

“The Road Not Taken”: Poetry and Personal Insight
in the EFL Classroom and Beyond

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This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and is therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.

Foreword and acknowledgements

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Abstract

This qualitative study examines how Norwegian tenth graders show personal insight through the reading of the poem “The Road Not Taken”. The research is based on the responses from two English classes in a lower secondary school in Kristiansand, and the empirical material includes 39 responses. The data are analysed using literary terms from reader-response theory. Values and expressions embedded in Norwegian curricula are also discussed in relation to the data.

My findings reveal that the adolescents perceive the poem in a fairly coherent way, while at the same time many of the respondents have doubts regarding the accuracy of their own perception. The poem inspires many of the respondents to make their own independent choices and to choose their own path in life. I also find that teenagers who are inexperienced when it comes to poetic literacy are able to enjoy poetry, maybe even to a greater extent than literary critics do.

In my analysis I argue that relevant poetry is a fine literary tool to help pupils gain more personal insight. They gain personal insight because they can recognise their own feelings in “The Road Not Taken”, because their feelings are modified by what they read and because the poem has relevant themes connected to their lifeworld. Adolescents today have mange challenges, but they also have the answer to many of their own problems. Some of these answers are found in the poem. Pupils need more practice when it comes to linking material provided them in school to their own lives, thus making school even more relevant. This is a task teachers must take into consideration more often when planning their courses, as education should help the pupils gain insight that reaches beyond the classrooms and lasts a lifetime.

Table of contents

TABLE OF CONTENTS	IV
LIST OF FIGURES	VI
LIST OF TABLES	VII
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Is poetry relevant for young people today?	3
1.3 The concept of “personal insight”	5
1.4 Aims of research, rationale and research questions	6
1.5 The outline of the thesis	8
2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	10
2.1 On reading and gaining personal insight in LK06	10
2.1.1 Personal Insight in the Core Curriculum	11
2.1.2 Reading and personal insight in LK06	12
2.2 Reader-response theory	14
2.2.1 Transactional theory	14
2.2.2 The role of the reader	16
2.2.3 A dualistic approach to literary texts	20
2.2.4 Indeterminacy and gaps in literary texts	21
2.2.5 Subjectivity and feelings	22
2.3 Scholarly interpretations of “The Road Not Taken”	27
2.4 Research on literary reading	30
3 METHOD	33
3.1 Research paradigms	33
3.2 Design	34
3.3 The prima vista method adapted to my study	36
3.4 Tasks distributed to the pupils	37
3.5 Ethical considerations	38
3.6 The affective filter	40
3.7 Hermeneutics	40

3.8	Bottom-up or top-down.....	42
3.9	The use of a poem	43
3.10	“The Road Not Taken”	44
3.11	Analytical approach	47
4	ANALYSIS	48
4.1	Overview of the responses.....	48
4.2	“The Road Not Taken” experienced by Norwegian adolescents	53
4.2.1	Reading as an event in time	53
4.2.2	Feelings aroused from the poem.....	56
4.2.3	Themes and messages elicited from the poems.....	65
4.2.4	Interpretive communities	75
4.2.5	An aesthetic versus an efferent approach.....	78
4.2.6	Indeterminacy, gaps and reader awareness	79
4.2.7	Levels of reading and validity	81
4.3	Being young according to Norwegian adolescents.....	85
4.4	Personal insight through poetry	92
4.5	Didactic implications, principles and examples.....	95
5	CONCLUSION.....	98
5.1	Research limitations	100
5.2	Suggestions for further research	100
5.3	A personal frame	101
	REFERENCES.....	103
	Appendix A: “The Road Not Taken”	107
	Appendix B: Letter of approval for research	108
	Appendix C: Tasks for respondents.....	109
	Appendix D: Information to respondents	111
	Appendix E: Responses text 1-39.....	112
	Appendix F: Questionnaire for respondents- five months after	140
	Appendix G: Permission to use illustration, Claire Holgate	145

List of figures

Figure 1: The Core Curriculum's categorisation of human beings.....	11
Figure 2: An illustration by Claire Holgate based on "The Road not Taken"	46

List of tables

Table 1 Feelings in "The Road Not Taken"57
Table 2 Modifying feelings60
Table 3 Assessment of respondents' reading experiences63
Table 4 The concept of choice in "The Road Not Taken"66
Table 5 Examples of hindsight and regret.....72
Table 6 A comparison of two responses76
Table 7 Voicing uncertainty80
Table 8 Associations to "The Road Not Taken"82
Table 9 Positive aspects of being an adolescent86
Table 10 Negative aspects of being an adolescent.....86
Table 11 Adolescent challenges and adolescent advice88

1 Introduction

In chapter 1.1 I will explain the motivation for this study, its background and its interdisciplinary aspects. Poetic literacy linked to adolescence is the main topic of the thesis hence I rely on theories and empirical studies on reading, as well as empirical material and research in the field of social studies. In 1.2 I look at the relevance of poetry-reading in contemporary society, whereas in 1.3 I clarify how the concept of “personal insight” is understood in this thesis. In 1.4 I discuss and present the research questions, before I provide an outline for the thesis in 1.5.

1.1 Background

This study is carried out in two English classes that I teach in a lower secondary school in Kristiansand, and consequently the reading of literature in this study is seen from the perspective of learning English as a foreign language (EFL). In addition I teach Social science and Religion,¹ and my interdisciplinary scope derives from these areas of interest. I wanted my research to be close to life and teaching and therefore I conducted a didactic case study where I analysed whether teenagers, through the reading of poetry, could gain personal insight and thus understand their own life situation better. Teaching should focus on matters beyond grammar and vocabulary, and issues of importance to the pupils must be on the agenda. Initially I will touch upon some of the ideas that ultimately led to my research question.

A life is made up of the choices a person makes every day. Some decisions are being made on our behalf, but we are responsible for most of our choices ourselves. In class teenagers learn about heroic choices that altered other people’s lives, like that of

¹ The full title of the subject as of August 2015 is “Knowledge of Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics”

the Polish Catholic priest Maximilian Kolbe who volunteered to die in place of a stranger in Auschwitz or Malala Yousafzai who used her horrific experience of being shot as fuel for her continuing fight for the education of girls in particular. These two examples stand out as incredible acts of bravery and in comparison most people lead rather insignificant lives. Still, we are all given a lifespan, and based on the choices we make day by day our projected lifespan turn into our actual lives. The Core Curriculum in Norway says that education “... must teach the young to look ahead and train their ability to make sound choices” (1993:5). What thoughts adolescents have regarding their own choices and how they see their own future are both aspects that fuelled my interest.

The United Nations has for the twelfth year in a row announced Norway to be the best country to live in, according to their Human Development Report. In the Human Development Index the length and the quality of education is measured as one of three variables describing a privileged life (2015:208). It is logical to infer that young people feel satisfied and content with their lives as well as self-confident and anticipative regarding their own future. Statistics tell another story though, as recent research shows how young people in Norway feel a lot of pressure concerning their own achievements (Samdal et al 2012:64-65). That life can be hard to handle is also shown through statistics telling that the use of antidepressants among young girls especially has had a significant increase in Norway recently (Skogen et al 2014).² Concerns regarding adolescence will serve as a link to “The Road Not Taken”.

Parallel to multiple headlines in the newspapers on youths’ sense of pressure, I sense a shift among pupils at school. Those who are satisfied with average grades these days are few and far between. When I started my career as a teacher fourteen years ago, slang words like “geek” or “nerd” could occasionally be heard in the classrooms, but

² Article, Folkehelse rapporten 2014 (Public Health Report 2014)

nowadays pupils who manage to get top-notch grades gain a lot of positive attention from the others. Many have attempted to label this generation, with suggestions such as Millennials, Generation Me and Digital Natives (Horovitz, 2012). The teenagers who participate in this study were born in the year of 2000, at the turn of a new millennium. The challenges they face may also be new and different from the generations that precede them. This study aims at letting the adolescents verbalise their own thoughts, seen in the light of a poem that has stood the test of time.

“The Road Not Taken” (Frost 2015: 87) (Appendix A) is handpicked for this thesis. In a study where adolescents are given the chance to reflect upon their lives, their choices and their future, a quintessential poem about choices seemed like a prerequisite. I found myself in a position where I had to make a choice on what poem about choices to use, and this provided a meta-perspective that made me reflect on how many choices we make every day. I encountered “The Road Not Taken” years ago, and it has followed me since. In a way it feels more correct to say that the poem lent itself to this study. In this study I combine the two elements of reading poetry and gaining personal insight, and examine whether I can find a connection between the two in the adolescent generation of today.

My study includes interdisciplinary elements; in both the theoretical framework and the analysis I focus primarily on literary perspectives, but my research also touches upon other fields. An eclectic approach can add to a study if it is relevant and used wisely.

1.2 Is poetry relevant for young people today?

Poetry has followed humanity almost since the birth of the first known civilizations. One of the oldest pieces of poetry that we know of is an ancient Sumerian tablet and it

probably dates back more than 4,000 years (Arsu, 2006). Its message is one of love, and its first line resembles much of the poetry written since: “Goodly is your beauty, honeysweet.” Since poetry has been relevant for people throughout history, it should be considered relevant for young generations today as well. Still, as times are changing, the reading and teaching of poetry must also adapt.

According to Hofstadter we would be more evil without poetry to guide us. He says that “without the poetic element in our own being, and without our poets and their great poetry, we would be brutes, or what is worse and what we are most like today: vicious automata of self-will” (Heidegger 2001: xv). If poetry can facilitate human interaction and provide for a more empathic attitude towards others, then poetry is highly relevant for people of all ages.

Youths today prefer poetry in social media and on internet to poetry in print. On websites like Wattpad and Movellas young people publish their own poetry and they are read by hundreds or even thousands. They also receive feedback and through competitions they may be acknowledged as real writers. In her online article “How the internet is kickstarting a teen poetry revolution” Alison Flood interviews young writers who have posted their poetry online. Chloe Smith says that poetry “seems like a way to convey a person’s emotions, and because teens seem to be going through so much ... they need to be able to put it down somewhere.” Abby Meyer comments on why she likes to read the poetry of others online: “I think that it gives teens reassurance that other people their age feel the same way as them, and are going through the same emotional changes.”³ Harry Baker, World Champion Slam Poet, is an example of new poets rising. His background is within rap music, and his poetic style has made him so popular that he travels the world with his poetry. On social media, like Instagram, poetry

³ Both quotes listed as Flood in References

entries are also popular. The hashtag “poetry” is put on more than six million pictures, “Shakespeare” is tagged on more than 850 000 entries, while the title of Robert Frost’s poem, #theroadnottaken, is to be found on more than ten thousand pictures. Whereas classical, canonical poetry may suffer from less attention than before, young people today do embrace poetry in new ways.

1.3 The concept of “personal insight”

In this thesis, “personal insight” is neither seen as a classical self-help concept, nor as a term reserved for psychiatry, even though it clearly may be applied to both of these categories. Instead “personal insight” is seen more in layman’s terms as describing the ongoing process in all humans’ lives where people seek to better understand their own selves and their surroundings. Dictionaries will provide definitions on “insight” like the “faculty of seeing into inner character or underlying truth”, “self-knowledge” and “the capacity to gain an accurate and deep understanding”.⁴

In LK06, the Norwegian curriculum plan, it is said that reading literary texts in English can impart “a deeper understanding of others and oneself”. English as a subject is in general meant to enhance the pupils’ “personal insight”. Also in the Core Curriculum in Norway understanding both oneself and the position the self has in a rapidly changing society is a recurring topic. This can be seen in the introductory part where verbs like the following are used to sum up the aims of education: “...to expand the individual’s capacity to perceive and to participate, to experience, to empathize and to excel” (1993:5). In addition it is discussed how crucial it is to place the individual in a social and historical context as it “... expands the scope for insight and initiative and reminds us that today’s conditions will also change” (29). Human beings could not have

⁴ [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) and www.oxforddictionaries.com

accomplished what they have today without “the accumulation of skills, insight, and wisdom...”(29) through time. From these lines it becomes clear that teaching and learning is meant to reach beyond what happens in the classrooms alone.

The expression “gaining insight” can also be found in literary theory. David S. Miall uses the term when he describes the effect literature may have on people. He claims that literature can be dehabituating and make people more adaptable. It is consequently possible to be “gaining insight ... so that we know better how to act when similar situations occur in reality” (2006/2007:17). In a similar way Oatley finds that through literature “the reader may reach an insight, and build a new piece of his or her model of the self and its relations. In other words, some cognitive transformation may result”. (2002: 54) Personal insight is essential in order to understand ourselves and our surroundings and this concept is, as shown, rooted both in Norwegian curricula and in literary theory. At the same time, personal insight is impossible to define and to understand. It reaches beyond classrooms, curricula and theory. A person’s insight is always expanding, and it helps shape the identity of the individual.

1.4 Aims of research, rationale and research questions

The theoretical assumptions in the field of reader-response clearly outnumber the empirical studies. The present research aims at exploring how adolescents respond to poetry and how they relate their responses to more personal matters regarding adolescence. On a more practical note this study aims at enhancing the link between the lifeworld of teenagers and the literary material they are faced with in school settings. The bigger picture in this respect is how educational institutions can contribute in a field where little research is conducted, namely how to understand and relate to the sense of pressure teenagers feel today. What means should teachers lean to in order to fathom

the change in teen culture, and how can this be addressed in the various subjects so that the adolescents can also grasp it themselves? The rationale for this thesis thus has a theoretical side in that it will extend the knowledge on adolescents' poetic literacy in a contemporary setting and bridge a gap in an interdisciplinary field of literature and social studies. Furthermore the rationale has a practical side in that society is developing and in accordance with that so should the teaching of literature in schools (Furseth and Everett 2013: 96-97). Since elements resembling parts of my study have been examined before, it is possible to make an assumption prior to the collecting of material for research. The assumption that forms the basis for my superordinate research question is that "Pupils in lower secondary schools will benefit from reading literature that deals with matters close to life, in this case a poem. If pupils are allowed to experience literature, instead of merely being asked to interpret it or conform to predetermined answers, they will profit from it by gaining a more profound personal insight." With this perspective as my starting point I seek to confirm, to amplify or to revise previous research in the field of poetic literacy (Merton 1965: x). My assumptions may of course be either verified or falsified, and there are many factors that govern the outcome of this study.

Two subordinate research questions that are vital for this study can be formulated this way:

- How do the respondents understand and explain the metaphors and the themes in "The Road Not Taken"?
- To what extent are the respondents willing to share their feelings on adolescence?

If the respondents do not recognise the metaphors or relate to them as adolescents, this study will not rise to its potential, but instead tell another story of poetic literacy, or

rather illiteracy. There are two pitfalls when it comes to the information given by the respondents on adolescence. The pupils may be insecure and refrain from telling the true story on what it is like being an adolescent today, hence the material sampled will be wanting and hard to analyse. On the other hand some pupils may tell stories that are personal to the extent that the analysis becomes hampered by ethical considerations. My task is to treat the responses in a professional way, and avoid biased opinions on behalf of the respondents.

The overall, or superordinate, research question for this thesis must encompass both the experiencing of “The Road Not Taken” in an EFL-setting and the element of personal insight. Consequently the phrasing is:

- What aspects of personal insight are shown by EFL-pupils experiencing the poem “The Road Not Taken”?

1.5 The outline of the thesis

In the introductory part of the thesis I have presented the background for the research, and looked at the role of poetry in contemporary society. The way “personal insight” is understood in this study is explained, and the concept is linked to both Norwegian curricula and literary reading. The assumption forming the basis for the study is presented, along with the subordinate and the superordinate research questions, based on the theoretical and practical rationale for this thesis. In Chapter 2 I examine Norwegian curricula and literary theories that will serve as a frame to the research questions. The field of literary criticism that applies to the topic I examine is reader-response, and I will turn to scholars who have contributed to this field of knowledge, like Louise M. Rosenblatt and David Bleich, as well as relevant and more recent research, like that of Signe Mari Wiland. The method applied to the study, and its implications, will be

presented and discussed in Chapter 3. The responses to “The Road Not Taken”, emphasising also the respondents’ views on adolescence, will be analysed on the basis of reader-response theory and in relation to the current curricula in Chapter 4. The responses are provided as appendix material. In Chapter 5 I conclude and discuss some didactic implications, before I proceed to the limitations of the thesis and suggest ideas for further research.

2 Theoretical framework

In this chapter I give an account of the theoretical framework on which I have based my study. First, in section 2.1 I will examine how the current curricula in Norway, both the Core Curriculum and the English subject curriculum, deal with the importance of reading literature and the concept of gaining personal insight. I will also, in section 2.2, look into the literary theory that is most relevant for my study: some reader-response theory and theorists. In 2.3 some scholarly interpretations of the poem “The Road Not Taken” are discussed, while in 2.4 I review research conducted in the field of teaching and experiencing literature, before I sum up my findings.

2.1 On reading and gaining personal insight in LK06

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Primary and Secondary Education and Training (henceforth shortened LK06) comprises:

- The Core Curriculum and the Quality Framework
- Subject Curricula
- Distribution of teaching hours per subject

Both the Core Curriculum and the Subject Curricula highlight the importance of reading literature and gaining personal insight, and they will therefore be dealt with in section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 respectively. While the Core Curriculum serves as a paramount framework for all teaching in Norway, the Subject Curricula are more specific and detailed. The Core Curriculum dates back to 1993 and a revision is currently debated, whereas the subject of English was revised by the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research in 2013. There is also a Framework for Basic Skills in the Norwegian Curricula,

and reading is listed as one out of five skills that are seen as fundamental to all subjects (Framework for Basic Skills 2012: 5).

2.1.1 Personal Insight in the Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum sees a human being as a multi-faceted individual. Hence terms like spiritual, creative, working, liberally-educated, social, environmentally-aware and integrated are used in order to describe the different aspects of being human (Fig 1).

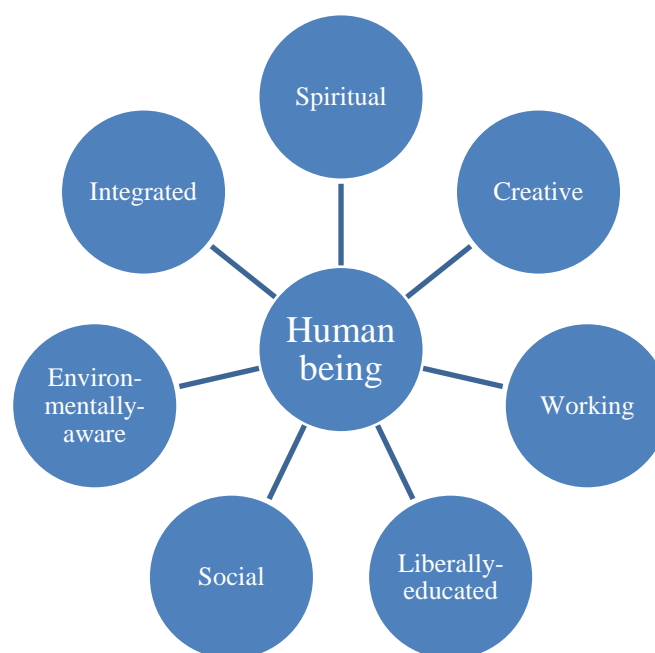


Figure 1: The Core Curriculum's categorisation of human beings

Tracing the element of “insight” in this part of the curriculum shows that it is an important prerequisite for learning. One of the overall aims of education in Norway is that it “...shall impart in the learner a zest for life, the courage to tackle it, and a desire to use and extend what they learn.” (1993:11) Education may succeed in this task through the use of creative art, where poetry serves as an example. The pupils may experience that “... insights can be given lovely forms, be it in the architecture of a formula or in the weave of words” (14). The periodic table and equations with two unknowns may

provide factual knowledge, but in order to expand the pupils' cognitive scope and challenge the schemata by which they perceive the world, education serves an even greater purpose and should both "... teach the young to look ahead and train their ability to make sound choices" (5) and at the same time "... ensure the versatility to meet the vicissitudes of life and the demands of an unknown future" (5). As the generation growing up today will surely experience major societal changes, school is an institution responsible for providing "perspective and guidance for the future" (7). The Core Curriculum emphasises how all individuals are responsible agents in their own lives. This is specified in that individuals are "... accountable for their decisions and responsible for their actions" (9). Education should also help "... confirm the belief that each can nourish his own growth" (7).

Schools should recognise how peer culture influences adolescents, and the Core Curriculum states that "... school must safeguard the worth and virtue of adolescence, but also serve as an alternative to peer culture" (20). As new technology and scientific insight are discussed it is claimed that other areas also profit from this "as when sociological and humanistic insight is used to make wiser and more humane choices" (36). Together these references to the Core Curriculum make up a framework from which this study will benefit in the analysis of pupils' responses of the poem "The Road Not Taken".

2.1.2 Reading and personal insight in LK06

Reading is seen as one of five basic skills in LK06. In the Framework for Basic Skills (2012) reading is said to provide "insight into other people's experience, opinion and knowledge, independent of time and place. The reading of texts ... is a prerequisite for lifelong learning ..." (2012:8). In the specific subject of English, the basic skill of reading

is seen as a means to "... understand, reflect on and acquire insight and knowledge... ". Part of the purpose of learning English is to "help us understand and be understood" and it can thus "... be a part of our personal development". This personal development may arise from literature as "Literary texts in English can instil a lifelong joy of reading and a deeper understanding of others and of oneself". The part of LK06 discussing the purpose of learning English concludes that "English as a school subject is both a tool and a way of gaining knowledge and personal insight." This part of the plan offers multiple perspectives on how "insight" can be understood, both as a way of understanding the society that surrounds us and on a more personal level. The importance of gaining insight should consequently be thoroughly dealt with in the planning and teaching of English. The main subject area of written communication says that "Reading different types of texts can lay the foundation for personal growth, maturation and creativity..." whereas the main subject area of culture, society and literature is meant to cover "... key topics connected to social issues, literature and other cultural expressions." Literature can consequently promote the understanding of contemporary society and also enhance the pupils' personal insight.

When teachers plan their work they are both privileged and obliged to look to curriculum plans. These plans offer advice and guidance and as a result they should be consulted regularly. Scrutinizing the curricula looking for aspects that correlate with my research made me both optimistic and a bit pessimistic, the former because these aspects are frequent and highlighted, the latter because I fear these aims and perspectives are not currently reflected in the everyday life of pupils in Norwegian schools. The Core Curriculum states that learning occurs when it is tied closely to the pupils' own lifeworld and their own experiences and if this is taken into consideration the pupils will access new insight more smoothly (1993:19).

2.2 Reader-response theory

Reader-response theory focuses on the reader and the reader's response to a given literary text. It is contrasted to the New Critics who focused on "the text itself" and aimed at a single, best interpretation through the studying of textual clues. These two opposing views represent the far ends of a continuum. A pendulum can swing too far in either direction, causing either a regime too strict on how to understand a specific literary text or extreme subjectivism. Reader-response criticism opens up for various interpretations of a work of art, and responses are in general not seen as right or wrong. Some reader-response critics still state that interpretations may be more or less logical, and as Lois Tyson points out a practitioner of reader-response criticism who analyses the responses of others can conduct a wanting analysis (Tyson 2015: 161). The point in applying reader-response criticism to a literary text is to turn the attention to the act of reading itself and also to the personal responses to the text. The reader brings his or her personal background, prior experiences, knowledge and feelings to the table and in the encounter between reader and text the text is transformed from words on paper, to meaning in the reader's mind. This constructive approach relates to the works of among others Jean Piaget and John Dewey, who based their theories on how learners construct meaning based on their own resources and acquired competence.

2.2.1 Transactional theory

"There is no such thing as a generic reader..." according to Louise Rosenblatt, as "each reading involves a particular person at a particular time and place..." (1994: viii). Readers are conditioned by factors like gender, ethnic and socioeconomic background and cultural environment (viii). In her work *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* (1994, first published in 1978) she redefines

the term “poem” when she says that a text is merely ink on a paper, until a reader materialises, reads the text and responds to it, thus turning it into a poem. The transactional theory consequently claims that the text and the reader make the poem together. They are interrelated, each conditioning the other (12). Similarly the reader evokes the text, whereas the text evokes feelings and a response in the reader. These feelings are personal, although the words of the poem may belong to the public domain. We thus respond to a poem either consciously or more “momentary, peripheral, almost woven into the texture of what is felt to be the work itself.” (49) As a result the literary experience is “both shared and uniquely personal” (53).

The reading of poetry is seen as an event in the following passage that forms a basis for the present study:

The poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time. It is not an object or an ideal entity. It happens during a coming-together, a compenetration, of a reader and a text. The reader brings to the text his past experience and present personality. Under the magnetism of the ordered symbols of the text, he marshals his resources and crystallizes out from the stuff of memory, thought, and feeling a new order, a new experience, which he sees as the poem. This becomes part of the ongoing stream of his life experience, to be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being. (Rosenblatt 1994: 12)

In the stimulus-response theory offered by Pavlov and his peers, an automatic outcome is predicted when a certain anticipated stimuli is provided. Although Rosenblatt opposes this idea in connection to reader response, because a reader seeks out the text actively, she sees some resemblance in that a literary text functions as a stimulus to a reader. The attention that is activated and the selective process of what the text elicits are both parts of this mind-set (11). A somewhat farfetched analogy is imaginable where eager readers

anticipate a great literary text, salivated at the idea of digesting it, and through the nutritious process become one with it. In the text the reader finds food for thought and the next encounter with literature is met with some of the same enthusiasm as Pavlov found in his experiments. The transaction between reader and text is seen as a mutual interfusion, resembling the hermeneutic circle, where both the text and the reader are conditioned by and at the same time are conditioning each other (18). Combined the ideas that interaction between reader and text brings forth a new poem and in this process the reader must be willing to bring forth all his resources, make up much of the foundation for Rosenblatt's transactional theory. The reader is offered an active role in making meaning.

2.2.2 The role of the reader

What most theorists who discuss the role of the reader have in common is the focus on a theoretical, academic and hypothetical reader, rather than the empirical, inexperienced EFL-pupil with limited literary background who is the actual reader in this study. I. A. Richards was among the first to engage in reader-response studies, but sadly the responses of his student readers did not receive much respect. In *Practical Criticism* (1929), he labels some of their responses as "blank incapacity" (1929: 225) and says that although dictionaries can be used as remedy for wanting vocabulary skills, "an inability to seize the poetical sense of words is not so easily remedied." (92) The poet does not receive much credit either when Richards questions both their technique and the "precise result they are endeavouring to achieve" (190). Although inspired by Richards, Rosenblatt clearly opposes to the way he approaches the readers, and in her studies the reader is met with respect. In her opinion it is not crucial that the reader arrives at a precise result ordered by an author.

A comparable view to that of Richards is seen in Umberto Eco's work *The Role of the Reader* where he says that an author visualises a "Model Reader" who decodes the text. In order for the text to be communicative the two have to share the same codes. If the reader is not able to understand the text the way the author intended, the reader is called unsuitable. Eco claims that a text would collapse if it is not read the way it is supposed to, and exemplifies his views by someone being "stupid enough" to read Kafka's *Trial* as a random criminal novel (Eco 1979: 7-10). Still Eco claims that the Model Reader is invited to deconstruct the text "by a plurality of free interpretative choices" (1979: 40) as texts may be open or more closed, and signs are open devices that allow readers an active role in interpretation. Eco makes a distinction between use and interpretation, and claims that a text can be used for whatever purpose, but a valid interpretation must be rooted in the codes put forth by the text (Eco 1981:35-44). The reader's freedom lies in the choosing of codes to apply to their interpretation (1979: 39). The transactional aspect of Eco's theory may be found in his statement "... every text is made of two components: the information provided by the author and that added by the Model Reader," (206) but at the same time Eco blames the reader if a misunderstanding is made (206). Eco's views are contrasted by among others Culler who engages in a debate on overinterpretation, and while Eco sees this as "an overestimation of the importance of clues"(Eco 1992: 49), Culler considers it the "best source of insights into language and literature ... a quality to be cultivated rather than shunned" (123). Discussing a fictive, idealised reader seems far from the world of teaching, where the readers are present indeed. An author may visualise a reader while or after a literary work is created, but most authors will instinctively know that the individuals who encounter their work will experience it in a unique way, some closer to the lifeworld of the author than others. If the encounter with a literary work of art is limited to

immaculate interpretation, neither adding too little weight to the codes of the text, nor overinterpreting it, there is not much room left for the personal appreciation of art, where young learners can gain insight.

Wolfgang Iser uses the term “Implied Reader” in his early works, trying to bridge the gap between the text and the reader. This implied reader is meant to represent a real reader, or “the-reader-in-the-text”, since Iser has no wish to work with contemporary readers. Instead he wishes to provide a framework for assessment of real readers and how they respond to literary texts (Iser 1993:42-51, Holub 1995: 330-331). “The Informed Reader” is Stanley Fish’s concept, describing a member of an “interpretive community”, a hybrid who is neither a real reader nor an abstraction. In order to become a member of such a community one has to be a competent speaker of the literary language, have a full semantic understanding of the same language, including idioms and dialects, and finally be an experienced reader with literary competence who is familiar with literary discourse (Fish 1980:48). Fish changed his perspective gradually through his writings and simultaneously limited the freedom of the reader, as he attempted to make interpretation neither a subjective nor an objective matter (14). Even though one may find that respondents largely agree on how to read and understand parts of literary works, as they share the same language, schooling and values, they may not be granted access to one of these “interpretive communities”. The criteria listed by Fish would not allow foreign learners of English to enter, and leave out quite a lot of native speakers as well. In teaching one must include, rather than exclude, and also focus on how pupils learn while they read literature instead of waiting for them to be fully educated before literature is explored.

