

## **IMAGERY DEALING WITH CHOICE OF LIFE IN ROBERT FROST'S "THE ROAD NOT TAKEN"**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The research aims to discuss the imagery dealing with the choice of life in Robert Frost's "The Road not Taken". The research has three purposes: (1) to describe the kinds of imagery in the poem, (2) to describe the choices of life in the poem", and (3) to figure out how the imagery deals with the choice of life in the poem. The theories used in the research are the theory of imagery and its kinds and theory of symbol. Next, formalistic and structural approaches are applied to analyse the data. Further, descriptive method and library research are used to facilitate the analysis and seek for the data in the research. Visual, organic and kinaesthetic imageries are imageries that reflect the choice of life in the poem. In the poem, the speaker is taking a very different way of life but sad and tragic that he believes that it will make him stronger in life. Life is a choice. Whatever the choice he takes, he will be ready to face obstacles that come and block him. His soul is really brave. He believes that to experience a beautiful life, he must pass the hardest things in his life. What burdens him today will strengthen him someday.

**Keywords:** Imagery, Symbol, and Choice of Life.

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article is an attempt to analyze imagery dealing with choice of life in Frost's "The Road not Taken". The problem involved in this study is interesting and it is one of poetic aspects that is always found in the poem. So, the topic is considered relevant to discuss in this scientific study.

Literature is a kind of art which is usually enjoyed and appreciated by human beings. Literature is a composition that tells stories, dramatizes situations, expresses emotions, and analyses advocate ideas. Rosenheim adds that literature is an elusive term; we hear it applied to advertising and historical tracts and novels and poems and plays (1960: 2). Literature can be recognized by humans whose dreams and struggles are in different places and times that they would never know.

Baldick explains that the broader sense of literature as a totality of written or printed works has given a way to more exclusive definitions based on criteria of imaginative, creative, or artistic value (1990: 124). Thus, literature is a creation which contains artistic and exclusive values. Literature itself has some branches.

One of them is poetry. Poetry is a part of literature that discusses a poem and its parts like imagery, figure of speech and symbol.

Poem is a piece of writing in which the words are arranged in separate lines, often ending in rhyme, and are chosen for their sound and for the images and ideas they suggest.

Imagery is one of the important poetic devices in literary works especially poetry. There are seven kinds of imagery; visual imagery, auditory imagery, olfactory imagery gustatory imagery, tactile imagery, kinaesthetic imagery and organic imagery.

In *Understanding Poetry*, Brooks states that the representation in poetry of any sense experience is called as imagery. Imagery does not consist merely of “mental pictures”, but may make an appeal to any of senses (1960: 555). Therefore, imagery is not only physical appearance like the touch of hands but also invisible things like feeling and tension involving all senses.

Symbol is one of literary devices that reveals a sign for something more deeply. It is believed that a rose has long been considered as a symbol of love, affection or lust. It means that a symbol is a thing regarded to present or stand for something else and as representation of another meaning. A symbol has not only one meaning but two or more. As stated by Holman in “*A Handbook to Literature*”, “symbol does not “stand for” the meaning. Its suggestiveness is not from inherent quality in itself but from the way in which it is used in a given work.” (1986: 494). It proves that sometimes to find out the symbol is difficult and requires more understanding to comprehend it. It needs more reading and analysing to understand what an author means.

## **METHOD**

One of the most popular literary works is poem. One who writes poems is a poet. One of the famous poets is Robert Frost. One of Frost’s poems is “The Road not Taken” that becomes the source of the data. It tells about the consideration of a fork in the road both ways of which are equally worn and equally overlaid with un-trodden leaves. The speaker chooses one road, and tells himself that he will take the other road on another day. Yet he knows it is unlikely that he will have the opportunity to do so. He admits that someday in the future he will recreate the scene with a slight twist: he will claim that he takes the less-travelled road. Indirectly, it shows about the choice of life.

Furthermore, there are three approaches which are used to support analyzing the data. The first approach applied is structural approach. According to D’haen structural approach is producing relevant results by looking in places where one would not look without being urged by sturdy model (2014: 143). It means that the structural approach is used to get the mastery over the structures. It concentrates on each word to get the detailed meaning.

The second one is called formalist criticism. It is defined by Guerin as the assumption that a given literary experience takes a shape proper to itself, or at the least that the shape and the experience are functions of each other (1999: 83).

