



# The Road Less Traveled: Creating a Future Path in Career Guidance and Life Planning

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- My Warmest **Congratulations** to the Hong Kong Association of Career Masters and Guidance Masters on her 50th Anniversary!



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- **50 Years** on a Road Less Traveled – It is a narrow and difficult road for teachers to travel in their professional journeys

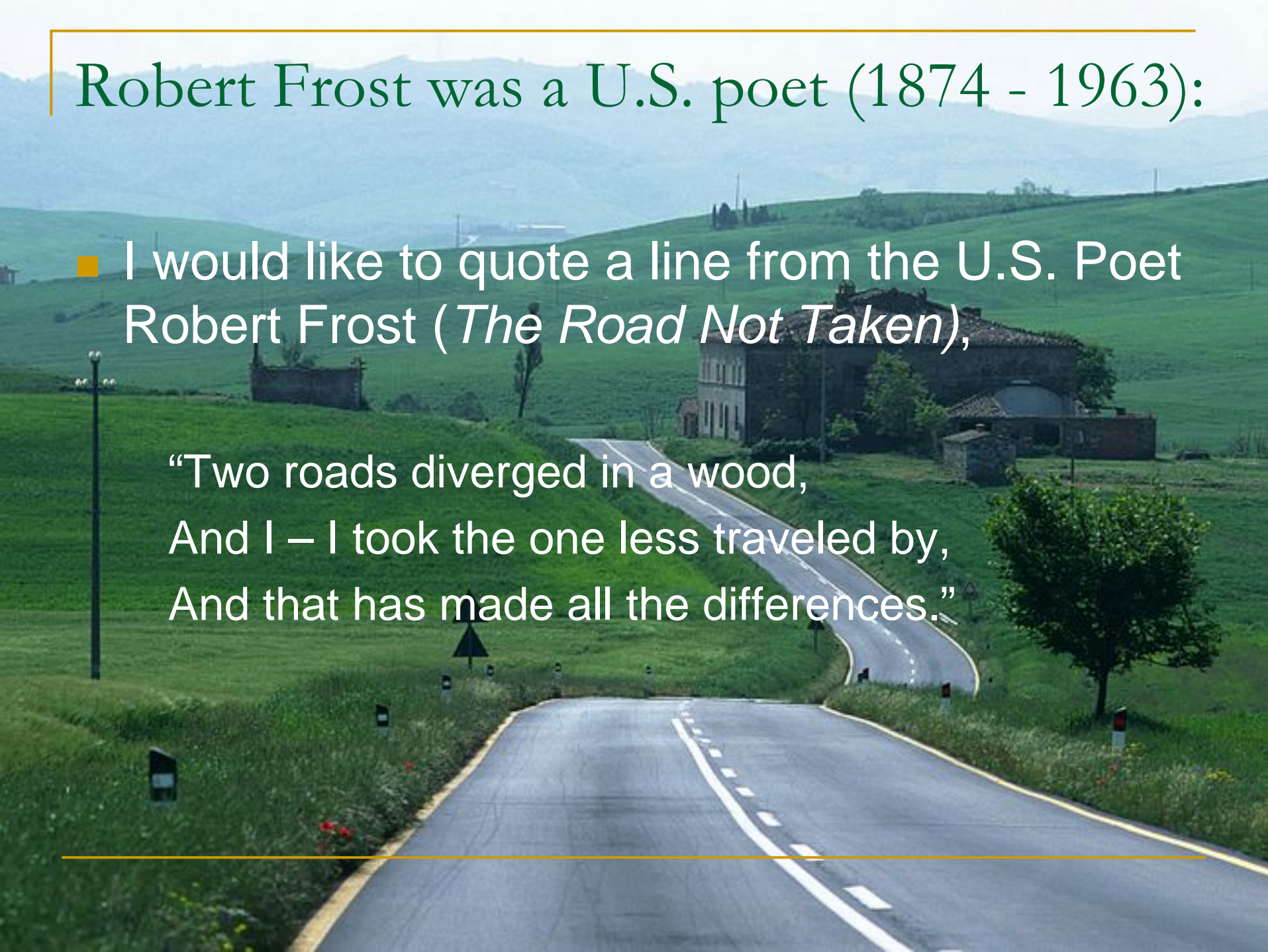


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Robert Frost was a U.S. poet (1874 - 1963):

- I would like to quote a line from the U.S. Poet Robert Frost (*The Road Not Taken*),

“Two roads diverged in a wood,  
And I – I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the differences.”



