

UNIT 3 A Nation Divided
Slavery and The Civil War 1850 to 1865

A SEEM School
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



Author Focus:

**Emily
Dickinson**

with **Jim Soto**

SPEAK YOUR MIND

Think of someone you know who is quiet and withdrawn—someone who keeps to himself or herself.

How is he or she generally treated by others?

What might others discover if they got to know this person better?

Take a minute to consider and answer the question in your notebook.



SHY. QUIET. WEIRD.

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, to a prominent family. She lived a very private life, rarely venturing beyond her home and close circle of family and friends.

She delighted in reading literary works such as: The Bible, Shakespeare's plays, and the works of such writers of her day as Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Keats, Alfred Tennyson, and George Eliot.



Although Emily Dickinson is considered by many scholars to be the United States' greatest lyric poet, she kept her writing private, sharing them only with her closest relatives. When she died, her family discovered forty volumes containing some one thousand poems. In her lifetime, only seven of her poems were published anonymously and without approval.





Scholars have offered various explanations for Dickinson's withdrawal from society, including thwarted love and physical disabilities. She was considered strange by her neighbors as she took to wearing white clothes much of the time, and also for her reclusive nature. She eventually refused to come downstairs to greet her guests and sometimes would only talk through the closed door of her bedroom. Despite her isolation, she lived her life intensely, in vivid moments of observation and reflection captured in astonishingly original verse.

“MUCH MADNESS IS DIVINEST SENSE—”



Her poems themselves support the theory that her reclusiveness was a determined, willful act of someone who wished to live life on her own terms. This view is supported by Dickinson's tongue-in-cheek analysis in "Much Madness is divinest Sense—" of society's treatment of people who choose to think for themselves.

"I HEARD A FLY BUZZ—WHEN I DIED—"

Dickinson analyzed the topic of death in several of her poems. In "I heard a Fly buzz—when I died—," the speaker imagines her own death, expressing with brilliant irony her fears about the transition from this life to the next.



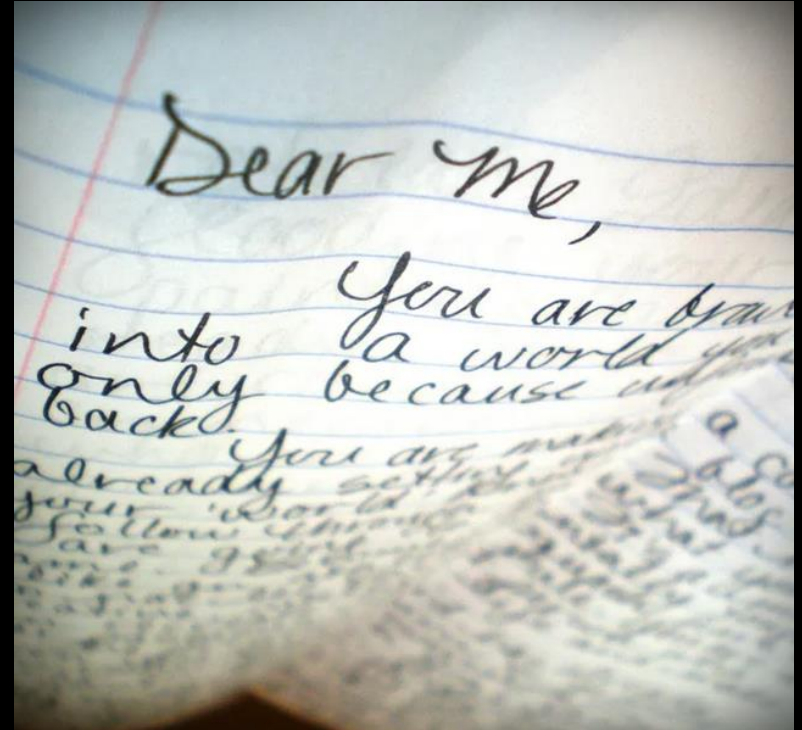
“BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH—”

In “Because I could not stop for Death—,” considered one of Dickinson’s best poems, the speaker describes a journey through eternity and suggests accepting death with quiet civility.



"THIS IS MY LETTER TO THE WORLD"

"This is my letter to the World" provides insight into Dickinson's view of her poetry and her wish to someday connect with her readership. This wish seems to have gone unfulfilled, given that only seven of Dickinson's nearly eighteen hundred poems were published in her lifetime.





LITERARY ELEMENTS

Personification

Is a figure of speech in which an animal, object, force of nature, or idea is described as if it were human or given human characteristics.

Slant Rhyme

In slant rhyme, the sounds are similar but not identical, as in bear and bore.

ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 218-227 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
 - **Personification and Slant Rhyme** - How is personification used in "Because I could not stop for Death—"? How does it enrich Dickinson's portrayal of death?
 - Find two examples of slant rhyme in "Much Madness is divinest Sense—." Explain what ideas in the poem the rhymes reinforce.



Jim Soto © 2022