived from 1874 – 1963. Though he was born in San Francisco, he moved back to his family’s home in New England after his father died when he was a young boy. Both his mother and grandfather were teachers who made sure Robert read a wide variety of materials.

As a young man, Frost attended Dartmouth College and Harvard, but he didn’t graduate from either. Instead, he worked as a farmer, an editor, and a schoolteacher. As a young man, he wrote in his spare time, but his poems were rejected for publication. When his first poem was published in 1894, he was paid \$15 for it.

In 1911, he decided to move to England in hopes of getting his poetry published there. By this time, he was married and had children. In England, he met other poets. His first book of poetry was published in England in 1913, and it was well received. When he returned to the United States, he was surprised by the favorable American reviews of his poems. The same publishers who had rejected his poems years before were now asking him for his poetry! He continued to teach and received invitations to lecture and read his poetry throughout the country.

In 1924, 1931, 1937, and 1943, he won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. He was appointed the Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (which is called the Poet Laureate today). Additionally, throughout his life, he received forty-four honorary degrees and numerous awards including a Congressional gold medal in 1960 for his poetry. There is even had a mountain in Vermont named after him. In 1960, he was asked to read at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy – the first time such an invitation had been extended to a poet.

Robert Frost’s work is still extremely popular today. His poems deal with simple events and rural settings. Often the topics and dialect are unique to the New England region. While the topics of his poems may be simple, like a road in the case of *The Road Not Taken*, they contain insight into human nature and life.

### **Historical Background**

#### ***What is the Pulitzer Prize?***

Joseph Pulitzer was a man who embodied the American dream. He was born in Hungary, moved to America, and through hard work and determination, built a successful newspaper that created standards in journalism. In his will, he established the Pulitzer Prize. The prize would be awarded each year for journalism, history, and biography. Later, awards were added for poetry, music and photography. The Pulitzer Prize is considered a great honor by all who receive it.

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### ***A Poet at the Presidential Inauguration***

John F. Kennedy invited Robert Frost to speak at his inauguration on January 20, 1961. Like many people of the time, Frost was excited by the energy and enthusiasm the new president promised to bring to the country. Frost wrote a poem for the occasion called *Dedication*. However, Inauguration Day was bright and sunny, and an elderly Frost had difficulty reading the printed copy of the poem. After an attempt to read his new poem, Frost instead recited the poem *The Gift Outright* from memory.

### ***Exploring Expository Writing: Author Biography and Historical Context***

**Directions:** Use the information you learned in the article about Robert Frost to answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. When and where did Robert Frost live?
2. What kinds of careers did Robert Frost have in order to support his family?
3. How do you know that Robert Frost was dedicated to writing poetry?
4. What do you think might have been one of the best awards or honors Robert Frost received in his lifetime? Why do you think that?
5. Why do you think he chose to write about topics such as rural life and life in New England?
6. Read the quote at the beginning of the article. How do you think Frost felt about poetry? Why do you think that?
7. Analyze what you think the word *belief* in the quote at the top of the article means. Explain your answer.

**“The Road Not Taken”**

*Vocabulary*

**diverged:** branched off; moved in a different direction

**undergrowth:** small trees and plants growing beneath larger trees

**fair:** promising; favorable

**claim:** demand or right

**trodden:** walked on

**hence:** from this time

*Comprehension Check*

**Part One**

**Directions:** Paraphrase the poem using the graphic organizer below. Use the sentence prompts to help you.

<p>Stanza 1</p>	<p>The speaker is in the woods and comes to a spot in the road where the road is forked</p> <p>The speaker is sorry ...</p> <p>He ...</p> <p>Until ...</p>
<p>Stanza 2</p>	<p>The speaker takes the other road which is ...</p> <p>He chooses this road because ...</p> <p>Because grass is growing on it, and the road seemed ...</p> <p>Though ...</p>
<p>Stanza 3</p>	<p>Both roads were...</p> <p>The leaves...</p> <p>The speaker saves the first road for...</p> <p>But, the speaker knows that ...</p> <p>And the speaker doesn't think ...</p>

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Stanza 4	Sometime in the future, the speaker will be ... At a time ... That two roads ... And he... And that was ...
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**Part Two**