Theorists and scholars more recent than Richards have indeed focused on real readers. Both Norman Holland and David Bleich are preoccupied with the subjective

aspects of readers' responses. Holland tries to seek out the readers' "identity themes", whereas Bleich analyses subjective response statements and finds that the experience-oriented ones are preferable (Bleich 1981: 184-185). Comparable to Fish, Bleich is also oriented towards a community. "To know anything at all is to have assigned a part of one's self to a group of others who claim to know the same thing." (296) Bleich sees a group or a community with whom one can share the literary experience as a bare necessity. Epistemologically speaking it is comparable to an individual interpretation of a poem which is kept a secret, and thus resembles an unremembered dream (296). Holland's search for identity themes is heavily influenced by Freud and psychoanalysis, and I find this approach not recommendable in a classroom. Bleich encourages his students to associate freely, providing emotional responses that he also connects to psychoanalysis, although he states that no students will be analysed in the classrooms (Bleich 1975: 11-13). In a school setting the balance of encouraging a personal encounter with literature, while refraining from a setting that resembles therapy is of the utmost importance. Also one must allow for individual encounters with literature that are not shared with others.

In her study, *Poetry: Prima Vista*, Signe Mari Wiland develops a concept to define a student reader. The 'dynamic prospecting countersignatory' includes the moving forth that most learners wish to accomplish, the search for valuable insight through literature and finally the restricted freedom one has as a reader to make sense of a poem's innate signifiers without being limited by the definitions of poetic language (Wiland 2009:53). Both Wiland and David S Miall have carried out research among real readers, and they have discussed their findings primarily in terms of poetic literacy and literature's dehabituating effects respectively, both relevant to this study.

Rosenblatt shares her opinion on the ordinary reader, far from some of the views looked at here which she finds both elitist and condescending, as a person who “chooses to devote part of life’s short span to the kind of experience called literacy- to aesthetic reading- doing this not as a professional but for personal satisfactions.” (Rosenblatt 1994: 138) She finds the climate for reader autonomy increasingly hospitable in the years spanning from her first publications and up until the 1990s, and she also allows for a high level of reader autonomy in her transactional theory. Although the pupils taking part in my study both read poetry and respond to it at my request, the stance that Rosenblatt depicts here is similar to the approach I wish to apply to my teaching of poetry and to the analysis of the pupils’ responses.

2.2.3 A dualistic approach to literary texts

A continuum relevant to the transactional theory is that of an “efferent” versus an “aesthetic” attitude to a text (Rosenblatt 1994: 24). Taking an efferent stance in reading the significant aspect is what the outcome will be. The word efferent originates from Latin (*efferre*) which originally means *to carry away*. If a text is read primarily to extract facts or immediate knowledge, like a recipe for a tasty dish or a newspaper article on a current topic, an efferent stance is applied. Some label this an instrumental way of reading. As opposed to an efferent way of reading, one can read a text applying an “aesthetic” stance. If this is the case, the reading act itself is seen as enjoyable, and as Coleridge once put it “the reader should be carried forward, not merely or chiefly by the mechanical impulse of curiosity, or by a restless desire to arrive at the final solution, but by the pleasurable activity of mind excited by the attractions of the journey itself” (cited from Rosenblatt 1994: 28). If a text intended to be read in an aesthetic way, like poetry or fiction, is read with an efferent attitude, the magic is lost. As a reader, one has to let go

of the boundaries and allow for suspension of judgement because fiction does not always connect with reality (32). Iser contributes to this perspective when he argues that “Literature reflects life under conditions that are either not available in the empirical world or are denied by it.” (Iser 1989:244) This is the exact reason why many people turn to literature in the first place, exemplified through the study of Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance*, where she found that many women read romance novels to escape demanding lives (Rabinowitz, in Selden (ed), 1995: 390-391).

A teacher who adopts an efferent position in the teaching of poetry, making the pupils focus primarily on say rhyme schemes or biographical facts about the author, strains a true encounter between the reader and the text, and consequently hinders the transaction. Comparable to a person who drinks tea and at the same time enjoys the shape of the cup, it may at times be hard to pinpoint exactly what stance to prefer in reading (Rosenblatt 1994: 37). A newspaper article may be both witty and well-put, while a work of fiction may not be that appealing. Rosenblatt solves this by suggesting that the reading stance often adopted will be somewhere near the middle of the aesthetic-efferent-continuum, since a reader must deal with the various responses brought forth before the attention is shifted to either side of the spectrum (37). Her conclusion serves my study well, in that the respondents experience the poem, respond to it and also possibly carry with them more insight from the encounter. Consequently both the act of reading and the lesson learned from the reading experience matter.

2.2.4 Indeterminacy and gaps in literary texts

How can teachers deal with pupils who impatiently claim that they do not understand what they read? A possible answer is found in Rosenblatt’s transactional theory where the reader is at the centre of attention. The literary text guides the reader towards a

fuller understanding or appreciation of the work of art. Blueprint is the expression used to express how a literary text will adjust itself partly by limiting the scope of interpretation, but primarily by the emotions and associations that the text elicits in the reader (Rosenblatt 1994: 54). As the reading progresses the text will organise itself, and the words on the page will be grasped up until the point where the reader experiences a “click of insight” (55). At the same time readers must stay alert, looking out for verbal cues and draw on their own experiences to “fill the gaps” (88). Wolfgang Iser explores this, as he too recognises the blanks in the text. Through his phenomenological approach he sees it as the reader’s privilege to fill these blanks not only through the guidance of the text, but also according to his own imagination. He goes as far as to say that “It is quite impossible for the text itself to fill the gaps.” (Iser 1989: 9) Through indeterminate language the reader is invited to participate actively in the reading process (10). Although one can understand his reasoning, one can also at times see that a text varies between being determinate and indeterminate, and thereby a text does fill gaps. At the same time, as language often, or always, is ambiguous there will always be gaps to fill for a reader. Iser is criticised by other scholars, like Norman N. Holland, who find his theories wanting as they are not founded on empirical studies based on real readers (Iser 1989:43). Real readers will not always feel that a literary work provides them with “clicks of insight”, and they will not always know how to “fill the gaps”, but the mere fact that they are allowed to participate in the making of meaning will most likely give them more confidence and the will to try.

2.2.5 Subjectivity and feelings

The wish to be understood is essential for a human being. Hence a shift from objective, predetermined opinions on literature towards a more subjectively oriented approach

will yield more personal responses, related more directly to the lifeworld of the respondents. In classrooms the pupils are encouraged to participate and share their knowledge on topics dealt with, also in the field of literature. A challenging aspect is to grasp what the pupils really feel about texts they read, as they are often reluctant to reveal emotions in front of their peers. A written response to literature may thus facilitate a more personal feeling tone. According to David Bleich self-awareness is released through language, as language is a “foundation of self-knowledge and self-esteem” (1981: 7, 53). Bleich calls the act of reading “symbolization” as the symbols on the page are processed and turned into our “perception and identification of experiences” (39,65-66). The text goes from being a real object and turns into a symbolic object in the mind of the reader. This process will in turn lead to a subjective “resymbolization” as a need is felt either to explain or to interpret what is read (39, 65-66). The urge to be understood in a personal way, forming an identity, is part of what spurs resymbolization, whereas in a school setting resymbolization will often be administered by a teacher who tells the pupils to write about what they have read, and the urgent need to explain or interpret may be hindered or lost completely in this respect. In my study the subjective first encounter with a text is found in the pupils’ responses, and these responses share traits with both the initial phase of symbolization and the following phase of resymbolization.

For educational purposes Bleich introduces the idea of response statements, where the aim is to “record the perception of a reading experience and its natural, spontaneous consequences, among which are feelings, or affects, and peremptory memories and thoughts, or free associations.” (1981: 147) A similar approach is found when Holland searches for “identity themes” in students’ texts. Bleich claims that a classroom is no therapeutic setting and states that these identity themes are brought

forth from far too “brief and superficial a knowledge of an individual” (116-118). He consequently doubts that identity themes may contribute to the study of response, also in the respect that Holland seeks out the identity themes without including the respondents themselves in this highly personal process. As for the response statements exemplified in Bleich’s *Subjective Criticism*, where students are being very personal, one could easily apply the same criticism to Bleich as he himself did to Holland, namely that a classroom setting is not therapeutic.

In order for a more personal approach the pupils could be trained to write responses, like Bleich explains more in detail in *Readings and Feelings* (1975). Three phases of literary response are discussed. The first level is how a work is perceived, the next how the work is felt, verbalised in an Affective Response, and finally the Associative Response that elicits both thoughts and affects connected to associations rather than the poem. Bleich looks into one response in particular, and finds that the respondent shows a recurring theme, namely the feeling of being victimised, and yet again he resembles Holland in trying to seek out what looks like an identity theme. Teachers must be careful and sensitive when dealing with pupils’ responses. On the one hand the wish may be there for the pupils to share their free associations on how a literary text affected them, but on the other hand there must be limitations to what pupils should share in a classroom debate, even as a subjective approach is called for. The written experience-oriented response statement is promoted by Bleich, as such responses often include the three aspects of perception, affect and associations related to the reading process. When these response statements are discussed in class they will contribute more than responses that focus primarily on the reader itself or the reality of the reader, since they will add to the common body of knowledge related to the reading process itself (Bleich 1981: 168-189, Tyson 2015: 169-173). Even though the empirical material in the

present study bears some resemblance to the response statements in Bleich's studies, these respondents are not schooled in this respect and their responses may thus prove to be less advanced. Also in the case of this study where focus is placed on the personal outcome of a reading experience, and also on the societal change that the teenagers witness, both a reader-oriented and a reality-oriented approach would suffice.

That literature may affect readers emotionally is claimed by both David S. Miall and Keith Opdahl. Miall states that literature has a "dehabituating function", in that it will make us consider and feel new and unfamiliar sides of the world (Miall 2006/2007:3). This belief may be confirmed in my empirical material if the respondents, inspired by the poem, show the willingness to change their conduct. Normally people rely on cognitive schemata, "stereotyped processes of behaviour by which we orient ourselves and know what to expect" (17), but through literature alternative worlds are explored in safe surroundings. The insight readers get will make them more adaptable to comparable situations in real life (17). This dehabituating effect is also explained in the Core Curriculum, because "a confrontation with creative art can wrench us out of our habitual modes of thought, challenge our opinions, and provide experiences that spur us to re-examine prevailing concepts and break with conventional wisdom and customary modes." (1993:13)

In Miall's work with Don Kuiken a framework for feelings in literary response has been offered. The four different categories in the framework are evaluative feelings, narrative feelings, aesthetic feelings and modifying feelings. *Evaluative* feelings are the readers' reactions to the text, to what extent the text brings about pleasure or frustration. Furthermore *narrative* feelings are aroused when we empathise with a character or the author. *Aesthetic* feelings of "fascination, interest, or intrigue..." (Miall 2006/2007:44) are brought fore when the text captures the reader's attention. These

aesthetic reactions have another function in that they, combined with the narrative feelings, may elicit anticipation in the reader regarding the final category. *Modifying* feelings occur when the readers identify personally with the text in a way that modifies their self-understanding (Miall, referring to Miall & Kuiken 2002, 2006/2007:44). The reader's sense of self is also modified it seems, through the feeling of catharsis. On top of all these aspects, Miall and Kuiken suggest that feelings enhance border-crossing, the ability to relate concepts from various fields, additionally feelings help us anticipate and prepare for events and finally feelings are self-implicating (2006/2007: 45). The hermeneutic approach is present in the reading of poetry as a poem may contribute to enhanced understanding of major aspects in life, and at the same time as a reader's feelings are projected onto a poem it may be seen in a brand new way.

As personal feelings are always evolving they are both hard to understand and to grasp. Literature offers a description of fictional characters' feelings in which readers can recognise or contrast their own (Opdahl 2002:11). Opdahl treats emotion in literature as a frozen object that can be studied in detail when he says that "... emotion is *there*, on the page, embedded in language. We can walk around it, studying it from all sides. We can come up close to feel its texture and stand back to view it in context. In prose narrative emotion is stable and public and so uniquely accessible" (11). "The Road Not Taken" can be said to symbolise the walk of life, and in this poem the walk of life can be studied from many sides. The pupils come up close to the emotions in the text as they read and respond to one stanza at a time. They stand back when they look at the themes and message in the poem. If they return to the same poem at a later stage in life, the words on the page will remain the same, but their emotional reaction them may differ as human beings are not static objects, but subjects conditioned by their surroundings and experiences (Orr 2015: 75-76).

Robert Frost embraces the concept of feelings in poetry when he declares that: “A poem... begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness. It is a reaching-out toward expression; an effort to find fulfilment. A complete poem is one where an emotion finds the thought and the thought finds the words.” (Untermeyer 1963: 22) Frost must have wanted his readers to get an emotional output from his emotional input. “The Road Not Taken” can be seen as a frozen image of Frost’s own feelings, onto which the readers’ subjective feelings can be countersigned.

2.3 Scholarly interpretations of “The Road Not Taken”

Throughout the hundred years that have passed since Robert Frost wrote “The Road Not Taken” many scholars have attempted an interpretation of these lines. David Orr, who published *“The Road Not Taken”: Finding America in the Poem Everyone Loves and Almost Everyone Gets Wrong* partly to commemorate the anniversary of Frost’s poem, has divided his book into four sections: The Poet, The Poem, The Choice and The Chooser, with an epilogue titled The Crossroads. The same structure will be applied here.

Robert Frost wrote “The Road Not Taken” inspired by his friend Edward Thomas, and the tone was that of a friendly joke, as he would often regret his choice of path when the two of them were out walking together (Orr 2015:14-15, 65-68, Richardson 1997:183). Frost warned his audience that this poem was a tricky one, and not as straight-forward as people seemed to believe (Orr 2015:11, 97).

“The Road Not Taken” can be read as homage to the individualist who dares to choose the road that few others have taken, and this is the stance taken by the majority of readers, and quite a lot of valedictorians alike. The critics however do not agree. They see the irony in that the narrator cannot possibly know how one of the roads was the least travelled by, as Frost mentions thrice how the diverging roads look more or less

similar from the point of the crossroads (Orr 2015: 76-80, Parini 1988: 917-46, Richardson 1997:181). Some critics suggest that the often-quoted line describing the outcome of the chosen road: "And that has made all the difference" is point blank self-betrayal as it is impossible to know what life would have been if the other road was chosen, whereas Orr points to the fact that the debated sigh in the fourth stanza will be said in times to come and may signal self-deception (Orr 2015:8-9, 82-83). Mark Richardson, in *The Ordeal of Robert Frost: The Poet and His Poetics*, claims that the title of the poem is ambiguous and he questions which road is actually the road "not taken"? Is it the road that the narrator of the poem ends up taking, the one that has not been travelled by many others? Or is it rather the road the narrator chooses not to take? (Richardson 1997:181). The ambiguity of the title is also referred to by Robert Faggen as he says it "refers doubly to bravado for choosing a road less travelled but also to regret for a road of lost possibility and the eliminations and changes produced by choice" (Faggen 1997: 269-273). Regret and bravado are opposites, and both are recognisable mental states in a human lifespan. The original title of the poem was simply "Two Roads", and by changing the title Frost obviously wanted the readers to question what it could imply (Orr 2015: 70).

It is questionable whether there is an inherent deliberate choice in the poem. Richardson states that only by walking into the woods may the narrator arrive at an understanding of his or her choice, as "Our paths unfold themselves to us as we go. We realize our destination only when we arrive at it, though all along we were driven toward it by purposes we may rightly claim, in retrospect, as our own" (Richardson 1997: 182). It is, in other words, when we look back at our lives that we find what turned out to be the momentous choices. Orr looks at the choice in "The Road Not Taken" as distilled, as many elements conditioning choices in real life, like other people

and moral consequences, are not present (Orr 2015: 101-103). Furthermore Orr considers the idea that even though the traveller could return to the same spot at a later time, it would not be as the exact same person, as all choices change the individual. Even the most minor choice becomes existentially important (75-76). Faggen questions how individual the choice is, as the roads already do exist in the poem (1997: 269-273), whereas Montiero compares “The Road Not Taken” to the Gospels and even to ancient Greek literature in *Robert Frost and the New England Renaissance*. “The Choice of Two Paths” is a recurrent theme in the literary tradition. The letter “Y” represents the aspect of choice, “with the trunk of the letter representing the careless years of childhood and the two paths branching off at the age when the child is expected to exercise discretion” (Montiero 1988: 44-53). In other works of art the two roads symbolise vice and virtue, but Montiero suggests that Frost deliberately wrote about two paths that were basically the same, and that neither of them would lead directly to disaster. A more far-fetched approach is presented by Faggen who in *Robert Frost and the Challenge of Darwin* compares the diverging of the road to Darwin’s idea of natural selection. Apart from the image of a branching scheme and the notion of life as evolving, the two theories seem to share little common ground (1997: 269-273).

The chooser is faced with a choice in “The Road Not Taken”. Frost’s agenda could be to encourage exploration and adventures, and to consider all options carefully in life. However, in Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”, the narrator also lingers and pauses in the woods. Here Frost seems to say that “Looking too closely into things, exploring too adventurously beyond the familiar, may have its dangers...” (Eagleton 2007: 99). According to Eagleton Frost endorses “conventional morality” (2007:99) when he says that he has “promises to keep”. If one opts for these readings two of Frost’s most read poems convey opposing messages. Only situated at the crossroads the

chooser will find all options open, but ultimately a choice has to be made (Orr 2015:168).

Although these scholars differ in their approach to “The Road Not Taken” they have one thing in common. They all try to come up with the single best interpretation of the poem, and in this respect they follow the path of the New Critics more than the path of reader-response. When the same scholars criticise ordinary readers for their poor interpretive skills, they function as literary critics in more than one sense of the word. Some of whom Orr calls dedicated readers are said to consider “The Road Not Taken” “a minor, dark joke” (2015: 95). What seems to be lost then is the sense of wonder, and how to connect with the self through poetry.

2.4 Research on literary reading

Little empirical research has been conducted in Norway on literary reading in an EFL-setting. Wiland, in *Poetry: Prima Vista. What Foreign Language Students Can Tell Teachers about English Poetry* (2009), applies an experimental reading method to trace students’ thoughts and feelings during the first encounter of a poem. She finds that even though reading poetry may not have an immediate effect on the cultural knowledge and the linguistic capacity of the readers, poetry does engage students both intellectually and emotionally when the themes and the topics of the poems are relevant to their life and identity (2009:219). Among other findings, the line by line method applied to Wiland’s study enhances the readers’ awareness on for example personality factors because it promotes personal response and secures the readers’ privacy. The method is time consuming, but as the idea is to slow down, process what is read and mirror the poet’s artistic effort, the time is seen as well spent (63-64, 220). According to Wiland the students are not that creative and imaginative in their responses and they could benefit

from more experience with the line by line method. In addition foreign language learners should realise that cognitive and affective approaches are not mutually exclusive. Wiland suggests that more important than what poems are chosen is the practical approach in addressing the poems, the interpretive community in which the poems are read and the teacher's attitude to the students (219-220). In this respect the present study differs greatly from Wiland's, as it is based on a carefully selected poem which it meant to make "all the difference".

David S. Miall has conducted several empirical studies emphasising the role of feeling in literature in particular. The framework, proposed by Miall and Kuiken, for the various feelings that occur through reading has been valuable for this study. Miall questions the view of the cognitive poetics in this respect, and claims that they treat feeling as a "subsidiary effect" (Miall 2006/2007:45). The contemporary literary theorists are also criticised for being too involved in a theoretical and cognitive approach to literature and the accounts of real readers are said to be both disregarded and even deprecated (12). Miall finds that literature can be seen in an evolutionary context, as literature may have a dehabituating effect on readers (190). This effect is caused because literature may help mending "emotionally negative experiences" (198). Furthermore Miall claims that when a reader responds to literature an "offline tuning of emotional and cognitive schemata" (197) occurs and through this process the reader is reset and thus experiences a "readiness for appropriate action" (197). Through formal features like foregrounding, figurative and narrative structures, literature provides an alternative to daily life discourse and consequently stereotypical concepts may be contrasted (198). In this respect literary studies will add to social studies, which is also a topic in the present study. One may claim that Miall goes a bit too far though, when he finds that literature will assist "our powers of survival" (200).

In her study Løvstuhagen (2012) examines whether literature in lower secondary schools is taught mostly in a text-centred or a student-centred manner. She finds that both approaches are applied, but the shifts from one approach to the other are not transparent enough. If these shifts are made clearer the pupils will know how to approach the tasks and also be more aware of their role and the teachers' expectations. This is believed to increase both the enjoyment and the participation of the pupils.

3 Method

Human beings seem designed with an urge to comprehend and make sense of the society in which we live. Much research is consequently carried out with the intent of broadening our knowledge or changing the world as we know it for the better. The methods used are tools needed in order to find the answers we seek, as we need to set limits to our work and define it. In all research we have the privilege of standing on the shoulders of those who have studied our field of interest before us. On a more practical note, we need a way to collect data and analyse them.

In section 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 I explain how I decided on a qualitative in-depth study of pupils' responses to literature, implementing elements of the Prima Vista method. In section 3.4 I present the tasks given to the respondents, whereas in section 3.5 I discuss the ethical considerations in my study. The respondents' affective filter is discussed in section 3.6 and the art of interpreting, also known as hermeneutics, is presented in section 3.7. In section 3.8 I explain how the categories for analysis will be made and what reading strategy to opt for. Furthermore, in section 3.9 and 3.10, the role of poetry in general and "The Road Not Taken" in particular will be examined. Finally I look at the way the data will be analysed in section 3.11.

3.1 Research paradigms

All research, be it minor or major, finds its place in a broader landscape of research paradigms, often labelled qualitative or quantitative studies. In my case a qualitative study seems most viable, as I seek to grasp more thoroughly how pupils react and respond to "The Road Not Taken". I aimed for practical and applicable research, in accordance with the Core Curriculum's aim that education should be close to "the pupil's own observations and experiences." (1993: 19) The present research has an

interpretative in-depth approach, where I look for answers to questions expressing the *why* and the *how* in the reading of “The Road Not Taken”, as opposed to questions that answer to *what, where, when* and *who*. Some label qualitative studies “soft” data, as the aim often is to lend an ear to people’s thoughts on a given topic.

Most research is carried out due to the fact that the researcher has an idea or an assumption, often based on previous research. According to Furseth and Everett a hypothesis is normally tested by quantitative research (2013: 91). My material could be comprehensive enough for a qualitative study, and I could have labelled my anticipation a hypothesis, but due to the scope of the study I believe a qualitative study would not yield fruitful results. In some cases I will turn to figures and tables and thus make use of the width of my empirical material, but in most cases the voices of the respondents will provide the evidence needed to justify the defend the end result of the thesis. The epistemological point of departure in this thesis is thus qualitative and constructivist, where ‘constructive’ is seen as “using the resources and competences the learners already possess” (Wiland 2009:15) as a basis for meaning making and building new knowledge.

3.2 Design

The responses of ordinary readers, instead of more scholarly trained ones, were required in my study to illuminate the research question: What aspects of personal insight are shown by EFL-pupils experiencing the poem “The Road Not Taken”? Research shows that there is little difference between expert readers and ordinary readers when it comes to the appreciation of literature and the readers’ involvement in literature (Andringa 1996: 431-452, Hanauer 1995: 338-347). This serves as justification for the ordinary reader to be seen and heard and, even though a scholar

may be able to recognise more complex structures in the text, the ordinary reader may gain more or as much insight from a work of art than a scholar.

Miall states the need for more research connected to how feelings affect the way we read (2006: 3, 11-12). Reader-response critics like Stanley Fish and Wolfgang Iser never conducted research based on real readers. Others, like Louise Rosenblatt and David Bleich, have been involved in actual studies of reading, a fact that justifies a study like the present. Rabinowitz claims that even though the reader became the centre of attention for many theorists after the era of New Criticism, literary criticism has not welcomed sociological input. Consequently actual readers have been ignored, and hypothetical readers have been preferred (Rabinowitz, 1995:382).

My research is a case study of thirty-nine tenth grade pupils in two English classes (EFL) in a lower secondary school in Kristiansand, carried out on 14 October, 2015. Qualitative studies are often based on observations, interviews or questionnaires. As it would have been both time-consuming and possibly a stressful experience for the pupils with interviews, a written response turned out to be the best way to collect data. Other ways of collecting data would have been possible, like recording discussions on the poem. This would have felt unsatisfactory in my study, as I wanted the respondents to voice personal matters if they felt like it. I made arrangements with my school (Appendix B) and prepared some tasks for the pupils to respond to (Appendix C). The pupils were asked to participate in advance (Appendix D). Ample time to respond to the tasks was given, and 90 minutes turned out to be enough for everyone to finish their writing. My empirical material is thus pupils' responses, handed in anonymously on memory sticks (Appendix E). These responses have not been modified in any way since and are consequently authentic. Five months after the pupils' initial reading of the poem "The Road Not Taken", a short questionnaire was handed out to them via their learning

platform It's Learning. Those who wanted to participate responded anonymously to the questions presented to them (Appendix F). I believe my empirical material is valid and reliable as all the pupils were asked to participate, and they responded to the tasks individually, providing me with primary sources for analysis.

3.3 The prima vista method adapted to my study

The prima vista method applied by Wiland suggests that the 'dynamic prospecting countersignatory' gives immediate response to a literary text and that this process can resemble someone who is able to sight-read straight from the musical scores without practising. The method is said to "reduce anxiety and enhance self-confidence" (Wiland 2009:58). The opposite may occur as pupils often rely on hints and clues from teachers when they read, whereas here they are on their own. The respondents are handed out poems line by line and respond to them. Wiland studies what happens in the minds of the respondents during a first reading of a poem, where they are not influenced by anything else than the text itself (57-58). There is thus a direct link between the poem and the reader. My motivation is partly similar to Wiland's when I apply this method to my study, not line by line, but stanza by stanza. I aim for the immediate responses to the poem, but I fear the respondents would lose their patience if they were to repeat this process twenty times, which is the total number of lines in "The Road Not Taken". The method corresponds to Bleich's definition of symbolization, a process where "perception and identification of experiences" (1978:39) occur. Resymbolization should not be forced, as the need or desire to explain should come freely. Still this terminology will be used to describe the responses, where the respondents are asked to tell about their subjective thoughts and feelings.

According to reader-response criticism there are no predetermined answers and similarly in a stanza by stanza reading method the poem is not there as a complete and predetermined object either. Eventually the poem will logically exist as a whole, but on the way there the respondents' "moment-to-moment alertness" (Rosenblatt 1994:26) and their subjective anticipation and responses constitute the poem.

3.4 Tasks distributed to the pupils

Ten tasks were handed out to the pupils, and to each of them I signalled whether a brief response or a more elaborate one would be preferred. The first four tasks had the same wording, and dealt with the four stanzas respectively. The pupils were asked to tell about their thoughts and emotions while reading the poem, in other words not a standard interpretation of the poem. Thoughts and emotions can hardly be right or wrong and thereby the affective filter is lowered. In these four tasks I asked for short answers so the respondents would not feel too overwhelmed.

Next I inquired about positive and negative aspects of adolescent life in Norway, drawing from the respondents have first-hand experience. While responding to this task the pupils had to reflect, and they were also encouraged to be personal if they wanted to.

The following task had themes and message as a topic. I was not checking their knowledge of literary terms, but I knew they were familiar with these two concepts. The use of basic literary terminology may clarify both the pupils' understanding of the text and their reactions to it.

Furthermore the respondents were asked to reflect on all answers given so far and try to connect or link them. Part of this task is leading, because I ask if a poem like "The Road Not Taken" can be useful for young people in our country today. Still, I felt the need to guide the pupils a bit, as they were now at the crux of the matter. Whether they

would regard the themes in the poem universal, like I anticipated, or not, would be revealed here.

The two following tasks dealt with the extensive use of this poem in the USA and the title of the poem. I wished for the pupils to reflect on why this poem is so widely used and still so highly regarded after all these years, and what the “not” in the title could denote. Finally, I added a task on the pupils’ personal response to the poem. I was curious whether the poem made the respondents think of aspects in their own lives. I anticipated that this could be a hard question to reply to, but in a reader-response context it is suitable, as it is open and touches on personal matters.

3.5 Ethical considerations

When children and young people participate in research, ethical considerations should always be at the core. Informed consent and the assurance that the research will not in any way harm the informants are both key issues in this matter (Furseth and Everett 2013:109-110). In advance the pupils were asked to participate in my research. They were explained carefully how their answers would be used, and that it was voluntary to sign up for the task. Those of the pupils who had not yet turned fifteen also had their parents’ signature, as recommended by NSD⁵. If they felt like it, the pupils were encouraged to share personal stories in their answers. Therefore I told them that their full responses would not be included in the thesis. Further on, as I read the answers carefully, and discussed this with my supervisor, I ended up including the answers to show both transparency and transferability. Of course the respondents were consulted and they also had the possibility of withdrawing their responses at all times, as is requested in research. The major reasons as to why the texts were added as appendix

⁵ Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste

material were that the answers turned out to be less personal than I anticipated along with the fact that as much data as possible should be included in a thesis.

I also had to consider that fact that the respondents are my own pupils. They are evaluated by me on a regular basis, and in this case evaluation or assessment was far from what I wanted them to think of. Therefore their anonymity was ensured, and they named their tasks using a code that I could not trace back to them. There are both positive and negative aspects connected to doing research on familiar groups. The setting was not intimidating for the pupils, as they were used to having me in the classroom, and they also knew my intentions and my genuine interest in their responses. Furthermore I have read their texts before, and I have also read and commented on several thousand texts from other pupils their age during the span of my teaching career. I consequently know a fair share about the way adolescents in Norwegian schools normally express themselves in English, and I am therefore able to see how these responses resemble or differ from tasks I have looked at in the past.

One may also wonder if engaging in research on one's own pupils could have certain pitfalls. The pupils may have tried to come up with "the correct answer" to the tasks provided. In addition, even though the pupils knew they were guaranteed anonymity they may have held back on information they felt were too personal to reveal to a teacher. One could claim though that both these scenarios could also occur if a stranger conducted the research. Finally it is possible that because the pupils look at me as someone they are acquainted with and thereby hopefully trust, they may have exposed their insight more profoundly than would have been the case with an outsider. On my own behalf I have tried to not be biased and consequently I treat the responses as if they could have been written by any tenth grader in Norway.