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# Goals of This Presentation

- **Learning from history**: Examine the life and ideas of Frank Parson, the grandfather of career guidance (in the U.S. and perhaps elsewhere)
  - **Looking ahead into the Future** of career guidance and counseling in Hong Kong: Lessons from Frank Parson
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Frank Parson, 1854-1908

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# Context of Frank Parson's Life

- Lived at a time of **great economic instability** (serious economic depression in the U.S. in 1873, 1882, 1893, and 1907; Watts, 1994, p.268): Unemployment, uneven distribution of wealth, social injustice (e.g., exploitation of labors)
  - Lived in an **era of rapid industrial and technological changes**
  - **Parents died early**, and lived with aunts in his boyhood years.
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# Career and Life Themes

**Zytowski, 2008**

- **Bright student** – At age 16, Parson enrolled in Cornell University, studying in mathematics and engineering.
- **School-to-Work Transition:** Upon graduation, Parson obtained a position as an engineering staff of a railroad company (relatively high in prestige at that time).
- **Unemployment – Under-employment:** The financial breakdown in 1869 caused the closedown of his company, and Parsons could only find work as a laborer in a steel mill.



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- **Joined the Teaching Profession:** Parson later became a teacher in Southbridge, Massachusetts, teaching Mathematics History, and French
  - **Law Profession:** Self-studied for law, and passed the bar examination in 1881, and became a lawyer (did not actually practice law in his career)
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- **Multiple career-roles:** **Book editor**, including editing legal books (Little Brown & Company), **part-time professor** (Boston University, Kansas State University), **writer** on social issues (1880s and 1890s)
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# Parson's Visions/Dreams

- **Strong concern for social justice and need of the social marginal** – Run unsuccessful for mayor of Boston, spoke and wrote of many social issues (e.g., 8-hour work day, anti-monopolies, representative form of government, women's right to vote, labor rights, national income tax; concern for the unemployed, the marginal, youth who had no direction and purpose).
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- “**This vision** was the source and focus of his energies. He worked tirelessly in advocating this views through writing, teaching, lecturing, and lobbying – this was his vocation, or calling.” (Jones, 1994)
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- **Simple lifestyle:** “Unmarried, he lived in Spartan simplicity in two furnished rooms on St. James Street in downtown Boston. I remember visiting him in his quarters where he was working amidst many books, galley proofs, magazines and newspapers. Each time I called on him he seemed closer to the door, literally crowded out by his books” (written by his landlady/neighbor, quoted in Watts, 1994)
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- **Innovator and Pioneer of career counseling theory and practice.**

- “In 1901, the Civic Service-House had been established in Boston to provide educational programs for immigrants and young persons seeking work. In 1905, Parson was named the Director of the Breadwinner’s Institute, which was one of the Civic-House’s programs. Eventually, through Parson’s leadership, the Vocation Bureau of Boston was established.” (Zunker, 2000, p.11)
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- Parsons served as the first Director of the **Vocational Bureau**. Branch offices were established at the Boston YMCA and the Women's Education and Industrial Union.
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**Civic Service House**

The Vocation Bureau established by Frank Parsons in January, 1908 was located in the Civic Service House in the North End of Boston.