It means that the formalist criticism is concerned primarily with the work itself. The form and content cannot be meaningfully separated since the various stylistic elements of literary work influence each other. Moreover, the third kind of approach is psychological approach.

In addition, a method of research is required in order to analyze the data. Here, the descriptive method is applied. Punch explains that descriptive method is setting out to collect, organize and summarize information about the matter being studied (2000: 38). Hence, this method is aimed to describe the symbol of choice of life in the poem.

To collect the data, the library method is used in this research. George states that library research involves identifying and locating sources that provide factual information or personal/expert opinion on a research question; necessary component of every other research method at some point (2008: 6). It means that some materials in the form of printed media are needed in order to support the analysis. Moreover, the data are also collected from some literary sites in the internet to support the analysis.

## **DISCUSSION**

This chapter contains the analysis of the problems. There are three problems that have to be analyzed. The first problem is the kinds of imagery in Frost's "The Road not Taken", second problem is the choice of life in the poem and the last is the imagery deal with the choice of life in the poem.

### **1 The Kinds of imagery in Robert Frost's "The Road not Taken"**

In this sub-chapter the researcher wants to find out and explain the imageries in Robert Frost's "The Road not Taken". The poem can be seen below:

#### **The Road not Taken**

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, (6)  
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 (11)  
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 (16)  
 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.

--Robert Frost—

#### a. Visual Imagery

Some visual imageries are figured out in the first stanza. They are in the first, fourth and fifth lines. The lines can be classified into visual imagery because they are dealing with sight, something in the mind's eyes.

##### **Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both**

In this research, the speaker's sex is male so the use of "He" as the subject is applied in this analysis. "yellow wood".....(1) refers to life which is in autumn season. When autumn, leaves fall down and become dried. Autumn is seemingly not fresh to be seen. In the poem, the speaker's heart is like autumn. His life is in down position where he feels sad and sorrow deeply and nobody helps him when he needs the most. He is hopeless and so lonely. He needs somebody to talk to. "two roads".....(1) means two choices. "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood".....(1) means that his life is sad and so lonely with two choices that he must choose either. Two choices which are given to him are unhappy and less taken choices. It shows that he is faced on the two hard choices. In his position right now, he does not know which one to choose. He is afraid of deciding the wrong choice in his life. The words "And sorry I could not travel both".....(2) means that he wants to take both of them but he cannot do that. He cannot solve two things in the same time. He realizes that he must take one and overcome it. He feels dilemma with both choices. He promises that one day he will decide which choice he wants to overcome in his life. It takes much time and many considerations for him. What makes him dilemma is that he is aware that both choices are equal. In addition, in life sometimes he cannot have everything he wants. He must make decisions between the choices but he is so doubtful to overcome his decisions. Though it is hard for him, but life must go on. All he needs is additional time to think and decide the choices.

Additionally, in the fourth and fifth lines of the first stanza, visual imageries can also be found.

##### **And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;**

To ensure that the choice he takes is good for him, he tries to look to the way where it will lead him as far as he can. He attempts to follow the way that he considers better. He starts walking and overcoming his choice of life. Walk by walk, he is led to the place where undergrowth stands up strongly. This may be a sign that his choice is not really good to take. The undergrowth visualizes how steep and less travelled the way is. Knowing that the way is not happy to be seen,

he hesitates his choice in his life. He stops and thinks how to pass this obstacle. He ever thinks that he should go back and consider the other choice he has. It may be better than what he takes right now. Seeing that he has walked far, he thinks that it will be meaningless to go back because the choices are equally unhappy and steep. Finally he passes the undergrowth with the strength he has and continues the journey that he wants to reach the most in his life.

### **b. Auditory Imagery**

Auditory imagery is an imagery that represents a sound. The auditory imageries are found out in the sixteenth line of the last stanza.

**I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence**

He is telling the condition he experiences with a sigh. The word “sigh”.....(16) means that he is tired and weary. He knows that nobody cares of him. He cannot tell anything he wants to share and tell when he is tired of his life. His sighing indicates that he actually needs somebody to take care of him. One day he promises that he will make a good relationship with someone in order to make him believe that there is somebody who will listen to what he sighs about. In the other hand, he feels amazed with what he has already reached. He has been going so far and passing through many experiences in his life. So one day when he becomes older and older, he wants to tell the journey to someone else. He will still remember what makes him sigh because it is one of the reasons why he can still survive in his life with nobody to tell.

