Title: The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

Suggested Time: 5 days (45 minutes per day)

Common Core ELA Standards: RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4; W.8.4, W.8.9; SL.8.1, SL.8.4; L.8.1, L.8.2, L.8.3, L.8.4, L8.5

Teacher Instructions

**Preparing for Teaching**

1. Read the Big Ideas and Key Understandings and the Synopsis. Please do not read this to the students. This is a description for teachers about the big ideas and key understanding that students should take away after completing this task.

Big Ideas and Key Understandings

Individuals have free will to make choices that may be easy or difficult.

Synopsis

The speaker reflects on the risks and responsibilities of making choices and deciding which road to take.

1. Read the entire selection, keeping in mind the Big Ideas and Key Understandings.
2. Re-read the text while noting the stopping points for the Text Dependent Questions and teaching Tier II/academic vocabulary.

**During Teaching**

1. Students read the entire selection independently.
2. Teacher reads the text aloud while students follow along or students take turns reading aloud to each other. Depending on the text length and student need, the teacher may choose to read the full text or a passage aloud. For a particularly complex text, the teacher may choose to reverse the order of steps 1 and 2.
3. Students and teacher re-read the text while stopping to respond to and discuss the questions, continually returning to the text. A variety of methods can be used to structure the reading and discussion (i.e., whole class discussion, think-pair-share, independent written response, group work, etc.)

Text Dependent Questions

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| **Text-dependent Questions** | **Evidence-based Answers** |
| How many stanzas are in the poem? How many lines are in each stanza? | There are four stanzas with five lines. It is called a quintrain. |
| What is the rhyme scheme? | The rhyme scheme is ABAAB. It is based on iambic tetrameter. |
| Tone is the way somebody says something as an indicator of what that person is feeling or thinking. An example of tone is “long I stood” (3). What do you think is the tone of the poem? Find evidence to support your choice. | The tone of the poem is thoughtful. Some evidence of this is “long I stood” (3), and “kept for another day.” This shows reflection, as opposed to rushing to a decision. |
| In the first stanza, Frost provides an overview of his feelings as an individual having to make a choice. Summarize how he feels. | Frost feels conflicted because he states, “and sorry I could not travel both and be one traveler, long I stood”. The word sorry implies that he is not very comfortable about the situation that he is in. |
| Symbolism is the practice or art of using an object or a word to represent an abstract idea. What is the “road” symbolic of? What textual evidence can you find to explain this symbolism? | Frost uses the road to symbolize the paths in life that people take. Every time that a person encounters a situation where they need to make a decision they are living on a specific path. “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both” (lines 1-2) |
| What does *“wanted wear”* mean and imply about the choice the author made? | “Wanted wear” in Line 8 means that not very many people have gone down this road or made this choice. It implies that the author is being unique about choosing this road and taking a risk because others do not choose this path. The reason others do not choose this path is unknown but could be because it is more difficult or riskier for the person choosing. |
| How are the two roads different and how are they similar? | The two roads are different because one is chosen more often than the other “then took the other, just as fair…because it was grassy and wanted wear” (lines 6 and 8). This shows that one is a bit more worn out than the other because people walk on it more often than the other. They are similar because they both seem to be “just as fair” in Line 6 and people have walked down both before, “Though as for the passing there. Has worn them really about the same” (lines 8-9) |
| What is the author expressing about his final choice in lines 13-15? | The author is expressing self-doubt at not being able to use both roads just like he did in the beginning of the poem, “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both” (lines 1-2). It is tinged with humorous self-realization that in every choice we make, there is a sacrifice involved. And he knows that, as life usually goes, he might not get the chance to come back to that same crossroads again or that same choice. “I doubted if I should ever come back” (line 15) |
| According to the text, what is the relationship between choices in life and human beings? Use textual evidence to support your claim. | Possible Answers:  a. According to the text, when making choices in life, human beings should think well about the choices they are making, “long I stood” (3). This shows that human beings should think well about the choices they are making because the text has the speaker standing long and thinking about the roads before the speaker makes a decision between the two roads. The speaker does not take another step nor choose which road between the two to take until the speaker states the words “long I stood.”  b. According to the text, when making choices in life, human beings should acknowledge some kind of responsibility for their own choices. In the end the text states that the speaker says, “And I—/I took the one less traveled by” (18-19). This shows the speaker taking responsibility for his or her own choices. First because the speaker speaks in the first person, he or she states that he or she took the one less traveled by and not anyone else. The speaker takes ownership as the subject of the action. |
| Re-read lines 13-15 of stanza 3. What might Frost be referring to when he declares, “Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back”? | Frost is in a meditative state. He is contemplating and reflecting on the fact that even as decisions are made life goes on. Despite all that time he spends rethinking his decision he doubts that he should have made a different choice. |
| What is the speaker’s perspective regarding choices in life? Use textual evidence to support your claim. | Possible Choices:  a. In Robert Frost’s poem, the speaker’s perspective regarding choices in life is that choices are complicated. This is because the speaker mentions how he or she, “Shall be telling this with a sigh” (16). This shows that choices are complicated specifically because of the text’s use of the word “sigh.” Deciding what this word means is itself complicated. A “sigh” could mean that the choice the person made is one of relief and that the person’s choice was complicated but a good one since a sigh of relief means that the person came out of a difficult situation with a good solution. The word sigh could also mean that the choice made was a bad one because people could also sigh as a result of having gone through something and regretting their ultimate decision.  b. The speaker’s perspective regarding choices in life is that choices can completely impact our lives. This is because the text ends with: “And that has made all the difference” (20). Whatever the choice the speaker made whether good or bad, this has made ALL the difference. The use of the word all means a complete change in circumstances as a result of choices in life. The text’s word choice itself can “make all the difference” between a reader’s understanding of the poem. |
| What was the speaker’s final choice? Why has it made all the difference? | The speaker’s final choice was to “travel the road less traveled” because he wanted to follow his own decisions (or he wanted to be alone or he wanted to have no responsibilities) (line 20). |