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- The **vocational guidance movement** soon spread to many cities in the U.S., and led to the first vocational guidance conference in Boston in 1910, and the formation of the National Vocational Guidance Association in 1914 (now **NCDA**).
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- In a lecture, Parson reported on the experience of the first five months of the Vocations Bureau over 80 young men and women, ages 15 to 39, and stated that **“all but two received much light and help, some even declaring that the interview with the Counselor was the most important hour of their lives.”** (cited in Spokane & Glickman, 1994, and in Zytowski, 2008)
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- Parson published his book “***Choosing a Vocation***” in 1909, posthumously.
  - Parson died of cancer in 1908, after finishing final draft of his book.
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- I think we have a lot to learn from Parson, the pioneer in vocational/career guidance



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# On Career Guidance/Intervention

## ■ #1: Light – accurate self-knowledge

- “Look yourself in the eye. Compare yourself with others...watch the people you admire, note their conduct, conversation and appearance, and how they differ from people you do not admire, then see who you resemble the most.” (p.6 of Choosing a Vocation, cited in Spokane & Glickman, 1994)
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- On **interest or career orientation**:
    - “If a farmer, an artist, an architect, and an entomologist are walking together, the farmer will see the trees and crops, the artist will see the beautiful women, the clouds, the sky and the scenery, the architect will see the buildings.... And the entomologist will see the bugs...”  
(unpublished manuscript of Parson, cited in Briddick, 2009)
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## #2: Information

- “One who would be a vocational counselor should familiarize himself in a high degree with industrial knowledge, and he would need some knowledge .... that is not easily obtained ...” (p.45 of Choosing a Vocation).
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## #3: Inspiration

- **Removal of blocks to action, and activation of hope through the process of effective counseling:**
    - “The counselor should use the utmost frankness and kindness in a friendly effort to enable the applicant to use himself exactly as others see him, and correct whatever defects may stand in the way of his advancement.”
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## ■ **The importance of spending time with your clients:**

- “I find it best to have at least 15 min’s private talk with the applicant .... (and half an hour or an hour is better still if it can be had). (p.11 of Parson, 1909)

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## #4: Cooperation

- The importance of obtaining community and institutional resources to assist in implementing career choice:
  - “There is the possibility here for cooperation with employment agencies of the right kind, with very valuable and helpful results.” (p.9 of Choosing a Vocation, cited in Spokane & Glickman, 1994).

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# Three-Part Formula for Choosing a Vocation

- #1: A **clear understanding of yourself**, aptitude, interests, resources, limitations and others
  - #2: A **knowledge of the requirements** and conditions of success, advantages and disadvantages, compensations, opportunities, and prospects in different line of work.
  - #3: **True reasoning** on the relations of these two groups of facts (Parson, 1090, p.5, cited in Zunker, 2002)
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- The three points above formed what we called the “trait-factor” approach. Career counseling is more complex than just a matching process, yet the trait-factor approach has become one of the foundations of theory and practice.
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# Parson's five Main Propositions

- #1: It is better to “**choose**” a vocation than merely to “**hunt**” for a job.

From Spokane & Glickman, 1994, based on Parson, 1909.

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- #2: No one should choose a vocation without **careful self-analysis**, thorough, honest, and under guidance.

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- #3: The youth should have **a large survey of the field of vocations**, and not simply drop into the convenient or accidental positions.
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- #4: Expert **advice**, or the advice of men (women) who have made a careful study of men and of vocations and of the conditions of success, must be better and safer for a young man (women) than the absence of it.
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- #5: **Putting it down on paper** seems a simple matter, but it is one of the supreme importance in this study.
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# Reviewing the Key Words

