

UNIT-VI-AMERICAN LITERATURE**Poetry****For Detailed Study**

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WALT WHITMAN

Walt Whitman, in full **Walter Whitman**, (born May 31, 1819, West Hills, Long Island, New York, U.S.—died March 26, 1892, Camden, New Jersey), American poet, journalist, and essayist whose verse collection *Leaves of Grass*, first published in 1855, is a landmark in the history of American literature

Early life

Walt Whitman was born into a family that settled in North America in the first half of the 17th century. His ancestry was typical of the region: his mother, Louisa Van Velsor, was Dutch, and his father, Walter Whitman, was of English descent. They were farm people with little formal education. The Whitman family had at one time owned a large tract of land, but it was so diminished by the time Walt was born that his father had taken up carpentering, though the family still lived on a small section of the ancestral estate. In 1823 Walter Whitman, Sr., moved his growing family to Brooklyn, which was enjoying a boom. There he speculated in real estate and built cheap houses for artisans, but he was a poor manager and had difficulty in providing for his family, which increased to nine children.

Walt, the second child, attended public school in Brooklyn, began working at the age of 12, and learned the printing trade. He was employed as a printer in Brooklyn and New York City, taught in country schools on Long Island, and became a journalist. At the age of 23 he edited a daily newspaper in New York, and in 1846 he became editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, a fairly important newspaper of the time. Discharged from the *Eagle* early in 1848 because of his support for the antislavery Free Soil faction of the Democratic Party, he went to New Orleans, Louisiana, where he worked for three months on the *Crescent* before returning to New York via the Mississippi River and the Great Lakes. After another abortive attempt at Free Soil journalism, he built houses and dabbled in real estate in New York from about 1850 until 1855.

Whitman had spent a great deal of his 36 years walking and observing in New York City and Long Island. He had visited the theatre frequently and seen many plays of William Shakespeare, and he had developed a strong love of music, especially opera. During these years, he had also read extensively at home and in the New York libraries, and he began experimenting with a new style of poetry. While a schoolteacher, printer, and journalist, he had published sentimental stories and poems in newspapers and popular magazines, but they showed almost no literary promise.

By the spring of 1855 Whitman had enough poems in his new style for a thin volume. Unable to find a publisher, he sold a house and printed the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* at his own expense. No publisher's name and no author's name appeared on the first edition in 1855. But the cover had a portrait of Walt Whitman, "broad-shouldered, rouge-fleshed, Bacchus-browed, bearded like a satyr," as Bronson

Alcott described him in a journal entry in 1856. Though little appreciated upon its appearance, *Leaves of Grass* was warmly praised by the poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, who wrote to Whitman on receiving the poems that it was “the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom” America had yet contributed.

Whitman continued practicing his new style of writing in his private notebooks, and in 1856 the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared. This collection contained revisions of the poems of the first edition and a new one, the “Sun-down Poem” (later to become “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”). The second edition was also a financial failure, and once again Whitman edited a daily newspaper, the *Brooklyn Times*, but was unemployed by the summer of 1859. In 1860 a Boston publisher brought out the third edition of *Leaves of Grass*, greatly enlarged and rearranged, but the outbreak of the American Civil War bankrupted the firm. The 1860 volume contained the “Calamus” poems, which record a personal crisis of some intensity in Whitman’s life, an apparent homosexual love affair (whether imagined or real is unknown), and “Premonition” (later entitled “Starting from Paumanok”), which records the violent emotions that often drained the poet’s strength. “A Word out of the Sea” (later entitled “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking”) evoked some sombre feelings, as did “As I Ebb’d with the Ocean of Life,” “Chants Democratic,” “Enfans d’Adam,” “Messenger Leaves,” and “Thoughts” were more in the poet’s earlier vein.

Civil War Years

After the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, Whitman’s brother was wounded at Fredericksburg, and Whitman went there in 1862, staying some time in the camp, then taking a temporary post in the paymaster’s office in Washington. He spent his spare time visiting wounded and dying soldiers in the Washington hospitals, spending his scanty salary on small gifts for Confederate and Union soldiers alike and offering his usual “cheer and magnetism” to try to alleviate some of the mental depression and bodily suffering he saw in the wards.