3.6 The affective filter

According to Krahen's Affective Filter hypothesis variables like high motivation, self-confidence and a low level of anxiety are all crucial in second language acquisition. New input should consequently be presented in a way that encourages a low filter (Krashen 2009:31-32). Bearing this in mind I wished to provide optimal conditions for a low affective filter for the respondents. The pupils were told that I was looking for neither spelling skills nor grammar skills at this point, they were allowed access to online dictionaries (ordnett.no), they could listen to music if they wished and some minor treats were set out for them to nibble while they wrote. All in all this provided the relaxed atmosphere that was attempted. Still I could sense the pupils' attentiveness as they knew their writing would provide material for research.

Wiland argues that the respondents' affective filter seems to be lower when they write than when they read, suggesting that structuralist views reduce the pupils' self-confidence in the reading process whereas sociolinguistic and pragmatic views enhance their confidence in terms of writing. These different views on language acquisition still seem to influence the various areas of learning despite the sociolinguistic focus in curriculum plans (Wiland 2009:17-18). Hence, the more need for teachers to motivate and encourage pupils, and at the same time always be conscious of the affective filter that may trouble individuals in the classrooms.

3.7 Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is defined by Schleiermacher partly as "the art of understanding another person's utterance correctly" (Schleiermacher 1998: 5). The early discussions between authorities like Spinoza, Jacobi and Schleiermacher dealt with concepts like "conditioned conditions", explained as "each thing depending upon its determining 'condition' within

a self-relating whole” (Schleiermacher 1998: xiv). Rather simplified one can say that the hermeneutic circle is seen as a way to explain how a text as a whole is understood in terms of its constituent parts (Holub 1995:258). In my study the respondents are asked to see each stanza of “The Road Not Taken” as a fragment of the whole text, and also the other way around; the poem as a whole, being conditioned by all its individual parts. Schleiermacher comments on works of art where the whole is not known, which is literally true for the respondents in my study, and how the reader then must “take the other path of recognising the unity of the whole via the most complete understanding possible of the particular” (1998:109). The analogy of taking another path could easily be read as one of the two roads in the poem and because the whole is not known it is up to the respondents to make the most of each part.

Hermeneutics is commonly known as ‘the art of interpretation’. In research the art of interpretation may be especially challenging, as the risk is there to predict an outcome too closely in advance. There is a fine line between logical anticipation that spurs the researcher’s interest and confirmation bias where the empirical material is interpreted in a way that confirms the anticipation. In my research I do partly predict an outcome, but I still have to keep my focus on the responses, and not my own forecasts. When I analyse the data each response must be seen as a part of a whole, and the whole would not be a whole without each individual response. Although a standard interpretation of “The Road Not Taken” is not the heart of the matter in this study, certain elements of interpretation are clearly present. One way of defining interpretation is “to perform something in a way that shows your own thoughts and feelings about it”⁶. In the light of this definition both the respondents are asked to interpret the poem presented to them, and following that I in turn will interpret their

⁶ Merriam-webster

interpretations. Consequently, one could say my study includes a “double hermeneutic approach” or a meta-perspective on interpretation.

3.8 Bottom-up or top-down

If a researcher has a ready-made theory and wishes to test it on a group of informants, the approach is labelled top-down. The aim is often to study whether a given hypothesis is valid or not. I bring a certain expectation to my study in that I anticipate the gaining of personal insight among the respondents, elicited from their reading experience. On the other hand my approach is similar to the way of thinking termed bottom-up, where the researcher enters with a clean slate. Miall explains the bottom-up-approach as an empirical study where one is “...asking readers to think aloud while reading a literary text, to mention any thoughts or feelings that they have” (2006/2007: 43). In the content analysis that follows he argues that the protocols provided by the respondents will allow for the categories to be studied (2006/2007:43). My study is conducted in a manner that mirrors Miall’s explanation of a bottom-up approach, in the sense that I encourage the respondents to write freely about their own thoughts and feelings, and furthermore I let their responses form the basis for my analysis. I consequently see my approach as primarily bottom-up when it comes to the handling of responses. Through the responses Miall explains how the researcher gains insight and can “discover features of response which have not yet been described...” (2006/2007: 43). The content analysis of the empirical material becomes a tool where dominant features are discussed.

Another way of looking at this distinction between a top-down and a bottom-up perspective is from a textual point of view. If one wishes to focus on the top-down approach as a reading strategy, one takes a socio- and psycholinguistic approach, bringing life experiences and personal experiences to the table. A bottom-up reading

strategy focuses more on the grammar and the structural parts of the language (Wiland 2009:63). From this perspective my study is exclusively top-down, as the focus rests clearly on experiencing the text, and not on its grammatical components. Depending on the way one looks at the concept of bottom-up and top-down, my study bears elements of both.

3.9 The use of a poem

Poetry has a condensed and often soulful form. Dylan Thomas puts it this way: “The world is never the same once a good poem has been added to it. A good poem helps to change the shape and significance of the universe, helps to extend everyone’s knowledge of himself and the world around him.” (Thomas 1992: 61) Here he sums up the essence of my study. Pupils are frequently told to “show, don’t tell” when they write texts, and as poetry often lends itself to metaphors and analogies the readers are shown another world where their own feelings can be reflected.

Using a poem makes it possible to share a reading experience in the classroom, using the stanza by stanza method, without risking that the process becomes too time-consuming. The individual responses fuse into a common body of material for analysis, and in this way this study resemble the Latin phrase and American motto ‘E Pluribus Unum’, literally ‘out of many, one’, meaning that a whole emerges from the separate parts.

I teach English to pupils who do not speak English as their mother tongue. Poetry can be a demanding genre, and reading it in another language than one’s own is a challenge. Looked at from another perspective the challenging aspect may become the most beneficial one. The pupils have to pause at words and phrases that are new to them and from their search for meaning insight may arise (Ibsen 2000:137). Like the poet

carefully sculpts the poem, selecting each word and phrase, the pupils have to study the lines of the same poem until their effort may be compensated for as new insight.

Jack Kerouac's poem "To Edward Dahlberg" goes like this: "Don't use the telephone. / People are never ready to answer it. / Use poetry." (Kerouac 1985:176) Poetry may be said to have a message to the respondent, compared to something that could be the topic of a conversation on the phone. Kerouac may signal that a poem conveys a message even better than direct speech. Although a response is called for in this study, poetry in general does not require a direct response. It waits patiently for the reader's reply. The poem that calls for the pupils' attention in this study is "The Road Not Taken".

3.10 "The Road Not Taken"

Most hundred-year-olds are marked by time, but "The Road Not Taken" seems to age well. In a letter Robert Frost wrote in 1913, he says: "I want to be a poet for all sorts and kinds... I want to reach out." (Orr 2015:35) He accomplished his goal, as this poem, at least in an American setting, is ubiquitous and known by most people. Orr argues that it is most read and recalled American poem from the past century (5). It is written in colloquial language which makes sense as Frost said poetry should be constructed from "sentence sounds" (30). When he names his recent book *The Road Not Taken: Finding America in the Poem Everyone Loves and Almost Everyone Gets Wrong*, David Orr signals that there is a right way and many wrong ways to read the poem. He says that though many people love it, they do not understand it, which is a paradox. The analysis of responses will show whether the pupils have chosen what is seen as the popular way of reading the poem, or a more scholarly one.

That the poem has survived through time and is fairly easy to read on a word level do not justify the use of it in a study on poetry and personal insight. The themes dealt with are far more essential, exemplified by possible readings like life as a journey, the ability to make sound choices and not knowing what the future might hold. These themes provide a suitable link for the topic at hand. The Core Curriculum states that one of school's tasks is that pupils learn "not to be fearful, but to meet the unknown with hope and drive, with expectation and enthusiasm" (1993:11). The fork in "The Road Not Taken" can be seen as a manifestation of a meeting with the unknown. Furthermore the Core Curriculum points to the fact that for children and adolescents "the world is new and nothing in it is taken for granted" (11). If teachers really believe this to be the case, the responsibility is considerable regarding both the way we teach, the way we present various topics and what material we bring to the pupils. A carefully picked poem that can challenge and question the way pupils look at their own future and the role they play as active agents in their own lives, may indeed contribute to hope and expectation in a world where nothing is taken for granted.

"The Road Not Taken" reaches out to intellectuals, but also to ordinary readers. Innumerable graduation speeches have had lines from this poem cited, there are commercials based on this poem and many people find themselves inspired by Frost's lines. Googling "The Road Not Taken" shows how widely it is used; one will find readings of the poem, amateur films exploring its themes, presentations for school assignments, blogposts, photos and illustrations. In his blog post "Forging Your Own Path", life coach Luke Iorio explains how he came across the poem years after he read it for the first time, and he says: "I realize now that the seeds it had sown had grown within me over the years. It's amazing how an instance from childhood can quickly become so clear. Something that seemed so insignificant to *twelve-year-old me* played a significant role in

who I've become." Graphic recorder Claire Holgate, inspired by his blogpost, illustrates the text,⁷ (Fig 2) and this way the poem lives a life of its own a hundred years after it was first published.

A debateable issue is whether it is possible to draw from literary inspiration and knowledge in real life. In his poem "The Tables Turned" William Wordsworth demands his reader to stop reading books and rather take a walk to enjoy nature's beauty, which he claims will provide more wisdom (1849: 361). Given that nature was our teacher we would learn to have an open heart that both watches and receives. If his words are taken literally, reading poetry is not worthwhile. There is no need to choose

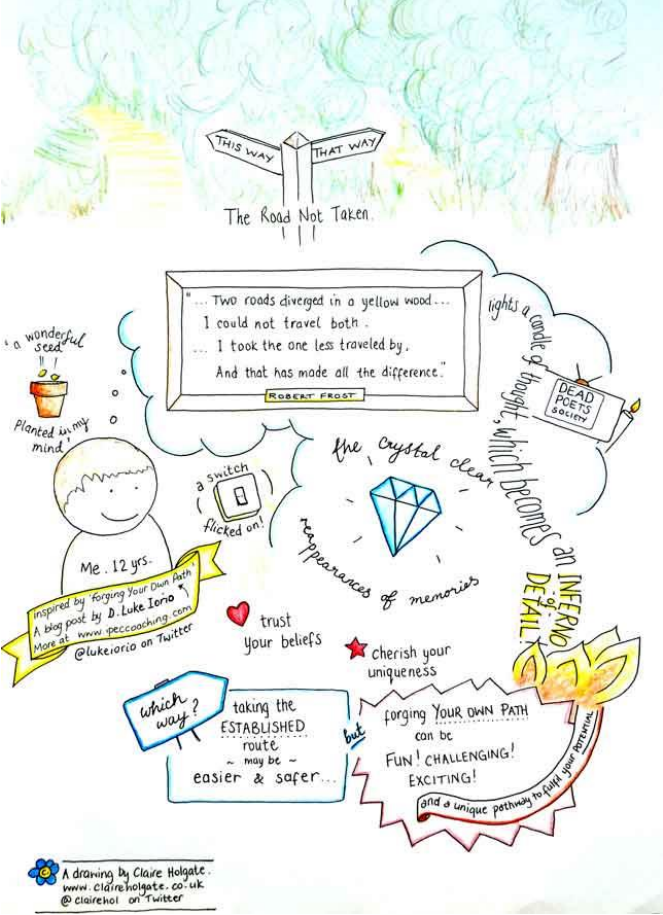


Figure 2: An illustration by Claire Holgate based on "The Road not Taken"

between the wisdom residing in and between the lines of a poem and the romantic idea of nature as the keeper of true insight. In "The Road Not Taken" one can find the best of two worlds, wisdom and a walk in the woods combined. Nature is in a way the teacher, guiding the lonesome wanderer.

⁷ Printed with permission, see Appendix G

3.11 Analytical approach

An overview of topics that stand out in the responses will be given, and the analysis will be structured according to categories provided by the material itself. What seems clear is that the various themes and the message of the poem according to the respondents must be analysed. I anticipate discrepancies among the responses, and therefore I predict a section on gaps or indeterminacy in the analysis. As my study bears some resemblance to *Poetry: Prima Vista*, some categories discussed there, like interpretive communities and reader-awareness, could also be relevant in my study (Wiland 2009: 67-74).

A constructivist perspective on learning presupposes an individual to whom meaning-making is based on previous knowledge and ideas. The reader in this study is seen both as competent and willing to learn. Consequently the analysis of responses will focus primarily on what the reader achieves, unlike Richards who says: "We shall find in the protocols instances, in plenty, of failure..." (1929: 183). Still Rosenblatt has a point when she says that in order for an interpretation of a poem to be valid there are two prime criteria: there must be a verbal basis for what is claimed in the text and aspects of the analysis must not be contradicted by the text (1994: 114-115). Even though this study focuses on thoughts and feelings rather than interpretation, some theorists claim that whenever we read, we do interpret because "interpretation is the only game in town" (Fish 1980:355).

4 Analysis

The responses analysed in the following section offer new insight in the field of poetic literacy in a current Norwegian educational context. Furthermore the respondents provide empirical material on how it feels to be an adolescent in a rapidly changing world. Combined these two elements expose a new generation subject to massive pressure, partly fuelled by themselves, but also a generation stating their readiness when it comes to making of their own choices and shaping their own future.

The analysis will be structured as follows: An overview of some aspects that stand out in the material will be provided in section 4.1. Several of these aspects will be further examined in the parts that follow. Next the pupils' responses to "The Road Not Taken" will be analysed in section 4.2. The responses will be looked at in the light of the literary framework. In 4.3 I analyse the responses given on adolescence, whereas the study's overall aim, namely looking at the relationship between the readings of "The Road Not Taken" and gaining personal insight, will be discussed in 4.4. Didactic principles concerning reader-response and the teaching of poetry in particular and literature in general are looked at in section 4.5.

4.1 Overview of the responses

The pinpointing of what many responses have in common provides a useful background for further analysis and scrutiny. Also what is not to be found in the pupils' responses is worthwhile to notice and reflect upon.

First and foremost basically all the respondents recognise the diverging road as an allegory for the choices we make in life. Prior to the study I feared that some, or even many, would fail to see this rather apparent image. My own foreboding is interesting in its own terms because it signals the way many teachers may approach their pupils. We

may encounter the learners signalling that what we are about to present to them is above their understanding. This has a double perspective in that teachers should have faith in their pupils and not patronise them, and on the other hand what a teacher may see as a flawed response, a misinterpretation of a text or a misunderstanding of a topic may still serve the pupils well enough. Many teachers want to force upon their pupils their own opinions on how to read literature. This initial trepidation of mine even caused me to hesitate a while when it came to reading and analysing the pupils' responses, a fact I am partly ashamed of and partly intrigued by. I will leave this point for now, and return to it when didactic implications are discussed.

As stated initially the pupils were more than capable enough to see that all words in "The Road not Taken" should not be taken literally, and while they differ in how they convey their opinions and how eloquently they word them, their point is overall clear. One pupil with a rather straightforward approach says: "Maybe it means not just a road, but a choose in life. About doing right or wrong" (Text 8). Others elaborate more, like for instance:

I think it's about how you want to be in two places at the same time, even though it's not possible. And also that you want to be the person everyone want you to be, but that isn't possible either because the only person you can be is yourself. As well maybe you're not sure what you want to do in the future. You have two different ways to live your life, and you have to make a choice, but you don't know what you want to do (Text 37).

Both these responses grasp the essence of the crossroads in the poem, and signal their awareness of the fact that this fork in the woods is meant to present to them a more meaningful lesson in life than that of picking a path on a random stroll.

Even though the extended metaphor was recognised by almost all the pupils, a significant number of them were unsure when it came to their own understanding of the poem. They felt the need to voice their uncertainties, and ironically enough they often provided a highly logical response parallel to their doubts. In Texts 8 and 37, presented above, verbal cues are given revealing uncertainty, by the choosing of words like “maybe” and “I think”. Others state their uncertainty more clearly, for instance a pupil says: “I don’t have any thoughts about it [the first stanza]. That it is two roads diverged in a yellow wood. It doesn’t make sense. But if I have to say something, I will say the poem is about making choices” (Text 12). What is clear here is that even though the pupil feels unsure about how to understand what is read, the final sentence still makes perfectly sense. The juxtaposition of the two opposing utterances shows how pupils find themselves bewildered. More often than not they are trained to find the *right* answer, and consequently they find it hard to rely on their own immediate reactions to what they read. The challenges residing here will be further analysed in connection with a text’s indeterminacy and readers’ self-awareness.

I also find that on the whole the respondents agreed to how one could understand the poem. The pupils sat side by side without communicating at all and many of them shared similar experiences while reading “The Road Not Taken”. According to Stanley Fish this occurs because they belong to the same interpretive community (1980:15). Below, in section 4.2.4, I discuss how I both agree and disagree with him in this matter.

A point to note is that few pupils combine their own specific experiences of being young directly to what they see as the message of the poem. They seem to answer each task separately, and they may have struggled to find the overall connection as a result of that. When they reached their final task, where they were asked if the poem could tell

them anything personal or if it could symbolise anything special for them, they may have been tired of writing or unwilling to share deeply personal stories, because here their responses are quite short and they tend to repeat what they have already mentioned in other tasks. I anticipated more of a personal touch here.

One of the questions I asked myself prior to the analysis of the empirical material was to what extent the pupils would mention choices they face in life that involve others than themselves. Would they consider social engagement and look at the choices people make in a wider perspective? My anticipation was that the responses would revolve around their own lives, and this was confirmed. Traces of “Generation Me” can be seen in the data. Many mention friends as important, but emphasis is put on how friends are important to them, not on being good friends themselves. By rephrasing some of the questions, the outcome of the responses could be altered. The queries signal a personal response. On the other hand, peace, climate change and the like could be of personal interest for adolescents. The Latin expression “proximus sum egomet mihi”, literally “the closest one to me is me myself”, signal that what matters most to us are our daily lives and the aspects that affect us personally.

None of the respondents saw the possible irony in the poem, commented on by nearly all the scholars. The adolescents have thus chosen what is often called a popular way of reading Frost’s words, instead of taking a more critical stance. As I specifically tell the pupils that this poem is popular in the USA and furthermore ask why they think many people have it as their personal favourite, I may even signal a popular way of reading the poem, though not intended. A critical and analytical master interpretation is not what this study aims for either, as the pupils’ own thoughts and feelings are at the core. What strikes me is that the pupils seem to enjoy the poem more than the scholars do. Whereas the scholars are more preoccupied with how the poem contradicts itself,

the irony possibly present, the surroundings in which it was written and how it tells us that we deceive ourselves when we look back on our own lives, the adolescents see a future lying open where they must make the best possible choices. In this respect a scholarly background may restrain the appreciation of poetry more than enhancing it. Ordinary readers are just as capable of appreciating literature as expert readers (Andringa 1996: 431-452, Hanauer 1995: 338-347). Here I argue that ordinary readers may even be more capable of enjoying poetry than a scholar too busy demonstrating interpretative skills to be immersed in “the weave of words” (Core Curriculum 1993:14).

Although assessment of grammatical skills is far from the crux of the matter in this study, I believe that if I came across this material in another educational setting, I would have felt the urge to suggest multiple ways in which these tenth-graders could improve. Both spelling skills and grammatical attentiveness are at a lower level here than what I normally see from this group of pupils. As I introduced the tasks to the pupils, I pointed out that I was interested in their thoughts and emotional reactions to the poem, and that they did not have to worry about grammar. This piece of information must have been taken quite literally by the majority of the pupils. In his Monitor hypothesis (2009:16) Krashen claims that if a second language learner has enough time, knows the rules and focuses on form, the learner will monitor his or her own work in order to make it as correct as possible. Furthermore, Krashen claims in the Affective Filter hypothesis (2009:30-31) that if pupils are motivated, have a high level of self-confidence and a low level of anxiety second language learning may be facilitated. Combining these two hypotheses and comparing them with my empirical material provide unexpected results. I attempted to lower the pupils’ affective filter, which would lead to more competent pupils according to the Affective Filter hypothesis. However the pupils’ main focus has not been on neither form, nor spelling, and consequently their

self-correcting monitor has not been as alert as it normally is when they write English assignments that will be assessed. In this way Krashen's different hypotheses seem to contradict each other when it comes to aesthetic writing experiences. A balanced focus on feelings and form may prove to be the best, depending on the purpose of the text produced by the pupils.

4.2 "The Road Not Taken" experienced by Norwegian adolescents

The analysis of the responses given to "The Road Not Taken" offers new perspectives on how Norwegian adolescents read and understand poetry. In section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 some of Rosenblatt's terms will be discussed in relation to the empirical material alongside Miall's theory on how our feelings are important in literary reading. Emphasis is also put here, in section 4.2.3, on what the pupils see as main themes and messages in "The Road Not Taken". The concept of "interpretive communities" will be examined and exemplified in section 4.2.4, whereas in section 4.2.6 examples of indeterminacy and gaps will be studied and linked to reader awareness. How the responses relate to levels of reading and Rosenblatt's criteria for a valid interpretation, will be examined in section 4.2.7. Applying these theories to the empirical material will shed light on various ways to look at interpretation of literary texts in an educational setting.

4.2.1 Reading as an event in time

Rosenblatt sees all encounters with literature as "an event in time" (1994:12). In my research this point becomes obvious. The same poem is presented at the same time to a group of pupils who have not encountered it before. The outcome of that get-together of text and teenager shows that a new text is being created in each individual case. Although the respondents differ when it comes to how they experience "The Road Not Taken", they also resemble each other in more than one respect. Basically all the pupils

see the diverging road as symbolic for their choices in life. After a close look at each of the thirty-nine responses, I felt a bit overwhelmed by all the respondents who highlight the importance of making their own decisions. Then all of a sudden I grasped an aspect that made me look at the responses in a totally new way. Each and every one of these pupils encountered a new text for the first time. They experienced it individually, and “lived through”(Rosenblatt 1994:68) it individually, and as they sat shoulder by shoulder and responded to it, they had no idea that the person sitting next to them had his or her own revelation, where the text opened up and became a poem. So many of them dealt with similar thoughts at the same time, but they experienced and felt the poem individually. Rosenblatt finds the reading experience uniquely personal and shared at the same time (1994:53), and this fusion of separateness and togetherness is part of what makes literature significant.

Research may not rest entirely on feelings and experiences. Still I want to comment on what happened in the classroom on the day when the pupils responded to the poem. Bearing in mind still Rosenblatt’s term of reading “as an event in time” (1994:12), I want to look at this event from another angle. In this case it is an authentic event that I find myself privileged to have witnessed. During my time as a teacher I have been in many a class, handed out many a task and propelled various teaching methods. This particular morning in October 2015 I had the opportunity to reflect upon reading and learning from a new angle as a genuine event took place in the classroom. Often a buzzing classroom is preferred in so far as the buzzing indicates the sharing and acquiring of knowledge. On the other hand, once in a while silence is golden, as it was this autumn morning. A class that is normally not too eager to get started at sunrise quickly found their seats and seemed all set to embark on a journey into the yellow woods of the poem awaiting them, although they as of yet had no clue of what was

residing on the teacher's desk in front of them. Cut into its constituent parts rested the stanzas of "The Road Not Taken" until they would be reassembled in both the minds of the respondents and in the responses handed in. The lines would be grasped by the adolescents, in both senses of the word. Initially, a combination of morning fatigue and suspense was present among the pupils, but as I sat at the back of their classroom watching them fetch the first part of the poem, encounter it, fetch the next part, encounter it and so on, I argue that an event took place. The atmosphere denoted a low affective filter and each individual could indeed "crystallize out from the stuff of memory, thought, and feeling a new order, a new experience" which consequently would become a "part of the ongoing stream of his life experience, to be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being" (Rosenblatt 1994:12).

Sometimes teachers interfere too much. Many of us need to learn how to step back, let the pupils catch their breath, provide them with food for thought and by all means take it upon ourselves to keep our mouths shut when we are tempted to provide the pupils with, in our opinion, the one and only correct answer. We need to let the event happen. Surprised by what happened in the classroom this morning, I jotted down a few personal, random notes of my own, while I watched the backs of the teenagers, reading, reflecting and typing along:

"A silence I have never heard in this classroom before. No one utters a word. Maybe they feel part of something big? Maybe they are nervous or a little bit anxious? Maybe they are tired? The sun is shining in the yellow trees outside our window. It is the 14 October 2015. I can't help being really curious as to what they are writing. Do they see the double meaning? What if they just see a trip in the forest? I am supposed to correct tests while I sit here, but somehow I can't seem to start. "

My anticipation, in other words, fused with the experience of the pupils. In my writing I believe I signal care for the adolescents, but I also signal prejudice on my own behalf in indicating that the poem may be too hard for them to understand.

Teachers should allow the pupils access to the amount of time and the amount of silence it takes for a text to turn into a poem. If the reader is alert and committed to the task, the text may be evoked and a new poem is made. The responses show that this event actually took place in the classroom this morning, and thus provide factual evidence to the same event that I witnessed.

4.2.2 Feelings aroused from the poem

As my repeated question to the pupils when they got hold of a new constituent stanza from “The Road Not Taken” was “What thoughts and emotions do you have when you read this part?” it was expected that some feelings would be stirred through their reading. This correlates to Rosenblatt’s idea that a text is being evoked if memories or feelings are called upon. The reader is affected by the poem because “A concurrent stream of feelings, attitudes, and ideas is aroused by the very work being summoned up under guidance of the text” (1994: 48). According to Opdahl one of the advantages of literature is that it grasps what usually are fleeting emotions and freeze them in time (2003:10). The respondents have been allowed to study the feelings embedded in the poem, and this may also stir feelings in them.

Initially the feelings evoked will be grouped in two categories, those that seem positive at first glance, and those that seem more contemplative or negative at first glance (Table 1). The same forms of the words that the respondents have chosen are used here. Some of the feelings are mentioned more than once in the empirical material, and the most frequent one is “sad”.

Table 1 Feelings in "The Road Not Taken"

<i>Positive feelings</i>	<i>Contemplative/Negative feelings</i>
Peaceful	Sadness
Brave	Lonely
Hope	Serious
Happy	Thoughtful
Relaxed	Insecurity
Calm	Mysterious
Glad	Scary
	Confusing
	Disappointed
	Not very happy
	Doubt
	I don't smile, because I don't get the feeling of such happiness and pleasure
	Twisted emotions
	Annoying

The list of contemplative or even negative feelings clearly outnumbers the list of positive feelings. At first sight this may signal that the pupils did not enjoy the poem that much. Reading through the whole body of responses provides another perspective, though. The mood that recurs in the empirical material is one of contemplation, rather than dislike. One respondent words it: "I actually get this sad feeling when I read this. It's like you have to choose something or take a very hard decision and no matter what the answer is, are you still just seeing the long trip before you." (Text 6) Life may feel exhausting at times and more often than not one cannot know the outcome of the choices made. Another respondent takes the opposite stance and says that "Personally the poem makes me happy and relaxed. It makes me happy because I start think about all the choices I

have. And make me relaxed because I don't have nothing to stress about." (Text 15) The pupils seem to examine their own lives and compare them to what goes on in this junction in the road, and the majority reaches the conclusion that often in life one is faced with hard choices, and it is crucial to make the right choice even though it may be hard. The contemplative emotions may very well be the ones that contribute most to gained insight.

In dealing with their own emotions, or reliving the potential emotions of the poem's narrator, the pupils produce a vivid impression of the text they read. They experience it, rather than just read it. They "live through it", as Rosenblatt puts it (1994:68). The reading of the text functions as stimulus and a response is consequently given. They experience what the Core Curriculum encourages, namely to train the pupils so they may comprehend "...that good ideas can evoke strong feelings; that insight can be given lovely forms...in the weave of words." (1993:14) Before the pupils can put words on paper as a response, feelings have been aroused, thoughts have been elicited, insight has been provided and all of this occurs because of the compenetration of a reader and Frost's "weave of words". First the poem is read as symbolisation, the first encounter where the text is deciphered and grasped, and then a process of re-symbolisation starts where the contents of the text turn into a personal and subjective matter. As Bleich points out, the latter stage depends merely on subjective factors (1978:39) and as a result the responses vary and become more interesting to analyse.

In one of the responses the pupil experiences a wide spectrum of feelings through the reading of the poem, spanning from "a bit sad and also happy at the same time. Because it is so good written and that makes me happy" in the first stanza, via "I feel a bit happier than before because the author took a choice" in the second stanza, then "I feel a bit nervous..." in the third stanza and ultimately "Now I feel confused" in the fourth

stanza (Text 29). The reasons for this array of wavering feelings being stirred are to be found both in the actual words of the poem itself and in the respondents' emotional response to the same poem. Miall has found, in his empirical studies of reading, that there are four categories in which we can place the diverse feelings aroused from reading literary works of art. In this response all the four categories are displayed. *Evaluative* feelings are seen as pleasure in the first example and frustration in the fourth, when the reader finds the poem "very deep" and feels both happy and sad at the same time, and eventually ends up confused as the last stanza did not match the predicted answer to which road was actually taken. Furthermore *narrative* feelings are aroused here, when the respondent empathises with the narrator in these examples: "I think the author have gone through some hard choices", "I feel a bit happier than before because the author took a choice", "I think that the author might start to regret the choice..." and "We don't get the real answer on if the road he took were bad or good". Yet another example showing narrative feelings can be found in Text 28 where the respondent feels strongly for the narrator and comments: "Now I want to give this person a hug, and tell him/her that it is going to be okay." Strong feelings are involved when the reader feels the urge to enter the poem personally to comfort the storyteller. *Aesthetic* feelings, denoting that the text has captured the reader's attention, are shown in basically all the examples above and these aesthetic reactions may work with the narrative feelings in order to arrive at *modifying* feelings.