- Light / self understanding
  - Inspiration / encourage
  - Information / tools
  - Cooperation / resources
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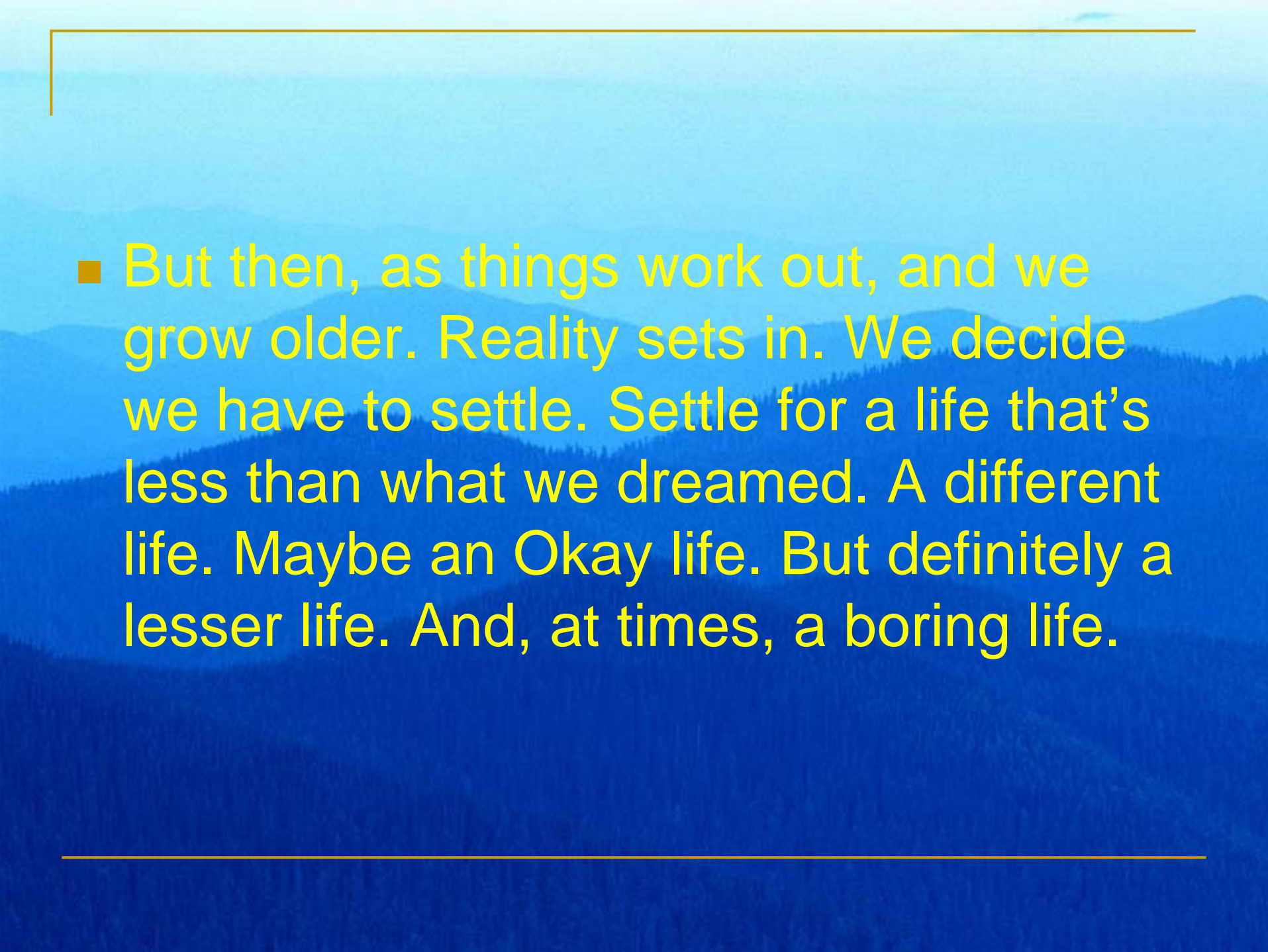


