

**Poem 968 by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)**

It's the first of her poems I ever read, and surprisingly I loved it...

Why would I be surprised to love it

A narrow Fellow in the Grass  
Occasionally rides—  
You may have met Him—did you not  
His notice sudden is—

The Grass divides as with a Comb—  
A spotted shaft is seen—  
And then it closes at your feet  
And opens further on—

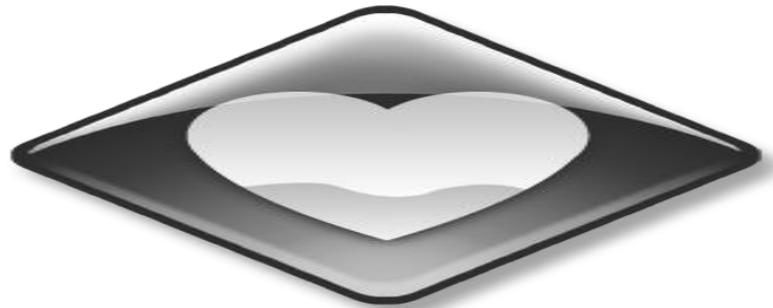
He likes a Boggy Acre  
A Floor too cool for Corn—  
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot-  
I more than once at Noon

Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash  
Unbraiding in the Sun  
When stooping to secure it  
It wrinkled, and was gone—

Several of Nature's People  
I know, and they know me—  
I feel for them a transport  
Of cordiality—

But never met this Fellow  
Attended or alone  
Without a tighter breathing  
And Zero at the Bone—

Now let's brainstorm the unusual things we notice about her writing style and her thinking... Talk at tables, then we'll put all our findings together.  
Jot notes here:



We learned the whole of love,  
The alphabet, the words,  
A chapter, then the mighty book—  
Then revelation closed.

But in each other's eyes  
An ignorance beheld  
Diviner than the childhood's  
And each to each a child

Attempted to expound  
What neither understood  
Alas, that wisdom is so large  
And truth so manifold.

Heart, we will forget him!  
You and I, to-night!  
You may forget the warmth he gave,  
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me,  
That I my thoughts may dim;  
Haste! lest while you're lagging,  
I may remember him!

My life closed twice before its close;  
It yet remains to see  
If immortality unveil  
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive  
As these that twice befell.  
Parting is all we know of heaven,  
And all we need of hell.

**And two more about one of her favorite subjects:**

Death is a dialogue between  
The spirit and the dust.

“Dissolve,” says Death. The Spirit, “Sir,  
I have another trust.”

Death doubts it, argues from the ground.  
The Spirit turns away,  
Just laying off, for evidence,  
An overcoat of clay.



Part 2 Some Emily Activities:

You will be given 8 lines of an Emily Dickinson poem.  
See how adroitly you can arrange the lines as Miss  
Dickinson wrote them. Clue: “Much madness...”

Write the complete correct poem in the space below.

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 played  
Their lessons scarcely done;  
We passed the fields of gazing grain  
We passed the setting sun.

We paused before a house that seemed  
A swelling in the ground;  
The roof was scarcely visible,  
The cornice but a mound.

Since then ‘tis centuries; but each  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses’ heads  
Were toward eternity.

### Part 3 Emily Dickinson

Now read another Emily Dickinson poem. Any idea what it means?

Hope is a subtle glutton;  
    He feeds upon the fair;  
And yet, inspected closely,  
    What abstinence is there!  
His is the halcyon table  
    That never seats but one,  
And whatsoever is consumed  
    The same amounts remain.



*I'll share a think aloud/question and answer session with myself using this poem to show you how to talk yourself into understanding. I think you will enjoy this kind of dialogue with yourself and discover you are your own best teacher.*

Ok, ready? Here we go...

### Part 4

*Choose one (or more, if you are quick) of the following Emily Dickinson poems to learn and internalize using one of our discovery methods. Be prepared to share your thoughts and results with the class.*

(1)

For each ecstatic instant  
We must an anguish pay  
In keen and quivering ratio  
To the ecstasy.

For each beloved hour  
Sharp pittances of years,  
Bitter contested farthings  
And coffers heaped with tears.

(2)

We never know how high we are  
Till we are called to rise;  
And then, if we are true to plan,  
Our statures touch the skies,

The heroism we recite  
Would be a daily thing,  
Did not ourselves the cubits warp  
For fear to be a king.



(3)

They say that "time assuages,"—  
Time never did assuage;  
An actual suffering strengthens,  
As sinews do with age.

Time is a test of trouble,  
But not a remedy.  
If such it prove, it prove too  
There is no malady.



## Part 5 Emily Dickinson

*Here are two more poems by the incomparable Emily Dickinson. Choose one to read/understand using one of the methods we've practiced, or another one you artists will especially relish: Use illustrations to draw out (ha ha) the meaning of the poem. You may work in pairs or triads for this if you wish.*

(1)

The brain is wider than the sky,  
For put them side by side,  
The one the other will include  
With ease, and you beside.

The brain is deeper than the sea,  
For hold them, blue to blue,  
The one the other will absorb  
As sponges, buckets do.

The brain is just the weight of God,  
For, lift them, pound for pound,  
And they will differ if they do,  
As syllable from sound.

(2)

Success is counted sweetest  
By those who ne'er succeed.  
To comprehend a nectar  
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple hosts  
Who took the flag today  
Can tell the definition,  
So clear, of victory,

As he, defeated, dying  
On whose forbidden ear  
The distant strains of triumph  
Break, agonized and clear.

## Part 6

*Finally, here are some short, philosophical poems from Dickinson. These are easy to remember and make great introductions to get some essays going as well. I hope you will stay acquainted with my favorite poet...always.*

(1)

In this short life  
That only lasts an hour  
How much—how little  
Is within our power.

(2)

Had I not seen the Sun  
I could have borne the shade  
But Light a newer Wilderness  
My Wilderness has made.

(3)

Surgeons must be very careful  
When they take the knife  
Underneath their fine incisions  
Stirs the culprit—life.

(4)

Who has not found the heaven below  
Will fail of it above  
God's residence is next to mine  
His furniture is love.

(5)

Opinion is a flitting thing  
But truth outlasts the sun  
If then you cannot own them both  
Possess the oldest one

(6)

It's such a little thing to weep  
So short a thing to sigh  
And yet by trades the size of these  
We men and women die.

Here is a clever list poem about E.D. I found on-line which will help you know a bit more about the reclusive "Belle of Amherst."

Monday

Figure out what to wear—white dress?  
Put hair in bun  
Bake gingerbread for Sue  
Peer out window at passerby  
Write poem  
Hide poem

Tuesday

White dress?  
Off-white dress?  
Feed cats  
Chat with Lavinia  
Work in garden  
Letter to T.W.H.

Wednesday

White dress or what?  
Evesdrop on visitors from behind door  
Write poem  
Hide poem

Thursday

Try on new white dress  
Gardening—watch out for narrow fellows in grass!  
Gingerbread, cakes, treats

Friday

Poems: Write and hide them  
Embroider sash for white dress  
Write poetry  
Water flowers on windowsill  
Hide everything