Furthermore, in the twelfth line of the third stanza, the imagery can also be found.

**In leaves no step had trodden black.**

Dried and brittle leaves in autumn can make crackling and scrunching sounds when they are stepped. When passing the way, he steps on them. There is soft sound of crackling dried and brittle leaves he can hear. He is aware that the way is never passed before because the leaves are still intact. He is the only person who passes it and steps on them. As long as he passes the place where many dried and brittle leaves, he hears the sounds. This line also shows how silent the situation is until the sound of crackling leaves can be heard. That really breaks the silence of the place. When nothing sounds, they sound. Naturally, those broken leaves after being stepped will be a fertile for the ground itself. They will fertilize the ground and create a better life.

Thus, he is a mere human. When he is tired, he can sigh as his expression of feeling tired. Knowing that the way he passes through is too difficult and quiet, it is natural for him to express how he feels. In autumn, he can hear how dried and brittle leaves fallen which are cracking and crushing because the situation of the place is too quiet. Nobody is with him and surrounds the place. His hearing of crackling and crushing leaves can be included in auditory imagery which is pertaining of the sense of hear.

## **2 The Choices of Life in Robert Frost's "The Road not Taken"**

In this sub-chapter the researcher wants to find out and explain the choices of life related in Robert Frost's "The Road not Taken".

### **a. Living Naturally**

Minarik states that the natural life is a life lived that is totally guilt free to do what you want. Living the natural life allows you a strong confidence in knowing that what you do is right (2011: 39-40). It shows that natural life is a life that is free to do what you want to be.

The words "two roads" and "yellow wood".....(1) mean living natural life. "Two roads" is about how the speaker is faced on two choices in his life and he must make a decision between them. "Yellow wood" refers to the natural life which happens in autumn season. Fall season is pictured through the colour of "yellow" in woods which means the leaves and plants in the woods are dried and turn to yellow colour because of being sunned. Deeply, fall season symbolizes how it is unhappy to see when everything turns to die or wilt. It also symbolizes the fall of his life. He must make a decision in his fall.

Life naturally happens. Whatever it is going to be, God has ways to direct where his mankind goes. Sometimes life is on top, sometimes on down but that will give the true meaning of life. The experience that colours a life to be more interesting is the reason why God exams the mankind through hard and challenging choices.

Moreover, "two roads" and "yellow wood".....(1) can be the symbol of the natural life. Looking at where the speaker is right now, he is facing choices that are really hard to be chosen either. Fall season symbolizes his fall of life that he must wake up from it.

### **b. Living Toughly**

The word "traveler".....(3) can be meant as a person who is strong and brave to do tough activities. When someone commits to be a traveller, he or she must prepare many things in his or her life. A traveller is also mostly faced with challenging obstacles and steep ways. In the poem, the speaker chooses to be a traveller in his life. He believes that by being a traveller he can learn many things in his life. It is also proven that he has already been passing through many things which are either happy or sad in his life. He must have a good tenacity in his life when he commits to be a traveller because there are challenging and dangerous things that will block him. If he does not have a very good tenacity in his life, he will easily be broken and defeated.

In his life, he has a conviction in being a traveller. He wants to seek for the truly beauty of life, the beauty of nature, and pass different and challenging ways of life that others may not be brave to be like him. He hopes that becoming a traveller can also change his sad and sorrow life and make him become a strong and brave person than he was yesterday.

In conclusion, the word "traveler".....(3) can symbolize the tenacity of life. Seeing that the activity of a traveller requires high stamina and toughness to

keep fit in every situation, he is said to be a person who has a high tenacity of life because he chooses to be different by being a traveller who wanders in life.

### **3. The Imagery Dealing with the Choices of Life in Robert Frost's "The Road Not Taken"**

In this sub-chapter the researcher wants to explain the imageries that have relation to the choice of life in Robert Frost's "The Road not Taken".

#### **a. Visual Imagery**

The lines can be classified into visual imagery that deals with the choices of life that he lives sad life where he is faced on two sad choices.