**Directions:** Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is the speaker in the poem doing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does the speaker encounter? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What decision does the speaker have to make in the poem? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Infer the season. How do you know? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Describe the conflict the speaker feels. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Explain why the reader doubts he'll ever come back to travel the first road. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Analyze the last stanza. What does the speaker mean by "Somewhere ages and ages hence"? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Formulate an idea of what you think the road may represent. Explain why you think that. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Propose a reason for the “sigh” the speaker has at the end of the poem. What are some of the reasons he may be sighing? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Propose a meaning for the line “that has made all the difference.” What are some of other meanings of that line? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Which interpretation do you prefer? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

**“The Road Not Taken”**  
*Standards Focus: Setting and Extended Metaphor*

When is a road not a road?

What setting are you in right now? Share your answers with a classmate.

Did you write more than the physical space in which you are sitting? Setting includes:

1. **Geographical location** – where in space the story takes place. Does the story take place in a town, a classroom, a soccer field?
2. **The time period** – when in time the story takes place. This can include the year, era, or actual time.
3. **The emotional setting** – what are the emotions associated with the setting? How are the emotions of being at a party different from the emotions experienced at a visit to the dentist?
4. **The occupations or daily living conditions of the characters.** What is the character’s occupation or where does the character live each day? If the character is a farmer, the living conditions of being on a farm are part of the setting.

**Part One**

**Directions:** *Using the scenes below, write a short description of each setting. Try to include the geographic location, the time period, the occupation/daily life of the character, and an emotional condition. The first one has been done for you. (You may wish to fill in geographic location, time period, etc. before you write your scene.)*

*Example:* School: It is 8:30 a.m. and the halls of Happy Valley School are crowded on the first day of school. Students are hurrying to class but are still excited to see the friends they’ve missed during the break.

- a. Geographic location: Happy Valley School
- b. Time period: 8:30 a.m., first day of school
- c. Emotional condition: excited; glad to see friends
- d. Occupation/ daily life: students at school

1. The mall: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- a. Geographic location: \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Time period: \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Emotional condition: \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Occupation/ daily life: \_\_\_\_\_

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2. The library, the week before exams: \_\_\_\_\_

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a. Geographic location: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Time period: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Emotional condition: \_\_\_\_\_

d. Occupation/ daily life: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Opening night of the school play: \_\_\_\_\_

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a. Geographic location: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Time period: \_\_\_\_\_

c. Emotional condition: \_\_\_\_\_

d. Occupation/ daily life: \_\_\_\_\_

4. The dentist's office: \_\_\_\_\_

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1. Geographic location: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Time period: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Emotional condition: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Occupation/ daily life: \_\_\_\_\_

## Part Two

When you are writing your own setting, it's easy to create all the elements of setting. When you are reading, it is sometimes more challenging. Go back to "The Road Not Taken."



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**Directions:** Use the graphic organizer below to help you find clues about the setting of the poem. After looking over the clues, what can you infer about each stanza? You may not find an answer for each column, but you should be able to make an inference in the last column. Some answers have been filled in for you.

What does it mean to infer?  
 Use the information you learn from the text and add your own thoughts about that information.  
 What conclusions can you draw? That is inference.

Stanza	Geographical location	Time period	Emotional condition	Occupation/daily life	What I can infer from this stanza?
Stanza 1	A yellow wood Two roads diverged		sorry	Traveler	It is fall because the leaves are yellow
Stanza 2				It wanted wear	
Stanza 3		morning			
Stanza 4		He is in the future			

**Part Three**

**Directions:** Answer the following questions using complete sentences.

1. What is the time setting of the poem? How do you know this? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the emotional state of the traveler? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Compare the time of the poem in stanzas 1 – 3 and the time in stanza 4. What is happening in stanza 4? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. What conclusions can you draw by looking at the setting of the poem? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

5. What items of the setting might be symbolic of something else? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. Look back at the first stanza and the last stanza. What line does the speaker repeat? \_

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7. Infer why you think the speaker repeats that line. Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

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8. Analyze the last line of the poem. What do you think the speaker means by the last line? \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***Comparing Literature***

9. Both “The Road Not Taken” and “The Railway Train” are extended metaphors. How would you compare the tone of the two poems? \_\_\_\_\_

