

The Road Not Taken

BY ROBERT FROST

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,
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
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
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.

Storm

by Fiona Lockhead

It's a proper one outside.
Not a metaphor.
And the garden is possessed.
The swing is swinging-
Dementedly.
The bush is a frenzy
Of furious leaves.
And winter's plum trees wave-
Stabbing skeleton fingers.
Howling banshee wind.
The sound of hell
Unleashed.
Outside in the garden
And not a metaphor.

The History Teacher
by Billy Collins

Trying to protect his students' innocence
he told them the Ice Age was really just
the Chilly Age, a period of a million years
when everyone had to wear sweaters.

And the Stone Age became the Gravel Age,
named after the long driveways of the time.
The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more
than an outbreak of questions such as
"How far is it from here to Madrid?"
"What do you call the matador's hat?"

The War of the Roses took place in a garden,
and the Enola Gay dropped one tiny atom
on Japan.

The children would leave his classroom
for the playground to torment the weak
and the smart, mussing up their hair and
breaking their glasses,

while he gathered up his notes and walked home
past flower beds and white picket fences,
wondering if they would believe that soldiers
in the Boer War told long, rambling stories
designed to make the enemy nod off.

Sonnet 101

*That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed, whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well, which thou must leave ere long.*

Autumn

I want to mention
summer ending
without meaning the death
of somebody loved

or even the death
of the trees.
Today in the market
I heard a mother say

Look at the pumpkins,
it's finally autumn!
And the child didn't think
of the death of her mother

which is due before her own
but tasted the sound
of the words on her clumsy tongue:
pumpkin; autumn.

Let the eye enlarge
with all it beholds.
I want to celebrate
color, how one red leaf flickers

like a match held to a dry branch,
and the whole world
goes up
in orange and gold.

Bluebird **by Charles Bukowski**

there's a bluebird in my heart that
wants to get out
but I'm too tough for him,
I say, stay in there, I'm not going
to let anybody see
you.
there's a bluebird in my heart that
wants to get out
but I pour whiskey on him and inhale
cigarette smoke
and the bartenders
and the grocery clerks
never know that

he's
in there.
there's a bluebird in my heart that
wants to get out
but I'm too tough for him,
I say,
stay down, do you want to mess
me up?
you want to screw up the
works?
you want to blow my book sales in
Europe?
there's a bluebird in my heart that
wants to get out
but I'm too clever, I only let him out
at night sometimes
when everybody's asleep.
I say, I know that you're there,
so don't be
sad.
then I put him back,
but he's singing a little
in there, I haven't quite let him
die
and we sleep together like
that
with our
secret pact
and it's nice enough to
make a man
weep, but I don't
weep, do you?

A Brief Lecture on Door Closers

by Clemens Starck

Although heretofore unconsidered
in verse or in song,
the ordinary door closer is, I submit, a device
well worth considering.

Consisting primarily
of a spring and a piston, in combination,
here's how it works:

 You open a door,
either pushing or pulling.
The spring is compressed, the piston extended.
Now, having passed through the doorway,
you relinquish control,
and the door closer takes over. The spring remembers
how it was—
it wants to return. But the urge is damped
by the resistance the piston encounters,
snug in its cylinder
filled with hydraulic fluid.

Such is the mechanism of the door closer,
invented in 1876
by Charles Norton, when a slamming door
in a courtroom in Cincinnati
repeatedly disrupted
the administration of justice.

Whether concealed beneath the threshold
or overhead in the head jamb,
whether surface-mounted as a parallel-arm installation
or as a regular-arm,
door closers are ever vigilant,

silently performing their function, rarely complaining.

Whereas doors can be metaphorical—as in, for example, "He could never unlock the door to her heart"—door closers cannot.

Remember this when you pass through, and the door closes behind you with a soft thud and final click as the latchbolt engages the strike.

End of April

Phillis Levin

Under a cherry tree
I found a robin's egg,
broken, but not shattered.
I had been thinking of you,
and was kneeling in the grass
among fallen blossoms
when I saw it: a blue scrap,
a delicate toy, as light
as confetti
It didn't seem real,
but nature will do such things
from time to time.
I looked inside:
it was glistening, hollow,
a perfect shell
except for the missing crown,
which made it possible
to look inside.
What had been there
is gone now
and lives in my heart
where, periodically,
it opens up its wings,
tearing me apart.