In January 1865 he became a clerk in the Department of the Interior; in May he was promoted but in June was dismissed because the secretary of the Interior thought that *Leaves of Grass* was indecent. Whitman then obtained a post in the attorney general’s office, largely through the efforts of his friend the journalist William O’Connor, who wrote a vindication of Whitman in *The Good Gray Poet* (published in 1866), which aroused sympathy for the victim of injustice.

In May 1865 a collection of war poems entitled Drum-Taps showed Whitman’s readers a new kind of poetry, in free verse, moving from the oratorical excitement with which he had greeted the falling-in and arming of the young men at the beginning of the Civil War to a disturbing awareness of what war really meant. “Beat! Beat! Drums!” echoed the bitterness of the first of the battles of Bull Run, and “Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night” had a new awareness of suffering, no less effective for its quietly plangent

quality. The *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, published in the autumn of 1865, contained “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” his great elegy on Pres. Abraham Lincoln. Whitman’s horror at the death of democracy’s first “great martyr chief” was matched by his revulsion from the barbarities of war. Whitman’s prose descriptions of the Civil War, published later in *Specimen Days & Collect* (1882–83), are no less effective in their direct, moving simplicity.

The fourth edition of *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1867, contained much revision and rearrangement. Apart from the poems collected in *Drum-Taps*, it contained eight new poems, and some poems had been omitted. In the late 1860s Whitman’s work began to receive greater recognition. O’Connor’s *The Good Gray Poet* and John Burroughs’s *Notes on Walt Whitman as Poet and Person* (1867) were followed in 1868 by an expurgated English edition of Whitman’s poems prepared by William Michael Rossetti, the English man of letters. During the remainder of his life Whitman received much encouragement from leading writers in England. Whitman was ill in 1872, probably as a result of long-experienced emotional strains; in January 1873 his first stroke left him partly paralyzed. By May he had recovered sufficiently to travel to his brother’s home in Camden, New Jersey, where his mother was dying. Her subsequent death he called “the great cloud” of his life. He thereafter lived with his brother in Camden, and his post in the attorney general’s office was terminated in 1874. Whitman was ill in 1872, probably as a result of long-experienced emotional strains; in January 1873 his first stroke left him partly paralyzed. By May he had recovered sufficiently to travel to his brother’s home in Camden, New Jersey, where his mother was dying. Her subsequent death he called “the great cloud” of his life. He thereafter lived with his brother in Camden, and his post in the attorney general’s office was terminated in 1874.

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING**Walt Whitman**

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking.

Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,

Out of the Ninth-month midnight,

Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the child

leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,

Down from the shower's halo,

Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and

twisting as if they were alive.

Out from the patches of briars and blackberries.

From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,

From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings

and failings I heard,

From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen

as if with tears.

10

From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in

the mist.

From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,

From the myriad thence-arous'd words,

From the word stronger and more delicious than any,

From such as now they start the scene revisiting,

As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,

Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly.

A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,

Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,

I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter, 20

Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,

A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,

When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was growing,

Up this seashore in some beriers,

Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,

And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,

And every day the he-bird to and from near at hand,

And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent,

with bright eyes,

And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never

disturbing them, 30

Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating

Shine! shine! shine!

Pour down your warmth, great sun!

While we bask, we two together

Two together!

Winds blow south, or winds blow north,

Day come white, or night come black,

Home, or rivers and mountains from home,

Singing all time, minding no time,

While we two keep together.

40

Till of a sudden,

May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,

One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,

Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,

Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,

And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,

Over the hoarse surging of the sea,

Or fitting from brier to brier by day,

I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,

50

The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!

Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;

I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,

All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,

Down almost amid the slapping waves,

Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate.

He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

60

Yes, my brother, I know,

The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,

For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with
the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the
sounds and sights after their sorts,
Yes, my brother, I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasu'd every note,
For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with
the shadows,
Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the
sounds and sights after their sorts.
The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listen'd long and long,
Listen'd keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
Following you my brother.
Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes, the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lapping,
Every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.
Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is laggin—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love,
O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the
breakers?

What is that little back thin I see there in the white? 80

Loud! Loud! Loud!

Loud I call to you, my love!

High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves.

Surely you must know who is here, is here,

You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!

What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?

O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!

O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! Land! O Land! 90

Whichever way I tum. O I think you could give me my mate

Back again if you only would,

For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars !

Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some

of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!

Sound clearer through the atmosphere!

Pierce the woods, the earth,

Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!

