

The Poetry of Emily Dickinson
Thinking Through the Literature
Mrs. Dolhon

As we study each poem, use your flipbook to complete the questions and items below. We will be studying one poem at a time.

“Hope Is the Thing With Feathers”

1. Sketch the images that came to you as you read the poem.
2. Why do you think Dickinson pictures hope as a bird? Think about the qualities of a bird and the qualities of hope that are similar to that of a bird.
3. How do you interpret the last two lines?
4. What details does Dickinson use to extend the metaphor, which compares hope to a bird?
5. What two lines reflect slant rhyme in the poem? Why?
6. Identify two things in this poem that reflect Dickinson’s unique style.

“Success is Counted Sweetest”

1. Paraphrase each stanza of the poem.
2. What were you thinking when you finished reading the poem?
3. How do you interpret lines 3 and 4? Explain how they relate to lines 1 and 2.
4. In this poem, Dickinson uses the image of a battlefield to make her point. Why might the defeated soldier be better able to appreciate victory than the winning soldier?
5. Why would the lines “Success is counted sweetest by those who ne’er succeed” be considered a paradox?
6. What two lines reflect slant rhyme? Why?
7. Identify two things in the poem that reflect Dickinson’s unique writing style.

“My Life Closed Twice Before Its Close”

1. What kind of “parting” might Dickinson be referring to in the last two lines of the poem?
2. What does this poem reveal about Dickinson’s attitude toward death? Think about the human quality she gives to immortality in line 3; think about the use of the descriptive phrases “so huge” and “so hopeless to conceive” and what they describe.
3. Would a reader who has recently experienced the loss of a loved one be disturbed or comforted by this poem? Explain your answer.
4. Identify one example of figurative language used in the poem.

“I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died”

1. According to the first stanza, what is the atmosphere, or mood in the room? What effect does the buzzing fly seem to have on the speaker? Be sure to provide textual support.
2. In lines 5 and 6, what are the “eyes” and “breaths” doing? What do the “eyes” and “breaths” await? Explain your answer and use textual support.
3. According to stanzas 3 and 4, what does the fly come between? Explain your answer and use textual support.
4. Find two examples of figurative language that Dickinson uses in the poem? Explain the effect created by each example.
5. What point about dying does the speaker make in this poem?

“Because I Could Not Stop For Death”

1. In a **metaphor**, a writer compares one thing to another without using connection words such as *like* or *as*. In this poem, Dickinson uses an extended metaphor throughout the poem that **personifies** death, or compares it to a person. How does Dickinson’s use of this metaphor and personification affect the meaning of the poem? Support your answer with evidence.
2. In the third stanza, Death takes the speaker past a school and fields. What are these places a reminder of?
3. What is the speaker’s attitude about the ride in the first three stanzas? How does the speaker’s perception of what is happening to her change in the fourth stanza? Support your answer with textual evidence.
4. Besides figurative language (simile, metaphor, personification, symbolism, etc.) what other poetic devices are used in the poem? Write about two other devices, and explain the effect created by the device.
5. Write a theme statement for the poem. Support your theme with evidence from the text.