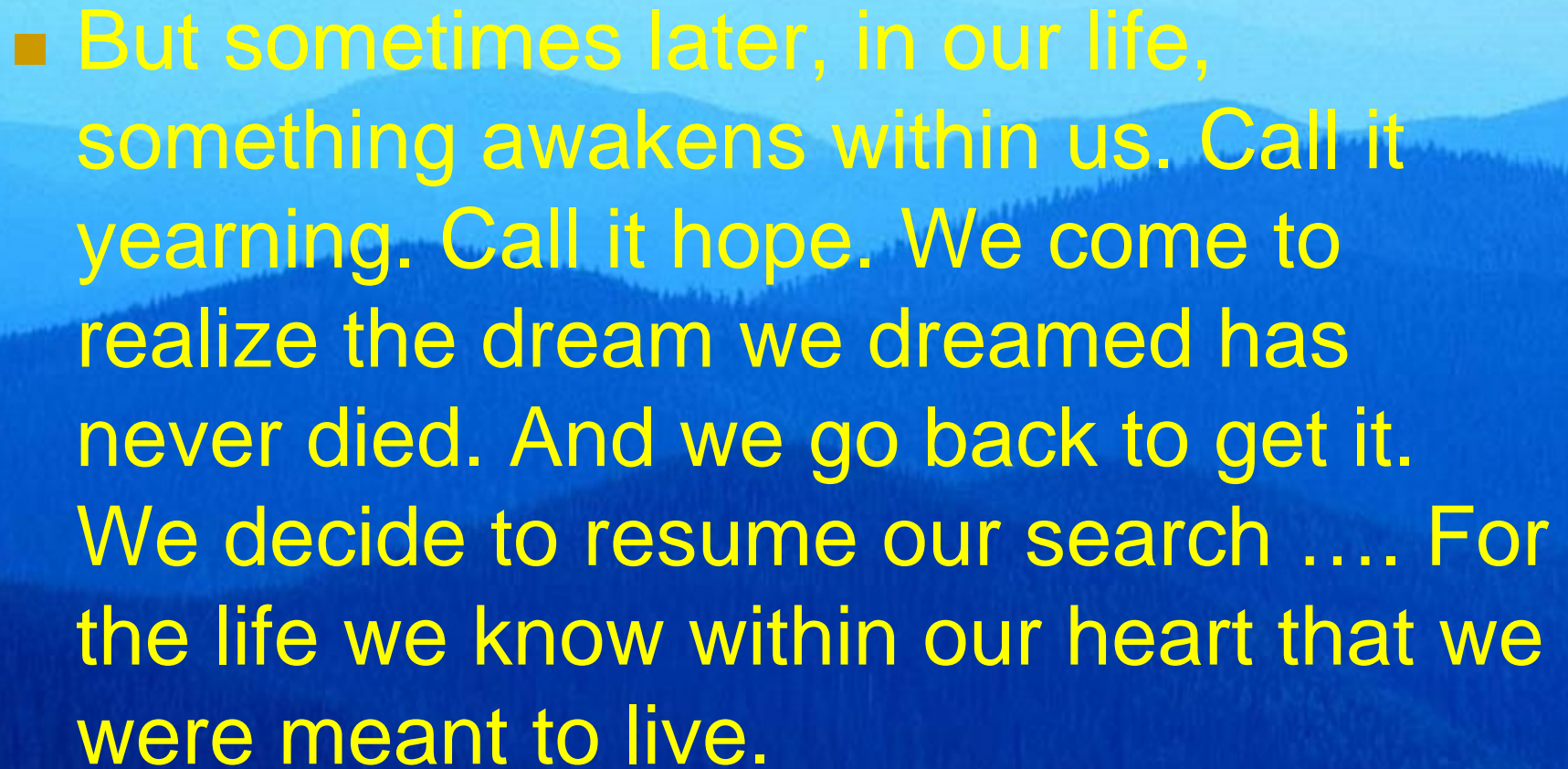
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# From Bolles, What Color is Your Parachute – On Pursuing Your Dreams

