

Name:

Date:

Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson is one of America's greatest poets of all time. She was born and raised in Amherst, Massachusetts and she wrote during the Romantic Era of American Literature (1830 to 1870). Her first volume of poetry was published in 1890, four years after her death; her work was published posthumously by her sister. She wrote over a thousand poems in hand-bound notebooks and used a unique variety of dash-like marks within her work. Additionally, none of her poems were titled. The titles we refer to today are simply derived from the first line of every poem. Dickinson's poetry was heavily influenced by the Metaphysical poets of seventeenth-century England, as well as her reading of the Book of Revelation and her upbringing in a Puritan New England town. Dickinson commonly takes an abstract feeling or idea in her poetry and correlates it to something physical.

Poem 1: "It's All I Have to Bring Today"

It's all I have to bring today—
This, and my heart beside—
This, and my heart, and all the fields—
And all the meadows wide—

Be sure you count—should I forget
Some one the sun could tell—
This, and my heart, and all the Bees
Which in the Clover dwell.

1. What is the tone of the speaker? How do you know?
2. What images of nature do you find in this poem?
3. What type of poem is this?
4. What is an example of repetition in this poem? Why does Dickinson do this?
5. Who is she talking to? What do you think "this" is?
6. In what way is the first line of this poem ironic?

7. Where is there an internal rhyme in this poem?

8. What does her heart symbolize?

Poem 2: Hope is the Thing with Feathers

Hope is the thing with feathers—
That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words—
And never stops —at all—

And sweetest —in the gale— is heard—
And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—
And on the strangest sea—
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb —of me.

1. What is the extended metaphor in this poem? What is being compared?

2. What is the speaker's tone in this poem? How do you know?

3. Where is the consonance in the first line?

4. Where is there alliteration in the third stanza?

5. What does the word **abash** mean? What does the word **gale** mean?

6. Explain the meaning of the second stanza.

7. How does Dickinson develop the metaphor throughout the poem?

8. What is the theme of this poem?

Poem 3: "Because I could not stop for Death"

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed us –
The Dews drew quivering and chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –

1. What personification does Dickinson introduce in the first stanza?

2. List at least two examples of alliteration from the poem.

3. Where is this carriage heading to? What is the journey like?

4. In the third stanza, the word “passed” is used three times. What three things do they pass? Why are these details significant?

5. In the fourth stanza, the carriage seems to be approaching the end of the journey. How do you know?

6. In the fifth stanza, they “paused before a House that seemed/A swelling of the Ground.” What is this house? Why does Dickinson use the term “house” for it?

7. What is immortality? Why is immortality in the carriage?

8. Why can’t the speaker or anyone “stop for death”? Why does death stop for her?

9. How does the speaker seem to feel about giving up her life? What evidence is there?

10. What surprise does the speaker reveal in the last stanza? Could this directly reflect her attitude about the experience?

11. What is the mood of the poem?

12. What is the theme of the poem?

Part 4: Comparing Two or More Poems

Choose 2 out of the 3 poems to compare and contrast. Pick at least two of the following to focus on: theme, imagery, mood, tone, language, style, or influence of the author’s life. Include TEXTUAL EVIDENCE from both poems to demonstrate your point.

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