

Emily Dickinson
pp. 82 - 100

“If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?” – Emily Dickinson

“But the main quality of these poems is that of extraordinary grasp and insight, uttered with an uneven vigor sometimes exasperating, seemingly wayward, but really unsought and inevitable. After all, when a thought takes one's breath away, a lesson on grammar seems an impertinence.” – Thomas Wentworth Higginson, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, speaking of Dickinson's poems in an introduction to a posthumously published collection

122. “These are the days when Birds com back” p. 86

1. The first two stanzas begin “These are the days.” To what days does the speaker refer? What do we know about those days?
2. What words in the throughout the poem have a connotation of falsehood?
3. What words in the poem suggest birth/youth? What words suggest age/death?
4. The poem contains multiple religious references. What are some of these? What do they mean—literally and figuratively?
5. What are possible themes of the poem?

236. “Some keep the Sabbath going to Church” p. 87

1. In the poem, who/what is the choir member?
2. In the poem, what is the speaker's “church”?
3. Who is the “noted Clergman”?
4. Summarize the message of the poem.

260. “I'm Nobody! Who are you?” p. 88

1. Why does the speaker believe being a “Somebody” is “dreary”?
2. Identify the simile in the second stanza. Explain.
3. What is the theme of this poem? How does this seem contrary to commonly accepted thought?

409. "The Soul selects her own Society" p. 93

1. To what is the soul compared?
2. Identify the metaphor in the last stanza. Explain.
3. Identify the simile in the last stanza. Explain.

479. "Because I could not stop for Death" p. 94

1. What is the speaker's attitude toward Death?
2. How is Death personified in the poem?
3. What three things do the travelers pass? What might each symbolize?

591. "I heard a Fly buzz--when I died" p. 96

1. What is happening to the speaker in the poem?
2. What is the mood at the beginning of the poem?
3. How does the mood change toward the end of the poem?
4. What might the "Windows fail[ing]" represent?

620. "Much Madness is divinest Sense" p. 96

1. Explain the paradox of the poem.
2. Have you found this paradox to be true?

1263. "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant" p. 100

1. What does it mean to tell the truth "slant"? How might this be different from lying?
2. Why does the speaker say that we should "tell all the truth but tell it slant"?