I had been hungry, all the Years

POEM TEXT

I had been hungry, all the Years—
My Noon had Come—to dine—
I trembling drew the Table near—
And touched the Curious Wine—

'Twas this on Tables I had seen—
When turning, hungry, Home
I looked in Windows, for the Wealth
I could not hope—for Mine—

I did not know the ample Bread—
'Twas so unlike the Crumb
The Birds and I, had often shared
In Nature's—Dining Room—

The Plenty hurt me—'twas so new—
Myself felt ill—and odd—
As Berry—of a Mountain Bush—
Transplanted—to a Road—

Nor was I hungry—so I found
That Hunger—was a way
Of Persons outside Windows—
The Entering—takes away—

SUMMARY

I'd been starving my whole life, but at long last, my time to eat had arrived. Shaking, I crept up to the table and touched the unfamiliar wine bottle.

I'd seen wine like this on tables before, when, on my hungry walks back home, I used to look in windows and envy all the food I couldn't have for myself.

I could hardly even recognize the abundant bread: it was nothing like the crumbs that I'd often shared with the birds in the "dining room" of nature.

All this food made me feel bad, it was so new to me. I felt sick and strange, like a wild mountain berry bush dug up and replanted at the side of the road.

I found I wasn't even hungry. That's how I discovered that only people who are held back from having what they want feel hunger; as soon as they're allowed to come to the table, their appetites disappear.

THEMES

WANTING VS. HAVING

The speaker of "I had been hungry, all the Years" finally gets what they've been longing for: after a lifetime of starvation, they're invited to sit down at a table loaded with "plenty." Now that they're there, though, they find that they've lost their appetite. Getting what you want, this poem suggests, can feel very different than you expected, and it might even be disappointing: after all, fulfilled desires aren't *desires* anymore.

The poem's speaker hasn't just been hungry, but starving. For "all the years" of their whole life, they've had to peer enviously through "Windows" at other people feasting while they live on a mere "crumb" or two. All this time, the speaker has longed to have what the people at the dining tables have: easy, plentiful, abundant nourishment.

When at last the speaker gets their wish, though, they find they don't feel satisfied. In fact, they're downright uncomfortable. Though they're awestruck to finally be in the presence of the "Curious Wine" and "ample Bread" they'd desired all this time, they also feel as uneasy and out of place as a wild mountain berry bush that's been "transplanted" to the side of a road. Unused to having as much to eat as they want, they find the abundant food "hurt[s]" them, making them feel "ill." Worst of all, faced with all this food, they find that they're not even hungry anymore!

Only "Persons outside Windows"—those who *don't* have what they want—can fully feel their hunger, the speaker concludes. "Entering" a time of satisfaction and fulfillment "takes away" one's hunger, but that satisfaction itself makes it hard to really savor having the food.

The alert reader might observe that this isn't just a poem about literal hunger, but about the metaphorical hunger of desire in general. Whether what you want is food, fame, love, or wealth, getting it can also be a kind of loss. This speaker's desire gave them energy and a sense of identity as an outsider. Now that their desire is fulfilled, they're "transplanted" into a whole new life—and one that doesn't give them all the pleasure they'd imagined. This, the poem says, is often how it goes with desire: one can only urgently want what one doesn't have.

Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-20

LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

LINES 1-4

I had been hungry, all the Years—
My Noon had Come—to dine—
I trembling drew the Table near—
And touched the Curious Wine—

The poem begins at a dramatic climax in the speaker's life. For "all the Years" of their life, they've "been hungry": they've never once had quite enough to eat. Now, at long last, their "Noon ha[s] Come—to dine." In other words, it's finally mealtime. With the sun at its zenith overhead, it seems as if this is going to be a literal and figurative high point for the speaker, the culmination of a lifetime of desire.