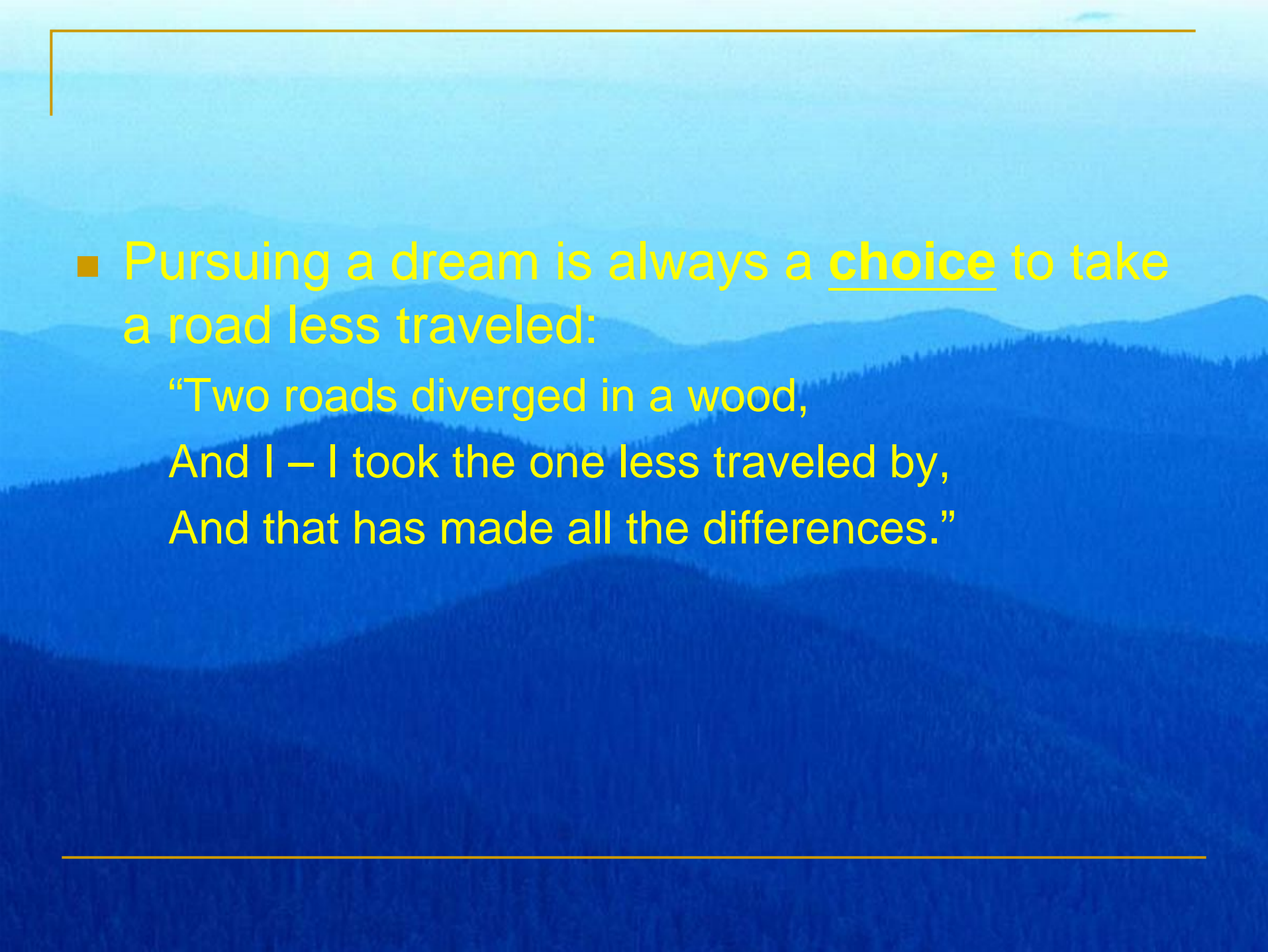
There is a time, when we are young, when we lie out in the meadow, our hands clasped behind our head, and as we stare up at the sky, we dream of what our life might be. The possibilities seem endless, and we are enchanted at this vision. It beckons us toward LIFE, and JOY.