Solitary here, the night's carols! 100

Carols of lonesome love! Death's carols!

Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!

O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!

O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! sink low!

Soft! let me just murmur,

And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,

For somewhere, I believe. I heard my mate responding to me,

So faint, I must be still, be still to listen.

But not altogether still, for then she might not come

Immediately to me. 110

Hither my love!

Here I am! Here!

We this just-sustain'd note, I announce myself to you,

The gentle call is for my love, for you,

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere.

That is the whistle of the wind; it is not my voice,

That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,

Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!

O I am very sick and sorrowful. 120

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon

the sea!

O troubled reflection in the sea!

O throat! O throbbing heart!

And singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!

In the air! In the woods, over fields,

Loved! Loved! Loved! Loved! Loved!

But my mate no more, no more with me!

We two together no more.

The aria sinking,

130

All else continuing, the stars shining,

The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,

With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly

moaning,

On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling.

The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping

the face of the sea almost touching,

The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his

Hair the atmosphere dallying,

The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last

tumultuously bursting,

The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,

The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,

The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering, 140

The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
drown'd secret hissing,

To the outseting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul)

Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? Or is, it really me?

For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I
have heard you,

Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,

And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs,

Clearer, louder and more sorrowful than yours.

A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within

me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me. 150

O solitary me listening, never more shall i cease

perpetuating you,

Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,

Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me.

Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was

Before what there in the night,

By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,

The messenger there arous'd the fire, the sweet hell within,

The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere)

O if I am to have so much, led me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it.)

160

The word final, superior to all,

Subtle, sent up – what is it ? – I listen

Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?

Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Where to answering, the sea,

Delaying not, hurrying not,

Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,

Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death;

And again death, death, death,

Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my

arous'd child's heart.

170

But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet.

Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and leaving me

softly all over,

Death, death, death, death, death,

Which I do not forget,

But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,

That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray

beach,

With the thousand responsive songs at random,

My own songs awaked from that hour.

And with them the key, the word up from the waves,

The word of the sweetest song and all songs, 180

The strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,

(Or like some old crone rocking, the cradle, swathed in

Sweet garments, bending aside)

The sea whisper'd to me,

Author introduction:

Walt Whitman, the great American poet was born on May 31, 1819 on a farm at West Hills, Long Islands. The place was the borderline of the English and the Dutch colonies. The inhabitants were both English and Dutch. He was the second child of Walter and Louise Van Velsor Whitman. His mother was the daughter of a Dutch. His father was an English man. So Whitman had both English and Dutch blood in his veins. His father was a farmer, a carpenter and a free thinker. He had radical and democratic beliefs.

Whitman spent the major portion of his boyhood on Long Island and in Brooklyn and New York. He went frequently to Coney Island. Just before the fifth birthday his father set up his carpenter business at Brooklyn. There he went to an elementary school. In 1832, he left school. Then he began the career as a printer in the offices of different local newspapers. In 1931-1932, he began his first newspaper work for the *Long Island Patriot*. From 1833 to 36 he was a journey-man printer in the New York City. He developed an interest in the City life, in theatre and opera. He lists the name of plays and actors of operas and singers familiar to him in '*Specimen Days*'.

From 1836-1841 Whitman served as a teacher in seven Long Island country schools. Between 1839 and 1841 he contributed immature essays and conventional poems to the '*Long Island democrat*'. In 1842, he published '*Franklin Evans; or, The Inebriate: A Tale of the Times*' a didactic novel in the New World. In 1848 he journeyed many places in America. It enlarged his knowledge of American life. At Brooklyn he edited the *Freeman* an anti-slavery paper. In March 1850 he published his first poem in free verse "*Blood-Money*" in the *New York Evening Post*. His "*Resurgemus*" was the first poem by Whitman to be retained in '*Leaves of Grass*' was published in June.

With all the experience gathered upto this year he entered into the gestation of '*Leaves of Grass*'. The first edition of '*Leaves of Grass*' contained twelve poems. The reception of this first edition was almost uniformly adverse. In England, Whitman got little appreciation and much denunciation especially for his obscenity. In American Emerson hailed the emergence of a great poet and poetry. On the whole the reception was not encouraging. As a result the '*Leaves of Grass*' was revised and republished several times. In 1861, the Civil war broke out. His brother George was wounded in the war. He went there to nurse him.