Modifying feelings

Readers may identify personally with what is read, so that their self-understanding will actually be modified (Miall, referring to Miall & Kuiken 2002, 2006/2007:44). One respondent comments on the relationship between the poem and self-understanding

this way: “It’s because it [the poem] in some unexplainable way just make me feel so good about my choices.” To justify this feeling the respondent even recommends this poem to be used by “shrinks” to help young people make the best choices in life. Finally the respondent says:

For me it’s telling me that I have to be really careful about what choices I make in the hardest situations. And it reminds me of taking good care of my best friends and always be there, cause if I don’t they will choose the road that tracks away from me. It symbolizes my life pretty good. I have taken so many choices in my short life. Some of them are good and some of them bad, but everybody survives a fallen road sometimes. Don’t they? (Text 29)

If by merely encountering words on a piece of paper, modifying feelings like these occur, that may either change, improve or confirm the reader’s sense of self, it shows that poetry has qualities that can make people gain more personal insight. Topics dealt with in this response range from the choices the pupil has to make when rough weather is hit, via the importance of striking a blow for friends who need it, to reflecting upon the outcome of choices that have been carried out in the past. As a final point the respondent addresses the reader in asking “Don’t they?” as if seeking the confirmation of others who have experienced what it feels like to make a wrong decision in life. This little question seems to signal that it must be possible to learn from mistakes made and rise as a more confident individual.

Throughout my empirical material modifying feelings are shown in a number of responses, and some are presented in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2 Modifying feelings

<i>Text</i>	<i>Modifying feelings</i>
4	...I can do stupid things, but I have more chance.
5	...it sure does inspire me to be myself, and not only listen to what other people

	have to say about how I should be.
6	...telling me to be brave and take own choices, because maybe that's best for me.
7	I got to try to be different. I need to stop judging people about how they look because that is wrong. I got to change myself in the way I think and perhaps taking and unsecure road.
17	...I have to go for my dreams and not always think of the consequences. I am often a person who thinks a LOT about the consequences of a decision and I might sometimes overthink it. For me it can symbolise that I don't have to think so much about my future like I do today, since the way might come as I go.
18	...telling us and personally me to step forward and dear more.
20	To me it is about choosing the right thing and how serious that is. We really need to think about what we want to do with our lives.
23	... that sometimes I just have to take the chance I have got even if it turns the bad way. You will never know until you try.
25	...to not be afraid to have different opinions than everybody else. That I can have my own thoughts and feelings. And of course can make my own choices.
26	...we should be our self and not trying to be someone you're not. I think we should follow our dreams and not let anybody else tell us what to do. Maybe we not need to follow the stream all the time?
30	...I shouldn't be afraid of living my dreams. ... going out in the world can be really scary but I will get through it and it will give me a lot in life and bring me a lot of happiness.
34	...I can't complain on the society before I do something whit it to!
35	This poem really inspires me to do my best at school as it's very important. I can easily become what I want if I just try hard enough ... I can't think of anything special this symbolizes for me, but I know it will one day. If I one day lose my motivation to continue studying I'll read this for sure and I'll get inspired to continue."
36:	I should make the right decisions and help others to do it as well

Generally speaking the modifying feelings that "The Road Not Taken" bring forth have to do with to what extent the choices made in life are deliberate and conscious, rather than merely choosing what is considered as prevalent behaviour. Many respondents write a more straightforward response, where they say that the poem is telling them to be themselves and make the right choices in life, whereas some of the examples in table 2 portray more specific areas where the respondents want to modify their conduct. The idea of having more chances in life is presented here (Text 4), in addition the wish of becoming a better person who does not judge others by their appearance (7), furthermore we find an individual who wishes to stop thinking matters over too thoroughly (17). Even though some of these responses may resemble pieces of advice one could find in a random self-help book, it does not seem right to label any of them

neither light nor shallow. One should keep in mind that these adolescents are in the midst of their teen years and they try to find their own way in life. This perspective makes the responses both touching and profound. To dare more, to stand out, to risk taking chances even though the outcome cannot be predicted and to aim at helping others make smart decisions, are all traits defining sensible and responsible human beings. The respondent who comments on how society cannot be blamed unless the individuals who form that society step up, has gained insight in this respect. Together all these responses form a body of teenage insight and know-how, and the willingness to move forward and to improve.

An assessment of pleasure and frustration

In revising the scholarly readings of "The Road Not Taken" several of the critics seem to reach conclusions that are also, indeed, critical. According to them, the choice in the poem seems to be made by sheer impulse, Frost is most likely is ironic, neither of Frost's roads would lead to disaster, they are the same, consequently our choices really do not matter that much. The two roads are already there, denoting that our choices are readymade. Contrasting the responses of the pupils to these scholarly views, the pupils' responses are far more positive and constructive. Many of the respondents are more open-minded and they project their own future choices in the lines of the poem. Even though the respondents take a less critical stance than the scholars, they vary when they explain their reading experience. Some respondents assess their own reading experience by indicating pleasure and some by frustration. These findings correlate with a study conducted by Andringa, who finds that when less experienced and more skilled readers are compared, a pattern seems to occur. While less experienced readers give emotional references first, then evaluative references and finally present their

argument, the more skilled readers make references to the text first, then add a metacomment to elaborate on the meaning of the reference and finally they add interpretive comments. The emotional aspect seems to be lost somewhere in the process of becoming more acquainted with interpretation. According to Andringa emotion “initiates, selects and steers the way of arguing” (1990:247) for the less experienced readers, showing that feelings have a constructive role.

Some pupils assessed their reading experience and one may categorise these assessments in terms of pleasure or frustration (Table 3).

Table 3 Assessment of respondents' reading experiences

<i>Pleasure</i>	<i>Frustration or indifference</i>
Text 15: Personally the poem makes me happy and relaxed. It makes me happy because I start think about all the choices I have. And make me relaxed because I don't have nothing to stress about.	Text 7: Now it makes sense to me. I guess my guessing on 1,2 and 3 was wrong but I don't care.
Text 16: It's clever written.	Text 9: I didn't understand much of Part 3, therefore it's hard to make thoughts out of it.
Text 18: I think the poem is deep and explain many people that don't dear to step forward and those who is most silent has more to say and not only go to the shadows.	Text 12: I didn't understand the poem. I think it is confusing. I am sorry but I don't understand the poem.
Text 24: When I read the first part of the poem I thought that this was a great poem.	Text 13: I thought it was alittle bit weird in the start but I think it means that you can only choose one road u can't choose both. Hard to understand.
Text 25: I think the last part is very useful. For me, the ending was a bit unexpected. But in a way it made me happy. I like the title. It makes you feel sorry for the road that no one took (haha). The road if of course just a picture.	Text 14: Still not sure what's going on at all. My emotions are confused.
Text 29: It is very deep, good written	Text 19: This text did not give me anything in particular (emotions and feeling wise), but I do think there is a meaning behind it.
Text 31: I feel calm when I read it, it's like a flow in the poem, and I like that. This poem made me kind of “calm and happy” as mention before... I liked it, even though I didn't understand it well.	Text 26: When I was reading the first part of the poem for the first time I actually was a little bit confused, and was sitting again with some thoughts and emotions.
Text 35: I can't think of anything special this symbolizes for me, but I know it will	Text 29: I think the ending didn't gave much sense

one day. If I one day lose my motivation to continue studying I'll read this for sure and I'll get inspired to continue.	
Text 36: It is written very elegantly and I understand why people would find that appealing.	

In the positive end of the scale, responses like these can be found: “Personally the poem makes me happy and relaxed” (Text 15), “When I read the first part of the poem I thought that this was a great poem” (24) and “For me, the ending was a bit unexpected. But in a way it made me happy. I like the title. It makes you feel sorry for the road that no one took (haha). The road if of course just a picture” (25). In what could be called a more neutral stance responses like the following is to be found: “It was nice to read, I liked it even when I didn’t understood it. Maybe others like it because it is meaningful to them. The poem gives them a bit inspiration. It becomes personal to them, and maybe they even can relate to the text.” (1) Toward the more frustrated end of the continuum are responses like: “I didn’t understand the poem. I think it is confusing. I am sorry but I don’t understand the poem.” (12) The last respondent even apologises for not understanding, which is polite, but also unnecessary, as no offense has been made. What seems to frustrate the respondents the most is that they do not understand the poem. The dissonance between the scholars’ critical interpretations and the frustrated pupils is that whereas the pupils, in their own opinion, do not know how to understand the poem, the scholars may know it all too well. Both these pitfalls seem to cause less enjoyment. Table 3 shows examples of feelings in either end of the continuum.

Some of the respondents think it is a problem that they do not understand the poem, whereas others do not mind. Those who find it hard not to understand, may be influenced by the view of the New Critics, who searched for the one and only interpretation of a text, whereas those who do not understand everything but still sees the poem as a fine reading experience, are more influenced by reader-response views. In

Text 1 and Text 31, the respondents say that even though the poem was hard to understand, they still liked it. They show a more confident manner when they approach the poem. Some respondents also choose to turn aspects seen as negative into something positive. In Text 1 the respondent gets “twisted emotions” and says that the poem may be personal to other people. In Text 6 the respondent says that one should be a little selfish, and not do what everyone else thinks one should do. In Text 29 the respondent says that he or she feels happy and sad at the same time, denoting a bittersweet feeling.

Many feelings are brought forth by the respondents, although in a less grandiloquent manner than Wordsworth’s, who says that good poetry is “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” (Damon 2009:22). The empirical material shows that if an efferent stance is applied to poetry, many sentiments get lost, and it also shows that the pupils agree to a large extent on some thoughts and feelings that correspond well with what they see as themes and message of the poem.

4.2.3 Themes and messages elicited from the poems

Although the literary terms ‘theme’ and ‘message’ are not fully interchangeable they both deal with the overall idea or base of the text, and how to deal with this idea. As the two terms resemble each other I have combined them in one of the tasks given to the pupils. Even though the present study is not dealing specifically with pupils’ recognition of literary terms, some terminology is important to verbalise the reactions more specifically. The three themes that recur in the students’ responses are ‘choices’, ‘dare to be different’ and ‘hindsight and regret’.

Choices

The words 'choice', 'choose' or 'decision' are mentioned in 37 of the 39 responses. Of the two remaining texts, one respondent uses expressions like "I feel that this poem is about take risk" and "Take a pick, mistakes and get over it" (Text 4), while the other says that the poem is about "...how you should be in the life" (38). 'Choices' is regarded the most prominent and paramount theme in the poem, and the subordinate research question "How do the respondents understand and explain the metaphors and the themes in "The Road Not Taken"? is answered in this section. Table 4 exemplifies the topic of "choice" in the empirical material (bold letters added).

Table 4 The concept of choice in "The Road Not Taken"

<i>Text</i>	<i>Responses</i>
1	Chose the right way, because you will feel your decisions when your older?
2	every single day you have to choose
3	take the good ways to go, the right choices
4	Take a pick , mistakes and get over it
5	go down their own road, make their own decisions
6	a message to all the young people that just take the choices because everyone else is
7	making your own choices and doing what nobody else does. Try something new and don't be just normal
8	... to be yourself and take the right chooses
9	... take your own choices , and not just follow everybody else.
10	the right decision is not always as everyone does. Sometimes you have to make you own decisions .
11	... about making choices in life.
12	... that you have to take some chooses in life that you dint expected. Witch choice is right.
13	... you can only choose one road u can't choose both...
14	Maybe to be yourself and make your own choices and do your own thing
15	I think the poem is about taking big choices in life ...don't care about what other people choose and think of you.
16	.. you should choose your future carefully
17	... you are alone with your choices and you can't make people take them for you.
18	... he has to take a choice and the choice will mean something ...
19	...being different and making your own choices
20	That we need to really thing about it [the future] and what we chose . What look the best may not be the best.
21	... you have to think good about the choices you make in life
22	...to not make quick or selfish decisions in your life.
23	... to be careful about the decisions you make.
24	We don't know what would happen if he choose the other road. But that's how the poems is all about.

25	... to choose different from others.
26	I think maybe the poem is about having to make a choice and have several options, and that you just could pick one of the options or choices that you have.
27	You follow the stream and take the wrong choices ... But after you have taken the choice , you will understand that it's not what's best for you.
28	... the choice is difficult for the person. He or her probably don't know what to choose .
29	I think the theme is choices . And the message would then be to take good time before every choice you make. That you also have to think really good about the consequences in the future.
30	He chose the one that looked the best from where he was standing ... The man chose the road that was not taken. The other way than the others.
31	Our life is full of choices , and sometimes we choose wrong, and learn from our mistakes... to take the right choices .
32	...to choose the right things or the right way/road in your life. Don't just follow everyone else. Take your own choice and don't care what other people says.
33	...we all have to make some choices in our life and we should not just follow ...everyone else. ... make our own choices in our life's we don't have to follow the stream.
34	...others will get the same choice , and he took the way there less has been before him
35	...you should always choose the part that you think is best. Maybe not the easiest one because you never know what could lay behind it after some time.
36	... just make the right decisions . The storyteller ... didn't and the outcome was not positive. So if you make the right decisions your life will be good in the end.
37	... taking choices and how hard it is to take the right choice .
38	... you think about how you should be in the life.
39	Life is not easy, you have to do many choices .

The general idea according to the respondents is that it is both important and hard to make the right choices, but one should still attempt to do so. Also, people should not go with the flow, but make choices that seem right for them. All choices are unique in one way or another. Even though some respondents state that it is important for many adolescents to act the same way as their peers, and it may be a general (mis)conception in society that teenagers are a conform group, it is important to bear in mind that every single choice carried out freely is both the responsibility and the privilege of each individual. One of the respondents says that "If you feel all down one day, you should still chose the right way, not just the easiest way. Everything is important." (Text 1) The respondent is in line with Orr's interpretations here (2015:75-76). If everything really matters, then each day and each moment is precious, as it will never return. If everything is important, then people need to stay alert and they must also prepare themselves for the twists and turns life may take.

Orr contemplates the way most choices follow the same pattern and says: “We observe, we consciously evaluate, we choose between or among competing options” (2015:107). In this study the respondents are faced with this pattern twice or maybe even thrice, as they first encounter the poem, observe it, evaluate it and choose what to write about it, furthermore they are encouraged to do the same on the topic of being young, and finally they are to combine the two approaches. Every word they type as a response is a deliberate choice, which is a somewhat dizzying thought. Orr suggests that this same pattern is present in “The Road Not Taken”. The observation of a fork in the road, the stopping, looking, comparing and evaluating of the two roads before one of them is chosen. In Text 30 a respondent comments on this:” “He chose the one that looked the best from where he was standing ... He might think that it’s the right way, but maybe it’s not. The road might look good from a distance, but when you’ve walked on it for a while it will not be as good and amazing as you first would have imagined.” This respondent turns the choice of the narrator into a more personal one when the pronoun is changed from “he” into “you”. The perspective, post-choice, is changed, and what was once perceived as an alluring track to follow, may turn out to be either a disappointment or even a hazardous road to head down. If the poem spurs the thought that one should avoid making hasty or ill-conceived choices, it may serve the adolescents well. This thought is also to be found in Text 22, where the pupil states that we should not make our decisions too quickly and that they should not be selfish.

Making the right choices in life is crucial. J.K. Rowling uses the voice of Dumbledore as the source of wisdom when in the novel “*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*” he says: “It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.” (1998:245) Often we see right away what our best options are, but more often than not, choosing what is right is hard. A respondent writes: “When both sides are

good, and none of them are better than the other, choosing one of them is scary. You are so afraid you are going to pick the wrong one..." (Text 9) Situated between a rock and a hard place the only wish one has is to escape, but when both sides are good, the choice itself is the hard part. This pupil shares the view of several of the scholars who discuss the two roads and how they look the same from the fork where the narrator is placed. What to face down the road is not easy to predict from the junction. According to the Core Curriculum, individuals should be seen as "moral beings, accountable for their decisions and responsible for their actions; with the ability to seek what is true and to do what is right." (1993:9) In order to meet such aims in an educational setting it is essential that ethics is on the curriculum. In lower secondary schools pupils learn about the theoretical aspects of consequentialism, deontology and virtue ethics, but the most challenging part is to make the right decisions in real life.

When it comes to being responsible for our own actions, there is a small distinction in the data well worth looking at. A lot of the pupils make the same "mistake" when it comes to the "making of choices". Many pupils translate directly the most common Norwegian way of putting this phrase and write "to take a choice", while the more correct way of putting it in English is "to make a choice". There is a mild distinction between these two ways of carrying out a choice. The Norwegian way of putting it denotes that the different possible choices already do exist, and you merely pick one of them. The English way of writing the phrase has a more personal feel to it, as if the choices are moulded by the individual in a more conscious way.

In Text 31 the respondents comments on choices this way: "My life- the past and the future- is just full of choices. Way too many for a child. Like a rollercoaster that never ends. But the choices that I take, makes me to the person I am- and will get." A rollercoaster would for most people signal thrill or excitement, but in this context it

seems to signal the ups and downs in life, and how it all happens so fast that one cannot seem to separate neither one choice from the next one, nor one day from the next. The wild ride in a rollercoaster it thus a fitting metaphor.

Dare to be different

A substantial number of pupils responded that they find it imperative to dare being themselves. This has a touch of irony to it, as teens are often characterized by the fact that they want to be like their role models and that they look very much alike, at least at first glance. Still, they claim that they want to be different. One can respond that the only option human beings have is to be different, as all are unique individuals. A few texts will explain why this theme is found to be of importance. A piece of advice is found in Text 4: “Yours dream is right and if someone said something bad about your dream, stop being with them. They are not good for you.” Likewise Text 30 shows insight into the culture of adolescents:

Many people are afraid of being an independent person and follow their dreams. It's much easier to just tag along with the others instead of doing their own thing. They might be scared that they'll be judged or that they will be alone. I think that if you dare to be your own person and don't care so much about what everyone else is doing you will become a much happier person.

In Text 35 the tone is motivational and a slogan has been imbedded: “Anyone can follow their dreams and become whatever they want to be, all you have to do is to do your best! If you're doing everything in your power, you can't fail! Don't let your dreams be dreams, just do it!” 22 of the 39 responses include the word ‘different’, and one comments on it this way: “I think the title ‘the road not taken’ means that your chance is

there to be different! It is not gonna go away. Everyday it's a new chance to be different." (Text 34). To be able to pursue a dream and to be a unique individual are both matters essential to the respondents. The Core Curriculum contributes in this respect when it is said that "It [education] should confirm the belief that everyone is unique; that each can nourish his own growth and that individual distinctions enrich and enliven our world." (1993:7) A perspective that must keep educators on their toes is that too much emphasis on the individual's uniqueness may decrease the sense of companionship and the willingness to contribute to common good. Parts of teen pressure may also rely on the feeling of being unique, in the sense that one has to perform and be better than others⁸.

Two respondents mention "the American Dream", where both the concepts of "every man for himself", and consequently "every woman for herself", and "the self-made (wo)man" reside. A parallel can be found to the period of adolescence where personalities are shaped, and many teenagers "construct" themselves. In Text 17 it is said that: "... you have to take your own way in life and don't just follow everybody else. And in the US many people do just that," whereas in Text 7 the respondent comments on success and says: "It is inspiring for people to do something different and then succeed in what you are doing. Kind of like American dream actually." These aspects may be mentioned because in the tasks handed out to the respondents, it is said that "The Road Not Taken" is popular in America. In Text 23 yet another perspective is shown, where the respondent encourages others and says: "You will never know until you try."

⁸ The great focus on the individual may be compared to the "Little Emperor Syndrome" in China where a study shows that an only child is more self-centred and shows little cooperative skills. (Cameron, L., Erkal, N., Gangadharan, L and Meng, X. :953-957)

Hindsight and regret

An aspect that also recurs in the responses is that of hindsight or regret. Some of the respondents comment on the fact that choices made are hard to undo, while others focus on the fact that you cannot know the outcome of your choices yet. Some also talk about regret. An overview of relevant responses is found in table 5.

Table 5 Examples of hindsight and regret

<i>Text</i>	<i>Responses</i>
4	You can do bad and good things but you learn. You miss people but you will never come back to them. Your chance is not over, you can do bad things but you have more chance
6	I think it means that the opportunity is not gone to change and do what's best for you
7	It is like many have been taking the bad road or chosen the bad things in life, and they are trying to warn them but they do the same mistake as they did.
10	And he also thinks about going back, and takes the other way. But now he has made his choice and he can't go back.
11	... and it made him regret taking this path. I get a little sad
17	...you have to take risks in your life alone and with somebody else, even if you don't know the consequences.... I am often a person who thinks a LOT about the consequences of a decision and I might sometimes overthink it
18	He knows now that he has maybe chosen the wrong way and it is too late to go back
20	He is now thinking back at it and kind of regrets the decision he made. It made it harder for him and he is thinking "what if". What would have changes for the better if he had chosen the other path and where would it have lead ... it is about regretting something you have done and everyone regrets something.
21	... you should think about the consequences and what the result of the choices are ... I also think that it's telling me that if I choose wrong I may be looking back and regretting later in life.
26	...following one of the directions and don't know how it leads, and maybe not could find the way back to where it starts.
30	The road might look good from a distance, but when you've walked on it for a while it will not be as good and amazing as you first would have imagined.
32	The way the person took when the roads diverged in a wood made all difference. Maybe it was a good thing or maybe it was a bad thing. But I think it was a bad thing for the person who telling this with a sigh.
35	This poem tells you that even if you have chosen maybe the hardest path, it will always be worth it. Maybe you regret it at that time because it's hard, but in the end you will always think it was worth it.
36	In the third part the storyteller regrets his decision. The path he chose was not as good as it seems ... Maybe the road and the storyteller has a long history back, but a bad one, which is why he never really wanted to go back this road. But maybe life forced him, and he had no choice in the end.
37	The person chose the first way, and I think it's trying to say that during your life you have to choose between millions of ways and that some of the choices you take will be bad and some will be good, some will you regret and some will you don't regret. It's just how life is.

The aspect of bittersweet reminiscence, often to be expressed by people who have had long lives is not clearly present in these responses. Neither is the mourning over a childhood that is gone. These adolescents find themselves at a point in life where they are no longer cocooned by youth, and the responsibilities of adulthood have not yet dawned upon them. If this poem was read by an elderly person, he or she would perhaps feel at home in the last stanza, whereas the adolescents who read the poem may see themselves near the first stanza. They have many choices to make, and from where they are now they can make clever choices so that the regrets in the future will be few. Still the feeling of regret and looking back seem to be relevant for them. “...Everyone regrets something”, says the respondent in Text 20, and 6 more respondents choose to use the word “regret” in their response. What seems to be the opinion of equally many respondents is that you will have more chances, and if you fail you can try again. If the poem really says so explicitly or if this is just a wish that the respondents have is not clear.

The sigh commented on by many scholars, exemplified by Orr (2015:8-9, 82-83), is commented on by one pupil only, and the sigh is linked to how a wrong road is chosen (Text 32). The respondents face reality also when they comment on aspects like maybe life forced the traveller to choose a road that he did not wish to go (Text 36). The contrast between the distilled choice in the poem, where no other people or circumstances seem to affect the traveller (Orr 2015:101-103), and real life, where there will always be circumstances that partly control the choices people make, is salient. The “What if”-perspective mentioned by one respondent can be an example (Text 20). One respondent comments on how the wanderer in the poem is warned by others, but will not listen to the warning. In Text 26 the respondent says that the traveller tracks off and is perhaps not able to find his way back to the crossroads from where he started. This

may be seen as symbolic, because in life people will often change and thus never return to where and who they once were. The same perspective is taken by Orr, when he argues that if a person returns to the crossroads, the person will have been altered and consequently the crossroads will be looked at differently if encountered again (2015:75-76). A second encounter is not necessarily worse than the first, though.

A road may look tempting from a distance, but when it is entered there may be unforeseen events around the bend. This view is expressed in Text 30, and also by Richardson who says that "Our paths unfold themselves to us as we go." (1997: 182) The only way one can avoid following a path, is by hesitating at the crossroads. What many respondents say, denote the opposite of hesitating, exemplified by these two responses: In your lifetime you will have to choose between millions of ways, that is just how life is (Text 37), but in the end it will be worth the struggle (Text 35). These views are also expressed in literature for young people. In "*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*", Rowling lets Dumbledore say to Harry: "The consequences of our actions are always so complicated, so diverse, that predicting the future is a very difficult business indeed" (1999: 311). In this novel the Time-Turner plays an important part. By being able to go back in time Hermione and Harry save the day. If possible, many would have wanted to turn time, go back and visit the past. Many of the same aspects that occur in "The Road Not Taken" are encapsulated in Rowling's quote. Choices and decisions from the past have consequences. Life is diverse. What will happen in the future is impossible to foresee. These aspects correlate perfectly with what the pupils' respond to as the main themes and messages in "The Road Not Taken".

In this part of the thesis I have looked at one of the subordinate research questions, and seen how the metaphors and the themes are understood and explained by the respondents. Although no one calls the road in the poem a metaphor, it is treated

as one by all the respondents. Some themes have been discussed, the most apparent one being 'choices'. The respondents have contributed to this thesis by choosing themes apt for analysis. On the whole the respondents also agreed on how to understand the themes of the poem, a central aspect of an interpretive community.

4.2.4 Interpretive communities

The idea of interpretive communities is most widely discussed by Fish, but similar thoughts are also communicated in the Norwegian curricula. The following part of the Core Curriculum shows a constructivist view on learning: "New perceptions must build on what is already well-founded - that which the pupil already knows, can do or believes beforehand." (1993: 20). Moreover, the idea of interpretive communities is built into the plan: "A good portion of this the pupils have in common, from our broad cultural heritage which provides a sounding board for communication, dialogue and learning." (20) Finally the individual must ultimately rely on his or her own knowledge and perception: "Yet even in a common culture there are wide variations between individuals, due to social background, sex, and local origin. Hence that which is a striking example or a telling image for one pupil, can be wholly devoid of meaning for another" (20).

The responses in this study are in many ways quite similar. One can raise a number of questions related to this observation. Even though the findings in a case study can only be valid for the group studied, the data could provide useful information to other groups as well, as material for comparison or contrast. The respondents in this study are the same age, they come from the same area and they are subject to the same school system. Would "The Road Not Taken" be read differently by respondents from

other countries? By elderly people? By a cross-section of Norwegians? Most likely some aspects would have been the same, and some would differ.

Fish has strict rules for what he sees as an interpretive community. Still, he claims that “interpretation is the only game in town” (1980:355). Hence, his own term “interpretive community” should also be open for interpretation. Although the pupils I teach do not fulfil Fish’s demands for membership in an interpretive community, as they do not have the linguistic and semantic skills that he claims should be present, they do form a community in their classroom, and they do interpret, thus an interpretive community they are. Clearly one could label them otherwise, like a reading community, but this would alter neither their sense of fellowship nor their reading experience.

Readers have acquired strategies for interpretation, Tyson explains (2015: 177), and what makes a poem a poem cannot be found in the text itself, but in these strategies. The experience of literature is both personal and shared (Rosenblatt 1994:53), and as a result interpretive communities are formed. As table 6 shows, the reading strategies applied by two of the respondents in this study are quite similar (emphasis mine).

Table 6 A comparison of two responses

<i>Text</i> <i>Stanza</i>	<i>Text 9</i>	<i>Text 15</i>
First stanza	I feel like the text is about taking big choices . You have to think through what is the right thing to do. It is not always easy to decide which way to go , but sometimes, you have to take a chance.	My thoughts from the poem are not a lot. I didn’t understand it that well. But I think it is about taking a difficult choice . I think it’s a little bit sad because the I person had to choose witch way he wanted to go. But I think the poem is about something else then the wood and witch way he wanted to go .

Second stanza	It is still the same problem. He starts comparing them in hope of getting to an end. When both sides are good, and none of them are better than the other, choosing one of them is scary . You are so afraid you are going to pick the wrong one, so you never get to the end.	I think someone tries to call on the person and tell him that everything is fine and good. But as further they comes into the wood it gets really scary and maybe they did something wrong
Third stanza	I didn't understand much of Part 3 , therefore it's hard to make thoughts out of it.	I didn't understand the 3th one
Forth stanza	The man chose the one less traveled by. I think that was very clever. Many people just do what other people do , because they think that is the smartest thing to do. But this man followed his dream, not the stream. And that choice made a difference in his life .	I think the poem is about taking big choices in life . Not follow everyone else but to be yourself and don't care about what other people choose and think of you.

If I had not been in the classroom myself, monitoring the computer screens and seen how the desks were placed far apart from each other, I would have thought that the two respondents had collaborated. As this is not the case their approach, their choice of words and their thoughts are surprisingly identical. Of course these responses are handpicked from the data, but several other texts could have been compared in a similar way. In the first stanza both discover that the poem is about choices, and that the point is which way to choose. In the second stanza they choose the exact same words, but have different thoughts, one finds both of the ways attractive, while the other finds the woods scary. In the third stanza both of the respondents are bewildered, and rest their case. In the final stanza the puzzle is solved, and both end up mentioning major choices in life and how to relate to other people's opinions.

Whether these two respondents belong to an interpretive community or not boils down to how one reinvents and adjusts literary theories. What the text does is more important than what the text says (Fish 1980:3), and what is does here is to enter the minds of these two teenagers in almost the exact same way.

4.2.5 An aesthetic versus an efferent approach

The wish to understand both the content and the context of the poem is strongly felt among the respondents, hence the need from some of them to explain that they do not understand and even include an excuse for not understanding (Text 12). The readers seem eager to understand what the poem means, whereas they are merely asked to tell what they think and feel, words that denote an aesthetic reading stance. Whether or not it is possible to “understand what a poem means” at all is a different matter. An efferent reading experience seeks to carry useful information away from the reading, and by bending this concept a little one could say that there is much useful information to carry away from “The Road Not Taken”, like how to look at life, how to look at ourselves and how to look at the concept of choice. This type of information is normally not considered efferent, but by comparing a term from Coleridge on reading poetry and Rosenblatt’s definition of an efferent reading stance, one will find that they are almost identical: “carried forward”(Rosenblatt 1994:28) versus “carry away”(24). Both cognitive and affective aspects are present when we read, as well as an efferent and an aesthetic stance. The aesthetic stance is normally seen as the most appropriate way of reading poetry, but an efferent stance may both pave the way for feelings and help the reader to save the information, the insight, for future use. To apply rules to a reading experience, and to arrest all thoughts that are not aesthetic, will not help adolescents gain a more profound insight. The self-confidence of the reader will be enhanced when various ways of interpreting literature are encouraged, and when the reader is aware of the aesthetic-efferent continuum and applies it wisely.