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10. Review the other poems you’ve read. Compare the setting of “The Road Not Taken” with the setting of another poem. How are the settings alike? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Contrast the setting of “The Road Not Taken” with another poem. How are the settings different and why is the setting important in each poem? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

**Part Four**

**Directions:** Scan “*The Road Not Taken*.” Be sure to indicate the meter as well as the rhyme scheme.

***The Road Not Taken***

by 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,

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

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 yellow wood, and I –

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

1. What is the meter of “The Road Not Taken”? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the rhyme scheme? \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

## **“The Road Not Taken”**

### **Assessment Preparation: Writing with Purpose—Extended Metaphor**

What decisions have you made this week? Did you choose to stay up late one night to watch a movie? Did you go to bed earlier than usual? Did you get homework done or did you put it off? Did you pack your lunch or buy it?

You can probably think of hundreds of decisions and choices that you’ve made this week. What choices had a consequence – big or small? Staying up late may have left you tired in English class. Buying your lunch may have meant you had to spend your allowance. Talk about a recent choice and consequence with another student.

Choices have consequences whether they are big or small. The poem “The Road Not Taken” is about making choices. As a matter of fact, the entire poem can be read as a metaphor about a choice the speaker makes – it is a comparison between two things. Metaphorically speaking, what are those two things?

When a poet uses a metaphor throughout an entire poem, it’s called an **extended metaphor**.

#### **Part One**

**Directions:** Robert Frost created the extended metaphor by using **diction** (word choice). Go back to the poem. Take a look at the diction. Use the graphic organizer below to identify each time Frost uses a word or phrase related to **travel** and the **road**. The chart has been started for you.

Stanza 1	Two roads, diverged, travel, one traveler, it bent
Stanza 2	
Stanza 3	
Stanza 4	

1. Contrast what you think of as a road with what the speaker of the poem experiences as a road. What do you imagine a “road” to be like in your experiences? What is the speaker’s road like? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you think the road in this poem is an appropriate metaphor for life? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Analyze the use of the word “diverged.” What other words could the speaker have used? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Interpret why the speaker might have used the word “diverged.” Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Analyze the use of the word “fair.” What other words could the speaker have used? How do you think Frost wanted us to interpret the word? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Analyze the use of the word “difference.” What other words could the speaker have used? How do you think Frost wanted us to interpret the word? Explain your answer. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Why do you think Frost specifically chose diction that could be interpreted several different ways, rather than more precise or deliberate wording? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Part Two**

In his essay "Education by Poetry" Frost writes about metaphors. He states, "Poetry begins in trivial metaphors, pretty metaphors, 'grace' metaphors, and goes on to the profoundest thinking that we have. Poetry provides the one permissible way of saying one thing and meaning another."

Try your hand at creating an extended metaphor. You'll write a paragraph in which you explain your metaphor.

**Section I:** Use the chart below to help you come up with an original metaphor for life. Jot down your ideas about why you think your metaphor is accurate in the "because" column. The more ideas you have in the last column, the easier your paragraph will be to write. An example and ideas have been given to you.

***Beware the cliché!***  
 When writing metaphors, it may be tempting to use a cliché. Cliches are overused expressions, which have lost their meaning over time. Some common clichés include: *as clear as mud, as slow as molasses, stop and smell the roses, every cloud has a silver lining.* The list goes on and on.

Event...	Is ...	Because ...
<i>School</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Lots of excitement Fun to be with friends "presents" from teachers (homework!)</i>
Homework		
Cell phones		
Computers		
Music		

**Section II:** Choose a metaphor and create a metaphor word bank. Think about verbs, nouns, and adjectives that you associate with the metaphor you've created. Write those words in the space below. An example has been done for you.

*Example:* happy, presents, favors, cake, laughing, playing games, friends, music, surprises

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**Section III:** Use the outline to jot down your ideas for your paragraph. As you write your ideas, you may find that you need to focus on ideas, narrow your thoughts, or be more specific. Feel free to add more sentences. Try to include a few words from your word bank.