But he remained there as a nurse to help the wounded. In 1864, he was affected by 'hospital malaria' from the effects of which he never fully recovered.

In 1865, Whitman was appointed clerk in the Indian Bureau. He was dismissed for having written an immoral book. In 1866, his '*Drum-Taps*' appeared. In 1868, Rossetti published selected poems of Whitman. Steadily Whitman's reputation increased in England. In 1871, he published '*Democratic Vitas*' and '*Passage to India*'. He recited '*After all Not to Create Only*' at the American Institute. In 1872, he delivered '*As a Strong Bird on Pinions free*' at the Dartmouth College and '*Song of the Universe*' at Tufts college. In 1873 he had his first paralytic stroke. In 1875 he published his '*Memoranda during the war*'. In 1876 he partially recovered from paralysis. In the same year the Centennial edition of the '*Leaves and Two Rivulets*' came out. In 1881 '*poetry of the future*' was published. In 1887, he published '*Specimen Days in America*' and in 1888 his '*November Boughs*' appeared. He published '*Complete Poems and prose*'. In 1889, he added '*A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads*' to '*Leaves of Grass*'. In 1891, '*Good bye My fancy*' was published. By now his popularity had touched a new height. In 26 March 1892, he died at Camden.

SUMMARY

Lines 1-22

The passage serves as an introduction to the poem. The mention of the endlessly rocking cradle in the opening line strikes a positive note, as cradle is associated with creation and its inexhaustible possibilities. The poet goes on to describe the mocking-bird's song heard across sterile sands and fields and patches of briars and black berries filling him with sadness in his childhood days. The child Whitman was so much moved by the bird's song that he used to leave his bed and wander bare-footed in search of the inconsolable bird. The male bird sang a happy song in the beginning as it had a fulfilling experience with its mate in the mist. This song evoked a 'thousand responses' from the poet's heart. Later, when the female bird died, the male was plunged into grief. And so was the poet. Even when he had grown into a man, the thought of the bird's bereavement made him weep like a child. The present song is a product of the poet's reminiscences over the past.

Lines 23-31

When Whitman was a small boy he lived in Long Island. Two birds migrated there from Alabama. They made a nest where the female bird brooded over four light-green eggs spotted with brown. The anxious male bird kept watch over its mate by remaining close to the nest. The female bird was silent, its eyes bright with joy at the prospect of hatching, young ones. The boy Whitman was watching it with curiosity. He was absorbing the mystery of creation, reducing it to the simplicity of his understanding.

Lines 32-40

This is the first of the bird's arias or melodic songs. The birds appeal to the sun to shed warmth and facilitate the hatching of their eggs. The birds are so hopeful of their future that the winds and rivers and mountains seem to be singing to them.

Lines 41-50

Suddenly, the female bird was missing. Perhaps somebody had killed it. It did not come back to its nest any more. From that time onwards the male bird's sad song was heard across the surging sea, the calm sky lit by the full moon and from bushes of birds. All nature which had earlier participated in the birds. All nature which had earlier participated in the bird's glee now seemed to echo the male bird's bitter agony.

Lines 51-53

This is the second aria in the poem. It is in contrast to the male bird's former appeal to the sun to shed warmth on the brooding she-bird and its eggs. Now the bereaved male bird the sea-wind to blow its missing mate back to it.

Lines 54-70

The bereaved male bird called for its mate day and night. When the stars shone, the male bird sat on the prong of a stick covered with moss and scallops and sang sad songs and shed tears. Nobody understood the cause of the bird's agony. Whitman regarded the male bird as his brother. Only he understood the birds grief. On several nights the boy Whitman glided from home and went to the beach and searched in shadowy, obscure places for the she-bird. He listened for long to the waves beckoning him with its white spray as if with arms. He could translate the bird's mournful notes into human language.

Lines 71-128

This aria is the last and most important. It registers the male bird's awareness that its loss is irrevocable.

The male bird turns to nature for consolation. It applies to the never-ending succession of waves to soothe it. The bird notices love impelling all natural objects. Waves 'embrace' and 'lap' one another, like human lovers. Next, the bird turns to the moon and feels that the moon is 'heavy with love' and so rises late and moves slowly. The sea is also urged by love. The male bird sees a 'black thing' on the waves and mistakes it for its beloved. It mistakes the 'dusky spot' in the moon likewise and asks the moon to return its mate. The male bird's obsession becomes so acute that it sees its mate wherever it looks—in the moon, the

stars and the land and asks all of them to send the mate back. The male thinks that the mate does not hear its and 'pierce the wood and the earth with its loud call. Next, express not joy but the male bird's feeling of loneliness and despair and obsession with death.