At first, it sounds as if the speaker can hardly believe their good fortune:

> I trembling drew the Table near—
> And touched the Curious Wine—

Shaking with nerves, the speaker approaches the "Curious Wine" (that is, the strange, unfamiliar wine) as reverently as if it were a sacred artifact. The delicate /t/ alliteration of "trembling," "Table," and "touched" suggests just how carefully, how unbelievingly, the speaker is moving: all those /t/ sounds hit like the very tips of the speaker's fingers touching that wine, at long last.

In a lot of ways, this first stanza feels like classic Emily Dickinson:

- For instance, it uses Dickinson's favorite meter: common measure, a pattern of alternating iambic tetrameter (lines of four iambs, metrical feet with a da-DUM rhythm: "I had | been hun- | gry all | the years") and iambic trimeter (lines of *three* iambs: "My Noon | had Come— | to dine—").
- Usually, however, Dickinson would pair this meter with the classic ballad rhyme scheme: ABCB. (In fact, later in the poem, that's the pattern she'll choose.) In this first stanza, however, things are a little more concentrated: rhyming both "Years" and "near," "dine" and "wine," Dickinson uses an ABAB scheme.
- That extra A rhyme makes these first lines feel as focused as the speaker's gaze as they stare at this unfamiliar loaded table.

This intense, dramatic first stanza leaves the speaker (and the reader) in suspense. This person has starved their *whole life;* now, faced with a feast, what will they do?

LINES 5-8

'Twas this on Tables I had seen—
When turning, hungry, Home
I looked in Windows, for the Wealth
I could not hope—for Mine—

Approaching the "Curious Wine" on the table as if it were a rare jewel, the speaker remembers that they've seen wine just like it many times before. What's curious about it—that is, what's unfamiliar and strange about it—is that the speaker can now touch it themselves. In the past, they've only been able to see it through other people's "Windows."

For "all the Years" that they've starved, the speaker has longed for what other people have. In this stanza, they paint a picture of themselves as a kind of Dickensian orphan, peering into the dining rooms of richer people as they themselves turn, "hungry, Home." This image paints the speaker not just as a starving vagabond, but as an outsider looking in. Without "hope" of sharing what they see in other people's homes, they nonetheless long for such "Wealth."

Here, readers might start catching a whiff of symbolism on the wind. Perhaps the speaker hasn't just been literally hungry for food, but figuratively hungry for other kinds of plenty: warmth, wealth, and love all come to mind.

When the speaker approaches the wine, then, their reverence and nervousness suggest that they're not simply getting ready to eat. They're crossing a border, entering the world that has so far been closed to them, the world beyond the windows.

LINES 9-12

I did not know the ample Bread—
'Twas so unlike the Crumb
The Birds and I, had often shared
In Nature's—Dining Room—

The speaker feels startled not just by the "Curious Wine," but also by the "ample Bread" laid out on the table. While the wine felt familiar in a *deja vu* kind of way, the bread seems purely strange. The speaker's only point of comparison for this bread has been the meager "Crumb" they used to share with "The Birds."

The previous stanza revealed that this speaker was a bit of an outsider. This stanza suggests that they're an out-and-out exile, living among the birds, eating not at a table among other people, but outside in "Nature's—Dining Room." That wry metaphor shows that the speaker isn't feral: they know what a dining room is, they simply haven't had one.

The image is so outlandish that it invites readers not to take the speaker's story altogether literally. This poem isn't the shocking story of an abandoned child invited to eat indoors for the first time. Rather, it's the story of someone who *feels* as if they've spent their whole life starving in the wilderness, longing for something that they couldn't have—and getting what they've

desired at long last.

By juxtaposing a wild, starved existence with a well-fed, civilized one, the speaker makes it clear that their *inner* world feels strange and lonesome. Compared to all the people behind those elegant "Windows," they might as well have lived under a bush all these years.

The image of the speaker sharing crumbs with the birds, however, also suggests that living this way has had its consolations. All alone, the speaker has been rather like a bird themselves: a wild, free creature, if a hungry one.