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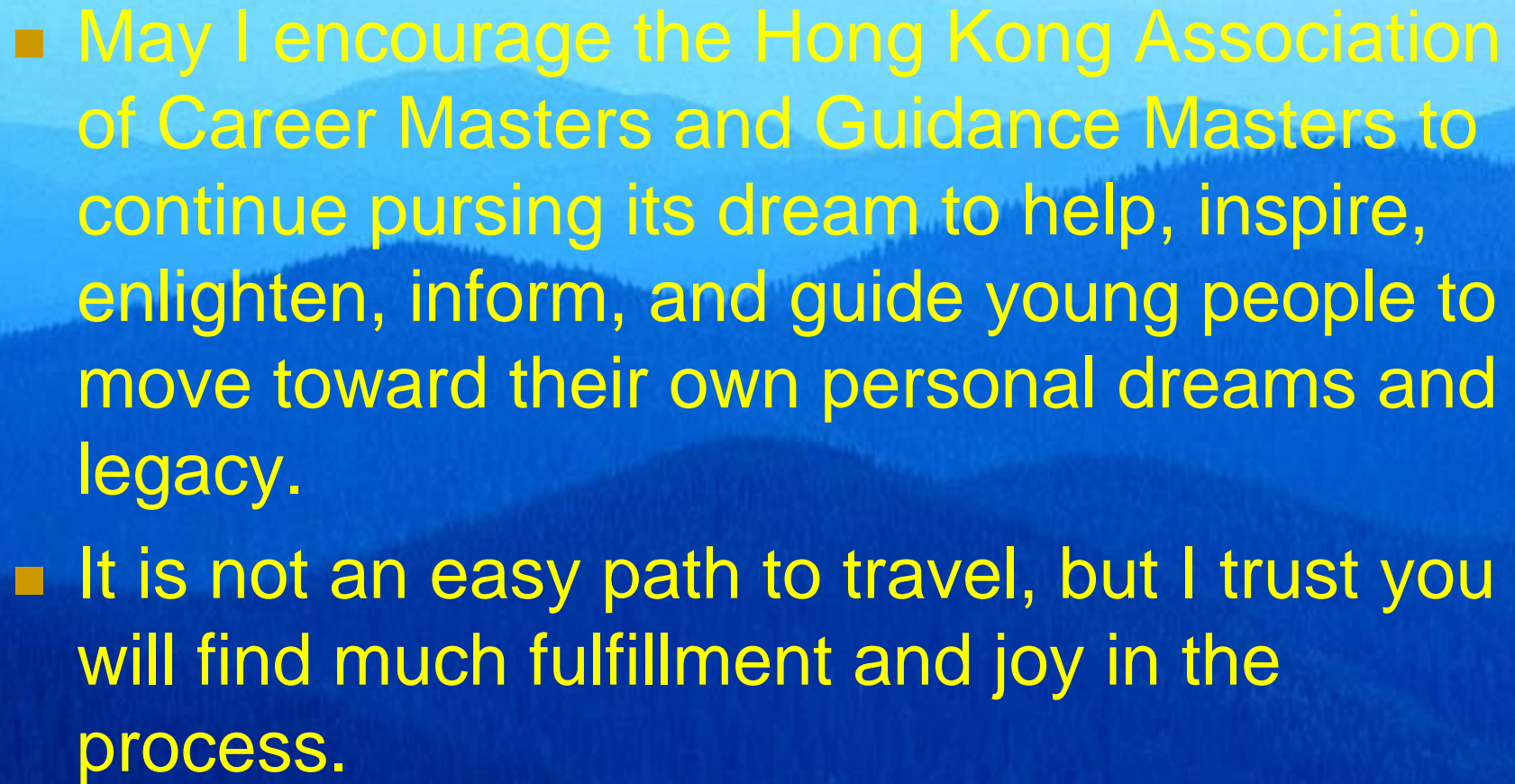
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- But then, as things work out, and we grow older. Reality sets in. We decide we have to settle. Settle for a life that's less than what we dreamed. A different life. Maybe an Okay life. But definitely a lesser life. And, at times, a boring life.

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- But sometimes later, in our life, something awakens within us. Call it yearning. Call it hope. We come to realize the dream we dreamed has never died. And we go back to get it. We decide to resume our search .... For the life we know within our heart that we were meant to live.
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- Pursuing a dream is always a choice to take a road less traveled:

“Two roads diverged in a wood,  
And I – I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the differences.”

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- May I encourage the Hong Kong Association of Career Masters and Guidance Masters to continue pursuing its dream to help, inspire, enlighten, inform, and guide young people to move toward their own personal dreams and legacy.
  - It is not an easy path to travel, but I trust you will find much fulfillment and joy in the process.
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