4.2.6 Indeterminacy, gaps and reader awareness

A reader needs to be guided by the text in order to reach “clicks of insight” (Rosenblatt 1994:55). Passages may be reread and the text may act as blueprint to enhance the reading experience. Iser refers to the indeterminate meaning when he explains how the gaps in a text are there to invite the reader in (1989:10). What seems to be indeterminate meaning at one point in a text may shift to determinate meaning in another part. These aspects become even clearer here as the respondents read the poem stanza by stanza. They have time to reflect, and as they read, each new part is conditioned by the parts read before. Many respondents indicate that they grasp more and more of the text as they read on. At some points the reader may almost feel the presence of the author and feel that they communicate directly (Rosenblatt 1994:50). In Text 14 the respondent gets a revelation when the final stanza is read: “Okaay, out of this part I got a whole other picture in my head. Now it sounds more like life. Choose directions and how you’re making choices in your life and how your choices make a difference in your life... I am probably misinterpreting the text, probably big time too.” Despite the sudden “click of insight”, the reader does not dare to trust what has been revealed.

Instead of trusting their own instincts as readers, some seem to feel inferior and hasten to add “I don’t understand”. The common misconception that poetry has to be fully understood in order to convey meaning or elicit enjoyment seems to apply to the respondents. If teachers open for multiple ways of responding to literature, the pupils may start to see the indeterminate parts and the gaps of the texts as intriguing, because here they may contribute actively to the transactional process, condition the text and make meaning. The awareness of the reader depends on her self-confidence in relation

to the text. Some of the comments in the empirical material that deal with reader awareness and the indeterminate parts of “The Road Not Taken” are shown in table 7.

Table 7 Voicing uncertainty

<i>Text</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Type of comment</i>
Text 7	It's kind of a mysterious text cause they're talking in riddles and puzzles.	Anticipation
Text 12	I admit that I don't have a clue	Blank
Text 13	The road he took made the difference in his life. I don't know if it was a bad or a good thing. But I think it was a bad thing.	Revision
Text 14	Okaay, out of this part I got a whole other picture in my head. Now it sounds more like life. Choose directions and how you're making choices in your life and how your choices make a difference in your life... I am probably misinterpreting the text, probably big time too.	Revision Fulfilment Indeterminacy
Text 17	You just find the way as you go	Anticipation
	I think it can be linked to a different scenario than just picking which road to go down, but I can't quite wrap my head around what scenario just yet. Maybe in the next part. I start to wonder if this text is about life choices. ... that he made the choice he thought seemed most inviting him	Anticipation Revision Fulfilment
Text 21	I think that there is a red line through the story which is based upon thinking right and good about the choices you make. I think that this story can be useful for young people if they understand it. I am having trouble understanding it and I don't even know if it is right. So if it should be useful for young people I think it should be if they read it with a teacher who understands it well.	Anticipation Indeterminacy
Text 29	Now I feel confused. We don't get the real answer on if the road he took were bad or good. I think the ending didn't gave much sense... I think young people would really like if this poem got read to them, maybe by a shrink or someone like that. So they could explain it later.	Gap

Out of the 39 responses 17 mention that at one point or another they did not understand the poem, still most of them reached an insight before or in the last stanza. Two pupils suggest that someone should help them understand the poem. One suggests a teacher (Text 21) while another suggests a “shrink” (Text 29). This may denote that pupils are used to having a teacher who tells them what the answer could be, also in literary reading, hence deprive them of thinking for themselves.

The major gaps or indeterminate parts in the poem, according to the pupils, can be phrased: “Which road was the best?” and “Did he take the best way or not?” In Text 36 the respondent calls the road a “life path” and sees a possible warning signalling that dangers may be lurking, but “so far nothing bad has happened”. In Text 17 the respondent says that “You just find the way as you go”, similar to the path unfolded (Richardson 1997:182). This can be said about the physical poem in this setting, as it is cut in four pieces, and then reassembled. Life itself has both gaps and indeterminacy, and therefore the choices people make are essential.

Frost on the one hand wants everyone to be able to read his poetry. On the other hand he seems to be misleading his readers from time to time. “...all poetry relies to an extent on the indeterminacy of language. But Frost’s writing seems not merely to rely on this indeterminacy, but to heighten and celebrate it” (Orr 2015:30-31). In the poem “The Mountain” from 1915, Frost says: “All the fun’s in how you say a thing” (31). Here is a poet who deliberately plays with words, hid in everyday speech, and thus creates poetry not that easily interpreted.

4.2.7 Levels of reading and validity

It is questionable whether one should look at the responses in my study as interpretations of “The Road Not Taken” or merely as first encounters. Wiland also raises this question, and she calls the protocols in her study a “reservoir of interpretive potential” (2009:71). While Fish says that every time we read, we also interpret, he still distinguishes between a first level of reading, based on perception, and a secondary level, resembling the responses in this study. In the secondary level, labelled interpretation, differences between readers become more apparent, as this is seen as an “emotional reaction” to the first level

(1980:5). The responses in this study also resemble Bleich's concept of resymbolization. These levels are blurred or fused to a certain extent, but more important than how to label them, are the contents of the responses.

As both Bleich (1981:147) and Rosenblatt (1994:54) point to the relevance of associations in connection to literary reading, the associative elements in my data will be looked at. Bleich trained his students to write response statements that were packed with anecdotal material. Even though the respondents in this study are asked to tell about their thoughts and feelings related to "The Road Not Taken", they have kept their focus on the poem, and left anecdotal material out. From their educational experience they are not used to respond in a very personal way. Still many respondents add to the poem and use their imagination, as seen in table 8.

Table 8 Associations to "The Road Not Taken"

<i>Text</i>	<i>Associations</i>
Text 3	About leaving something/someone behind About a man who will be young as long as he can
Text 4	You miss people, but you will never come back to them
Text 5	I imagine the two parted roads going far into infinity; they look as if they never were to end. The forest is quiet. The only thing I can imagine seeing/hearing I [is] birds and a noise in the bushes now and then, and also that I/the person is alone, standing in a crossroad. This might sound scary or dark, but I actually picture it being peaceful.
Text 6	I feel this is about someone that travels a lot... Not traveling in the world, traveling himself/herself and hoping to find himself/herself.
Text 7	...two men who needs a ride and he could only take with one
Text 11	...a kid in a divorce... to choose between living with his dad or his mom. Maybe the kid isn't able to help his mother/father and that the parent is having big troubles, is maybe traumatized and sad all day. Maybe the parent did something to the kid and it made him regret taking this path.
Text 12	Maybe because he/she don't want to be found. To be left alone and just escape.
Text 15	...someone tries to call on the person and tell him that everything is fine and good. But as further they comes into the wood it gets really scary and maybe they did

	something wrong
Text 20	Its autumn and colder days are coming, colder and maybe sadder.
Text 22	Its maybe family problems or maybe friendship problems, it could be anything... The person maybe stood in front of all the nearest people the person had. They knew the right decision, but you were maybe angry, or sad or stressed and the emotions you had effected your choice.
Text 23	Maybe it's about a girl who has to choose between 2 people and she doesn't know who to choose in her life... Maybe the person she choose needed some company, he was alone and had no one to care for him.
Text 24	The person in the poem is depressed, and he don't know how to come back from it, because he had a better life before. And now he just don't know what to do.
Text 26	It could be forex sample problems or trouble with friends...
Text 27	Let's say the theme is "drug addicted"... You take drugs because you're being tempted. But people warn you. People who have been on the same track before.
Text 28	Maybe a friend that is turning into being not a friend?
Text 31	Maybe the person does have pain, wanted to go away from the others. He or she wanted a break and travels around...
Text 34	Like a man has to choose between to women he loves... The first night after he has chosen her, he looks back in his footprints at the ground to see if his footprints has turned black. And if they do he has choose wrong.
Text 35	You can't go through studies and stuff easily. You have to work just as hard as everyone else to achieve what you want.
Text 36	His life path... is grassy and feels nice to go for the storyteller. But there is a warning that might turn things around. Maybe this was a bad path after all? So far nothing bad has happened, and the storyteller can go safely on the road with no worries.
Text 38	I think that is when you are whit people around you how don't think the same as you... to take a step to show himself for the world and go out and think and see you are good and not ugly. Sometime should we travel away from someone and that's hard to go from.

In a subjective context one must allow for different ways of reading a text. The transactional theory is applied when the reader and the text interact. Some of the associations in table 8 would not be considered valid interpretations according to Rosenblatt's two criteria: one must find verbal basis in the text and interpretation must not be contradicted by the text (1994:115), but they are all valid experiences, or resymbolizations, of the poem. Rosenblatt allows for individual readings that are far-fetched when she says that the get-together of reader and text could "be reflected on from any angle important to him as a human being" (1994:12). As both fantasy and imagination are key aspects of an aesthetic reading experience, one cannot deny such

experiences to be verbalised in responses. According to Bleich it would be fine if the respondents made up their own stories from scratch, inspired by “The Road Not Taken”, whereas for Rosenblatt it would not, if the text was meant to be an interpretation. Table 8 shows how some respondents find topics like divorce, depression, family problems and drug addiction in the poem. Although Holland’s “identity themes” do not seem apt in an educational setting, some of the topics seen by the adolescents could be of direct relevance to their own lives or to someone they know. Neither of these topics have verbal basis in the poem directly.

Less specific associations are found, like the thought of leaving someone behind, missing people that one might not meet again, the need or wish to escape reality and problems related to friends, family or studies. These concerns could fit in most people’s lives at one point or another, and they may serve as examples where the respondents link the poem to experiences in real life. Several of these concerns are also addressed when the adolescents describe what it is like to be young today.

In text 22, the respondent associates the words of the poem with how emotions affect our choices. The storyteller is situated in front of persuasive friends or family members, but strong emotions prevent the narrator from listening to them. This description portrays the life of an adolescent, facing a choice, in a touching way.

According to some of the scholars, an interpretation of “The Road Not Taken” without considering the irony in it, would probably be seen as flawed. Consequently one could perhaps see the readers in this study as lacking depth or not being able to see the deeper meaning. In a reader-response context it would be more accurate to say that the readers see the deeper meaning *for them*. Either they are not schooled enough to see the irony, or in this case it does not make sense to them. For them the irony is not there, and

the removal of irony can possibly enhance their enjoyment and appreciation of the poem, because they look at it with less critical eyes.

If by valid interpretation, one means *critical*, the criteria for validation can be objected to. It is noteworthy that the word *criticism* is used to evaluate works of art. Even though the word obviously has a double meaning, the irony lies in its similarity to criticism as “expressing disapproval and of noting the problems or faults of a person or thing”⁹. The fact that the pupils do not see the similarities between the two roads in the poem, and that the narrator in the poem therefore may deceive himself when he says that his choice of road made all the difference, does not mean that they do not understand and interpret the poem, it just means that they understand and interpret it differently.

4.3 Being young according to Norwegian adolescents

The best way to find out what it is like to be young today must be to ask young people to describe it. In this study the respondents are asked to describe what they think is important and typical for young people. They are asked to consider both good sides and bad sides of adolescence, and to include more personal thoughts if they wish to. Many of the aspects mentioned in the pupils’ responses may be classified as having both positive and negative sides, in other words they are not clear cut. Hence, a table can structure their views to a certain extent, but not do them justice. Table 9 attempts to display the more positive aspects of adolescence, while table 10 shows the more negative sides. The number of respondents who gave these answers is shown in parenthesis.

⁹ Merriam-Webster

Table 9 Positive aspects of being an adolescent

School(9), education (4), a good job (3), school is free (2), the wish for a bright future (2), no school uniforms (1), good grades (1), want to earn money (2), homework (1)
Friends (24), social life (4), building friendships (1)
Family (11), parents help them out (1)
Sports (12), be active (3), spare time (2), hobbies (2), healthy life (2)
Have fun (5), enjoy life (3), happy life (2), be a little crazy (2), freedom (1)
Be themselves (1), be happy with who they are (1)
Have someone to talk to (8), feel loved (7), get support (6), get help if needed (4), trust (2), important to feel included (1) and appreciated (1), be seen and heard (1), feel special (1) , self-confidence (1), not be selfish (1)
Endless opportunities (1)
Relaxing(2) , having time to themselves (1)
Having a good personality (1), many are mature and reflected (1), caring and nice (1), sophisticated (1)
Cell phone (3), music (2), video games (1), tablet (1)
Make their own decisions(3), trying to find and be themselves (3)
Peace (2), free country (1)
Animals (1)
Religion (1)
We have all we need in life (1), feel lucky (1)

In the data one can clearly see that many of the respondents turn to their peers for comfort and support. To succeed at school, to have a close relationship to their families and be active in sports are also of great importance to many of the respondents. In addition, the need to feel loved and to have someone to talk to stand out as important to many. These views are contrasted by the negative aspects of adolescence, seen in table 10.

Table 10 Negative aspects of being an adolescent

Stress related to school (5), homework (4), tests(3), grades (2), don't know what to do when it comes to education (1)
Friends-related stress and too little time for friends (7), wanting to be popular (6), friends that are not real(2), teenagers can be evil (gangs, shut others out)(1), bullying (1), should have many friends (1), be cool (1)
Judged by how one dresses (6), what others think of them (4), judged by their looks (2), judged by others (2), feel lonely or don't have any friends (2), rumours (1), some act happy(1), have to be happy to please others(1), hide struggles inside (1), reputation (1), low self- confidence (1), worry (1)
Façade (1), Facebook shows a perfect life, real life is not like that (1)
Family-related stress (4), don't listen to their parents (1)
Cell phones (7), snapchat(2), Instagram(1), Facebook (1)

Pressure (5), must be perfect in everything (4), perform(2), tired (2), exhausted(2), must achieve (1), pressure from themselves and from Internet (1), starting early (1), must be successful (1), life is shallow (1)
Body pressure (3), perfect body (3), skinny (2), pretty (2)
Stress related to money (2)
Too little time to do nothing (1), too little free time (1)
Many follow the stream, do as everyone else (4), scared to be different (1)
Negative (1), expect too much (1)
Can't make choices like grown-ups (1)
Shopping (1)
Don't go out and experience things like before (1)
Drinking and smoking (1)
Can't get a driver's licence before turning 18 (1)

The responses in table 10 are not as coherent as in table 9, but some aspects still stand out. Quite a few teenagers feel stressed because of school, they feel they have too little time for friends and they feel a sense of pressure in many areas of life. In order to analyse the responses in this section one can turn to the young voices themselves. Studying the material shows that while the respondents address many issues that are hard for young people today, they also provide solutions that may either end or ease the problems. The young respondents thus respond to each other's dilemmas and perform an analysis of their own situation. Table 11 shows a grid that could be used as a pedagogical tool in an educational setting, where the teenagers address their problems in the left column and their own advice on how to alter the situation are put in the corresponding right column. The various parts are assembled from the authentic responses, but modified to fit together and to form a whole (text number in parenthesis). Moreover the most suitable pronoun in the right column had to be "we", as these are the voices of the teenagers themselves.

Table 11 Adolescent challenges and adolescent advice

<i>Challenges voiced by adolescents</i>	<i>Advice to problems and challenges voiced by adolescents</i>
Many have a nice façade (1), where everything looks fine on the surface (7), but this may hide the struggles and loneliness many feel inside (25). The pressure many feels comes partly from themselves (15) and is exemplified through the wish to get straight A's in school (36) and the willingness to get up two hours early to straighten the hair before school (30). Some starve themselves, while others spend money on expensive clothes (30). They feel that they must be perfect (34), and no one talks of dropping out of school to go fishing for a living anymore (36).	We should talk to our friends and be a bit more open about our feelings (30), as teenagers today are mature, kind and helpful, and they will also listen to advice from others who have more experience (39). This can lift a burden from our shoulders (16). Norway could be a big society of friends (11). Young people should enjoy being young and make silly mistakes in the period before we become an adult. We should live right now and think that nothing else matters (34). Youth is a period of endless opportunities (5), with a lot of freedom (34). We should be happy with who we are and remember that what is inside counts more than expensive clothes (37). No one wants to be one in the crowd (25), so young people should make sure others feel appreciated and remember that what we often take for granted is the most important things in life (16).
Many feel that the cell phone takes too much time, and some are addicted to the little box (12). They feel lost without it (15) and a week without internet would be torture (30). Some say that young people love their cell phones (31) and use it too much (33, 35) It can be negative to use it all day long (38) and even at girl's nights people hardly talk to each other, because they stare at their phone (30).	We should slow down the use of the cell phone (31), and remember that friends and family have much more worth (31). We should rather talk in person (30) than check Facebook and Snapchat all the time (33). Before young people used to walk in the mountains and sleep in a tent, we should not just sit at home. We should be active (33, 35) and stay healthy (31).
Some young people feel tired all the time (20), and some feel exhausted (28).	Sometimes it is important to do nothing (5).
Life can feel shallow (17)	Sometimes we feel the true love from our friends and our family (17). To believe in something gives us a wide perspective (22).
Some young people feel that when they are with their family they have to be happy (28).	If we have a family who supports us, we should sacrifice everything to see them happy (22)
It is typical for young people to think of school and nothing else (23), many wonder what to do next year, when they have to make a choice for a new school (25). Many want a future with enough money (1, 21, 37).	Life does not have to be a living nightmare, even though we want to be successful, we should just take things as they come. We should not say no to our friends to do homework (36). Is making a lot of money really what we want? (13) We do not need millions upon millions, we should choose what we love to do instead (21).
Many worry too much (23), and because Norway is a rich country, many young people expect too much (35)	We are lucky to live in a free country with no wars (28). We have peace (23). We should not be selfish (22) and we should remember that we can't have everything we want (35).
Teenagers cannot make choices like grown-ups (31).	We can make some decisions, and then we learn about adult life (31).

From table 11 one can draw many conclusions on teenage culture, even though the table shows a simplified version of teenage challenges. While many are preoccupied with how they are perceived by others and the pressure they feel, some also focus on being themselves, being there for others and they highlight aspects of life that are more important than looks and achievements. The Core Curriculum comments on how “...problems that are perceived as being personal are in fact shared by many and hence can only be solved through cooperation ...” (1993:32).

A recurrent topic in the responses is the massive use cell phones among adolescents. The phone itself is not the issue, but rather how it affects young people. In research conducted recently in the USA, 54 % of the younger millennials (18-24 years) say that they check their mobile phones constantly¹⁰. Although not directly transferable to Norway, statistics would probably tell a similar story, showing habits that the young themselves address. According to medienorge’s report, 92% of 15-29 year olds in Norway check Facebook every day.¹¹ The Core Curriculum says that through education one should “combine technical know-how with human insight” (1993: 28), and a sensible use of devices like cell phones is a matter to look at in this respect, according to the adolescents’ own worry. In Text 30 a girl says: “At a girls night we will just all be staring at our phones and almost not talk to each other at all. A week without internet would be torture. Not good in my opinion. I would rather talk to people in person than talk to people over snapchat or whatever.”

One respondent says: “I don’t think it is a typical young life. We’re all different... I think also we teens are trying to find ourselves. Trying to find out who we really are, what we really love. What makes us happy and what we’re going to avoid” (Text 14). This response is in line with what many see as the message in “The Road Not Taken”,

¹⁰ Bank of America, 2015, Trends in Consumer Mobility Report, conducted by Braun Research, Inc

¹¹ Bjørnstad, Nina & Tornes, Knut A. Medieåret 2013-2014, medienorge.

namely that one should not try to be like everyone else. Too often generalisations are made, in research, in media and in daily conversations, where groups are categorised and labelled according to the general idea describing them. One always runs the risk of simplifying or generalise, also in this study. Furthermore teenagers' individual ideas of teen culture may not be accurate, as they may be coloured by newspaper headlines and stereotyped views themselves. It is also hard to evaluate a culture where one is a part.

In text 4, the respondent reflects the views of Montiero, describing the letter 'Y' and how it denotes the transition from childhood years and into adulthood: "Being young is not always so easy, but you can do so much when you are young. Life has just start and you have so much you can do." Text 5 brings a similar perspective: "Just make silly mistakes, not big ones just one you can fix. And just being between a kid and an adult." Tables of letter frequency in English show that 'Y' has a 1,66% frequency, whereas in "The Road Not Taken" it has a 1,95% frequency.¹² Two other letters that may be seen as splitting up into different paths are 'V' and 'W', with a frequency rate of 1,05% and 1,68% respectively. In the poem they have a higher rate: 1,42% and 3,19%. These facts must be seen merely as curiosities, as this study is not a cryptanalysis, nevertheless all the three letters resembling a junction with diverging roads have a higher rate in the poem than in English generally.

The respondent in text 17 comments on adolescence and says that "somehow it has become very shallow". The opposing view is seen in the Core Curriculum where education is meant to help the learners get "a zest for life"(1993:11). In school the pupils should feel that teachers show "a sensitivity for their uniqueness" (22). At the same time it is realised that "peer culture constrains and gives scope to what the school is able to achieve" (32). Whenever people attempt to understand each other, the possibility of

¹² Norvig in the list of references

misunderstanding each other is present. Diane Davis discusses how people interact in *Inessential Solidarity* and says: “You remain both unbearably close and inaccessible” (2010:76). A blunt response is given in text 22, where the respondent admits that “When you’re young you don’t know everything about everything.” Even though adolescents do not know everything about everything, they do have teenage know-how and they provide the remedy for many of their own challenges.

“The Road Not Taken” is seen as a useful poem for young people by many of the respondents, because of its message to them. They include matters like choosing the right way rather than the easy way (Text 1), daring to tell their own stories or opinions (10), taking risks and following their dreams when it comes to a career (17) and the feeling that no one understands them and their choices, but often their parents know what is best for them in the end (22). Furthermore they recognise themselves in being unsure when it comes to crossroads in life (25), they must think before they act, because it can be difficult to return from a wrong way (32) and choosing the hardest path, exemplified by education, will be worth it in the end (35). Finally, the poem could be useful to make conscious choice on avoiding drugs and crime (36) and making the right choices related to drinking and smoking (37). These responses seen as a whole tell the story of being young, seen through the lens of “The Road Not Taken”, useful both to young people and to adults who relate to teenagers. The subordinate research question asking to what extent the respondents would be willing to share their feelings on adolescence, is consequently answered in this section. An elaborate account of teenage life today, considering both the positive and the negative aspects, is provided, exemplified by “...youth is sometimes a nightmare, sometimes a dream” (Text 28).

4.4 Personal insight through poetry

“A text’s unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination” (Barthes 1977:148) is a line often used to describe the role of the reader versus the role of the author. When Robert Frost had “The Road Not Taken” published, he sent the poem on a centennial journey, ending in two classrooms in Kristiansand. Whether or not those classrooms became the poem’s final destination or a stopover, metaphorically speaking, is partly a matter that can be discussed empirically and partly a matter of inference. The title of this thesis is “The Road Not Taken”: Poetry and Personal Insight in the EFL-classroom and Beyond. The scope of ‘beyond’ corresponds to “learning to last a lifetime”(Core Curriculum 1993:5), which is what education is meant to impart. Fish says that studying what poetic language does can “transform minds” (1980:66). These perspectives form a basis for the analysis on gaining personal insight through poetry. “The Road Not Taken” has contributed to modifying feelings among its readers in this study. Themes related to the adolescents’ lives have been found and the poem is considered useful in many respects connected to adolescence.

When asked what the poem “The Road Not Taken” could symbolise for the respondents personally, it inspires them to be themselves (Text 5, 6), it both tells them to consider the consequences of their actions otherwise they may regret the choices made (20, 21, 29) and on the other hand to relax and not think too much about consequences as the way will come as they go (15, 17). Some say that they can do stupid things, but they will have more chances in life (4), whereas others say they must learn from mistakes made when “emotions are in action” (22). The insight some gained through reading spans from one who needs to stop judging people because of their looks (7) to one who realises that complaining about society is useless unless one is willing to change one’s own behaviour (34), exemplified also in Text 36 where the respondent

wishes to help others make right decisions and in Text 38 where the respondent wants to be better at helping others. The will to try and to dare more is mentioned in several responses (18, 23, 26, 30). One respondent links the poem to the future where these lines will function as motivation to continue studying and reaching a goal (35). Insight is shown in Text 7, where the respondent expresses worry because of conformity in Norway and says that we are “all trying to be way too A4”, referring to the standard paper size. Finally the rollercoaster-aspect elicited by the respondent in Text 31 shows how life can feel, with too many choices. All these reactions to the lines of “The Road Not Taken” mirror what the Core Curriculum sees as insight found in the “weave of words” (1993:14).

The word “insight” troubles Fish, because it signals “there it is, I’ve got it” (1980:34). Although said in a context on sentence ambiguity, Fish is uneasy by the concept because it denotes something fixed. Even though individuals may differ in what they see as insight, exemplified through the various responses to “The Road Not Taken”, it is still insight to them, in their lives and in their context. Whether insight can be measured or not is hard to pinpoint. It must be seen as something unique and personal, something that is felt and experienced. Insight is also an evolving concept, constantly changing and expanding as individuals widen their horizon, in this study by mirroring their own lives in a poem. Consequently “The Road Not Taken” will not remain in the classroom, but it will remain as a more or less conscious part of the pupils’ insight. What is experienced in a classroom is meant to last longer than the lesson itself, hence the term ‘beyond’ is suitable to describe how insight is elicited and attained to last a lifetime.

Although not comparable to a lifetime, the pupils did answer to a questionnaire five months after their initial encounter with “The Road Not Taken”. Their replies show that 23 out of 39 respondents remember the accurate title of the poem, while 3 more

remember parts of the title or a line. 29 out of 39 respondents can retell what the poem is about and many of them add themes like 'choices'. 19 respondents can recall thoughts or feelings they had during the reading five months earlier, and 20 respondents say that the poem made them more aware of important of new aspects in life. Finally 9 respondents say that they have thought of the poem after they read it. No one told the respondents to remember the poem at the time when they read it, and it was not a situation they had rehearsed for where they were tested. That so many pupils do remember the poem at all is remarkable. The most unexpected in these data is how almost one out of four says that they have thought about the poem in situations in life after the reading. A poem does not provide individuals with a key to solve life's problems, but it can make people wonder and reflect. The respondents may not see the direct link between the poem and their own lives at the moment of reading, but it may return to them later in life. It may dawn or grow upon them, comparable to how Luke Iorio reconnected with "The Road Not Taken" years after encountering it for the first time. When he came across it in a new setting he felt that he was reconnected to his twelve-year-old self. The poetic experience was stored for future use.

On the difference between an aesthetic and an efferent reading experience it is said that the aesthetic experience happens while reading, whereas in an efferent stance one reads to serve a purpose. Rosenblatt says that the reader's attention is focused on "the *residue* after the reading" (1994: 23). The two ways of reading can be combined by applying the aesthetic stance to a reading experience that will both last and be useful. The insight will remain after the reading. Miall and Rosenblatt both says that a work of art may expand the mind of the reader, the former in saying that a response to literature "promotes an offline tuning of emotional and cognitive schemata, with a particular focus on resetting the individual's readiness for appropriate action" (2006/2007:197) and the

latter in saying that a literary work is “a unique mode of experience, an expansion of the boundaries of our own temperaments and worlds, lived through in our own persons” (Rosenblatt 1994: 68). If the reader’s emotional and cognitive schemata are tuned, and the boundaries of the reader’s familiar world are expanded, insight must have been gained and this in turn may have consequences of a more practical manner.

4.5 Didactic implications, principles and examples

Some didactic implications and principles are described explicitly in this study, while others are more implicit. When the reading of literature is seen as an experience, rather than as a starting point for standard interpretation, one must allow for reader autonomy. Teachers must refrain from their position of being close to omniscient in the eyes of the pupils. Collins expresses worry on behalf of poetry reading in his poem “Introduction to Poetry” where he says that “They begin beating it with a hose / To find out what it really means” (1988, l 15-16). According to Poetry Foundation’s website Collins’s work is reader conscious, like when he compares the transition from a poem’s title to its first line to stepping into a canoe.¹³ Collins is cited: “A lot of things can go wrong ... we are all attempting, all the time, to create a logical, rational path through the day. To the left and right there are an amazing set of distractions that we usually can’t afford to follow. But the poet is willing to stop anywhere.” This approach is what should be seen in the classrooms. The teacher’s task is to provide for the smooth transition into the world of poetry, and then allow for the learners to explore the paths that follow.

As the Core Curriculum has provided an educational framework for this thesis, its implications are also present. The lifeworld of the pupil, as shown in figure 1, should be reflected in all areas taught in schools, also in literary reading. Learning and insight

¹³ Slosek in references

reach beyond the classrooms, and also beyond what pupils may grasp instantaneously. The role of the reader has been discussed, but the role of the teacher is also essential. The Core Curriculum says that a teacher's "command of his or her field is vital when the experiences of the young are to be converted into insight" (1993:20). The word command signals the opposite views of those fronted here, however a teacher must master the subject taught. How to convert the experience of poetry into insight is to a large extent what this thesis has dealt with. Readers who are allowed more autonomy, and who apply both the cognitive and the affective mode to the reading of poetry and to the response that follows, may benefit from this as it can lead to "less inhibition and anxiety and more self-esteem and risk-taking" (Wiland 2009: 206). This resembles the words attributed to Socrates on teaching: "Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel".

As society is always changing, teaching must adjust accordingly. When research shows that more pupils feel the pressure to perform, that the use of antidepressants rise and teenagers spend hours each day on social media, teaching should reflect these issues. Dylan sings that "Your old road is rapidly agin' / Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand" (1964). Frost and Dylan share the metaphor of a road, both of them old in a rapidly changing world, and in teaching the knowledge of the past is a link to the present, and in turn an anticipation of the future. Wiland calls the internet an extended version of an interpretive community (2009: 201) and this is apparent also in the teaching of poetry. Wattpad and Movellas are examples of sites where teenagers can post their own poems, and receive feedback. Videos of poetry slams are easily retrievable, and these can inspire pupils to make their own poetry. Creativity can also be spurred by looking at other's experiences of canonical or more contemporary poetry, exemplified by Claire Holgate's illustration in figure 2, and consequently competence

aims in the English subject curricula like “create, communicate and converse about own texts inspired by English literature...” can be attained.