LINES 13-16

The Plenty hurt me—'twas so new—
Myself felt ill—and odd—
As Berry—of a Mountain Bush—
Transplanted—to a Road—

The speaker has taken a long moment to marvel at the "ample" bread and wine that now lies in their reach. By now, readers might anticipate that it's time for the speaker to move on to the next step: feasting.

Instead, something peculiar happens. The speaker doesn't tuck into their dinner with a glad heart, but stops, frozen in confusion and pain. Take a look at the way Dickinson uses caesurae in these halting lines:

> The Plenty hurt me—|| 'twas so new—
> Myself felt ill—|| and odd—
> As Berry—|| of a Mountain Bush—
> Transplanted—|| to a Road—

These strong mid-line pauses (a Dickinson trademark) evoke the speaker's bewilderment as they come to terms with what they could never have guessed: getting the feast they've wanted their whole life only makes them feel weird (and a little sick). Each dash suggests an abrupt pause as the speaker tries to muster their thoughts and get to grips with what's happening to them.

There seem to be two parts to the speaker's discomfort:

- One is that this kind of "Plenty" is completely "new" to them. They have no idea how to cope with having exactly as much food as they want; having starved their whole life, they simply don't know what to *do* with all this abundance.
- The other is that this new kind of life conflicts with the way they've always thought about themselves. Their simile of a mountain berry bush being suddenly "transplanted" to the side of a road reminds readers that, up until now, this speaker has felt almost like a wild creature. Being invited into the comfortable world they've always been outside of, they hardly know who they are anymore.

The simile of the berry bush also suggests that the speaker might have gotten used to feeling self-sufficient in spite of their hunger. A berry bush, after all, *produces* fruit, rather than starving for it. The speaker has perhaps gotten so accustomed to living a secluded, self-reliant life that sudden abundance (and, symbolically speaking, social acceptance) just plain feels *wrong*.

Before moving on, take a moment to appreciate how delicately Dickinson phrases this simile. The speaker isn't just the transplanted bush, but a single "Berry" on that bush—a tiny, bewildered little being on the loud, bright, dusty road.

LINES 17-20

Nor was I hungry—so I found
That Hunger—was a way
Of Persons outside Windows—
The Entering—takes away—

The final stanza of the poem begins with an ironic kicker. Besides feeling "ill—and odd," uneasy and out of place in front of an abundant table, the speaker discovers: "Nor was I hungry." They've been "hungry, all the Years"—but now, with a table full of food in front of them, they seem to have lost their appetite.

By tossing off this realization in one short, clear, simple line, the speaker underscores the dark humor of the situation. The very hunger that has haunted them their whole life has deserted them the second it can be fulfilled, just like that. You have to laugh.

This, the speaker says, isn't solely their problem. Through this experience, they discovered:

> That Hunger—was a way
> Of Persons outside Windows—
> The Entering—takes away—

In other words: get what you want, enter the dining room, and you just can't be hungry anymore—at least not in the same way.

Symbolically, the poem thus suggests that *any* dream-come-true might actually be uncomfortable and confusing. It might even feel like a loss. In gaining the food, the speaker loses the *hunger* for food that has shaped their whole life: it's impossible to long for what you already have!

Perhaps such longing even gives people a sense of identity. The speaker has always seen themselves as an outsider, a "Mountain Bush" growing in the secluded wilderness, far from the glowing "Windows" of the comfortably civilized majority. Getting to go inside those magical windows might leave the speaker feeling as if they don't know who they *are* if they're not separate, lonely, or starved. Getting your dearest wish, this poem finally suggests, might not be the unalloyed joy you'd expect.

Take a moment to look back at the specific foods the speaker

names. In paying special attention to bread and wine, the speaker might be subtly alluding to Christian faith, which Dickinson, a minister's daughter, had plenty of thoughts about:

- In the rite of communion, bread and wine represent the body and blood of Christ.
- Alongside the ironic earthly realities the speaker is dealing with here, perhaps this poem also explores some darkly funny doubts about the consolations of religion. What if even heaven itself—the place where all desires are satisfied—were a bit of a letdown?