In the very next moment, the male bird decides not to shout but to 'just murmur'. It asks the sea to remain noiseless for some time, as it thinks that the female bird is responding. The male remains still but then realize the need to let know its presence to the mate. It anxiously asks the mate not to mistake the whistle of the wind and the fluttering of spray for its (the male bird's) voice and the shadows of leaves for its body.

At last the male bird realizes that its mate is dead and that it is useless to sing. There is love in the air, the woods and the fields but its beloved is irrecoverably lost.

Lines 129-149

The male bird's song gradually subsides. Nature continues its activities unaffected by the birds' grief. The stars glisten, the winds blow, the sea moans and the moon comes close to the sea as usual. The boy Whitman experiences both joy and sorrow. Long-repressed love bursts out and at the same time tears run down his cheeks. The latent poet in the boy is aroused by the bird's grief. The boy realizes that he is a consecrated being meant to sing songs about the sorrows of life. A thousand songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful than the male bird's song, germinate in his soul. The poet is sure that his poetic talent will never die. The boy Whitman is bewildered by the effect of the bird's song on his mind and so thinks that it might be a demon.

Lines 150-159

The male bird, singing alone, is indirectly expressing the poet's grief. The poem that Whitman is going to write will immortalize the bird's grief. Thus the bird and the poet echo each other. The poet says that, after listening to the bird's sad song, he has lost the peace of mind that he knew as a boy. The bird's song has kindled the poetic fire in him. His newly sprung ability to write poems is a sweet experience to him. At the same time his growing awareness of tragedies is a bitter hell-torture to him. The bird's song has aroused in him a feeling that he is destined to be the mouthpiece of 'unsatisfied love'. He does not quite understand what exactly he wants to do or is destined to do. His future appears dark to him. He needs somebody or something to give him at least a hint about his destiny. He understands a little but wants to understand more.

Lines 160-183

Whitman is keen on getting a word, subtle and final, regarding the mystery and meaning of life. The sea whispers 'the low and delicious' word 'death' to the poet. The feeling that death is inevitable fills the poet's mind, like sea-waves washing a boy filling his ears. The poet fuses the male bird's song and the thousand songs surging up in his heart. The consciousness that death is final is as delicious to him as a crony's rocking of the cradle is to the infant sleeping in it.

FUTURE VISION

EMILY DICKINSON

Born on December 10, 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts, Emily Dickinson left school as a teenager, eventually living a reclusive life on the family homestead. There, she secretly created bundles of poetry and wrote hundreds of letters. Due to a discovery by sister Lavinia, Dickinson's remarkable work was published after her death—on May 15, 1886, in Amherst—and she is now considered one of the towering figures of American literature.

Early Life and Education

Emily Elizabeth Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830, in Amherst, Massachusetts. Her family had deep roots in New England. Her paternal grandfather, Samuel Dickinson, was well known as the founder of Amherst College. Her father worked at Amherst and served as a state legislator. He married Emily Norcross in 1828 and the couple had three children: William Austin, Lavinia Norcross and middle child Emily.

An excellent student, Dickinson was educated at Amherst Academy (now Amherst College) for seven years and then attended Mount Holyoke Female Seminary for a year. Though the precise reasons for Dickinson's final departure from the academy in 1848 are unknown; theories offered say that her fragile emotional state may have played a role and/or that her father decided to pull her from the school. Dickinson ultimately never joined a particular church or denomination, steadfastly going against the religious norms of the time.

Family Dynamics and Writing

Dickinson began writing as a teenager. Her early influences include Leonard Humphrey, principal of Amherst Academy, and a family friend named Benjamin Franklin Newton, who sent Dickinson a book of poetry by Ralph Waldo Emerson. In 1855, Dickinson ventured outside of Amherst, as far as Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. There, she befriended a minister named Charles Wadsworth, who would also become a cherished correspondent.