A more inductive approach to the reading and teaching of literature can facilitate and enhance pupils’ involvement and appreciation. In a subjective oriented teaching method the first question to ask is “What do I want to know?” (Bleich 1978: 41). If pupils are encouraged to ponder that question, they may be more apt for the art of reading poetry, communicated by Holden this way: “Poets are athletes of the mind ... The performances take place in books, and the quality of the performance depends almost wholly upon the existence of an educated and willing reader; for the art of poetry is pre-eminently an art of reading.” (1999: xi) To agree that the reader must be willing is not hard, but that the reader must be fully educated in order to do a poem justice is questionable, since to be a reader of poetry is not and should not be a protected title. However, the whole point of education is to educate, and it should always be carried out serving the interests of the pupils.

5 Conclusion

The main research question will be answered in this section. Research limitations will be looked at in section 5.1, whereas in section 5.2 I suggest how the present research leads to new topics for further analysis. In 5.3 I end by including a personal frame on reading and literature.

A poem can be structured in a timeline, where it first dwells in the mind of the poet and then is turned into words, much like how Frost describes a complete poem “where an emotion finds the thought and the thought finds the words.” (Untermeyer 1963: 22) The poem written will reside between the covers of a book, or online, until a reader reads it. The reader will then try to elicit meaning from what is read, and eventually the poem’s aftermath is that it will exist in the reader’s mind, preferably in the form of insight. Orr comments on Frost’s poem “Directive” that it shows the aftermath of choice (Orr 2015: 95-96). This poem is from the aftermath’s perspective, looking back at choices made in life. In “The Road Not Taken” a person is looking into the future, wondering how life will turn out, and the result is “a tangle of memory, sense impressions, guesswork and storytelling.”(Orr 2015: 145). These four words correspond well with what the students’ revealed in their response statements in Bleich’s studies, as they leaned on both childhood memories and associations to multiple areas in their lives. The responses in my study reveal that few respondents connect “The Road Not Taken” to specific incidents in their own lives. Considering that they are not acquainted to such a way of working with poetry this may be anticipated. Still many could enjoy poetry to a larger extent if they related their reading more to their own lives, not necessarily for school assignments, but for their own personal insight.

One may question if there is an aftermath from the reading of “The Road Not Taken” stored up in the adolescent readers. Regardless of the missing link to specific

events listed in the responses, many of the readers have had both a cognitive and an affective experience when they read the poem. Evidence is found in the responses on modifying feelings, the awareness of not understanding, suddenly followed by “clicks of insight” (Rosenblatt 1994:55) and many opinions on why “The Road Not Taken” could be a good contribution to teenage know-how. Five months after their first encounter with the poem many could still tell what it meant to them. These facts tell that insight has been gained. It is questionable whether a poem can alter lives entirely. In Text 36 the respondent comments on this in a pragmatic manner: “I am not sure though if just a poem would change the way people like this are thinking, but it has a very important message and I think the part where he understood that he took the wrong way might be very useful ... they would not make the wrong decisions.” Choices and decisions are recurrent topics in this study, and Orr comments on how Frost might have put it: “We can’t accurately tell the stories of our own choices, Frost might say, but they are nonetheless ours, and there is something pleasing- or at any rate fascinating- in the way we fall short of understanding them consciously, and in the hope that we might *not* fall short. In our reaching and failing we create a life, a story, an art.” (Orr 2015:119)

The wish to make their own choices, the will to be themselves and to go their own way, are all aspects of personal insight shown by EFL-pupils experiencing the poem “The Road Not Taken”. Their lives and their stories will be made from these choices. The themes found in the poem largely correspond to the insight gained, is my claim, and this is related to meaning making. Themes are found in the poem because the lines make meaning to the respondents. Simultaneously, insight is gained while meaning is made, hence the need for inductive approaches in teaching. Insight is also found through modified feelings and in the wish to alter conduct. Feelings stirred are often accompanied by new insight. The insight gained is also related to adolescent life today,

as many reflect on the relationship between “The Road Not Taken” and real life. To sum up it is shown in this study that through relevant poetry, dealing with matters close to life, like making the right choices and daring to stand out, adolescents gain new and personal insight. This insight lasts longer than the lesson in the classroom and it reaches beyond what can be measured or fully understood.

5.1 Research limitations

This research is a case study, and consequently the findings here only apply to this study. Still it is valuable evidence in the current setting, and may be transferable or comparable to other settings and other areas of research. The study is based partly on my own experience in teaching and assessing pupils’ work, and consequently a sincere effort has been made in order to treat the data correctly. The responses written by pupils may or may not provide an accurate picture of teenage life today, but from studying the data and comparing it to other studies of relevance, like HEMIL-reports and the Norwegian Public Health Report of 2014, there is little reason to believe that what they share is incorrect. The respondents are a fairly homogenous group, and their responses may consequently correspond more than what would be the case in a more representative group. Although one must be aware of this fact and treat the data accordingly, my belief is that every individual should be treated as such and not merely as a member of a group.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

Research can be conducted in various ways, and with an eye to the poem dealt with one could consider what “The Road Not Taken” in this thesis is.

Based on “The Road Not Taken”, or a poem dealing with similar topics, adolescents could write their own poems. These could be analysed in terms of reader-

response theory. It could be a fine way to discuss and explore a competence aim that deals with literature: “create, communicate and converse about own texts inspired by English literature, films and cultural forms of expression”.

More research on how teaching can reflect the lifeworld of pupils to a larger extent could be of great value. Also, more empirical research on reader autonomy and reader-awareness, maybe in a long term perspective, could be of use in educational settings.

There are current debates on a new version of the Core Curriculum. If a new document is made a comparison should be made between the current version and the new one.

5.3 A personal frame

While working on this thesis I have taught English to adolescents. Various methods of approaching literature have been tested, from collecting responses for this study, via classroom poetry slams, to a school-performance of *Hamlet*. While the pupils rose to the occasion in all these matters their personal poems in the poetry slam stand out. Teaching literature can be rewarding.

On a more personal note, my seven-year-old let me in on what it felt like when I read to her one morning. She defined the experience this way: “I am just telling my brain to draw a picture of what I hear, and then it happens. And the drawing gets stuck there. The ones who draw are extremely quick. Each drawing just takes two seconds. And if I think about it at another time, I can just watch the drawing in my head with my binoculars.” In a way she contributed to my research in showing me how literature functions. It gets stuck and it provides us with mental images for further use. My ten-year-old and I read the *Harry Potter*-series together, and one night he commented:

“Maybe you and I have totally different images in our minds!” We all perceive literature in a personal manner. Literature experienced, and not merely interpreted, becomes a source and a resource. Our mental images, formed by what we have read, are personal and unique, hence the term “Poetry and Personal Insight”. Reading poetry can be challenging, but matters that demand our utmost attention may eventually become our greatest assets, way beyond the classrooms.

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Appendix A: "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,
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.

Robert Frost

Appendix B: Letter of approval for research

KRISTIANSAND KOMMUNE

HAUMYRHEIA SKOLE



Til den det måtte angå

10.4.2016

Bruk av elever i forbindelse med masteroppgaveprosjekt

Aina W Bjelland og undertegnede gjorde høsten 2015 en avtale om at elevene på Haumyrheia skole kunne benyttes i diverse undersøkelser i forbindelse med Aina W Bjelland sitt masteroppgaveprosjekt.

Skolen ser positivt på denne typen samarbeid og ser fram til å kunne bruke de fremkomne resultatene når prosjektet er avsluttet.

Mvh

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Appendix C: Tasks for respondents

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;

Word power Part 1
diverged= delte seg
undergrowth= busker/kratt

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,

Word power Part 2
fair= fin
claim= gjøre krav på/kreve
passing= de som har gått der
før

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.

Word Power Part 3
trodden= tråkket

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.

Word Power Part 4
hence= langt herfra

Robert Frost

Please answer the following tasks:

1. Read the first part of the poem a few times. What thoughts and emotions do you have when you read this part? S
2. Read the second part of the poem a few times. What thoughts and emotions do you have when you read this part? S
3. Read the third part of the poem a few times. What thoughts and emotions do you have when you read this part? S
4. Read the fourth part of the poem a few times. What thoughts and emotions do you have when you read this part? S
5. You are young. Can you explain to me what is important and typical for a young person in Norway today? You may be personal, and tell what is important and typical for you as well. Include the positive and the more negative aspects. L
6. Are there any themes and/or a message in this poem? S
7. Now you should reflect on all the answers you have given so far, and try to see the link between them. Explain if you think this poem can be useful for young people in our country today in a way. What could be useful and why? L
8. "The Road Not Taken" is one of the most famous poems in the USA. Why do you think many people have it as their personal favourite? S
9. What do you think the title of the poem means? S/L
10. What is this poem telling you personally? Could it symbolise anything special for you? S/L

S= shorter answer

L= longer answer



Appendix D: Information to respondents

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet «Poetry and Personal Insight in the classroom»

Formålet med studiet er, gjennom bruken av relevant litteratur, å forstå ungdomskulturen i dag bedre. Uttrykket «personal insight» er hentet fra Kunnskapsløftet, som noe av hensikten innen litteraturundervisning. Prosjektet er en mastergradsstudie innen engelsk didaktikk (hvordan undervise engelsk), som tas ved UiA. Det er naturlig å spørre elevene i 10 C og 10 D om å delta, i og med at jeg er deres engelsklærer. Oppgaven som jeg skal skrive, er avhengig av et materiale å analysere. Jeg håper derfor at dere ønsker å bli med.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Dere vil bli bedt om å lese en kort tekst og svare på en oppgave til teksten. Spørsmålene i oppgaven vil omhandle deres tanker rundt teksten og hvilke refleksjoner dere gjør dere knyttet til tema, ikke ulikt oppgaver dere stadig møter på skolen. Oppgaven vil gis i klassen, dato er ikke fastsatt, men etter all sannsynlighet blir det i løpet av oktober måned. Data vil kun registreres på minnepenn, slik at elev og tekst ikke kan knyttes til hverandre. All tekst vil behandles konfidensielt.

Tekstene skal ikke vurderes og språkfeil er ikke av betydning, det er innholdet i tekstene jeg vil se på.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Det vil ikke være noen personopplysninger i denne oppgaven. I tillegg til meg, vil veileder kunne se på hele materialet. Ingen deltakere vil kunne gjenkjennes i oppgaven.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes våren 2016. I og med at det ikke finnes noen personopplysninger her, er det ingenting som trengs å slettes ved prosjektslutt.

Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Er du over 15 år, kan du samtykke selv (http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/vanlige_sporsmal.html). Teksten du skriver her vil ikke, på noen måte, ha sammenheng med verken terminkarakter eller avsluttende vurdering i engelsk skriftlig.

Dersom noen skulle ha spørsmål, ta kontakt med Aina Wikanes Bjelland, enten på mail: aina.wikanes.bjelland@kristiansand.kommune.no eller på telefon 41 68 71 46. Veileder på masteroppgaven er Signe Mari Wiland ved UiA (signemari.wiland@uia.no).

Studien er vurdert til ikke å være nødvendig å melde til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste AS, etter samtale med veileder og ut fra kriteriene satt på deres nettside (<http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/>) .

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, er over 15 år og vil delta (elevsignatur/dato)
Foresattes signatur trengs ikke.

Vi har mottatt informasjon om studien, har elev i 10 C/10 D som er under 15 år, og tillater deltakelse (foresattes + elevs signatur/dato)

Appendix E: Responses text 1-39

Text 1

Part 1

I don't understand the poem completely. But the feeling I am getting is a thought of the future. That you need to choose what you want to do. You need to decide which way you want to go. I don't feel like this is a very happy poem, more like serious and thoughtful.

Part 2

Same here as part 1, the poem is a bit difficult.

Maybe that both of the ways were fair but maybe the road the person chose had a better ending. She saw the future, and took a decision.

Still feeling it is about the future. When I read it I don't smile, because I don't get the feeling of such happiness or pleasure.

Task 3

Now I am getting more a feeling like someone is trying to go a road that gets them away from where ever they are. I still can't find out what the poem is about, and it is annoying. I have these twisted emotions. The text is a bit deep.

Task 4

The end is not getting me anywhere. I still don't understand the poem completely. I just get a feeling about someone's future and decisions. The results of her choice.

Task 5

I think that the reputation is very important for teenagers nowadays.

We care about what other think about us. Do we have a perfect body, nice clothes. Just a perfect front or façade.

School is actually very important to us. We all, or at least I want a bright future where I have enough money. It is just important to be perfect in everything.

Task 6

I didn't understand the poem, so I don't know. Chose the right way, because you will feel your decisions when your older?

Task 7

Since I don't understand the text it will be difficult to give you a long meaningful text.

The text might be useful for young people. If the text is about what I think it is.

The future is important to all of us. If you feel all down one day, you should still chose the right way, not just the easiest way. Everything is important.

You should do whatever everyone else is doing. Do what you want to do, as long as it makes you happy.

Task 8

It was nice to read, I liked it even when I didn't understood it. Maybe others like it because it is meaningful to them. The poem gives them a bit inspiration.

It becomes personal to them, and maybe they even can relate to the text.

Task 9

The title means that someone is in a crossroad and chose a the way they liked the most. I don't know.

Task 10

No, since I don't get the text.

Text 2

1. I think I might be mining that everyone have 2 ways to walk and it is hard to choose which way to walk and to go. Every person on this earth has many chooses to make. And to go one way or another is a hard choice.
2. This part Is not easy to understand. And I don't understand this part.
3. This part is not easy. But I think I understand it better than the last one. It's like the choice you gat, if you do that that will happen you have a way and you have a concise. You can chose to go in black or to go and have a nice life.
4. He travelled by the one that made all the differs. He had a lot of options I think he travelled by his hart not his soul. I think he as he followed his hart he was smart.
5. To be honest I have no id what is important for a young person In Norway today.

6. Follow your hart not your soul. If you follow your hart you experience allot, but if you follow your soul you don't get that experience it. You get to live the life that you have been given.
7. 8 . Two roads diverged in a yellow wood. Is a way to now is you have to choose the right way and to choose between right and wrong. Every single day you have to choose. Every single day you have 2 choices every single day you have to make the right choice that Is why I think it is ok for the young people should read it.
- 8.
9. I think it mines that you didn't choose the way the soul wanted you to choose. The right way and follow your hart whatever happens.
10. it tells me to choose right and not wrong. and it can symbolize the choice you do, and its consequence

Text 3

1. My thoughts when I read the poem is sad. I think that the poem is about leaving something/someone behind.
2. My thoughts is that they want something to be better.
3. My thought is that it is a person that's going the wrong ways.
4. My thought is that he writes about a man who will be young as long as he can.
5. It is important for the young ones to have much spare time because we have a lots of football trainings or handball trainings. It is important to be with friends. It is also important to live a healthy life. The things that are important for me at my age is to go to handball training and be with friend, and also do my homework and do my best at school. A negative aspect is that many young people must have a perfect body. It is a lot of body pressure in Norway and that is a problem.
6. I don't know to be fair.
7. the poem can be useful for the young people because it can show them that they must take the good ways to go, the right choices.
8. Because it means something good and also doing something good.
9. That persons may go the wrong way and didn't see the good way.
10. It symbolized wrong and good ways to go.

Text 4

1. I feel that this poem is about take risk. You can do bad and good things but you learn. I think that the person in this poem is insecure, and maybe don't know that she/he going to do.
2. I don't understand the poem.
3. Being unsure, you miss people but you will never come back to them.
4. If you have a dream follow the dream. Yours dream is right and if someone said something bad about your dream, stop being with them. They are not good for you.
5. Being young today is great but can be difficult. Today we have to achievement where ever we go. On school, homework's, tests, home, with friends and family and also get fit. You need to being good at school, lucking good and have the perfect life. On Facebook and Instagram is your life perfect, and every day is a good dag, even if you feel you bad. Is typical to just go to school and do homework from Monday to Friday and in weekend you meet your friends. In weekday it's not so much time to meet friends, you meet them on handball and football training. If you have much time one day, you maybe meet friends for a short time.
6. I don't understand.
7. This is about young people, positive and negative thing around it. Take a pick, mistakes and get over it. Being young is not always so easy, but you can do much when you are young. Life has just start and you have so much you can do.

8. Because it's personal, and you can fail yourself in this poem.
9. Your chance is not over, you can do bad things but you have more chance. Life can be difficult but life is most of the time good.
10. This poem telling me that that I can do stupid things, but I have more chance.

Text 5

1. When I read the first part of the poem, I firstly think of big trees, lots of bushes and just generally a giant forest. I imagine the two parted roads going far into infinity; they look as if they never were to end.
The forest is quiet. The only thing I can imagine seeing/hearing is birds and a noise in the bushes now and then, and also that I/the person is alone, standing in a crossroad.
This might sound scary or dark, but I actually picture it being peaceful.
2. When I read this, I understand it as if it has been many people there before, passing the two roads, and that they have been passed equal times, though there have been many there before, I feel like it's now kind of lonely for the person standing there. That these people who have passed the road before him, were here a long time ago.
3. I again get the feeling that it has been a really long time since anyone was there. And that the person I'm starting to doubt if it was a good idea to come here, or if he ever should come back at all.
4. I now understand (/think) that the one road was not passed as many times as the other. The person describes it as a place far, far into the woods, and now that he cannot stand there anymore, he has to choose which path he will walk, and alone he walks down the road that has been passed the least times. Maybe both him and the path were "lonely", until now.
5. Well, being young isn't always easy. Especially at my age (15). There is so much happening everywhere and one thing that I have noticed since we started in 8th grade, is that the tests have gotten more and more, the grades are affecting what will happen after 10th grade, the pressure has grown and there is also not always much time left for friends and just doing nothing. Because trust me, we all need to just do nothing sometimes.
But, and that is an important "but", there is so much positive with being young too. You have the opportunity to join things like a football or a handball club, you can start dancing, you can start playing music, singing, I mean, the opportunities are endless. Well, yes, of course you can start with all of these things later in life too, but when you are young it is much easier to learn all these things. To start at the bottom and work your way up, exactly as you're doing everywhere else in your life (for example with school and friends).
The social life when being young is also very fun. You experience a lot of things, like: going on a school trip, travelling with (for example) your football team, and most important, I would say at least, is to spend time with your friends and family (though of course you can do that your whole life).
6. Maybe something that could be a message in this poem is that: even though everyone does one thing, you do not have to do the same, that just because most people do one thing, it doesn't always mean it's better. You do not always have to follow the same road as everybody else...follow your own.
7. This poem might be useful for young people today because it can tell them that they can make their own path, go down their own road, make their own decisions and don't have to follow everyone else. When you stand alone, just choose your own path.
8. Maybe it is because of the reasons I just described above. Maybe it is because it inspires them. It inspires them to be themselves, and to encourage others to be themselves too.
9. The title might mean that he follows the road that is not taken by all the other people that have been there before him. He chose his own way, and that way was on the road not taken.
10. I mean, I'm not quite sure actually, but it sure does inspire me to be myself and not only listen to what other people have to say about how I should be. How I should act, how I should dress and what I should do.

Text 6

Task one

I actually get this sad feeling when I read this. It's like you have to choose something or take a very hard decision and no matter what the answer is, are you still just seeing the long trip before you. The first sentence can I compare into two hard choices and you have to pick one of them. And when you pick one road, it may not go so well.

Task 2

Maybe you have the opportunity to take the other choice and maybe that's easier and better. And maybe it's better to climb, drag yourself up instead of down, do positive things because it's hard always doing the things that drags you down.

Task 3

I feel this is about someone that travels a lot. And when he/she are going to travel again, it's like she's unsure is she's coming back. Not traveling in the world, traveling himself/herself and hoping to find himself/herself.

Task 4

He is different, he took the choice most of the people don't take. Maybe he took the choice that was best for him, maybe he got happier.

Task 5

What's important for me? What's most important for me are friends and family. When I feel like I don't have any friends I get sad. But my family are always there for me and that very important.

I feel like many youths thinks they have to be popular and perfect and everything everyone else is, but please, just be yourself, no one else does that better. Many get self-confidence because they compare themselves to everyone else, but no one is perfect so it's nothing to compare to.

Self-confidence is very important for a young person, not just in Norway, but in the whole world. Everything gets much better is you just believe in yourself.

Task 6

I think the poem is a message to all the young people that just take the choices because everyone else is, like if many girls/boys want something just because everyone else want it, or if it is an discussion and you just "follow the flow" because you don't want to say your own opinion or chose the school your friends are going to and not the one you actually want to go to.

So maybe you will get more happy if you just do what's best for you and not what's best for everyone else.

Task 7

The link between all my answers is to be yourself and take you own choices. Do what's best for you and not what everyone else want. Be a little selfish.

Task 8

Because it gives you hope and something to say "believe in yourself and make your own opinions".

Task 9

"The Road Not Taken" I think it means that the opportunity is not gone to change and do what's best for you.

Task 10

The poem personally is telling me to be brave and take own choices, because maybe that's best for me.

Text 7

1. I'm not quite sure what they are trying to explain. I guess it's about a road which leads in to a yellow wood. It's kind of a mysterious and special texts cause they're talking in riddles and puzzles. But my guess is that it is about like two men who needs a ride and he only could take with one. And if they did give me any feelings or emotions? Not quite cause it was a hard and mysterious text to read.
2. It makes a little bit more sense to me right now and perhaps it is about the different directions in life, I don't know. It is like many have been taking the bad road or chosen the bad things in life, and they are trying to warn them but they do the same mistake as they did. Going on that unsecure road where you don't know where it is going to end with voices telling you don't do this but you know you are going to do this.
3. Now I'm way more unsecure on what is going on in the poem. I have almost no clue. Either is the "I" the man who went the wrong way or "I" is the man who can help the different people who are on the wrong way.

4. Now it makes sense to me. I guess my guessing on 1, 2 and 3 was wrong but I don't care. It's like taking an unsecure road. Taking a decision in life where you don't know what's going to happen. Many people warned you but you kept on going that way no matter what they said and now you are very pleased with your decision.
5. Being young in Norway is way more different since our parents were young. They got connected between the housephone. We got our own cell phones which are costing enormously. Today you are being judged by the way you look and the way you dress. People judge you before they even know you. So in this society if you want to become popular you got to be well dressed and look good. But that's just on the surface. Popular guys need good friends. They are having a lot of "friends" which only are friends with them because of the popularity. So on the surface I believe everybody wants to become the popular one, but the popular one wants to be like them because he got no good friends I guess.
6. Being different from everybody else, like making your own choices and doing what nobody else does. Try something new and don't be just normal.
7. I believe it is about taking new roads (choices). Like doing something new and not be just normal. Try to be different in a good way and don't give a shit of what they think about you because you are you and you are going to make your own decisions with nobody telling that you have to do that and that. Try to be different is useful for our generation. We are all trying to be way too A4. Like everybody (almost) wants to go to KKG because there are where the cool kids are going. You got to be trying something if you want to achieve something and suddenly everybody wants to be like you. Message is dare to be different.
8. It is inspiring for people to do something different and then succeed in what you are doing. Kind of like American dream actually.
9. Like nobody is trying that road. Nobody is trying to do the unsecure thing because they don't know what's going to happen. They are too afraid. You have to try the road which is untaken. Make a different decision.
10. I got to try to be different. I need to stop judging people about how they look because that is wrong. I got to change myself in the way I think and perhaps taking an unsecure road.

Text 8

1. I think that it was a person or a traveler who was going to choose a road. He wants to travel both the roads but he could not. but it was a bit difficult to understand the first part of the poem.
2. It was hard to understand this part. It was many difficult words and I don't understand what it means. Maybe it means not just a road, but a choice in your life. About doing right or wrong.
3. I think that it is about choosing the way or being yourself. If you choose the way everybody chooses or the way you want to go.
4. He chooses the way that just a few persons had go, I think. He is different from other people and he is himself.
5. For a young person today I think that good friends are important. You need somebody who supports you and loves you. You need somebody to share all things with. You also need a good and nice family. My family is very important for me. It is also important to do it well on school.
6. I think the message is to be yourself and take the right choices.
7. I think that it is useful to know that you have to choose the right.
8. Because it is a nice poem and it has a very nice message.
9. The title means that you should find your own way.
10. You have to be yourself.

Text 9

1. I feel like the text is about taking big choices. You have to think through what is the right thing to do. It is not always easy to decide which way to go, but sometimes, you have to take a chance.

2. It is still the same problem. He starts comparing them in hope of getting to an end. When both sides are good, and none of them are better than the other, choosing one of them is scary. You are so afraid you are going to pick the wrong one, so you never get to the end.
3. I didn't understand much of Part 3, therefore it's hard to make thoughts out of it.
4. The man chose the one less traveled by. I think that was very clever. Many people just do what other people do, because they think that is the smartest thing to do. But this man followed his dream, not the stream. And that choice made a difference in his life.
5. Being young in Norway is not like you imagine. When you watch movies, hear stories, and read books, you get a completely different understanding of how it really is. It is a lot of pressure. Making friends, perform at school, wear nice clothes and much more. Teenagers can be evil. They can ruin peoples life just by using their mouth. They gather in gangs, and shut out other teens. You can get a rumor just by hanging out with "the wrong people". As well as it is bad sides by being young, there are also good sides. You can do sports. You can be with your friends all the time. You can go to school. Your parents makes you food, give you a drive anytime, give you money, and takes care of you. So all you have to do is to have fun and enjoy life.
6. It tells you to take your own choices, and not just follow everybody else.
7. Well, personally I don't think it is a good idea to use this poem for young people in our country today. Because I don't think they are going to understand much of it.
8. American people knows this language much better than us. Therefore they will think this poem is better than us.
9. The title "The Road Not Taken" means that the man went the way no one other dared to go.
10. The poem is not actually telling me anything special. I don't think I understood everything.

Text 10

1. I think the poem is about a person who has two choices, and the person doesn't know which choice he's going to make. The person tries to make a choice, but he doesn't know what the best choice is.
2. In part two the person still doesn't know which direction he's going to choose. Another person comes, and, he took the way who was most travelled.
3. The person has made his way, but he doesn't know if that is the right way or not. And he still doesn't know were the way is leading. And he also thinks about going back, and takes the other way. But now he has made his choice and he can't go back.
4. The person in the poem made his own way. He didn't follow the other person. And that made the difference.
5. I think it's important to have someone you can trust and talk to. I also think it's important to have a hobby, for example play football. When you are playing football, you play together whit your friends. And when you are whit your friends you are building friendships, and you meets other persons who maybe can be your friends.
6. I think the message in the poem is that you should speak for yourself, and not always follow other persons.
7. I think the link between all my answers is that you should make your own way, and stand up and speak for yourself. I think this poem can be useful in my country today, because there are many people in my country who is scared to tell their story or their opinion. Sometimes the right decision is not to follow everybody, sometimes it is to make your own way.

8. I think many people in the USA have this poem as their favorite, because they think it's a good poem, and they can learn to speak for themselves.
9. I think The Road Not Taken, means that there is a road or opportunity, that's not taken and you have the chance to take that way.
10. The poem tells me that the right decision is not always as everyone does. Sometimes you have to make you own decisions.

Text 11

1. The first think I thought of was a kid in a divorce. And I get sad. I think that that kid has to make a very hard decision, to choose between two paths. To choose between living with his dad or his mom.
2. Now I'm thinking that the kid had chosen the best "road" to travel even though it maybe wasn't the easiest, but maybe needed it the most and that makes me glad.
3. Maybe the kid isn't able to help his mother/father and that the parent is having big troubles, is maybe traumatized and sad all day. Maybe the parent did something to the kid and it made him regret taking this path. I get a little sad.
4. He's talking about what he chose and how it bade him the person he is to day in a good way, and I get happy again.
5. I personally think that for many young people in Norway it's important to have the right and expensive clothing and try to be popular. I even think that for some, popularity is more important than getting good grades in school. It would at least explain why Norway has such a low grade on average. But I also think it's important for them to have friends. We are simply a big society of friends.
6. How a divorce might be.
7. They are all about making choices in life. All the hard ones that will change your end result for the better or the worse. About what you prioritize in life.
8. I think it's the personal favorite for most people because most people have had to make a very hard decision some tile in their life.
9. It think the title means that you have taken a difficult choice, but there will always be leftover one of the options that maybe would have made you to a whole other different person.
10. The poem personally isn't telling me anything, and doesn't symbolize anything for me.

Text 12

1. I don't have any thoughts about it. That it is two roads diverged in a yellow wood. It doesn't make sense. But if I have to say something, I will say the poem is about making choices.
2. I didn't understand the poem. I think it is confusing.
3. I feel is about autumn. The leaves. About a person that have done something bad and want to run away from it.
4. That one special thing in this person's life have chance many things. The person tell that he/she took the one less traveled by. Maybe because he/she don't want to be found. To be left alone and just escape.
5. Well, personally I have many different things in my life that is important. Like my friends that I go to if I don't want to be home with my irritable family that don't understand or don't get anything that I say. But I love my family no matter what. And especially my boyfriend that I love and care about. He has a big roll in mye life. We spend much time together and do fun things. I don't know much to say, well my phone is also a big part of my life. I can admit that i use my phone more than I have too. Even in birthday's my friends and i use them so much. And i think its negative, because we are addicted to little box that we have in or pocket every day.

6. I cannot find any.
7. I am sorry but I don't understand the poem. I think is about that you have to take some chooses in life that you dint expected. Witch choice is right. If you have don't the wrong choice and you escape from it. That's also wrong then. I admit that I don't have a clue.
8. Because it can be interpret in different ways.
9. That it is one choice that you didn't take and that's the road not taken.
10. The choice of my future.

Text 13

- 1) I thought it was allitle bit weird in the start but I think it means that you can only choose one road u can't choose both.
- 2) This one was quit hard to understand.
- 3) Hard to understand :/
- 4) The road he took made the difference in his life I don't know if it was a bad or a good thing. But I think it was a bad thing.
- 5) What's important for most young people is joining a sport if it is handball and football or something else. People want to be popular at school and have many friends. For me it's different because I don't go to sports, I love to play video games and play with friends and meet new people over the internet. Many young people when the get the chance they like to start exercise in a gym with many other people to look cool in school. Many people also want a good education which is good and earn a lot of money but is that what you really want?
- 6) I think the message is to think hard about what way you want to go in you're life.
- 7) I don't know
- 8) I think it is popular because
- 9) It means that he only took the one road and the roade that he did not take was the right one for him.
- 10) The poem is telling me that ther is only on right road for you in the life and that is not the first one you pick.