SYMBOLS

HUNGER

The speaker's lifelong hunger can be read as a symbol of desire in general. The poem suggests that whatever you're hungry for (be it fame, fortune, love, etc.), you might not be so happy when you get it as you imagine. The speaker longs for food their whole life, only to find that, as soon as there's a groaning table in front of them, they've unaccountably lost their appetite. Read hunger symbolically, and this poem is about what often happens when people's fondest dreams come true. Rather than finding that they're satisfied at last, people whose desires are met might well feel at loose ends!

Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-4
- Lines 5-8
- Lines 17-20

POETIC DEVICES

SIMILE

An elaborate simile in the fourth stanza suggests that longing has become a way of life for this speaker.

As soon as the speaker sits down to the meal they've hungered for their whole life, they find that it just isn't hitting the spot the way they expected it to. Rather than feeling as if their wildest dream has come true, they discover that they only feel "ill—and odd." A big part of that discomfort seems to be that they feel out of place:

> As Berry—of a Mountain Bush—
> Transplanted—to a Road—

This simile suggests that the speaker has been used to feeling like an outsider: a tough, lonely being that grows in the wilderness, not a civilized creature from town. (The speaker's earlier line about sharing crumbs with birds in nature's metaphorical "Dining Room" supports this idea, too.) "Transplanted—to a Road," the speaker might feel both bewildered by all the action and just plain uncomfortable. The light and noise of civilization might feel unfamiliar and unfriendly after their mountaintop seclusion.

All of these images make it clear that the speaker's hunger might be more than the physical kind. The speaker also seems to have hungered for belonging: the full, satisfying life inside the "Windows" they used to peek through. Now that they have it, though, they find they've grown so used to being an outsider that they can't quite feel at home on the inside.

Where Simile appears in the poem:

- **Lines 14-16:** "Myself felt ill—and odd— / As Berry—of a Mountain Bush— / Transplanted—to a Road—"

IRONY

This poem tells the tale of a common and deeply ironic experience: getting what you want, only to find that you don't want it nearly as much as you thought you did.

The poem's speaker has been hungry not just for a while, but for "all the Years"—words that suggest their hunger might have been lifelong. Living in the wilderness, sharing crumbs with birds in "Nature's—Dining Room," they've been a true outsider, able only to press their nose to the windows of wealthier, better-fed people and dream about what it would be like if they could only sit down at one of the loaded tables they see.

When, at last, they're allowed to go into a real dining room, it's just as they imagined—at first. There's the "curious Wine" and "ample Bread" they'd seen on other people's tables countless times. But standing beside those delicacies, the speaker feels "ill—and odd," uncomfortable and out of place. Most ironically of all, they find that they're no longer the slightest bit hungry.

Desire, this poem thus suggests, might be inherently ironic. It doesn't matter if you've spent your whole life wanting one thing. Once you *have* what you wanted, you can no longer want it in quite the same way (or perhaps at all): wanting means *not* having!

Where Irony appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-20

ALLITERATION

Concentrated alliteration evokes the speaker's initial ravenous hunger. Just listen to all the interweaving sounds in the first two stanzas:

> I had been hungry, all the Years—

My Noon had Come—to dine—
I trembling drew the Table near—
And touched the Curious Wine—
'Twas this on Tables I had seen—
When turning, hungry, Home
I looked in Windows, for the Wealth
I could not hope—for Mine—

Alongside the balanced moments of /h/ and /w/ alliteration, note that intense run of /t/ alliteration in lines 3-6. All those crisp /t/ sounds might simultaneously suggest the speaker's delicate, "trembling" touch and the edge of biting teeth, ready to tear into all the food the speaker has been denied for so many long years.