Among her peers, Dickinson's closest friend and adviser was a woman named Susan Gilbert, who may have been an amorous interest of Dickinson's as well. In 1856, Gilbert married Dickinson's brother, William. The Dickinson family lived on a large home known as the Homestead in Amherst. After their marriage, William and Susan settled in a property next to the Homestead known as the Evergreens. Emily and sister Lavinia served as chief caregivers for their ailing mother until she passed away in 1882. Neither Emily nor her sister ever married and lived together at the Homestead until their respective deaths.

Dickinson's seclusion during her later years has been the object of much speculation. Scholars have thought that she suffered from conditions such as agoraphobia, depression and/or anxiety, or may have been sequestered due to her responsibilities as guardian of her sick mother. Dickinson was also treated for a painful ailment of her eyes. After the mid-1860s, she rarely left the confines of the Homestead. It was also around this time, from the late 1850s to mid-'60s, that Dickinson was most productive as a poet, creating small bundles of verse known as fascicles without any awareness on the part of her family members.

In her spare time, Dickinson studied botany and produced a vast herbarium. She also maintained correspondence with a variety of contacts. One of her friendships, with Judge Otis Phillips Lord, seems to have developed into a romance before Lord's death in 1884.

Death and Discovery

Dickinson died of kidney disease in Amherst, Massachusetts, on May 15, 1886, at the age of 55. She was laid to rest in her family plot at West Cemetery. The Homestead, where Dickinson was born, is now a museum.

Little of Dickinson's work was published at the time of her death, and the few works that were published were edited and altered to adhere to conventional standards of the time. Unfortunately, much of the power of Dickinson's unusual use of syntax and form was lost in the alteration. After her sister's death, Lavinia Dickinson discovered hundreds of poems that Emily had crafted over the years. The first volume of these works was published in 1890. A full compilation, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, wasn't published until 1955, though previous iterations had been released.

Emily Dickinson's stature as a writer soared from the first publication of her poems in their intended form. She is known for her poignant and compressed verse, which profoundly influenced the direction of 20th-century poetry. The strength of her literary voice, as well as her reclusive and eccentric life, contributes to the sense of Dickinson as an indelible American character who continues to be discussed today.

BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP FOR DEATH

EMILY DICKINSON

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,

5

And I had put away

My labour, and my leisure too,

For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove

At Recess – in the Ring –

10

We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –

We passed the Settings Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –

The Dews drew quivering and chill, -

For only Gossamer, my Gown –

15

My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed

A Swelling of the Ground –

The Roof was scarcely visible –

The Cornice – in the Ground –

20

Since then – ‘tis Centuries; and yet

Feels shorter than the Day

I first surmised the Horses' Heads

Were toward Eternity.

24

Life and Works of author:

Emily Dickinson was born in 1830 in Amherst, Massachusetts. She comes of patriarchal and Puritanic stock. His father and grandfather were connected with Amherst College. His father was also a Congress man and Emily went along with him to Washington D.C. and Philadelphia. She had a few men friends as tutors and literary guides. Her brief love affairs were purely Platonic.

Emily Dickinson never married and lived a sheltered life almost all her life time a home and within her family circle. Her significant life was, an introvert, as her poems show. She wrote about 1,800 poems, some incomplete. She made no great effort to publish her poems. Volumes of her poems were published mostly after her death. It was after her death that critics took notice of her genius and recognised her as one of the significant poets of America.

The Theme of Love in Emily Dickinson's Poetry

Emily Dickinson has written several love-poems. But it is open to doubt that they have all sprung from her personal experience. She did have some 'affairs' and intensely felt about them. But they were all unfulfilled, as the men with whom she was in love were married.

Summary:

A critical appreciation of "Because I could not stop for death"

The poem 'Because I could not stop for death' contains Emily Dickinson's meditation on death and immortality. She visualizes Death as a person taking her out for a ride. The poetess is much too busy, engaged in ceaseless stop for Death, Death kindly stops for her: "The carriage held but just ourselves – And immortality". The ride is a last ride. They drive in a leisurely manner. The poetess is completely at ease. She is quite unhurried. She thinks that death is very polite to her, because he has stopped for her at a time when she was too busy to think of him. So, she has put aside all her work. She has put aside her spare moments as well as her active ones.

'I had put away

My labour and my leisure too".

The poetess is quite aware of the daily routine that she is leaving behind. She sees certain scenes for the last time – children playing games during a school recess, fields of ripe grain and the sun setting. First she says that they passed the sun. But she becomes aware that she is outside time and change and so corrects herself to say that the sun passed them.

