

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.

Reason for choice

This is a famously self-contradictory poem. It is often erroneously referred to as “The Path Less-Well Traveled”; this and similar phrases have passed into modern speech. (Perhaps also “the grass is always greener on the other side” has some basis in this poem).

I like the poem because Life is a continuous set of choices. Certain aspects of the poem reflect my own life; making specific choices, consciously or unconsciously. And at the same time, being aware that Fate / Kismet / Luck has a strong effect on Life’s outcomes.

The ending suggests that one’s own actions have a significant effect on one’s life (although apparently the poet wrote it with sarcasm in mind i.e. that it makes no difference). And taking a slightly off-beat approach to life makes you feel different.

I think the poem acknowledges Experience and Wisdom. And you can’t go back, to try and do things better than you first did.

I have respected the American author’s American spelling.