After this first aggressively alliterative passage, though, alliterative sounds mostly drop away as, faced with all this food at last, the speaker realizes they've lost their appetite. There are just a couple more moments of alliteration in the poem:

- When the speaker compares themselves to a "Berry—of a Mountain Bush," that round /b/ sound evokes the plump berry and connects it to the place it was at home: out on the wild mountain, not here in front of a laden table.
- When the speaker reflects on what their satisfied desire has taught them, they observe that "Hunger—was a way / Of Persons outside Windows." The run of /w/ sounds there makes this new understanding sound focused and firm. Getting what they wanted hasn't made the speaker happy, but it has taught them something they won't forget.

Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "had," "hungry"
- **Line 3:** "trembling," "Table"
- **Line 4:** "touched"
- **Line 5:** "Twas," "Tables"
- **Line 6:** "turning," "hungry, Home"
- **Line 7:** "Windows," "Wealth"
- **Line 15:** "Berry," "Bush"
- **Line 18:** "was," "way"
- **Line 19:** "Windows"

CAESURA

Strong caesurae—especially ones marked with a dash—are a Dickinson trademark, giving her verse a characteristic thoughtful, halting pace. In this poem, the caesurae suggest that the speaker is trying their best to understand a difficult question: *I got what I wanted, so why on earth am I not happy?*

In line 2, a caesura evokes the speaker's amazement and disbelief:

My Noon had Come— || to dine—

It's as if the idea that lunchtime has come at last stops the speaker in their tracks for a moment. The reader might imagine them hesitating at the door before making their "trembling" way to the table.

Later on, though, a flurry of dashes suggests that this triumph just isn't hitting the way the speaker expected it to:

The Plenty hurt me— || 'twas so new—
Myself felt ill—|| and odd—
As Berry—|| of a Mountain Bush—
Transplanted—|| to a Road—

Now, those caesurae make it sound as if the speaker is grappling with their shocking discomfort: *Wait—hold on—I feel*—bad? *And—out of place?*

The last stanza similarly uses caesurae to slow things down:

Nor was I hungry—|| so I found
That Hunger—|| was a way
Of Persons outside Windows—
The Entering—|| takes away—

The first caesura here is downright funny, letting the speaker's ironic realization—"nor was I hungry"—hang in the air for a moment. As the rest of the poem unfolds, the dashes slow the verse down, capturing the speaker's thoughtfulness as their new understanding of desire sinks in.

Where Caesura appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "hungry, all"
- **Line 2:** "Come—to"
- **Line 6:** "turning, hungry, Home"
- **Line 7:** "Windows, for"
- **Line 8:** "hope—for"
- **Line 11:** "I, had"
- **Line 12:** "Nature's—Dining"
- **Line 13:** "me—'twas"
- **Line 14:** "ill—and"
- **Line 15:** "Berry—of"
- **Line 16:** "Transplanted—to"
- **Line 17:** "hungry—so"
- **Line 18:** "Hunger—was"
- **Line 20:** "Entering—takes"

VOCABULARY

Curious (Line 4) - Strange, unfamiliar.

'Twas (Line 5, Line 10, Line 13) - A contraction of "it was."

Ample (Line 9) - Bountiful, plentiful.

Plenty (Line 13) - Abundance.

FORM, METER, & RHYME

FORM

"I had been hungry, all the Years" uses one of Dickinson's favorite shapes: ballad stanzas. That means that each of this poem's five quatrains (that is, four-line stanzas) uses:

- An ABCB rhyme scheme;
- And common meter, a meter written in alternating lines of iambic tetrameter (four feet with a da-DUM rhythm, as in "I had | been hun- | gry all | the years") and lines of iambic trimeter (*three* da-DUMS, as in "My Noon | had Come— | to dine—").

