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English 3922.001
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Explication One (SAMPLE ONLY)

This quote from “The Road Not Taken” by Robert Frost proves to the reader that a single choice leads to unpredictable and unavoidable consequences, and this poem ultimately regards this fatalism in a positive light. The narrator knows that “way leads to way” and doubts “if [he] should ever come back” (14-15). Although this line belies a tinge of regret, the poem as a whole offers the reader strong advice to pursue his or her unique path and moreover suggests that such a commitment leads to the greatest rewards.

The line immediately before these two lines offers the most insight as to their meaning: “Oh, I kept the first for another day!” (13). The narrator here explains how he first expected he could take the less traveled path and on another day return to take the more traveled road, and in this manner satisfy his curiosity about both directions. However, he suspects that the less traveled path will lead him in such distinct directions that his travels will never return him to this place again. This allegory of a traveler facing a fork in the road relates very directly to an individual facing a life choice. Whereas a traveler might literally return to the same fork in the road and take the other road, an individual can never return to the same moment in time and make the alternative choice. This poem shows us that our individual choices make concrete impacts on our present situations as well as our future possibilities.

Moreover, this poem not only tells readers that choices cannot be revised, but it also insists that readers take risks and choose the way least likely to attract others. By the end of the poem, the narrator reassures readers that said risks and consequences prove rewarding: “I took the [road] less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference” (19-

20). One might argue that “the difference” that the reader invokes here proves too vague to connote an actual encouragement to take a more unique path in life. However, the poem’s insistence that his road was “the better claim” and that he would one day tell of this moment “with a sigh” shows that he remains secure that he made the right choice. Still, this poem does not consistently offer a confident directive because it merely predicts the way the narrator might tell this story in the future. Today, it seems, the narrator and the readers do not yet know how the narrator’s choice actually impacted his life. This poem certainly claims that risks offer rewards, it by no means guarantees this thought.

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