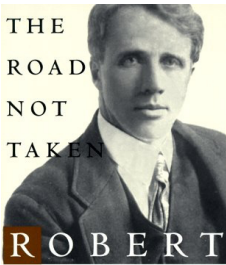


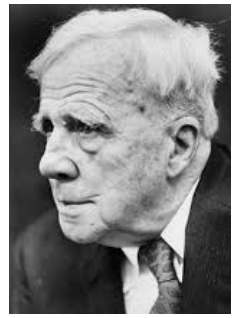
THE  
ROAD  
NOT  
TAKEN

ROBERT  
FROST



## On the Road with Robert Frost: His Poetry of Motion

Robert Frost was a four time Pulitzer Prize winner, the most widely-read American poet of his time and one who for many readers became almost synonymous with the maples, birches, farms, fences, country roads, and snowdrifts of rural New England. Frost was also a Latin teacher, a chicken farmer, an amateur botanist, a shrewd creator of a self-reliant public persona, and one of the first poets to bring creative writing onto college campuses. Classes will focus on Frost's use of voice and form in his lyrical, dramatic, and narrative poetry. Controversies regarding the poet's biography, politics, and aesthetics will also be explored. No text required. Recommended: *Robert Frost: Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays* (Library of America, 1995) and *Robert Frost, a Life*, Jay Parini (Henry Holt & Company, 1999).



**Class 1: "A Peck of Gold"** Frost's early childhood and hard landing in New England. Remembering and transmuting his birthplace ("A Peck of Gold," "Once By The Pacific," "At Woodward Gardens"). Early and lifelong encounter with poetry via Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. Relentless pursuit of high school co-valedictorian Elinor White. Mental instability (The Dismal Swamp). Marriage. Children. Years in obscurity down on the farm (the danger of "launching out too soon"). Off to England. 1913 publication of *A Boy's Will* (adjusted to provide an obeisance to *A Shropshire Lad*). Frost already "on the road" with physical, mental, metrical motion ("Into My Own," "My November Guest," "The Vantage Point").

**Class 2: Back in the USA.** American edition of *A Boy's Will* (detaching his book from Housman). "Mowing," "Storm Fear," "The Trial By Existence." Continued aesthetic development and decision to become "Yankier and Yankier" (versus expatriates Pound, Stein, Eliot and others). American edition of *North of Boston* introduces Frost to America as the premier poet of New England ("After Apple Picking," "Mending Wall," "Blueberries"). Signal replacement of his earlier, gloomy introductory voice "Into My Own" with the kinder, gentler, reader-oriented voice of "The Pasture."

**Class 3: Expanded poetic palette.** In *North of Boston* Frost suddenly excels as an innovative "long" narrative and dramatic poet ("Home Burial," "Death of the Hired Man," "A Servant to Servants"). Frost's sure sense of accent. His concept of "the sound of sense" (breaking the "speaking voice" against iambic meter). Upcoming shorter storied poems in *Mountain Interval* ("Out, Out," "An Old Man's Winter Night") and later equally powerful examples ("Not to Keep," "The Subverted Flower").

**Class 4: Other Roads to Take.** Frost as Sonneteer ("Putting in the Seed," "Range Finding," "Acceptance," "Acquainted with the Night," "On a Bird Singing in Its Sleep"). Mastering short, even mini poems ("The Secret Sits," "Dust of Snow," "It Bids Pretty Fair," "Nothing Gold Can Stay," "Fire and Ice"). Frost's brilliant use of titles and diction. David Orr's description of "The Road Not Taken" as "the poem everyone loves and almost everyone gets wrong." Getting "Mending Wall" right. "Departmental" as an example of "outer humor" and "inner seriousness."

**Class 5: Frost on Poetry.** His odd military metaphor for how to approach a poem. His refusal to play tennis "with the net down. His thoughts on the breakdown of metaphor; rhyme as revelation; "strict" versus "loose" iambic; "the figure a poem makes"; "a momentary stay against confusion." Frost's presence on college campuses as mentor to the young and promoter of his own poetry. His disparagement of fellow poets; comments on Eliot, Pound, and that "Minor Bird," Carl Sandburg. Merit of Lionel Trilling's characterization of Frost at his 80th birthday party as a "terrifying" poet? ("Desert Places," "Design," "Neither Out Far, Nor In Deep," "Bereft," "Provide, Provide.")

**Class 6: The You and I of Poetry.** Frost as elder statesman and wisdom-bearer. Visiting Russia; meeting Khrushchev; reading "The Gift Outright" at Kennedy's inauguration. Dueling biographical assessments of the man (Laurence Thompson versus Jay Parini). Attempts to marginalize Frost's importance as a poet (Malcolm Cowley, Yvor Winters, con; Randall Jarrell for the defense. Frost's undeniable success in his desire to "lodge a few good poems where they will be hard to get rid of." Placing Frost in 20th century poetry. Is he a Modernist? A "nature" poet? Revisiting and summarizing Frost's art and craft through consideration of "The Most of It," "A Star in a Stoneboat," "To Earthward," "Come In," "On the Need of Being Versed in Country Things," "All Revelation," and "Directive."