**Sentence 1:** Topic sentence (your metaphor)

**Sentence 2:** First big idea (an idea from your –because column)

**Sentence 3:** Explain, give an example, or provide details about your first big idea

**Sentence 4:** Second big idea

**Sentence 5:** Explain, give an example, or provide details about your second big idea

**Sentence 6:** Third big idea

**Sentence 7:** Explain, give an example, or provide details about your third big idea

**Sentence 8:** Closing sentence

***Example outline:***

**Sentence 1:** School is a party.

**Sentence 2:** There is always something surprising happening.

**Sentence 3:** For example, my friend Sandy is always in the middle of a crisis – usually involving her latest boyfriend.

**Sentence 4:** It's like a daily party when I'm with my friends every day.

**Sentence 5 & 6:** At lunch we spend more time talking and laughing than eating. The funniest lunch ended up with us laughing so hard that I got water up my nose.

**Sentence 7:** At school, just like at parties, we get presents from our teachers.

**Sentence 8:** The –presents we get at school are homework!

**Sentence 9 & 10:** I love going to school, and I love going to parties. For me, school is a party.

**Section IV:** Once you have the draft of your paragraph written, add transition words. Transition words help the reader navigate the sequence of when something is happening in your writing. Some common transition words include: first, then, next, since, however, after.

***Example paragraph:***

School is a party. **First off**, there is always something surprising happening. For example, my friend Sandy is always in the middle of a crisis – usually involving her latest boyfriend. **Since** I'm with my friends every day, it feels like a party. At lunch we spend more time talking and laughing than eating. The funniest lunch ended up with us laughing so hard that I got water up my nose. **Finally**, at school, just like at parties, we get presents from our teachers. The –presents we get at school are homework! It's true for me: I love going to school, and I love going to parties. For me, school is a party.



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**Section V:** Prepare the final draft of your paragraph by checking spelling and sentence structure. You may want to ask a friend to proofread it for you. Be sure to add a title to your extended metaphor.

**Part Three**  
**Vocabulary**

**Directions:** Choose the correct vocabulary word to complete the paragraph below.

diverged      undergrowth      fair      claim      trodden      hence

Last weekend, we went to the mall. The sales looked \_\_\_\_\_, and Ezra and I headed to the discount store. Ezra and I \_\_\_\_\_ once we got in the store because he was looking for socks and I was in search of a notebook. It was obvious that shoppers had been here. The aisles were littered with clothing. Walking through the store was like struggling through the \_\_\_\_\_ of a jungle. I found the notebook and made my \_\_\_\_\_ on it before any other shoppers could grab it. After searching through the store, I finally found Ezra who had \_\_\_\_\_ through the store with no success in finding socks. We left the store – Ezra was discouraged, and vowed that in the weeks \_\_\_\_\_, he would only wear sandals.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

## **“The Road Not Taken”**

### *Write a Poem About Choices*

As you’ve discovered in your study of “The Road Not Taken,” the poem is about choices that change a life. You’re going to write a poem about a choice you’ve made. Your poem can be serious or silly. You may even want to write a parody of the original poem.

**Part One:** Brainstorm ideas. What choices have you made that made an impact on your life? Write as many ideas as you can in the space below. Some examples have been done for you.

*Examples:* take a drama elective, become a vegetarian, quit piano lessons, join the soccer team, ask the librarian for a challenging book, wear my roller blades to school

**Part Two:** Share your ideas and expand them by talking about ideas with another student. Add any new ideas to your brainstorming.

**Part Three:** Choose an idea for your poem, and an “inciting” incident. An **inciting incident** is something that happened that forced you to make a choice. For example, in “The Road Not Taken,” the speaker *had* to make the choice. He had to choose a road if he wanted to continue on his travels.

Then, create a list of consequences of your choice. In “The Road Not Taken,” the speaker tells the reader that the choice “made all the difference,” but he doesn’t explain what he means by “difference.” In your poem, explain the results of your choice. An example has been done for you.

*Example:*

1. **Choice:** becoming a vegetarian
2. **Inciting incident:** choosing at lunch between meatloaf and a salad
3. **Consequences:** my family thought I was weird, my friends teased me, people tried to trick me into eating things with meat in them, I felt healthier, I was doing something to help the earth, I had trouble finding a variety of meals in the school cafeteria, I started to do more cooking, I’m interested in becoming a nutritionist.