Text 14

1. I am kind of confused by the poem. I think it is about a person that is going to move or something. And I think it is maybe about taken a choice. Because the person wanted to go to both places but she/he couldn't. Emotions are sad, I guess.
2. I don't really know what's going on. I am still confused and I don't think get the text yet.
3. Still not sure what's going on at all. My emotions are confused. But the text sounds sad, because it doesn't sounds like a happy story.
4. Okaay, out of this part I got a whole other picture in my head. Now it sounds more like life. Choose directions, and how you're making choices in your life and how your choices make a difference in your life. How to be different and don't go in same directions like everybody else. I am probably misinterpreting the text, probably big time too. But that is my thoughts and emotions after reading this poem.
5. I don't think it is a typical young life. We're all different. But somebody everybody is going to experiment is choices. I think also we teens are trying to find ourselves. Trying to find out who we really are, what we really love. What makes us happy and what we're going to try to avoid.
6. Maybe to be yourself and make your own choices and do your own thing.
7. Because making your own choices and go your own thing is important. It important to be your best self and do what makes you happy. To do what you love, and love what you do.
8. Because it has an important message.
9. It does. It tells me everything I wrote about right now. To be yourself and so on.

Text 15

1. My thoughts from the poem are not a lot. I didn't understand it that well. But I think it is about taking a difficult choice. I think it's a little bit sad because the I person had to choose witch way he

wanted to go. But I think the poem is about something else then the wood and witch way he wanted to go.

2. I think someone tries to call on the person and tell him that everything is fine and good. But as further they comes into the wood it gets really scary and maybe they did something wrong
3. I didn't understand the 3th one
4. I think the poem is about taking big choices in life. Not follow everyone else but to be yourself and don't care about what other people choose and think of you.
5. Well, being young is not easy at all. Typical Norwegian young people are to be on the phone. I am seriously lost without my phone. I talk to other people on snapchat and I like others pictures on Instagram. And I also love training. I think it is a lot of pressure on us. Body pressure is one of them. We need to stay fit with flat stomach and big booty. For girls of course. The boys need big muscles. But we make the pressure and other people around us make the pressure. But pictures on the internet and models also make the pressure. But I also love being with my friends! I love them and I can talk to them about everything.
6. The message in the poem is to be yourself and don't listen to no one else.
7. The poem is useful for young people today because we must learn to don't care so much. To do your best and don't be afraid for making mistakes. Our body is our body and we must be happy with what we have. We must do our best and don't try to do something we can't do.
8. I think many people have "The road not taken" as their favorite poem because many people sense themselves in the poem.
9. That you have all the choices in the world and it's never too late to fix on mistakes you have made.
10. Personally the poem makes me happy and relaxed. It makes me happy because I start think about all the choices I have. And make me relaxed because I don't have nothing to stress about.

Text 16

1. The first part of this poem is about choosing your path. To think about the choices you make and that you sometimes have to do a hard decision. It's clever written.
2. About going in to the unknown and try different paths. What the future looks like when you choose the better looking side.
3. To not leave the work that will take you the right way for later. If you know that the hard way is the right way. Its better doing it now than later.
4. If you take the path that few people choose, it may be a reason to it. Maybe the path that the majority takes is the one you're supposed to take.
5. The thing that is most important in my life as a Norwegian teen is to feel appreciated and that you know that someone loves you and gets worried if somethings happens to you. It's also important to me to feel included in my friend group for example. Friends and family is really important to me. Because I can tell things to them that makes burdens go off my shoulders, and I can trust them not to tell it to others. Schools and all of those sorts of stuff are important as well, but the things that you don't really think about, but you take for granted, is often the most important things in your life. Take care of it.
6. I think the message in the poem is that you should choose your future carefully.
7. All of this together tries to tell us about young people and the choices that lie ahead.
8. I think that many people have "Road not taken" as their personal favourite poem because it's about the most important things in your life, which is your future, and as a youth, you have to choose the important things.

9. I think "Road not taken" means that you have not chosen what to do in the future; you have not chosen your road.
10. It symbolizes future and choices.

Text 17

1) I feel lonely and little bit sad. I also feel like I have to take a big decision for my life but I don't know the consequences of them. I think the roads symbolises the road of life. Sometimes you come to a crossroad and you don't know if you're going to take the right road.

I also feel that you are alone with your choices and you can't make people take them for you.

2) I feel a little bit confused. Because it stands that this person took the other road that was just as fair. Then it stands something very confusing about having the better claim because it was grassy and wanted wear. Like the passing there had worn them about the same?

3) I now feel like it's about walking a road and not knowing which way the road lead you. You just find the way as you go.

4) I feel the author tries to tell us that if you try to take another way than the others you will success or you will fail, but you have at least tried to go your own way!

5) Something that is really important for a young person in Norway today is to have good grades, happy life, good friends and family. Somehow it has become very shallow. But sometimes you really feel the true love of being with friend and family. An example is when you are at a holiday with family and you just relaxes with them and have a good time.

6) Yes, and I think it is that you have to go your own way in your life and not just follow everybody else.

7) I think that the link is that you have to take risks in your life alone and with somebody else, even if you don't know the consequences of the choices.

I think this could be useful for the young people today, since only a few people take risks and follow their dreams when they are wondering what carrier they are going to be.

8) I think many people has it as their favourite since it says that you have to take your own way in life and don't just follow everybody else. And in the US many people do just that.

9) I think the title of the poem is like a summary of the poem. It says that you have to take the road that nobody else is going to take and just go for it!

10. This poem tells me that I have to go for my dreams and not always think of the consequences. I am often a person who thinks a LOT about the consequences of a decision and I might sometimes overthink it. For me it can symbolise that I don't have to think so much about my future like I do today, since the way might come as I go.

Text 18

1. I think he has to take a choice and the choice will mean something.
2. He knows now that he has maybe chosen the wrong way and it is too late to go back.
3. Now he sees the fantastic nature of this road and now he knows he did go the right way.
4. Now he is going to tell this that time he went in the wood and went an unexplored way.
5. In Norway young people often go at the shopping centres and buy many things that we don't need, so I try to don't use so much money and rather just save them to I need to find a place after

I'm kicked out of the house. We are also very into sports can't talk for all the girls but all the boys like training. But after the training we like very much to sit in front of the mobile or tablet.

6. I think the poem is trying to tell us that we need to risk something to achieve a goal.
7. This poem can tell that we don't fear to try something new and we should man up and just do it without questions. And maybe it can actually be fun so you want to try again.
8. I think the poem is deep and explain many people that don't fear to step forward and those who is most silent has more to say and not only go to the shadows.
9. I think that the title of the poem is saying us that we don't fear can't bring any harm, but if you don't fear you have not a well spent life.
10. I think it telling us and personally me to step forward and fear more.

Text 19

1. This text did not give me anything in particular (emotions and feelings wise), but I do think there is a meaning behind it. I think it can be linked to a different scenario than just picking which road to go down, but I can't quite wrap my head around what scenario just yet. Maybe in the next part.
2. I start to wonder if this text is about life choices. That this person chooses the path that looked like it wanted to be chosen, might mean that he made the choice he thought seemed most inviting him. I don't know if it's a girl or a boy telling the story, but I have chosen to call it a "he".
3. I don't know after reading this text. I think the text is difficult to understand.
4. In this part I think he means that he is happy he dared to be daring, to take the path that not everybody else had taken. He had not followed the others, but done what he wanted instead of what everybody else wanted.
5. Being young I think has changed a lot since our parents were young. I don't know if I think that is a good or a bad thing. Everyone now are really into looking a certain way, having the nicest and most expensive clothes and being good at everything. We want to be perfect. Many people think that when you become a teenager, that's when the pressure begins, but personally I think it begins as early as in around 5th grade. I think it is sad that people develop eating disorders at age 8, that people have no friends at age 12 because they don't have the right clothes or don't act the socially correct way, I think it's sad that parents struggle financially because they have to give their daughter the most expensive designer bag for her to keep her friends and be happy. I think it's sad.
6. I think it might be about being different and making your own choices.
7. I think this is a leading question. Yes, this poem could be useful for young people in our country today. I don't really know what or why.
8. I don't know why so many people have it as their favourite because I can't understand it. Maybe because it encourages you to make your own choices.
9. Going with the theme of my answers I think it is about making the choices that not many dares to make.
10. It is not really telling me anything special personally or that it symbolises anything special.

Text 20

Task 1:

When it says yellow wood I get the feeling they are talking about autumn woods. Its autumn and colder days are coming, colder and maybe sadder. The person got two paths to choose from and he knows that his future will be different depending on what he chooses. He needs to take the decision himself.

Task 2:

He chose the second. He thought that the second was the best choice. The people that had chosen the same path had thought and done about the same.

Task 3:

he doesn't really know where it leads or where he's going. The path was not as trodden as he had thought it was and needed to be trodden himself

Task 4:

He is now thinking back at it and kind of regrets the decision he made. It made it harder for him and he is thinking "what if". What would have changed for the better if he had chosen the other path and where would it have led.

Task 5:

My friends are extremely important to me. I really depend on music as well. I don't really know what I would have done without friends and music! I don't really watch TV, I just watch YouTube. School is quite important to me as well.

I hate that I am tired all the time. After school I am knackered so I spend more time on homework than I really need, but my head hurts. These last two weeks I have not hung out with my friend once. That really sucks.

Task 6:

The theme may be the future of young people? That we need to really think about it and what we chose. What looks the best may not be the best. We need to really think about what we chose and not just take the easy way or the way that your best friend took.

Task 7:

Task 8:

Because it's good and because it is about regretting something you have done and everyone regrets something.

Task 9:

I think the title means what he regrets the road he took and is thinking about the road he didn't choose.

Task 10:

To me it is about choosing the right thing and how serious that is. We really need to think about what we want to do with our lives.

Text 21

1. I think that the story tells us that when we are trying to choose a way to go we should look at where it goes. I also think the same concept can be transferred to where you are making a choice about something you should think about the consequences and what the result of the choices are.
2. The person is then chooses the other path because it looked better. I think we can say that the man is choosing one of the options because he looked carefully at both the options and he chooses the good one. Then he starts thinking about the people who walked there before him and made the same choices as him.
3. I think that he is now looking back at the choice he made and thinking if he did the right thing or if he should have chosen the other road/the other option.
4. He chose the option not many had done and that made a big impact on his life. So I think the concept is that you should choose carefully what you decide to do.
5. I think that for a young person in Norway it's important to have good friends and a family that loves you. I also think that many think about their future and they want a good job with good payment. I personally don't think that I need a job where I earn millions upon millions though it would be nice. I mean what I am aiming to be when I grow up is not something you earn more than average but just about what the average person earns. And when people are aiming for a good job they have to make the right choices about education and what they are going to be. I just choose what I loved doing in my free time and that is what I'm going to apply for education

after junior high. So I think that many young people in Norway think more and more about making the right choices.

6. I think that the message in the story is that you have to think good about the choices you make in life.
7. I think that there is a red line through the story which is based upon thinking right and good about the choices you make. I think that this story can be useful for young people if they understand it. I am having trouble understanding it and I don't even know if it is right. So if it should be useful for young people I think it should be if they read it with a teacher who understands it well.
8. I think it's very popular because a lot of people learn from it.
9. I think that the title says something about the man not taking the same path as everybody else. And he didn't choose the same choice as the majority of people.
10. I think that the poem tells me to make the right choices in life and that I should think carefully about the choices I make in life. I also think it's telling me that if I choose wrong I may be looking back and regretting it later in life.

Text 22

1. I feel like this person who is taking a road isn't actually going anywhere as the text says. I think the person is having a sort of struggle or a problem in his or her life. It may be decisions you must take, and that you want to choose one of them but you really have to take both of them in a way or another. Its maybe family problems or maybe friendship problems, it could be anything.

2. The person took a decision and toughed that it was the right decision. It was some things maybe which were hard to get past, maybe some persons that you had to deal with, or small problems that popped out. It maybe explains why the road was grassy and wanted wear; maybe you needed support with your decision.

3. The person realised that the decision or whatever choice he or she took was leading to another decision. The person maybe learned a lesson from his or her mistakes when it says: "Yet knowing how ways leads on to way". Maybe you were only thinking about the consequences you could get from the choice you too. Then you learned that you have to think about also other people then you self.

4. The person have realised that sometimes you aren't right. We are all human beings, and sometimes we make the wrong decision. The person maybe stood in front of all the nearest people the person had. They knew the right decision, but you were maybe angry, or sad or stressed, and the emotions you had effected your decision. When finally you realise that you were wrong you maybe feel guilty for something that was the consequence of your choice.

5. There are lots of things that are important to me. But the most important thing is my family. I would sacrifice everything in order to see my family happy, because they have supported me with all my decisions in my life. Whatever it was, either if it was right or wrong, they support me for what I want with life and what my goals are. Another important thing to me is to not be selfish. I know that it seems to be a wired thing, but the point is to let people like me even more because I care of them. I could say that my personality is important to me. It's actually lots of things to write about, but also a really important thing to me is my belief. If I am going to be honest with you I would say that I'm nothing without my belief or religion. I think it's very important to believe in a religion, because it gives you a wide perspective of live, and also it answers many questions you may ask about the world. Personally, it makes my life much easier.

6. I think the message in this poem is to not make quick or selfish decisions in your life. Because sooner or later you maybe realise that it was the opposite of what you should have done. It maybe gave the opposite consequences that you were expecting.

7. When you're young you don't know everything about everything. Sometimes you take the wrong decision, or you think that your parents are wrong and you don't agree with them. There are more responsibilities when you get older, and maybe you can't handle them all on the right way. In some situations you may think that no one understands you and that's only you who know what the right thing is. Believe me because I've felt these things before. Usually it ends up with that you were wrong and your parents were right, because they usually know what's best for you. I don't actually know what could be useful, but maybe there is nothing to do with it. I think that you should learn from your mistakes.

8. I think many people have this poem as their favourite because it maybe reminds them about themselves sometimes.

9. The title of the poem is a little bit difficult to understand. But I think "The Road Not Taken" means the way you must've taken, or the right decisions you must've taken.

10. I think that this poem is giving us a lesson on the life: to learn from your own mistakes. I think it symbolize your mistakes we take when many emotions are in action

Text 23

Part 1: The Road Not taken

My thoughts and emotions- Maybe It's about a girl who has to choose between 2 people and she doesn't know who to choose in her life.

Part 2

She gives a chance to the first one and then she choose the second one too, because he deserved to be treated good just like all the first one. Maybe the person she choose needed some company, he was alone and had no one to care for him. Maybe he was better than the first person, but no one really knew him so she decided to be friends with him.

Part 3

Maybe both of them were great and had no bad side. She decided to give another chance to the first person and she wonders if she has taken the wrong choice.

Part 4

She choose the one who needed most love and she's happy with her choice maybe or it was wrong of her to choose that person because he made her life different in a bad way maybe... I don't know

Part 5

It's important and typical for me, a young person to focus on school work and nothing else. That's one of the most important things in my life because it my future depends on it. The negative things for us young people in Norway is that you can't get the driver license until you're 18, the school work is a lot of stress and we worry too much about things more than someone at our age actually should. While the positive sides are, we don't have to go with uniform at school, we have good opportunities when it comes to education, we have all the thing we need to live, school is for free and everyone can go to school and it's peace in this country.

Part 6

I think the message on this poem is to be careful about the decisions you make.

Part 7

I'm not sure if this poem can be useful for young people in our country today because I didn't actually understand it. But from what I think it is about then my opinion is no, it can't be any useful for young people in this country today.

Part 8

I don't really know why so many people in USA has it as their personal favorite, cause as I said the poem was pretty hard for me to understand.

Part 9

I think the title of the poem means that sometimes we have to take dangerous alternatives and not always the safe one. Sometimes a little difference in life is good.

Part 10

This poem is telling me personally that sometimes I just have to take the chance I have got even if it turns the bad way. You will never know until you try.

Text 24

1. When I read the first part of the poem I thought that this was a great poem. Maybe the person is lonely, or don't have too many friends.
2. I think that the second part contains that he is in a lonely place and don't know what to do. And he means that has been someone before him who felt the same.
3. The person in the story is depressed, and he don't know how to come back from it, because he had a better life before. And now he just don't know what to do.
4. The person in the story chose the wrong road in the wood, and that has changed all his life. And know he is obsessed with depression. We don't know what would happen if he choose the other road. But that's how the poems is all about.
5. It is much different from being young and old. The younger peoples are more active and we are doing much fun stuff. We have always something to do. I don't find many negative side to be young nowadays. But there is one thing, as bullying, that will never stop. And that is sad of course. But it is so much to do when we are young. And we make friends that will last forever, and I think that are the best part of being young. Hang out with friend and just have a lot of fun.
6. The message in the text is that he really needs help with his depression. He is so far down that he can't get up by himself, he need someone to lean on.
7. All the answer I have given now contain some of depression and bullying. This poem should be useful for young people to understand how people actually can feel. People are suffering with this, and we all want to know how it feels. But we can't. But we have to help the people who are suffering with this, and don't make fun of them. That can also be the reason that they get it.
8. Because it's an important topic, and it is good written, that's why everyone like exactly this poem.
9. I think the title means that he took the road not everyone taken. The road of depression. He feels like he is the only one suffering with this problem. Alone. He just want to be like everybody else. But he can't. When you get there, you never can get out of it.
10. The poem don't tell me something personally. I don't feel like I am the one who are suffering with this. So the poem didn't hit me that hard.

Text 25

1. I think it is about someone who has to choose between two paths. It is difficult to know which road is the best one, and the person feels sorry that he can't go down both paths. You never know what will meet you when you round the corner. It can be something that is very good or very bad. The first part is about something most people can relate to. "What should I do?" and "Where will it lead to?"

2. The next path looks grassy and nice. It looks better than the other, but he can never know what is expecting him when he rounds the corner. I feel sorry for the person, that he has to make this choice. The mood in the poem is not very happy.
3. The person thinks both paths is laying equally. This makes his choice even more difficult. There were no trace after people who had gone on the roads before. That means he has to make his own choice, depending on no one other. This can be hard, not knowing anybody with a similar experience. But sometimes it can be good to make a choice without influence from other people.
4. The person took the road less travelled by. He chooses a way that is not typical. He chooses by himself, not thinking about others. He didn't choose the normal path, and that did that he got to experience something that few people had experienced before him.
5. I think young people want to be seen and heard. And feel that they are not just one in the crowd, but special and different from other people. I think from 8th to 10th grade, you want to be cool and popular and have many friends, rather than having good friends and be yourself. I experience that people are very much the same, because they don't want to stick out in a bad way, worrying about what others will think. But I also think that friends are very important in this age. You should have some good and loyal friends, and your youth will be much easier. I also experience that a lot of teenagers are very mature and reflected. I feel that there is a lot of caring and nice teenagers. But you can also have the people who seems very up in the clouds, and what we call a "fjortiss". But I think many of those people hide something inside of them, and act very happy. I think many teenagers hide their struggles inside of them. And I also think many teenagers feel very lonely. About choosing paths, in 10th grade we have to choose a new school for next year. Should we choose the normal schools, or different from everybody else? I think it is important to choose the place where you think you will enjoy yourself the most. I think many people are conflicted and have no idea what to do.
6. The message is to choose different from others.
7. I think the last part is very useful. For me, the ending was a little bit unexpected. But in a way, it made me happy. I think it is important to know that you can do different things from other people. It says "That has made all the difference". It can lead to something good. Also the thing about being unsure on which way to choose, both in big and small relations, is useful. Most people can relate to that. young people have to make important choices. This text says that we don't have to swim the stream.
8. I think many people has it as their favorite because it is something that people can relate to: "What should I choose to do?" And the text has a pretty clear answer. Do the less similar. Choose what other people don't normally choose.
9. I like the title. It makes you feel sorry for the road that no one took(haha). The road is of course just a picture.
10. The poem tells me to not be afraid to have different opinions than everybody else. That I can have my own thoughts and feelings. And of course can make my own choices.

Text 26

1. When I was reading the first part of the poem for the first time I actually was a little bit confused, and was sitting again with some thoughts and emotions. I think maybe the poem is about having to make a choice and have several options, and that you just could pick one of the options or choices that you have.
2. I think the second part of the poem also was a little bit hard to understand, but I think it is about to make the right choice, maybe the right way to follow or make the right alternative. I think we not just could pick one of the way because it just looks simpler and easier to follow at the beginning. You don't know how it is when you are in the middle of it.

3. I think the fourth part is about following one of the directions and don't know how it leads, and maybe not could find the way back to where it starts. It could be forex sample problems or trouble with friends, and being unsure and have a lots of thought if we would ever find the way back to echoer or fix the problem
4. When I was reading the last part I was thinking it was about to make and dissection for witch direction you would follow. Maybe the way everyone has traveled before you is not the best for you. I think we should be our self and not trying to be someone you're not. I think we should follow our dreams and not let anybody else tell us what to do. Maybe we not need to follow the stream all the time? I think we should be who we are and not pretend to be someone we not are.
- 5.
6. I think it is many thinks that are very important and typical things for young people today one example could be friends. I think everybody needs a good friends that always will be there and someone to hang with. A good friend that will make you laugh when you're sad, a good friend that you always can talk to about your problems, a good friend that always will be there for you no matter what you're going through. I also think that family is very important for young people today. Family has always been there and will hopefully always be there for you, and back you up.
7. "I took the one less traveled by, and that made all the difference" I think that the sentence could be a type of massages. I think it is about to dare to be you. Don't do like everybody else is saying and doing. Dare to be special.
8. I think the poem actually could be very useful for young people in our country today. Because we need someone who can tell us that is not wrong to dare and stand out from the crowd. I think we not should be afraid to take the way no one has taken before us
9. I think it is the poem is very famous because many can see themselves in the poem. And understand the feelings.
10. I think the title of the poem means that the road is not taken. That you could follow your own way, and have many options.

Text 27

1. I don't really understand what the first line means. The second line I start to think that all of us have to make a lot of choices in life. Actually, every day. But maybe it's kind of hard to know which one. The third line: You feel like you're all alone. Fourth line: I don't know. And the last part you feel like it's the end of the world. That you have to make a lot of choices in your life
2. You follow the stream and take the wrong choices. You don't even notice what's good for you. You take the direction that seems to be the best. Everybody do that. But after you have taken the choice, you will understand that it's not what's best for you.
3. The same morning or the same day, you choose the way no one else has trodden. It seems like it's something you're holding on to. I don't really understand this part.
4. The author of this poem wants to tell us something. Maybe something useful. A long time ago, he had to make a very important choice. He took the one less traveled by. I think it means a choice that not many people would've taken. But that choice changed his life forever. Maybe it's a bad thing. Or maybe it's a good thing. The poem doesn't tell.
5. Teenagers in Norway think about popularity. We may feel that we don't have what everybody else has. That's typical for us Norwegians. And we follow the stream and do the same as everyone else. We are scared to make a difference, scared of being different and scared of do any different.
6. You want what everybody else wants. And you follow the stream. Or maybe the theme is "drug addicted".

7. Let's say the theme is "drug addicted". Because that's what it looks like. You take drugs because you're being tempted. But people warn you. People who have been on the same track before. You take a pill, and then another one, and then another one. The reason why you take the drugs, is because everything becomes so much easier and better. Or at least, that's what you think. You know the drugs leads to more addiction. But you have to get more! This poem can be very useful to young people today. Drugs becomes more and more usual in our surroundings.

8. I think this poem is a favorite because a lot of people recognize the theme. Drugs is so usual today, and I don't think it will ever stop being used.

9. I don't really understand what the poem's title means.

10. The poem doesn't tell me anything personal.

Text 28

1. When I read this part I am thinking of someone who has to choose between two things. I think the choice is difficult for the person. He or her probably don't know what to choose. It could also be who to choose. I am feeling a bit confused. I do not understand the poem.
2. The person has now chosen a way. I think there is something that the reader doesn't get to know. There is something on the way. Maybe a friend that is turning into being not a friend? I am feeling sad for the person.
3. After reading this part I felt like the person is feeling alone. Maybe he or she chose the wrong way. I think the person doesn't ever want to come back to the place or time. Now I want to give this person a hug, and tell him/her that it is going to be okay.
4. When I read the last part of the poem I am thinking that the person is happy with his or her choice. Maybe it turned into something good. I am happy for the person.
5. In Norway the young people are weary lucky. We can go to school, free, so we can learn all the important things in life. Our country is free, we can say what we want. Norway is also peaceful and safe. We do not have any wars that we need to get away from. We can get help if something is wrong. For example if someone is being bullied, we have social teachers to talk to. So as I said earlier we are really lucky. We should not have anything to be sad or negative for. But there is of course always something dumb. Many youths can be exhausted. After a long day on school we have homework. That takes a lot of time. We have tests that we need to practice for. And after that most of us have some sort of activities. Football, handball or other social things. We also have to be happy when we are with our family. We have so many places where we need to perform (prestere). We need to get good characters on school. We need to be a good friend and join things. We need to play a good football match. And be a good daughter/son and sister/brother. It is not weird that we are getting a little bit tired. For me the most important thing is to be social while I still don't get exhausted. Education is also important for me. I want to get a great job.
6. I think there is a message; you never know if you don't try. It could also be that the youth is sometimes a nightmare, sometimes a dream. But you will get over it.
7. As I said I think the poem is about trying and manage. The Norwegian youths should not give up.
8. I think many people have it as their favorite because it has a meaningful moral. And it can help a lot of people in life.

9. I think the road not taken means one of the roads in the wood that the person did not take. Maybe it was the best or maybe the road he or she did take was the best?..
10. The poem is telling me what I have been writing about; life can sometimes be difficult, and sometime very good.

Text 29

1. I think this part of the poem is very deep. I feel a bit sad and also happy at the same time. Because it is so good written and that makes me happy. I think the author have gone through some hard choices, and wrote this too describe his/hers feelings about what he/she picked.
2. I feel a bit happier than before because the author took a choice. I think that the choice he/she made was based upon others meanings because it says that the passing there worn them the same.
3. I feel a bit nervous because it seems like the author are having a very good time after the choice. But then he/she writes that way leads to ways. I think that the author might start to regret the choice but knows that there is nothing to do with it now.
4. Now I feel confused. We don't get the real answer on if the road he took were bad or good. I think the ending didn't gave much sense and that we should be aware of the choices we make.
5. Being young in Norway is very different from place to place and which "community" you are in. It's important with style I think, and also what other people think about you. But the most important thing especially here on Søm, is having the best friends you could get. I think typical things is that we are so much nicer and sophisticated than youngsters in other countries. We are also always nice to each other and other around us. The more negative side is that we maybe not listen as much as we should to our parents. And also that we are a bit negative some times.
6. I think the theme is choices. And the message would then be to take good time before every choice you make. That you also have to think really good about the consequences in the future.
7. I think this poem is very useful for the young people in our country and also the rest of the world. It's because it in some unexplainable way just make me feel so good about my choices. And that could be useful because It's most likely many people out there who needs help to make the best choices they ever could make. I think young people would really like if this poem got read to them, maybe by a shrink or someone like that. So they could explain it later.
8. I think that's because many people have struggled with some choices in their life, and this poem maybe helps them through it in some way.
9. I think the title means that you should not be upset or sad with the choices you didn't make. That the road that is not taken is probably the road that will be the best for some years but then fall apart because there is too many people there. So the road not taken is probably the road you should not take.
10. For me it's telling me that I have to be really careful about what choices I make in the hardest situations. And it reminds me of taking good care of my best friends and always be there, cause if I don't they will choose the road that tracks away from me. It symbolizes my life pretty good. I have taken so so many choices in my short life. Some of them good and some of them bad, but everybody survives a fallen road sometimes. Don't they?

Text 30

1. The person has to make a big decision. I think the roads represent more than just two different roads. He/she has to make a big decision about his/her life, and which direction he/she wants to go. Knowing which way is the right way, can be really difficult. You just have to pick one and hope that it's the right one.
2. He chose the one that looked the best from where he was standing. He chose the same road as a lot of other people had done before him. He might think that it's the right way, but maybe it's not.

The road might look good from a distance, but when you've walked on it for a while it will not be as good and amazing as you first would have imagined.

3. I guess he chose the right road, or at least he thinks he did. He is going his one way. A way that he has made for himself. Maybe he feels independent and that he did this on his own. He's taken the first step in the leaves and one has gone this way before him. He chose the way that not everyone chooses.
4. He chose the road that less traveled by. He was the first person to do this and he did it all by himself. It was definitely the best choice he could have made. Many people are afraid of being an independent person and follow their dreams. It's much easier to just tag along with the others instead of doing their own thing. They might be scared that they'll be judged or that they will be alone. I think that if you dare to be your own person and don't care so much about what everyone else is doing you will become a much happier person, and the others that just went with the storm will look at you and wish that they would have done the same thing as you.
5. I think the most important thing for a young person is their friends. Friends has a huge impact on you as a person. If you have bad friends you will become bad, or at least you will be more excepting to bad things and you probably won't say anything if you see anything that is wrong. If your friends care a lot about you and asks you about have you're feeling, you might be a bit more open about your feelings. And if you never talk about stuff like that it won't be as easy for you to open up or ask them for help if you need someone to talked to. Another thing that a lot of young people care about is looks and what other people thinks of you. Many girls at my age, including me, will get up two hours before they really have to, so they will have enough time to wash their hair, dry it and straighten it after. They rather get two hours less with sleep and be exhausted instead of going to school with bad hair. They will use thousands of kroner one a acne scarf or some fancy jacket , when they could have gotten almost the same thing at Cubus for less than 200. People care so much about being popular, and pretty and skinny that they'll starve themselves and its only getting worse. This has been a huge thing for girls over the years but know the boys starting to do the same thing as well. Another thing that is important for the young generation is cellphones. At a girls night we will just all be staring at our phones and almost not talk to each other at all. A week without internet would be torture. Not good in my opinion. I would rather talk to people in person than talk to people over snapchat or whatever.
6. I think the poem is about finding yourself and dare to do your own thing and not just follow everyone else. I think it's important to be your one person and do what you want to do. A lot of people just follows the popular/leaders cause it's much easier. I think the poem show use that we need to dare to be different and that it will bring us a lot of happiness.
7. I think it's an important message to give out to the youth. How many friend you have or how you look doesn't really matter that much. We shouldn't care so much about what the people around us thinks. We should dare to be different and to stand out. We should dare to be a unicorn, rare but beautiful. Said more about it above.
8. In USA there are a lot of different people. I guess people like the idea of being able to be themselves and choosing their own way.
9. The man chose the road that was not taken. The other way than the others.
10. It tells me that I shouldn't be afraid of living my dreams. That going out in the world can be really scary but I will get through it and it will give me a lot in life and bring me a lot of happiness.

