

Richard Tillinghast prompt: “Turning Point”

Write a poem about a turning point in your life, a landmark event or life-choice. Something—good or bad—has happened that changes everything. Some examples would be Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” and “Bereft.” Interestingly, Frost chooses not to be specific about what has happened; perhaps this allows the reader to work him- or herself into the poem, to feel it applies to us and not just to the poet.

Here's a poem by Han-Shan, a Tang Dynasty Chinese hermit poet, translated by Gary Snyder:

Settled at Cold Mountain

by Han-shan (<https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/settled-cold-mountain>)

I settled at Cold Mountain long ago,
Already it seems like years and years.
Freely drifting, I prowl the woods and streams
And linger watching things themselves.
Men don't get this far into the mountains,
White clouds gather and billow
Thin grass does for a mattress,
The blue sky makes a good quilt.
Happy with a stone underhead
Let heaven and earth go about their changes.

Here are links to the two Robert Frost poems:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/44272/the-road-not-taken>

<https://allpoetry.com/bereft>

Here’s a link to “Home After Three Months Away,” where Robert Lowell, having been hospitalized and treated for a manic breakdown, is back home again, adjusting to being with his family again, feeling shaky, ambivalent about what life will now offer:

<https://poets.org/poem/home-after-three-months-away>