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**Part Four:** Write a draft of your poem. If you like, you can use a similar rhyme scheme and meter as “The Road Not Taken” or you can write your poem in another rhyme scheme, or in free verse.

**Part Five**

Read your poem to a friend. Does the poem make sense? Does your poem include enough about your choice? If not, revise your poem so others can enjoy it.

**Part Six**

Revise your poem, add a title, and publish the final draft.

*Sample Student Poem*

*Two meals on the cafeteria menu that day:  
Meatloaf or salad  
And I was hungry, so I looked at that meatloaf ...  
Then I looked at the salad as well.  
It looked fresh and crisp and most kids had passed it by  
Because it was green,  
But really the meatloaf didn't look all that bad –  
So I could have chosen either meal.  
But I decided to choose the salad  
Because I decided that day that I didn't want to eat meat.  
And I knew I would be teased by my friends,  
My family – will they think I'm weird?  
But I had two choices that day, and I chose to  
Become a vegetarian  
I am healthier and happier with my new choice.  
I became a vegetarian  
And that has made all the difference.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Per. \_\_\_\_\_

## ***“The Road Not Taken” Quiz***

### **Part I: Short Answer**

**Directions:** Answer the following questions on the lines provided.

1. Briefly explain what is happening in the poem. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Explain how the speaker feels about the two roads. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Why doesn't the speaker think he'll ever go back and travel down the other road? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Explain why this poem is considered an extended metaphor. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Part II: Matching**

**Directions:** Match the vocabulary word and its definition. Write the letter of the correct answer on the line provided.

- |  |                |
|--|----------------|
| _____ 5. from this time                                      | A. claim       |
| _____ 6. walked on   | B. diverged    |
| _____ 7. promising; favorable                                | C. fair        |
| _____ 8. branched off; moved in a different direction        | D. hence       |
| _____ 9. small trees and plants growing beneath larger trees | E. trodden     |
| _____ 10. demand or right                                    | F. undergrowth |

## Answer Key

### “The Road Not Taken”

#### Exploring Expository Writing: Author Biography and Historical Context

*Answers may vary. Sample student answers are given for numbers 4-7.*

1. 1874 – 1963; he lived in San Francisco and New England
2. He worked as a farmer, an editor, and a teacher.
3. It took almost twenty years for his first book of poetry to be published, yet he didn't give up writing.
4. He probably was the most proud of the Pulitzer Prizes because it is a notable award that is recognized as a prize for excellence.
5. He probably wrote about topics he was familiar with and felt at home with. He probably felt he could relate best with them.
6. He thinks poetry is powerful because he says that if you are close to poetry, you can understand belief.
7. It could mean belief in anything – belief in yourself, in life, in God, in nature. I think the word belief, to him, may have something to do with a deeper understanding of life.

### “The Road Not Taken”

#### Comprehension Check Questions

##### Part One

##### Stanza 1

The speaker is in the woods and comes to a spot in the road where the road is forked  
The speaker is sorry ... he can't travel down both roads  
He ... looks down one road as far as he can  
Until ... the road turns

##### Stanza 2

The speaker takes the other road which is ...just as nice as the first one  
He chooses this road because ...it might be a better road  
Because grass is growing on it, and the road seemed ...to need to be used  
Though ... he realizes that the two roads are worn about the same amount.

##### Stanza 3

Both roads were...equal  
The leaves...were undisturbed on the road – no one had stepped on them  
The speaker saves the first road for...some other time  
But, the speaker knows that ... one turn along a road will lead to another  
And the speaker doesn't think ... he'll ever go back down that first road

##### Stanza 4

Sometime in the future, the speaker will be ...telling this story  
At a time ...many, many years from now  
That two roads ... split in the woods  
And he...took the one less traveled  
And that was ... important

##### Part Two

1. He is walking down a road in a forest.
2. A fork in the road.
3. He has to decide which road to travel down.
4. It is probably in the fall because he says there are yellow leaves on the road – leaves turn yellow in the fall.
5. He can't travel down both roads and wants to. He has to make a decision about which road to take, so he feels anxiety about making the right decision.
6. One road will lead to another and he'll have traveled on so far that it will be too difficult to come back to the first road.
7. The speaker is imagining that at some time in the distant future, he'll be telling this story about the roads and the decision.
8. *Answers may vary. Sample student answer:* The road could mean choices the speaker has to make in life. One decision leads to another and you never really know how it's all going to turn out until you are at “the end of the road” or at the end of your life looking back.