Tier II/Academic Vocabulary

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|  | These words require less time to learn  (They are concrete or describe an object/event/process/characteristic that is familiar to students) | These words require more time to learn  (They are abstract, have multiple meanings, are a part of a word family, or are likely to appear again in future texts) |
| Meaning can be learned from context | wood  undergrowth  diverged  difference  passing  worn them | wanted wear  bent  just as fair |
| Meaning needs to be provided | sigh  trodden  equally lay | ages and ages hence  long I stood  claim |

Culminating Writing Task

* Prompt

*Using your analysis of form and content, demonstrate your key understandings about choice in “The Road Not Taken”. Choose your form of expression: dialogue, poem, speech or film. In addition, write a reflective paragraph to explain your finished product. Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.*

* Teacher Instructions

1. Students identify their writing task from the prompt provided.
2. Students complete an evidence chart as a pre-writing activity. Teachers should guide students in gathering and using any relevant notes they compiled while reading and answering the text-dependent questions earlier. Some students will need a good deal of help gathering this evidence, especially when this process is new and/or the text is challenging!

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| *Evidence*  *Quote or paraphrase* | *Elaboration / explanation of how this evidence supports ideas or argument* |
| Form  There is a rhyme scheme called iambic tetrameter. There is a lyrical quality and pattern. | abaab,cdccd,efeef,ghggh  The poet made choices about his words and limited himself to the rhyme scheme. |
| Form  There are four concrete stanzas, with five lines each. There is a uniform structure with concise language. | There is a comfort in discovering a familiar structure.  The students can easily count the stanzas. The product they create should be concise as well. |
| Content  Choices are complicated. | a. In Robert Frost’s poem, the speaker’s perspective regarding choices in life is that choices are complicated. This is because the speaker mentions how he or she, “Shall be telling this with a sigh” (16). This shows that choices are complicated specifically because of the text’s use of the word “sigh.” Deciding what this word means is itself complicated. A “sigh” could mean that the choice the person made is one of relief and that the person’s choice was complicated but a good one since a sigh of relief means that the person came out of a difficult situation with a good solution. The word sigh could also mean that the choice made was a bad one because people could also sigh as a result of having gone through something and regretting their ultimate decision. |
| Content  Life is made of choices. | b. The speaker’s perspective regarding choices in life is that choices can completely impact our lives. This is because the text ends with: “And that has made all the difference” (20). Whatever the choice the speaker made whether good or bad, this has made ALL the difference. The use of the word all means a complete change in circumstances as a result of choices in life. The text’s word choice itself can “make all the difference” between a reader’s understanding of the poem. |

