

Listening/Viewing Activity
Writers Reading out their Works:
The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost
(Appreciative Listening)

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- Objectives** : To enable viewers/listeners to watch/listen to the poems recited by the poets themselves or others, to understand the cadence and the aesthetic beauty of them.
- Text** : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrBHd41YqTc>
The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost – Recited by the poet himself.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ig3zsQUhXaw>
Read out by Naseeruddin Shah.
- Duration** : 2.30 minutes.
- Preparation** : Watch/listen to the poems read out by others paying attention to the musical quality and aesthetic beauty.

Procedure :

Setting the context and the task:

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963) was a much honoured and celebrated American poet. He has written numerous poems and among them, “The Road Not Taken”, finds place in most of the poetry anthologies. He had the distinction of being invited to read his poem at John F Kennedy’s presidential inauguration and it was the first televised inauguration. The poem he recited on the occasion was, “The Gift Outright”.

The poem, “The Road Not Taken”, captures the dilemma that everyone faces in their lives and ruminates over the decision made.

Task: When read out/recited, follow closely the musical qualities and the other poetic devices to appreciate the poem.

Process:

- Listen to/watch the poem being read out by paying attention to the following features:
(Identify more examples for each of the features listed below)

- **Musical qualities** such as,

Alliteration – It is a repetition of the same letter or sound at the beginning of each word – e.g., “wanted wear”.

Assonance - It is a repetition of a vowel sound in quick succession, e.g., ‘o’ sound – “way leads on to way”.

Rhyme scheme – a, b, a, a, b is the scheme in the first stanza.

- **Poetic features** such as,

Metaphor: A comparison between two things but implicit. The things that are compared have only certain things common. e.g., “Two roads diverged”.

Image: A word picture – poets appeal to all the five senses. e.g., “yellow wood”

Parallelism: The use of a source of words, phrases or sentences that have similar grammatical forms.

e.g., “And be only one traveler long I stood / And looked down once as far as I could”.

Repetition: Repeating something that has already been stated. e.g., “Two road diverged in a wood” but the word “yellow” is not.

Ambiguity: possibility of more than one interpretation. e.g., “I shall be telling this with a sigh” – “sigh” could mean many things. With the understanding of the above features listen to the poem again to appreciate it better.

Learning outcomes:

- (1) Learners realize that to appreciate a poem its musical qualities are important, and it is that feature which differentiates it from a prose piece.
- (2) Learners recognize that while approaching a poem they need to look for not only explicit but also implicit meanings. The interpretation of a poem could differ from person to person depending upon the experiences they bring to a poem.

Further practice:

To watch/listen to the recitation of the poems to avoid reading poems as prose pieces.

***Robert Frost:** President John F. Kennedy, at whose inauguration Frost delivered a poem, said of the poet, “He has bequeathed his nation a body of imperishable verse from which Americans will forever gain joy and understanding.” And, famously, “He saw poetry as the means of saving power from itself. When power leads man towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man’s concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses.”

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