However, Dickinson breaks from these patterns more than once across the poem, giving a familiar old form—which readers might recognize from folk songs or old hymns—a slightly *off* feeling that suits the speaker's surprise and discomfort. Each compact little stanza traces a stage in the speaker's slow realization: getting what you want doesn't always mean feeling satisfied or happy.

METER

"I had been hungry, all the Years" is written in common meter (also known as common measure). This is an iambic meter: that is, it's built from iambs, metrical feet with a da-DUM rhythm. Each stanza of common meter contains four lines that alternate between iambic tetrameter (four iambs in a row) and iambic trimeter (three iambs in a row).

Here's how that all comes together in lines 13-14:

> The Plen- | ty hurt | me—'twas | so new—
> Myself | felt ill— | and odd—

This simple, steady rhythm was one of Dickinson's favorites—a plain brown wrapping for complicated thoughts.

This poem, however, adds a tiny twist to its meter right at the end. Listen carefully to the meter in the two closing lines, where the speaker discovers that hunger is only "a way":

> Of Per- | sons out- | side Windows—
> The Ent- | ering—takes | away—

Here, two flat lines of trimeter break from the poem's alternating pattern, bringing the poem to a jolting halt. The realization that a satisfied desire isn't a desire anymore takes the wind right out of the speaker's sails.

RHYME SCHEME

Written in ballad stanzas, this poem mostly uses the standard ballad rhyme scheme:

ABCB

However, the poem sometimes takes a little detour from that pattern. Take the very first stanza, which rhymes like this:

ABAB

Even more subtly, Dickinson often uses slant rhyme rather than full rhyme: for instance, pairing "Home" and "Mine" in lines 6 and 8, "Crumb" and "Room" in lines 10 and 12, and "odd" and "Road" in lines 14 and 16. In fact, the first and last stanzas are the only two that use full rhyme.

Taken all together, there's a funny combination of familiarity and oddity here. The rhyme scheme *feels* simple at first, but plenty of irregularities leave things feeling just a trifle strange. That beautifully suits the speaker's mood as they discover that the feast they longed for all their life just makes them feel "ill—and odd" now that they're sitting down in front of it.

SPEAKER

The poem's speaker is an odd, furtive person. Living in hunger for years, they almost seem to have gone feral: they've shared their "Crumb[s]" with the birds in "Nature's—Dining Room," and they feel more like a "Berry—of a Mountain Bush" than a person who lives in civilization.

Still, they've been pressing their nose against the windows of wealthier, better-fed people for a long time—so long that it comes as a big surprise to them when they're at last allowed to sit down at a full table. Faced with abundance, they only feel "ill—and odd," out of place, not even hungry anymore. Their long life as an outsider means that they don't know how to handle getting what they want.

This speaker's predicament is a common one: plenty of people discover that getting their heart's desire isn't all they hoped it might be. This particular portrait of a nature-loving, hungry, thoughtful outsider, however, might draw on the famously reclusive Dickinson's own life.

SETTING

There's no specific setting in this poem. The only details the poem gives suggest a contrast between the civilized world, where lucky, wealthy people eat their fill, and the natural world, where the speaker starves with only birds for company.

This juxtaposition of the bountiful indoors and the lonesome outdoors suggests that the speaker's hunger hasn't just been for food but for acceptance. When they finally get the chance to sit down at a laden table indoors, they find they just don't

feel at home in the civilized world. Their time as a hungry outsider might have made satisfaction feel too strange to bear.

CONTEXT

LITERARY CONTEXT

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) published almost nothing during her lifetime, and after 1865 she rarely even left her family home in Amherst, Massachusetts. But from within her circumscribed world, she explored the heights and depths of human experience through her groundbreaking, world-changing poetry.

No one else sounds quite like Dickinson. Her poems use simple, folky forms—ballad stanzas, for instance—to explore profound philosophical questions, passionate loves, and the mysteries of nature. This poem uses plenty of Dickinson's characteristic dashes; here, they make the speaker sound halting and perplexed as they puzzle over why on earth they've lost their appetite now that they have plenty to eat.

