THE ROAD NOT TAKEN
Robert Frost

The poem is about making choices or decisions in life. It describes the nature of each decision and raises the question whether choices are irreversible or whether it is possible to do at a later stage what we gave up on in the past.

The speaker reflects on a major decision and choice that was made in the past and why he made that particular choice. There is a sense of regret, looking back on lost opportunities.

The poet sees two roads in a wood and knowing that he can’t choose both, has to make a decision to travel along one of them.

One road is the path that more people take. It is a more conservative and conformist path that has fewer risks because it is better known. This is why it is more popular.

The second road is the less travelled along. There is more risk or adventure in this choice; life is less predictable along this path. This is why this road is less popular.

The poet chooses the lesser known path that fewer people had gone along. He thought that it looked more interesting and challenging because it was “grassy” and less used by people, which meant it would be more of a challenge and adventure.

The speaker kept the other option open in his mind to choose another time, but in his heart he knew that one event leads to another and he would become more involved in the life he has chosen. Therefore, it is not likely that he could ever come back and make or try the other choice.

The ‘sigh’ in the last stanza can be interpreted in two ways.

One interpretation is that the speaker has regrets about his original decision because he says: “I shall be telling it with a sigh.” However, he doesn’t change his mind but thinks back on what might have been.

Another interpretation is from a more positive perspective- a sigh of relief. Since the "sigh" is part of his future, looking back at his
choices, he doesn't know if he will be happy with his choice (relief) or will be sorry (sigh of agony).

It should be noted that the roads in the wood and the wood itself are metaphors for life and the decisions we have to take.

The speaker’s choice “has made all the difference.” Life would have been different if he had chosen the more acceptable, common, popular way.

His choice implies that he is not the person who follows other people only because it makes life easier. He may enjoy the company of other people only if it is worthwhile. He is ready to pay the price of being alone along the way he has chosen if he believes it is right.