Text 31

1. When I read the first part of the poem, I did not really understand. But I think it is about a man or woman, who has taken many difficult choices in life? She or he has to take one of the roads, and the road he or she doesn't take, is "the road not taken". I feel calm when I read it, it's like a flow in the poem, and I like that. Perhaps it will mean something else than I thought at the beginning. That the poem kind of "change" in the next part.

2. The other road is grassy and fair. I think the person want to take this road because it is prettier than the first. I think the person stands right in front of a dilemma. Maybe the person does have pain, wanted to go away from the others. He or she wanted a break and travels around- as he/she says in part one: "and be one traveler, long I stood"
3. I feel like the person maybe is just going for a walk in the morning. He/she chooses the second road, and keeps the first for another day. I think this is a good choice, but I mean that you have to follow your heart, is you understand what I mean. And it seems to me that he/she wanted to take the first road, but he saw that the second was prettier than the first, so he/she chose that one.
4. I don't think I understand which road he really took? But it stands that the second road was: "though as for that the passing there, had worn them really about the same" - so I think he chose the first. And by taking that road, he made the difference, and discovered the road. This poem made me kind of "calm and happy" as mention before... I liked it, even though I didn't understand it well.
5. I think this generation is very healthy. Even though we love our cellphones. Our phones are really important, because we communicate through them. But mostly important- for me too- is friends and family. They support you, no matter what, and that's way more worth than all the cellphones. It is dull that I can't make my own choices like the grownups. But I like that I can take some important decisions in life. In that way I learn how the life as an adult is. Sports are important too, like football and handball. It is social and fun in the same time, and if you have friends there too, it's even funnier.
6. In the poem, the person takes an "important" choice. Our life is full of choices, and sometimes we choose wrong, and learn from our mistakes. Maybe that's the message in the poem, to take the right choices.
7. As I said in the last question, I think the message is about swimming with the stream. Like let people make your decisions for you, and do as they say. The road he took was less travelled; he didn't choose the one everyone chose. In life this is very relevant, especially as a teenager. We do take wrong choices, and we learn from them, as I said in the last part. This poem can be really useful for us because we can interpret the poem, like we do now, and put the message into our own life. That we can live our own life, and don't think about what other mean, but that is very hard...
8. I think that many people have the poem "the road not taken" as their favorite because they can relate to it. We all have to make decisions, and if you do something different, then you might get it better.
9. I think the title means to take the road no one has taken before you. To try other ways, and find yourself. Life is so undiscovered, and we should, me included, take more own choices. Like to not follow the majority, but be a part of the minority!
10. My life-the past and future- is just full of choices. Way too many for a child. Like a rollercoaster that never ends. But the choices that I take, makes me to the person I am- and will get.

Text 32

1. I think you have to read the poem a few times to understand the text. But I think it maybe is about to choose which way you want to go. You can chose about two roads and you just have to choose one of them. Maybe it means which way you want to choose in your life.
2. This text was also a bit difficult to understand but I think it means that one road is more difficult to choose and the other road is more fair than the other. And is always better to choose the easy road.
3. I think the third text maybe is about to get back from the road again and doubted if I should ever come back. Maybe it means when you have chosen the wrong way and you don't know how you can get back again.
4. The way the person took when the roads diverged in a wood made all difference. Maybe it was a good thing or maybe it was a bad thing. But I think it was a bad thing for the person who telling this with a sigh.
5. I think friends are very important for young persons in Norway to day. I think it is because it's always good to have someone you can talk with. Maybe about feelings or just someone you can have fun with, laugh with and being around in your spear time. But something young people don't like so much is school. So much homework and many are tired of school. Other things that is important is maybe something to do in the spear time. Maybe football, handball or dance or something else. For me is friends important and something to do in the spear time like football. Because that is something I can do with my friends. Relaxing is also important for me because I think everyone need time for themselves.
6. Maybe the themes is to choose the right things or the right way/road in your life. Don't just follow everyone else. Take your own choice and don't care what other people says.
7. I think this poem can be useful for young people today because it's a lot of choices for young people. Which school do you want to choose and which friends do you want to hang out with. The poem can be useful because the text shows that if you choose wrong choices and you choose wrong way in your life it can be very difficult to come back from the wrong way. So the poem get you to think before you act.
8. I think many people have this poem as their personal favorite because they can use it when they are going to take some choices.
9. I think the title "the road not taken" maybe means that the road don't take you but you have to choose your own road.
10. I don't know if this poem tell me something personally. It was a bit difficult to understand and I don't know if I thought right about the poem.

Text 33

1. This poem made me feel like it was in the autumn. I feel like the main person had to make a choice in his life and he thought about the choices, but he couldn't choose bout.
2. He had to go a way many people had gone before him. He felt that it was the safest road to go when he knew that people have walked this road before him. People have been taking this choice before him.
3. The man saw that bout the roads had many leaves where nobody had trodden yet. The man don't know what way to go. It made me feel that we all have to make some choices in our life's and we should see both ways before we make a choice.
4. At the end he choice to take the road not many have walked before him. I think the road is a symbol for choices we make. The man didn't just follow after other peoples and instead wanted to go another way.
5. Young people in Norway care way to much about their cellphone. If you walked in the city Kristiansand you can probably see many young people who is using their cellphone while they walk and do other stuff. Here in Norway almost all the young people in Norway uses Facebook

and Snapchat all the times. Even to I don't know how much young people uses their phones in other countries. I think we all need to slow down a bit when it comes to use our phones. Because before many young people in Norway used to go on a trip to the mountains and sleep in a tent, but now we just want to stay home. Don't get me wrong because many of us young people play some sort of sport and many of us are active.

6. I think there is a message in this poem and it is that we all have to make some choices in our life and we should not just follow the everyone else. We have to make our own choices in our life's we don't have to follow the stream. In this poem the theme is autumn in a wood were many the leaves have fallen down.
7. So the story begins with a man who is in the woods were the road splits in to. The main person in this poem chuces carefully the way he want to go but before he walkes that road he wants to see if he could walk the other one to. This poem can be used to make people choose better and easier witch way to go.
8. I think people in USA like this poem because it's a poem with a hidden meaning.
9. I think the title of this poem "The Road Not Taken" means the choice he didn't make and the way he didn't walk.
10. To me this poem made me think of some choices I have taken and other choices I could have made.

Text 34

1.I feel that someone is force someone to take a choose. Like a man has to choose between to women he loves. But he wants to choose both but he can't, and he is sad because he can't love them both. So he looks for something that maybe can change it.

2.Like he choose one of them because he has more in common. And he is thinking what has happened to this girl, like what her history is and what type of boys she has been dating and how they treated her.

3.The first night after he has chosen her, he looks back in his footprints at the ground to see if his footprint has turned black. And if they do he has choose wrong.

4.He is telling that in many years someone others will get the same choice, and he took the way there less has been before him.

5. I think that what is typical important for young person's today, is get freedom. Freedom from everything and just enjoy that you are young. Before you get bills every day and have to make money for your family. Just make silly mistakes, not big ones just one you can fix. And just being between a kid and an adult. There you can take a decision whiteout worry about everything else. The positive of being young is you live righth here and now. Like nothing else matters. To something you can just say 'fuck this, fuck that'. But when you are young it's so much pressure. If you haven't the righth clothes you can just get ditched. If you aren't in the righth size you can be called fat of chubby. And if you aren't pretty enough you can be called ugly. Everything has to be perfect! Or else you are just not good enough. You are worthless or not worth the time.

6.I think the message in the poem is not always the best just because everybody else is doing that. And it is okay (!) to being different.

7.I think this poem is good for the people in our country because people are so afraid to being different. It's just some people that aren't like everybody else. In this poem it is okay to not go the way everybody else does!

8.Because everybody is get different thoughts and emotions from it (?) and it is something you can recognize yourself in! You are like the only one when you read it. It is your opinion. Not mine not hers but your one!

9. I think the title 'the road not taken' means that your chance is there to be different! It is not gonna go away. Everyday it's a new chance to be different. It's not taken away. And it's never gonna disappear.

10. The poem is telling me that I can't complain on the society before I do something with it!

Text 35

1. I think that this part could mean the two different paths in life. I have to choose wisely the one that I think fits me. I'm looking for where I could end up, but I can't see the end. This makes me think about how I have to think about my different choices in life.
2. The character chose the part that he thinks was best for him. But it also needed more work. The other people who also had chosen that part had to work hard to get through it. I'm thinking that this means you can't get through studies and stuff easily. You have to work just as hard as everyone else to achieve what you want.
3. Both of the roads were equally as good, none of them had left bad steps on your future. After he had chosen one of the roads he kept it for another day, doubting if he would ever come back. This part means that when you make a choice it's hard to start over.
4. He made this choice long time ago. He had to choose one of the two roads and he took the one that less people dared to. The road that he chose made all the difference. This makes me think of how I should choose my road. Not the easiest one, but the one I think will make the biggest difference in my life.
5. A young person in Norway usually goes to a sport. Most boys go to football and most girls go to handball. Most young Norwegians like animals. It's really typical for a family to have a cat or a dog. A normal day would be: Wake up, go to school, go home, do homework, do some activity, watch TV/be on your phone/computer, go to bed. And we use our phones about every time we don't have anything else to do. The positive about young Norwegians is that they're pretty active physically compared to other countries. A lot also go to gyms. The negative would be that we maybe expect too much. We're living in a rich country, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we can get anything we want. It's also really expensive here compared to other countries. Especially fast food.
6. I think that this poem is trying to tell you that you should always choose the part that you think is best. Maybe not the easiest one because you never know what could lay behind it after some time. If you want success in life you have to work for it.
7. I think that all the answers have a link. School. There're people that drop out of school because they either aren't good enough, or they just want to do something else. I think this is the most stupid you can do as education is the most important part of your life. This poem tells you that even if you have chosen maybe the hardest path, it will always be worth it. Maybe you regret it at that time because it's hard, but in the end you will always think it was worth it. This poem could be really useful for young people today as everyone should choose what they think are best for their future. If everyone followed this path, there would most likely be very few people that have to struggle on the streets and stuff compared to today.
8. I think that this poem is one of the favorites because of how inspiring it is. This poem can inspire people to do their best at school and save themselves a good future. The American dream is success, and that's exactly what you will achieve if you follow this poem.
9. "The Road Not Taken" I think that this means that you don't have to worry about your road being taken. There will always be space for you as long as you qualify for it. Always follow what your heart desires and don't think that you can't achieve what you want. Because that's a lie. Anyone can follow their dreams and become whatever they want to be, all you have to do is to do your best! If you're doing everything in your power, you can't fail! Don't let your dreams be dreams, just do it!
10. This poem really inspires me to do my best at school as it's very important. I can easily become what I want if I just try hard enough. I know that I need good grades to become what I want, but

that won't stand in my way. I can't think of anything special this symbolizes for me, but I know it will one day. If I one day lose my motivation to continue studying I'll read this for sure and I'll get inspired to continue.

Thanks for reading.

Text 36

1. When I read the first part of the poem, my first thoughts was that this was kind of a sad poem. When reading it I felt like the storyteller felt sorry and disappointed because he couldn't go down the two roads, he could only choose one. The roads here might emphasise different paths you can choose in life, and when the storyteller looks down one of the roads he could choose, he sees as long as he can imagine. He looks down a path were the ending is uncertain, and he doesn't know if he should go that way or the other, because the other road might be better.
2. When I read the second part, I think that the person that this poem is about chose the best path so far, and that he is very happy with his decision. His life path, if you can call it that, is grassy and feels nice to go for the storyteller. But there is a warning that might turn things around. Maybe this was a bad path after all? So far nothing bad has happened, and the storyteller can go safely on the road with no worries.
3. In the third part the storyteller regrets his decision. The path he chose was not as good as it seems, and it also seems like he might have been there before. Maybe the road and the storyteller has a long history back, but a bad one, which is why he never really wanted to go back this road. But maybe life forced him, and he had no choice in the end. So he chose the bad path but the remembered why he didn't want to go back. Or maybe if he gets away he never want to go back. Not because of history, but because he sees what this road really is.
4. In the last part, the storyteller makes it clear that he chose the wrong way. He chose the wrong path and it had consequences. If we go back to the beginning, he had the choice between two paths. He looked as far as he could see down the road he didn't choose, but couldn't see the end. It was the same with the one he chose. He couldn't see what would happen. For me this is a metaphor for life. You don't know what will happen if you do what you do, sometimes you just have to do what you think is the right thing. And then you might see the end of the road. It might be happy or sad, but hopefully if you have done what you think is right, the end is happy. In this poem I think the storyteller knew he should go down the other way, but chose the wrong one because he felt he didn't have a choice.
5. I think the youth of Norway feels a lot of pressure. There is no talking about dropping out of school and go fishing for a living anymore. Now you should get an education, be good at sports, be fit, get a good job and just be successful. There is not a lot of time for spare time activities anymore. Young people want to get straight A-s, and at the same time have a lot of friends. At least this is what most of them think. Personally I don't think a lot about this, but it seems to be a problem for someone. I also want to be successful, but I don't think you need to make life a living nightmare. I just take things as they come and already have a plan of what I'm going to do when I grow up and how I am going to achieve it. But still I can understand why some people feel this way. When you are young you are supposed to live a life with a lot of friends and be social. But when you suddenly have to become a great student as well things get a bit more tricky. Plus you have to be good at sports which leaves you just the night for resting. The rest of the day there is no time for that. And you don't want to be the guy that says no to his friends because he has to do his homework either.
6. I think the message in this poem is just make the right decisions. The storyteller in this poem didn't and the outcome was not positive. So if you make the right decisions your life will be good in the end.
7. I think this poem can be a bit useful. Or at least the message. Many people today make bad decisions when it comes to drugs and getting involved with criminals. I am not sure though if just

a poem would change the way people like this are thinking, but it has a very important message and I think the part where he understood that he took the wrong way might be very useful. If people got shown were not to go there is a greater chance for them not to go there and they would not make the wrong decisions.

8. I think it is so famous because of the message it has and also the way it is written. It is written very elegantly and I understand why people would find that appealing.
9. "The road not taken" might stand for the road he didn't go down and that he wishes he would go there or that he actually went the right way and the title is for the road he didn't choose which is happy for.
10. This poem is telling me that I should make the right decisions and help others to do it as well

Text 37

1. I think it's about how you want to be in two places at the same time, even though it's not possible. And also that you want to be the person everyone want you to be, but that isn't possible either because the only person you can be is yourself. As well maybe you're not sure what you want to do in the future. You have two different ways to live your life, and you have to make a choice, but you don't know what you want to do.
2. I think he is standing in front of the two roads and thinks about which one he want to choose. He is now looking into the second way to go, and he thinks that maybe this one is better. I think that the person thinks that it's the best way because it looks better and easier, but it's not a good way to go, and the persons who went there before has worn people about not going there. I think we can think of this as our lives, and that it is very easy to choose the easiest way, even though it's not always the best way to go.
3. The person chose the first way, and I think it's trying to say that during your life you have to choose between millions of ways and that some of the choices you take will be bad and some will be good, some will you regret and some will you don't regret. It's just how life is.
4. In the last part I think it's about that the person chose the way that not many people had chosen before him. I think the last verse of the poem is trying to tell us that the person chose a way of living life that was very different from anyone else.
5. For me, family and friends are most important. I also think that school is important, because I want to get a good job when I become an adult and I want to have enough money to maintain my family. I also like to exercise a lot, and I thinks that's important to have a good lifestyle. Many people think it's important to wear the right close and to have the perfect body, but that's not important to me. For me it's important to just be yourself and be happy with who you are. If you're not happy with who you are, then no clothes will chance that. Young people in Norway can be judgy, and many people feels that they can never be popular if they are not pretty or doesn't have the perfect clothes. But the inside is what counts the most. Also some people starts drinking and smoking before its legal.
6. I think the message is about taking choices and how hard it is to take the right choice.
7. I think this poem can be useful for young people today because it's about taking a choice, and to follow the way everyone has gone before, even though it's not the right way. Many people feels that they have to drink or smoke if all the friends do, and they might think it's not that dangerous if it's just one time.
8. I think it popular because many people think they are the person in the poem, a person who has to make a choice and finds it difficult.
9. I think the title is a good summary to what the poem is about. That you have a plan for your life but you don't have all the bricks puzzled. There is something missing, and you don't know yet but you have to figure out.
10. The poem can symbolize many things in my life. When I was younger I had many different activities, and I was always unsure which activity I wanted to quit because I knew I had to many hobbies. I knew that the choice I made was going to influence my life. Today I feel like I made the

right choice. I also had a dilemma because I had to choose between two things to do in the summer, either work or to join a cup in Sweden. I chose to work and I feel like I made the right decision.

Text 38

1. When I read the poem I thought this was a little text whit stuff you think about how you should be in the life. I think that is when you are whit people around you how don't think like the same as you. When I hear that I think it about to go out in real life and feel you can go around and not be scared.
2. When I read this part I think it's about you should not go out and think you are not ugly u are fair and you should not think about that. When you see the grassy you should see you are better and that. The text tell me about the feeling you can have when someone think that.
3. I think the text is about to try to get a step out of the black world and go out from the fear the person have. The text say me about to take the step to show himself for the world and go out and think and see you are good and not ugly. And text tell me about when you will back but not think you should come back all thing is black.
4. The text tell us how the life can be in the world . Sometime should we travel away from someone and that's hard to go from. The feeling in the poem is too hard and many people go around and have that feeling to travel home from and miss all his/her friends and be alone and get new friends. You go to yourself and think about all thing you can't go whit out when they travel.
5. I think In my young life in Norway are my friends the important things I have when I am young. They give me hug and can help me If something Is wrong. We hang out whit them all days and smile and cry and are happy together. The family is important to when I am young . They help me whit school but family can be lit of bit easy sometimes. They bicker sometimes and I be crazy. The telephone In Norway are important from young people and we go whit that all day long that can be negative. Yong is to have fun and go crazy and go around and see all the crazy concert. I think all young people have the same life. To be young is funny.
6. There are little bit of how the world are to be young and have friends and good family.
7. In another country I think that can be good to think on. In the poem they say you should go and think you are fine and good you can take the step out. The poem can be useful in another country and we should think we can include all people in the world. We young people can be bether social and think of what in the world that happened know. And stop all hate.
8. I think many people have this poem some favourite because it has many feelings to think you can be better and try to don't give up the life and we see many people will not go out and think you are not fair.
9. I think the text is call the road is not taken because all thing in the world is not taken. People have not the best life so I think many people like the text and it s many feelings and people are not perfect. So the title are good for the text.
10. The text telling me about the life cannot be taken all day and many people cry every day and I will be bether to help people around me.

Text 39

1. I think that was one of the choices you have to do in your life. Life is not easy, you have to do many choices. For me I think I have done many choices, but I am not done 1/5 of my dictions, I hope.
2. I am not sure bur I think you have to take care of all, everyone have potential, maybe not the best now, but they can be good. I don't understand the whole poem, but that's my answer.
3. I feel that the person who is telling don't have the best period in his/her life.
4. The poem is about that he has done a choice and now he is thinking about if he had taken the other way and what he had missed in his life now.

5. The young people today is very kind, helpful and fixed. We are very fixed about own choices, but we are listening to advice from people who have more experience than us. We are very sporty and we have a lot of energy. Defiantly it is any groups that is drinking alcohol and that stuff. For girl it is very important to be fine and have a good look and have nice style. For boys it important to have big muscles and look good.
6. I don't understand it.
7. For me it is very good poems, because it is about the life. It about choices, potential, good and bad periods in your life and thinking about if you have done some others choices. What have your life been then? The topic of the poems is a very important in your life.
8. Because if you take a wrong dictions, you can always begin with clean sheet.
9. The life just in poems. I mean that is a good title because the poems is about that stuff.
10. I don't now but it something about life.

Appendix F: Questionnaire for respondents- five months after

1.What was the name of the poem?

The road not taken
The road not taken.
do not know
The roads not taken
The road not taken
I don't remember the name of the poem.
I dont remember
i don't know
the road not taken
I don't remember, sorry
I dont know
The road not taken
The road not taken
The road not taken
The road not taken
The road not taken
The roads untaken
The name was The road not taken.
i dont remember
Two roads divided into a wood? The road not taken?
Two roads diverged into the yellow woods
The road not taken
The road not taken
The road not taken
tow roads devide in a yellow wood
the road not taken
i dont know.
The road not taken
The road not taken
I dont know
The road not taken
The road not taken
don't remember
I dont know... (Gess the road not taken)
The road not taken
i dont remember.
the road not taken
blank
idk

2.Do you remember what the poem was about?

It was about the future. the different disisions you have to make in your lifetime and wondering what would be different is you chose another road.
The poem is about taking your own path for the future. It was about not letting others influence you. You have to do what you think is the best for yourself
It was about two roads that dilivered in a wood. And the person took the road not taken, and that made the whole difference.
Two roads diverged in a yellow wood. It was about which road did you choose, and was it the right for you? Which road did you choose for the future, and perhaps you took the road not taken.
Two roads that diverged in a yellow wood and the person took the one less travelled by. its about making lifechoices

it was about a man that maby took the wrong road.
the man had tow choises, and had to choos one
Standing for your thoughts, and taking choices in life, based on what you think is right. It was also about
being different. The road not taken is a poem about relevant topics.

No, i dont.

I think it was about that you shoul find your own way.

It was about two roads that were divided. And It was about taken a road and never look back.

I dont remember

It was about taking your own choises, and not do what everyone else does.

It was a about making desicions and choosing wich way to go.

don't remember

if i am right... one less traveld by and somthing about making a disison

i was about two roads and you had to choose wich one you wanted to go

no

it was a person who was going a road and it was divided in two one of the path was big and the other was
smal

blank

idk

The poem was about the ways you could choose in life.

It was about the choices in your life, and how it affect your life in the future.

no

The poem was about life and making choiches.

Two roards and a person had to choose one

I remember something about two paths and two choices, but i dont really remember anything else.

making important choices, and how important it is to make the right decision

no

i dont remener

I think the poem was about choices you take in life. Making your own ways, and don't just follow everyone
else.

Choices

I think it was about a two roads divided that lead to different places. A man who came to these two roads,
was not sure which way he wanted to go.

It was about two different ways in the woods. The theme was different choises.

It was about a road that split into two paths. A person wondered which one to take, and he chose the one
less travelled by.

I think the poem was about two paths you could choose in life or something

the poem was about different choices and ways to choose

it was about life choices, i think. And what decision we should take in our lifes .

It was about one road which lead to two differeent roads. One road was bigger than the other, and it was in
the forest.

i dont remember

3.I write about “poetry and personal insight”. What thoughts and feelings from the poem do you still remember?

None.

Just that i have to think before i choose.

i cant remember a thing

i don't remember

I dont remember

I remember that i though alot about how you should take the right path (The right choice).

dont remember

i don't remember

i dont remember

i can't remember that much from the poem. But I got a lot of thoughts through the writingsession. For
example, that i have to make own choices and not follow everyone else.

i can't quite remember

I remember I thought about that the two roads could illustrate life, when we have to take hard choices.

i remember that the poem was a bit (dystert)

I thought that it was nice that the person chose the road less travelled by. It is something that I often think about myself-to not make the same choices as everyone else, just because that's what's normal.

I don't remember much about that

I do not remember

I think that the poem was actually about a person who had to make different choices and decisions in his/her life. The person was confused, and had to think about the consequences.

i dont remember

I do not remember anything specific.

When I read the poem, I got a feeling that what was written in it was awfully true. I think that the what the poem tries to tell us really fits in into our daily lives at this moment.

I remember that since the person in the poem took the road not taken it made all the difference. That means that the choices you make makes all the difference between you and me.

I don't think i remember anything actually. No thoughts and feelings.

i remember it was a nice poem

i dont remember

I remember the two "roads that were divided", that your choices would lead one on the roads. Sometimes you would make wrongs, and take the wrong road. What's really important, is to take the choices, o behavior of yourself and your meanings.

dont remember.

you should have own opinions and make your own decisions.

I remember that the road actually was just a choice. A Choice of living life. And when you go one way, maybe some other ways get closed. And you can't change that.

I dont remember the poem

I remember it was about a man who had to choose between two roads. I picked the road not taken by anyone else.

I can't actually remember the poem, but I think I can remember writing about being lonely...? (not sure)

I remember liking the poem well, and it made me think twice about things.

don't remember

I have no clue

I remember that one of the roads was a little bit spooky and scary.

i dont remember it.

i don't remember so much but it was something about your one choose

blank

idk

4. In your opinion, did the poem make you think of new aspects of your life? Did it make you more aware of something important? (In my thesis I call it "gain more personal insight")

Now is a time on my life where i need to make some choices. Those choices have an impact on my life and if i chose the wrong thing i might regret it.

Ofcourse it encouraged me even more to take my own choices, but I knew that that was the smart thing to do on beforehand aswell and that is what i've done in relation to the upper secondary school next year.

Not really. Because I kind of already knew that my choices makes my path in life/world.

Not really, but I might gained more personal insight when it comes to taking a decision.

making choices for myself

yes, the poem made me think that follow your heart, not your soul. and dont always listen to people around you. listen to your heart

In one way it made me think about how important it is to be able to take choices of your own. I think the poem was great, it made me think about the aspect of my life.

no

No, or kind of. It is a very wise poem with a lot of meaning.

I dont remember, maybe:)

It didn't make me more aware. Like, I don't think I have thought of the poem since October...

it made me think about my future, and actually made me more frightened of the future. After reading the text i thought more of my actions and so on. Learned not to rush, instead be sure about which way im going

don't remember

I am actually stupid for dont remembering :-)

You have a choice in your life only you can make and you have to choose which direction you want of your life. I thought more about that I must follow my dreams and not follow the stream.

I don't remember, but maybe you have to make your own opinion and not always do what your parents and friends mean

blank

idk

I don't remember.

I remembered that every choice I make is important for both me and other people. Also that there are many different options if you just stop, and think for a little while.

That's a weird question to ask a person who can't remember a thing of what the question includes

Yes because we have to take many choices in a life

I started thinking a bit more about what I choose, and what will be the outcome of the choice I take.

How important it is to think before you make a big decision, and you should be sure that you're making the right one.

I'm not quite sure

I think so

As I wrote, I now have been more aware of making my own choices. And I can feel good about it. Even though I'm the only one who goes that way.

I did get a feeling about all the choices I'm ahead

I got more aware of that sometimes the easiest way isn't always the right way, and you have to think which way that is the best for you.

I don't think so...

I was already aware of not just following the stream. I think that is why I remember so much of it. I think I will remember the poem for a long time, because it has had a certain influence on me.

It made me think about my future and if maybe I have chosen the wrong "road"

Yes, now I know better what decision to take that will be the best for me. And that there are always other options, so if one way did not go right then I should take another one. There are always open doors.

I don't really know, but I got a thought of that we have to think more about the consequences we get before we make any actions.

I don't remember

5. Has the poem, or its content, crossed your mind during these five months?

No.

no.

I don't believe so

No

Nope

I haven't really thought much about the poem, and it is just now that I start remembering a few things. Right after I thought about it, but not so much after that...

I don't think so

yes, sometimes

A little bit, yeah

Not at all

no I have not thought about it

I don't think so... Maybe the first days after we had the writing assignment?..

It has crossed my mind several times. Sometimes something has reminded me of how the nature is described in the poem. Or made me think about the road that divided into two paths. And I have thought about the poem when I had to make a choice.

No not really

No

Well, I haven't thought about it but I remember the name of the poem very well, because I think it's unique.

I don't know

Not really, I have read it a couple times in school and therefore remembered it, but not more than that.

Ehm... not really. I don't think I have thought about it really.

No

No, not that I recall.

yes, i have heard it being used for advertising something.
yes, when i walk op to a mountan or somthing and the roads splits in to, whitsh do i chose.
I can not say I have used a lot of time thinking about it, but still, I think it is a good poem with an important message.

no

no i dont think so.

No, it haven't really crossed my mind. But when I'm thinking of it now I guess I'm going to think about it more. I have to make some changes so the poem is going to cross my mind.

No

not really

it might have, but I am not sure if I remember a lot of it...

No, actually not.

i can't remember anything from this sorry

maybe, I really dont remember

i dont think so

no

sometimes in enghish lessons

blank :(

idk

Appendix G: Permission to use illustration, Claire Holgate

From: Claire Holgate <claire@claireholgate.co.uk>
Subject: Re: [Contact Form] From Aina
Date: 11 January 2016 11:30:52 GMT
To: aina.wikanes.bjelland@kristiansand.kommune.no

Hi Aina

Yes, of course, that would be fine (in fact, I think you have already asked me before!).. But it's absolutely fine with me and thank you for your kind comments.

Good luck with your thesis :)

Claire

Claire Holgate

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On 11 Jan 2016, at 10:49, Aina <aina.wikanes.bjelland@kristiansand.kommune.no> wrote:

Name: Aina

Email: aina.wikanes.bjelland@kristiansand.kommune.no

Comments: Hi!

I am an admirer of your drawings. I was wondering if it was OK with you if I use your drawing on The Road Not Taken as front cover illustration on my Master Thesis. Of course you will be accredited.

Best regards,

Aina W Bjelland, teacher of English as a Foreign Language, Norway