1. Once students have completed the evidence chart, they should look back at the writing prompt in order to remind themselves what kind of response they are writing (i.e. expository, analytical, argumentative) and think about the evidence they found. (Depending on the grade level, teachers may want to review students’ evidence charts in some way to ensure accuracy.) From here, students should develop a specific thesis statement. This could be done independently, with a partner, small group, or the entire class. Consider directing students to the following sites to learn more about thesis statements: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/ OR http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/ thesis\_statement.shtml.
2. Students compose a rough draft. With regard to grade level and student ability, teachers should decide how much scaffolding they will provide during this process (i.e. modeling, showing example pieces, sharing work as students go).
3. Students complete final draft.

* Sample Answer

Part 1- Using your analysis of form and content, demonstrate your key understandings about choice in “The Road Not Taken”. Choose your form of expression: dialogue, poem, speech or film. In addition, write a reflective paragraph to explain your finished product. Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.

That’s right, fight for your right to survive

The dream is to die of old age

Longevity the goal of each page

Courage, courage keeps us alive

Take risk, I’m aware I’ll probably get burned

But those who keep trying

Will have life lessons learned

So brothers and sisters, here is some advice

Longer pages might be nice,

Don’t give up the good fight

Wrestle long into the good nite.

Based on “Do not go gentle into that good night” by Dylan Thomas

Part 2- In addition, write a reflective paragraph to explain your finished product. Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.

In order to create this original poem, I had to consider the form and content of Frost’s The Road Not Taken.” This poem was a Write Like of Dylan Thomas’ poem “Do not go gentle into that good night.” I used the same ideas of form in the Frost poem. There is a simple rhyme scheme: abba, cdc, eeff to produce a lyrical quality. There are three concise stanzas with a turning point in the middle. When I read Dylan Thomas’ poem, it reminded me of the theme of choice in Frost’s poem and the tone of thoughtfulness. The thinking and decision making in the lines “long I stood” (3) “Shall be telling this with a sigh” (16) and “and that has made all the difference” (20) are the focus from Frost that inspired this original poem. We have to make choices and live with them. Frost had courage to go down “the one less traveled by” (18-19). The repetition of courage is a reminder to be aware of the mettle we need to make and accept our decisions.

Additional Tasks

* Students will create a short video or slideshow spanning no longer than 2 minutes. The teams of five are comprised of a Writer, Actor, Director, Photographer and Editor. These assigned roles may be shared in the process of discussion and decision-making.
* RAFT strategies include:

**Reader:** The director, writer and the actor converge on creating a sub text for the original poem. This can be in the form of dialogue, interior monologue, or dramatic monologue.

**Audience:** The viewers of the completed video will see the thematic and dramatic correlation between Robert Frost’s The Road Not Taken, and the student created video.

**Function:** The goal is to make a creative interpretation of a text. This involves technical and creative decisions that are text dependent. Students are therefore committed to making inferences and creative choices based on the critical analysis of the poem.

**Task:** the five tasks guide students into an inter-dependency focus. The scenario (set) should be limited to: one actor, two doors, a window, one exterior (outdoor) vista, a ladder/chair.

Answer: Evidence reflecting 3 essential questions.

* Your Own Road Not Taken:

1. What are 3 directional choices in the video that reflect thematic developments in the poem?
2. What are 3 technical functions in the video that reflect how theme is described through location in the poem?
3. What evidence in the dialogue of the video shows consistency with the poet’s intention?

Note to Teacher

* Teach paraphrasing to support students with summarizing and organizing their thinking for each paragraph.
* Student presentations of videos with facilitation of discussion will enhance the learning experience for all students.
* Giving students freedom of location or allowing students to work afterschool will provide more opportunities for student choice.
* Using Expert Group strategy to provide students opportunities to check-in and refine their work with other students in like roles will support a better video product and multi-layer the collaborative process.