While Dickinson didn't get too involved in the literary world of her time, she was still part of a swell of 19th-century American innovation. Her contemporary Walt Whitman (who became as famous as Dickinson was obscure) was similarly developing an unprecedented and unique poetic voice, and the Transcendentalists (like Emerson and Thoreau) shared her deep belief in the spiritual power of nature. Dickinson herself was inspired by English writers like William Wordsworth and Charlotte Brontë, whose works similarly found paths through the everyday world into the sublime, terrifying, and astonishing.

After Dickinson died, her sister Lavinia discovered a trunk of nearly 1,800 secret poems squirreled away in a bedroom. Published at last, Dickinson's poetry became internationally famous and beloved. Dickinson's work and her life story still influence all kinds of artists.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This poem's portrait of an odd, staring outsider might draw on Dickinson's own experience. Dickinson was famously reclusive and shy; wearing white gowns, rarely leaving the family home she shared with her parents and her sister Lavinia, she cut a ghostly figure. The speaker here shares Dickinson's experience of feeling like an odd duck, cut off from mainstream society, more at home in a field than a parlor.

Within the tight confines of her home, Dickinson led a huge life. A lot of her poems—like this one—are set in the ordinary rural American world around her, but use that everyday terrain as a leaping-off point for profound insights into humanity and the divine.

In one sense, Dickinson shut herself away from a wildly eventful period of American history. She lived during the Civil War years and saw huge political change and chaos without ever writing much about it directly (though her many poems about death and grief suggest she was certainly affected by what was happening around her). In another sense, though, she had her finger on the world's pulse: her innovative work would one day revolutionize American poetry.

MORE RESOURCES

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- The Emily Dickinson Museum — Visit the website of the Emily Dickinson Museum to find a treasure trove of information on Dickinson's life and work. (https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/)
- Dickinson's Influence — Listen to the contemporary writer Jo Shapcott discussing how important Dickinson has been to her. (https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2013/feb/15/jo-shapcott-emily-dickinson-poetry-podcast)
- The Poem Aloud — Listen to a reading of the poem. (https://youtu.be/2rJk4y3IikA)
- The Poem in Manuscript — Take a look at Dickinson's handwritten copy of the poem. (https://www.edickinson.org/editions/1/image_sets/12174781)

LITCHARTS ON OTHER EMILY DICKINSON POEMS

- A Bird, came down the Walk
- After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
- A narrow Fellow in the Grass
- An awful Tempest mashed the air—
- As imperceptibly as grief
- Because I could not stop for Death —
- Before I got my eye put out
- Fame is a fickle food
- Hope is the thing with feathers
- I cannot live with You –
- I cautious, scanned my little life
- I died for Beauty—but was scarce
- I dwell in Possibility –
- I felt a Funeral, in my Brain
- If I can stop one heart from breaking
- I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -
- I like a look of Agony
- I like to see it lap the Miles
- I measure every Grief I meet
- I'm Nobody! Who are you?
- I started Early — Took my Dog —
- I taste a liquor never brewed
- It was not Death, for I stood up
- I—Years—had been—from Home—
- Much Madness is divinest Sense -
- My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun
- Nature is what we see

- One need not be a Chamber — to be Haunted
- Publication — is the Auction
- Safe in their Alabaster Chambers
- Success is counted sweetest
- Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
- The Brain—is wider than the Sky—
- The Bustle in a House
- The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants
- There came a Wind like a Bugle
- There is no Frigate like a Book
- There's a certain Slant of light
- There's been a Death, in the Opposite House
- The saddest noise, the sweetest noise
- The Sky is low — the Clouds are mean
- The Soul has bandaged moments
- The Soul selects her own Society
- The Wind – tapped like a tired Man –
- They shut me up in Prose –
- This is my letter to the world
- We grow accustomed to the Dark
- Wild nights - Wild nights!

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