9. *Answers may vary. Sample student answer:* The speaker may be sighing with regret because he made a poor choice; the speaker may be sighing with relief that he made a good choice. The sigh can be a positive thing or a negative thing. The reader doesn't really know.
10. *Answers may vary. Sample student answer:* It could mean that by choosing that road, he had a great life and it was a good decision. It could mean making that choice was the turning point in his life and maybe it wasn't such a good decision. He really won't know until he finishes his life.
11. *Answers will vary.*

### **“The Road Not Taken”**

#### **Standards Focus: Setting and Extended Metaphor**

#### **Part One**

*Answers will vary. Sample student answers are given.*

1. The mall: On Saturday afternoon, kids are shopping at the North Hills Mall. They meet their friends in the food court; they talk and laugh as they munch on fries.
  - a. Geographic location: North Hills Mall, food court
  - b. Time period: Saturday afternoon
  - c. Occupation/ daily living: students who are shopping
  - d. Emotional condition: happy; social
2. The library, the week before exams: Late Sunday night Hugh huddled in the corner of Memorial Library and pored over his English textbook. He frowned as he tried to figure out the difference between a participle and a gerund. He chewed on the end of his pencil and checked his notes.
  - a. Geographical location: Memorial Library
  - b. Time period: late Sunday night
  - c. Occupation/ daily living: student – studying
  - d. Emotional condition: worried; concentrating
3. Opening night of the school play: The auditorium was packed on Friday night for the opening of our school play. We had arrived early and found seats in the first row. We kept looking at the clock to see when the curtain would go up.
  - a. Geographical location: the auditorium
  - b. Time period: Friday night
  - c. Occupation/ daily living: students at a play; audience
  - d. Emotional condition: excitement; anticipation
4. The dentist's office: I sat clenching the arms of the dentist's chair. I held my mouth open as wide as I could, but that sharp sticking in my gums and shrill drill sound made me want to slam my mouth shut. I wish I had been more diligent at flossing. I wish I hadn't waited for two years to have the dentist check my teeth.
  - a. Geographic location: the dentist's chair
  - b. Time period: two years since the last appointment
  - c. Occupation/ daily living: “I,” the speaker, is at the dentist for a check up
  - d. Emotional condition: anxiety; pain; fear

#### **Part Two**

Stanza	Geographical location	Time period	Emotional condition	Occupation/ daily living	What I can infer from this stanza
Stanza 1	A yellow wood Two roads diverged		sorry	Traveler	It is fall because the leaves are yellow
Stanza 2	The other It was grassy		It wanted wear		He took the road that had more grass growing on it and looked like it needed to be walked upon
Stanza 3	In the wood	morning	Both equally lay		He thinks both roads are equal
Stanza 4	Two roads diverged In a wood	He is in the future	A sigh A difference	Old man	He is going to tell about his decision in the future, and that his decision made a difference

#### **Part Three**

Answers may vary. Sample student answers are given.

1. It is the fall. I know this because he refers to a yellow wood and leaves on the road. Leaves turn yellow and fall off the trees in the fall.
2. He's sad because he can't travel on both roads. He wonders what is down each one.
3. The speaker is predicting that at some time in the future he's going to tell us about this day and this experience. Then, at that time in the future, he'll realize that his choice "made all the difference."
4. The setting can give the reader insight into what the poem is about. The setting can reflect the mood of the speaker.
5. The yellow wood might symbolize the time in the speaker's life as adulthood when he had to make this decision. The road could symbolize the journey of life.
6. "Two roads diverged in a ... wood"
7. The divergence of the two roads is what forces him to make a decision. He has to choose. And it is important.
8. The choice he made on that day impacted his life in a dramatic way.

#### Comparing Literature

9. The tone of "The Railway Train" is more carefree and happy. The tone of "The Road Not Taken" is more serious and thoughtful.
10. "The Road Not Taken" takes place in nature and deals with the woods. "The Song of Wandering Aengus" is also a poem in which nature is important to what happens in the poem. The events of both poems occur in the natural world.  
In "Paul Revere's Ride" the setting is Colonial America. The setting is manmade (towns) and important to the poem because the Colonists are defending their towns from the British. In "The Road Not Taken" the speaker is merely walking in the woods – there is no threat to the speaker or the woods.