#### **Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both**

In this research, the speaker's sex is male so the use of "He" as the subject is applied in this analysis. "yellow wood".....(1) refers to life which is in autumn season. When autumn, leaves fall down and become dried. Autumn is seemingly not fresh to be seen. In the poem, the speaker's heart is like autumn. His life is in down position where he feels sad and sorrow deeply and nobody helps him when he needs the most. He is hopeless and so lonely. He needs somebody to talk to. "two roads".....(1) means two choices. "Two roads diverged in a yellow wood".....(1) means that his life is sad and so lonely with two choices that he must choose either. Two choices which are given to him are unhappy and less taken choices. It shows that he is faced on the two hard choices. In his position right now, he does not know which one to choose. He is afraid of deciding the wrong choice in his life. The words "And sorry I could not travel both".....(2) means that he wants to take both of them but he cannot do that. He cannot solve two things in the same time. He realizes that he must take one and overcome it. He feels dilemma with both choices. He promises that one day he will decide which choice he wants to overcome in his life. It takes much time and many considerations for him. What makes him dilemma is that he is aware that both choices are equal. In addition, in life sometimes he cannot have everything he wants. He must make decisions between the choices but he is so doubtful to overcome his decisions. Though it is hard for him, but life must go on. All he needs is additional time to think and decide the choices.

Moreover the words "two roads" and "yellow wood".....(1) mean living natural life. "Two roads" is about how the speaker is faced on two choices in his life and he must make a decision between them. "Yellow wood" refers to the natural life which happens in autumn season. Fall season is pictured through the colour of "yellow" in woods which means the leaves and plants in the woods are dried and turn to yellow colour because of being sunned. Deeply, fall season symbolizes how it is unhappy to see when everything turns to die or wilt. It also symbolizes the fall of his life. He must make a decision in his fall. Life naturally happens. Whatever it is going to be, God has ways to direct where his mankind goes. Sometimes life is on top, sometimes on down but that will give the true meaning of life.

### **b. Organic Imagery**

Organic imagery that is found in the fourteenth and fifteenth lines of the third stanza deals with the choice of life related to live doubtful life.

**Yet knowing how way leads on to way  
I doubted if I should ever come back**

In spite of the fact that he feels sure what the way will lead him in a good future, he is still doubtful and worried. His past was really tragic for him until he wants to forget it. He chooses a different way of life in which others are mostly afraid of taking it. He expects much in his choice because in his choice right now he hopes it will change his future. He can get a good future by passing through his hard and steep choice. He wants to get a better life. Sometimes he is afraid of what he has left in the past will return in his future and overwhelm his life again. He does not want it come back anymore. It must be vanished. The only thing he does is to overcome and face what is in front of him. His choice to choose this way is to forget and leave what yesterday was. His worry is just a flashlight. He is brought by the situation in which he has a different side of life which he has never felt before. A good future of life is seen by him. He is just afraid when he is happy in the future, his tragic past will come and destroy everything he has built so hard.

Accordingly, he can feel the internal sensation of his being doubtful because of being confused. His being doubtful can be included in organic imagery which is pertaining of the sense of internal sensations.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this conclusion, the researcher concludes all the problems that have been analyzed in the preceding chapters. The researcher is interested in analysing and discussing poetry. In “**The Road not Taken**”, there are some interesting problems discussed. The first is kinds of imagery as found in Robert Frost’s “The Road not Taken”, that are, visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, organic, and kinaesthetic imagery.

The next problem is the choices of life in Robert Frost’s “The Road not Taken”. There are some choices that are taken, namely to choose living unpopularity, living bravely, living ideally, living toughly and living naturally.

The last problem is the imagery dealing with the choice of life in Robert Frost’s “The Road not Taken”. The researcher has found out the imageries dealing with the choice of life. The imageries found are visual, organic, and kinaesthetic imagery.

Through the research, the researcher can take the message from the poem. In this life, people should be ready to face the reality. Either it is sad or happy, they should struggle the life they live. Sometimes they are faced on the hardest things in their life in order to make them stronger and are faced on the happiest things in their life in order to test how they can appreciate moments. Furthermore, all people are equal. The different thing that differs them is the way they take a way of life. Not all sad things result negative and not all happy things result positive. The researcher hopes the reader can learn and understand more about the choice of life through imagery and symbol after reading this research.



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