

ENGLISH

Journeys matter more than the destination

'It is good to have an end to journey towards; but it is the journey that matters in the end.' Good morning/afternoon Mrs Sayed and fellow students. Today I am going to be discussing this quote by Ursula K. Leguin in relation to our Area of Study – Journeys. Journeys can be divided into 3 sub-categories: the inner journey, the physical journey, and the imaginary journey. Shawshank Redemption has a number of characters which all partake in these various journeys. For my speech, I will discuss Red's journey in Shawshank Redemption, 'The Road Not Taken', a poem by Robert Frost, and a visual text I found on the Internet, which will definitively show that journeys matter more than destinations.

In the film Shawshank Redemption, Red, one of the main characters, has been in prison ever since he was a teenager. Every few years or so, Red would go up for parole, and he'd give the same answer every time: "Yes sir, I've learned my lesson. I can honestly say, I'm a changed man. I'm no longer a danger to society; that's God's honest truth." Each time, the camera would pan overhead as we see the parole officer assertively stamp 'DENIED' on the sheet of paper. Towards the end of the movie, Red goes up for parole once again. This time, his answer is a little different: "There's not a day goes by where I don't feel regret. But not because you think I should. I wish that I could go back, and try to talk some sense into that kid (the kid being a younger version of himself). But I can't. That kid's long gone, and this old man is all that's left. I gotta live with that." He then goes on to say that the parole officer can stamp anything he wants on that paper, because he honestly doesn't care anymore.

He realises that his life, or for the sake of this speech, his journey, is practically over, and no matter what his destination ends up being, he can never go back and change it. As the camera zooms in for a close-up shot of Red's face, we can clearly see the regret and sorrow in his eyes. We also see a blank expression on Red's face, showing us that he truly doesn't care whether he is released or not, as he has reached the tail-end of his journey called life. The character Red in Shawshank Redemption alone shows us that the journey is far more important than the destination. Red was on the verge of being released from prison, and he couldn't care less. Despite the possibility of being a free man, the journeys he could take, as a free man at that point would have been far and few between. Red is a prime example of why journeys matter more than the destination. Red's journey is very similar to the journey taken by the narrator in "The Road Not Taken", in the sense that they had a choice to make, and eventually regretted that choice later on; this brings me to my next point.

In the poem, "The Road Not Taken", by Robert Frost, the narrator goes on a physical journey. He arrives at a wood where the road diverges into two separate paths. He then goes on an imaginary journey, as he considers which path to go down. He eventually chooses a path and later regrets that he could not travel the other. This poem is a metaphor for all the times we've had to make decisions. We all think about whether we should've chosen the other option, and whether that would've made a difference. As much as this poem is physical, it is also an inner journey. It also represents how the journey is more important than the destination because of the way the narrator struggles to make a decision on which journey he'd like to take. He doesn't say, "Oh, I wonder what is at the end of this road" but rather focuses on the journey itself, and what it entails for him. Further emphasis is placed on this as he shows regret towards the end of the poem; regret that he could not experience both paths.

Furthermore, by stating that he wished to go down both paths, he again places more emphasis on the journey rather than the destination. He didn't care where he wended up, all he wanted was to be able to experience both roads, both journeys, and not have to make a decision and choose a path. This is reinforced by the final stanza, when he says "I shall be telling this with a sigh", again showing regret that he could not choose both paths. On an interesting note, the narrator states that he took the road less travelled by, and that has made all the difference. This however cannot be true, as he

had not travelled the other road, and could not possibly know this. One could interpret that he is compensating for the fact that he couldn't travel the other road, thus stating that he took a unique journey that many others haven't, further emphasising that journeys matter more than the destination. 'The Road Not Taken' is a perfect example of journeys meaning more than the destination.

The final point I would like to talk about in relation to journeys is about a visual text I found on the Internet. The image I found shows a man standing on a porch, looking out onto the red-roofed suburban houses. Already a sense of physical and inner journeys can be derived from the image. A caption reads: "Focus on the journey, not the destination. Joy is found in not finishing an activity, but in doing it." This further emphasises the point that journeys matter more than the destination. As the man looks on, there is no perceivable end, but rather more and more houses. This tells us that the man should focus on the journey, as the destination is far away. Also, in the image there are various unique and dynamic buildings and scenery, which show what the journey will entail; as opposed to the destination, which is a bleak nothingness.

The colours of the image also highlight that journeys are more important. The objects that are closer to the eye are vibrant, and draw your attention immediately as your eyes hit the image. The objects that are further away from the eye, and closer to the destination are of a pale and meek colour. This image and the meaning it conveys, shows how journeys matter more than the destination. It says that joy is found in partaking in a journey, not finishing it. The image underlines this fact, with different colours and meanings that can be extracted by analysing it. This image is a great example of how journeys are more important than destinations.

Despite the fact that these journeys are relatively different, they share most of the same characteristics. An individual embarks on a journey, and at the end they are changed in one way or another. We see this with Red in Shawshank Redemption, how he feels regret and remorse over his past actions, and thus becomes a better person overall. We also see this in 'The Road Not Taken' as the narrator embarks on a journey but in the end feels regret that he could not take the other path. Journeys more often than not change you as a person, which can be seen in all three texts. However, the most powerful similarity between all three texts is that the journey is always more important than the destination, as the journey is what changes you as a person, not the destination.

To wrap up my speech, and conclusively show that journeys matter more than the destinations, I'd like to quote famous American Novelist and Poet, Don Williams Jr. "The road of life twists and turns and no two directions are ever the same. Yet our lessons come from the journey, not the destination." Thank you for listening to my speech.