#### Part Four

1. the meter is tetrameter with iambic and anapestic feet.

2. the rhyme scheme is as follows:

Two **roads diverged** in a **yellow wood**, a  
 And **sorry I** could not **travel both** b  
 And **be** one **traveler**, **long I stood** a  
 And **looked** down **one** as **far** a I **could** a  
 To **where** it **bent** in the **undergrowth**; b  
 Then **took** the **other**, as **just** as **fair**, c  
 And **having perhaps** the **better claim**, d  
**Because** it was **grassy** and **wanted wear**; c  
 Though **as** for **that** the **passing there** c  
 Had **worn** them **really about** the **same**, d  
 And **both** that **morning** equally **lay** e  
 In **leaves** no **step** had **trodden black**. f  
 Oh, I **kept** the **first** for **another day**! e  
 Yet **knowing** how **way** leads **on** to **way**, e  
 I **doubted** if I should **ever** come **back**. f  
 I **shall** be **telling this** with a **sigh** g  
**Somewhere** **ages** and **ages hence**: h  
 Two **roads diverged** in a **yellow wood**, and I –g  
 I **took** the **one** less **traveled by**, g  
 And **that** has made **all** the **difference**. h

#### "The Road Not Taken"

#### Assessment Preparation: Writing with Purpose—Extended Metaphor

#### Part One

Answers may vary. Sample student answers are given.

Stanza 1	Roads, diverged, travel, one traveler, it bent
Stanza 2	Grassy and wanted wear, passing, worn
Stanza 3	Lay, step, trodden, way leads on to way, come back
Stanza 4	Two roads, Diverged, one less traveled by

1. In my experience a road is made of asphalt. Grass doesn't grow on it and it isn't in the woods.
2. Yes, because life is like traveling along a road. You have to make choices and can't go back and explore another road. You have to keep moving forward.
3. split, divided, went apart, fork in the road, turned
4. Diverged sounds more educated, so the speaker may have wanted the reader to know this was a serious event. It was more than just a "fork in the road" moment.
5. The word fair is ambiguous. There are several meanings of the word (pale, reasonable, just, adequate, attractive; equal). I think Frost deliberately chose the ambiguous meaning so that there could be a deeper meaning to the poem. I don't think he wanted us to choose any one interpretation, but realize that there is more than one option, just like the poem itself.
6. Again, like the word "fair" the word "difference" can be ambiguous. Frost could have meant that one wasn't a better choice—just a different one. It could have a deeper meaning in that we never know what the other "road" of life holds because we took a different one. Other roads could have been either better or worse—or just different.
7. Frost is not only reinforcing the choice and decision of two roads for the extended metaphor, but within the diction of the poem. By deliberately choosing vague and ambiguous wording, the poem ironically gathers even more power.

### **Part Two**

*Original Extended Metaphors will vary.*

### **Part Three**

Last weekend, Ezra and I went to the mall. The sales looked **fair** and Ezra and I headed to the discount store. Ezra and I **diverged** once we got in the store because he was looking for socks and I was in search of a notebook. It was obvious that shoppers had been here. The aisles were littered with clothing. Walking through the store was like struggling through the **undergrowth** of a jungle. I found the notebook and made my **claim** on it before any other shoppers could grab it. After searching through the store, I finally found Ezra who had **trodden** through the store with no success in finding socks. We left the store – Ezra was discouraged, and vowed that in the weeks **hence**, he would only wear sandals.

### **“The Road Not Taken” Quiz**

1. The speaker is walking along a road and comes across a fork in the road. He wonders which road he should take and what will happen because of the choice he made to travel down one road and not the other.
2. The speaker wants to travel down both roads. He likes them equally.
3. He realizes that one thing leads to another as life progresses and he probably will never have a chance to go back.
4. The speaker uses the entire poem to talk about choices and roads. The entire poem is about how making choices is like life.
5. D. hence
6. E. trodden
7. C. fair
8. B. diverged
9. F. undergrowth
10. A. claim