
Survey of World Literature II

ENG 204

Belhaven University

Hall # 4

The Poetry of Emily Dickinson

Essay Writing Tips

Introduction to Hall

- Emily Dickinson is a well-known poet and a favorite of many students. This Hall will explore four of her poems and their timeless themes.
 - In addition, we will do a brief review of essay writing since the first paper is due this week.
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Topics to be Covered

- Dickinson's place in American literature
 - Dickinson's writing style
 - American Romanticism
 - Discussion and analysis of four poems
 - Review of essay writing
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Hall Objectives

- Identify characteristics of Dickinson's poetry.
 - Examine elements of Romanticism in her poetry.
 - Analyze Christian ideas reflected in her poetry.
 - Review essay writing.
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Biblical Foundations

1 Corinthians 15:54-56

When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true:

“Death has been swallowed up in victory.”

“Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.

Emily Dickinson

- Mysterious, enigmatic life
 - Prosperous family, but led reclusive life
 - Many relationships through letter writing
 - "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?" ED
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Dickinson's Legacy

- Nearly 1800 poems
 - Unique American poetic style and voice
 - Along with Walt Whitman, she stands out as one of two great 19th century American poets
 - Simple directness has mass appeal
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Dickinson's Writing Style

- Preferred the dash rather than usual periods and commas.
 - Capitalized interior words, not just words at the beginning of sentences.
 - Employed slant rhyme (not exact rhyme...for example, the slant rhyme of “son” might be “tone”)
 - No titles—her poems are usually know by their first line
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American Romanticism

- Dickinson's complex imagination
 - Focus on range of individual emotions
 - Attention to role of nature and natural elements in everyday life
 - Poems investigate death as a process and a beginning, not necessarily hopeless and sad
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Major Themes in Dickinson's Poetry

- Poetry not particularly socially or politically focused; more centered on simple life truths
 - ❑ Hope
 - ❑ Death
 - ❑ Faith
 - ❑ Nature
 - ❑ Truth
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“The Soul Selects her own Society”

- This poem explores the contrast between rejection and selection.
 - Choice is involved in this process, and many times the chooser has all of the power.
 - This is a harsh truth of life.
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Discussion Points

- Chooser is a “she”
 - Alliteration: soul, selects, society
 - A royal setting
 - Closing valves like stone
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Poem's Appeal

- Everyone has felt the sting of rejection.
 - Everyone is faced with choices of varying impact
 - Powerful people can sometimes be perceived as special
 - Sometimes, the chooser is deemed cruel
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“I Heard a Fly buzz—when I died”

- The poem explores the final moments before death.
 - A seemingly insignificant element of nature, a fly, is integrated into this setting.
 - Requires reader to think about the moment of death
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Discussion Points

- Stillness comparison
 - Why a fly?
 - Importance of eyes
 - The King is present
 - “Assignable” portions of life
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Poem's Appeal

- Everyone wonders about the moment of his death
 - Common elements of death, from grieving to willing keepsakes, are integrated into the poem
 - Hopeful and peaceful, not desperate, dramatic, or sad
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“Because I could not stop for Death”

- Poem presents the journey through life towards death
 - Death is an inevitable part of life
 - Life is swift, and just a small part of our existence when compared to eternity
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Discussion Points

- Death is a gentleman
 - Life's seasons...childhood, working years, golden years
 - Death can arrive unexpectedly
 - Grave compared to house
 - Eternity bound
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Poem's Appeal

- This “kindly” view of death seems peaceful
 - Everyone's life is comprised of stages, and when death is near, those will seem short lived
 - Focus is more on eternity than the years of earthly life
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“Tell all the Truth, but tell it slant”

- Truth is important, but it must be told carefully and with forethought
 - Truth can overwhelm, so the teller must be aware of its impact on the receiver
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Discussion Points

- Contradiction between “all” and “slant”
 - Positive connotation: delight, superb, dazzle
 - Light imagery
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Poem's Appeal

- Most would agree that telling the truth is important; it's a basic value
 - Most would also agree that it's not always easy to deliver or hear
 - Poem has a playful feel and an important message
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Essay Writing Tips

- Format
 - Third-person point of view
 - Using quotations (textual evidence)
 - Paragraph structure
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APA Format

- Title page
 - Times New Roman 12, one inch margins
 - References page

 - *The Bedford Handbook*
 - Purdue University's Owl website
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Third-Person Point of View

- Write academic papers using third-person pronouns and nouns (he, she, they, their, Swift, writers, students, Christians, etc...)
 - This means no first-person pronouns (I, me, my, we, our, us, etc...)
 - And no second-person pronouns (you, your)
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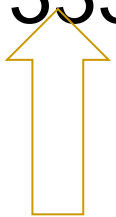
Point of View Examples

- I think that Swift believes that some people do not use reason. (First)
 - If you agree with Swift, you think that some people do not use reason. (Second)
 - Swift maintains that some people do not use reason, and he finds fault with this. (Third)
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Using Quotations (Textual Evidence)

- Integrate them into your writing; don't "drop" them in as freestanding sentences.
 - Introduce them by identifying the speaker.
 - Use brief phrases as opposed to lengthy passages.
 - Cite them according to APA rules.
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Quotation Examples

- The Duke remarks that his wife's "looks went everywhere" implying that she was unfaithful (23). 
- Gulliver declares, "I was ready to faint at the very smell of him and his men" (p. 335). 

Paragraph Structure:

Topic Sentence

- Begin any body paragraph with a topic sentence that states the main point of the paragraph:
 - Example: The theme of secret sin is important in *Tartuffe*.
 - Everything in this paragraph should relate to this one point and should not stray from this one point.
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Paragraph Structure: Transitions

- Use transitional words and phrases at the beginning of and within paragraphs when moving to a new idea.
 - Example: **Furthermore**, the effect of secret sin becomes apparent when Tartuffe attempts to seduce Elmire.
 - however, also, therefore, additionally, another, etc...
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Paragraph Structure: Organization

- Topic sentence (main point)
 - First example
 - Quotation
 - Explain
 - Second example
 - Quotation
 - Explain
 - Conclude
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What's next?

- Complete your detailed reading
- Answer the discussion questions
- Complete the writing assignments
- Take the Hall Quiz

References

- *The Norton Anthology of Western Literature*, Ninth Edition, Volume 2, Puchner Ed. et al

This concludes Hall 4