“We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed us”.

She is also aware of dampness and cold and the lightness of her dress and scarf.

“For only Gossamer, my Gown

My Tippet – only Tulle.

In the two concluding stanza, her ‘house’ – the destination which she has reached – is understood to be her grave. It is a slightly rounded surface ‘of the ground’, with a scarcely visible roof and a cornice ‘in the ground’. “At the end in a final instantaneous flash of memory, She recalls the last objects before her eyes during the journey: the heads of the horses that carried her, as she had surmised they were doing from the beginning, toward eternity.

This poem presents a remarkable picture of death. In that, death appears not as rude, sudden, and impersonal but as a kindly and leisurely gentleman. The poetess is aware that this is the last ride and that the carriage is only a hearse. However, the terror of the whole thing is subdued by the civility of the driver. Death is extremely polite and stops for the poetess even though she has no time to have anything to do with Death.

Going out with Death, the poetess is keenly aware of the things that she is leaving behind. Her leave-taking of the world is rendered with fine economy. The whole of human life is represented in this context by a few vivid scenes:

We passed the School, where Children strove

At recess – in the Ring

We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –

We passed the Setting sun –

The children represent joyful human activity and the grain represents the passivity of Nature. The ‘ring’ of childhood’s games represents not only children but all mankind playing at life. The playing children not looking up at the passing carriage of Death, symbolizes the indifference of mankind towards death. The

stare in the dead traveller's eyes is transferred on to the 'grazing grain' and thus the indifference of Nature is given a kind of cold vitality. Finally, the sunset symbolizes the soul's passing.

In the last two stanzas, the movement of the poem slows almost to a stop. 'We paused' contrasts with the successive sights, "We passed" in the earlier stages of the journey. All movement stops when the house of death is reached. To say that the carriage passed the 'setting sun' is to go beyond human time, so she quickly corrects herself by saying instead that the sun 'Passed us', as it surely does all who are buried. 'Dews' descend 'quivering and chill'. She realizes what it will be like to remain lying in the cold damp ground. The identification of her new 'house' with a grave is achieved by the use of only two details, the 'roof that is scarcely visible' and the 'cornice'.

The grave is, however, not the poetess's destination. At the end, it is clearly stated that the destination is 'Eternity'. Of course, she never reaches it;

"Since then – 'tis centuries – and yet

Feels shorter than the day.

I first surmised the horses' heads

Were toward Eternity".

The last vivid detail mentioned in the poem is "**the horses' heads**", recalled in flash of memory as that on which her eyes had been fixed throughout the journey. '**Since then tis Centuries**', she says, is an unexpected phrases for the transition from time to eternity, but this is '*finite infinity*'. Her consciousness is still operative and subject to temporal measurement. All of this poetically elapsed time seems to her '*Shorter than the day*', the day of death brought to an end by the setting sun of the third stanza, when she first guessed the direction in which these apocalyptic horses headed. '**Surmised**', carefully placed near the conclusion, is all the proof one needs for reading this journey as one that has taken place entirely in her mind. The last word may be '**Eternity**', but it is strictly limited by the directional preposition '*toward*'. So the poem returns to the very day, even the same instant, when it started'.

The theme of death is couched in terms of love. Death is regarded as a suitor escorting his beloved. The dress of the poetess is not conventional burial dress. It is instead a bridal dress:

"....., only gossamer, my gown-

My tippet – only tulle".

A tippet is the flowing scarf-like part of the hood of holy orders. The detail suggests that the poetess is properly dressed for a heavenly marriage. Death, to be sure, is not the true bridegroom but a substitute or

an agent. He is the envoy taking her on this curiously premature wedding journey to the heavenly altar where she will be married to God”.

Because I could not stop for Death – Analysis of the poem

Stanza-1:

The speaker represents the human race when she declares that she is too busy to think about death. It has become our primordial instinct to survive through all the difficulties posed by the community. But death never forgets and comes after those whose time in this realm is over. To the speaker Death is kind and it offers a chariot to take her away. There is a lot of perplexity about the inclusion of “Immortality” in the last line of the stanza (as the speaker says that the chariot has Death, her and Immortality). The reason for the inclusion of the word can be only understood from the meaning of the last stanza.

Stanza-2:

The speaker considers Death as wooer who shows civility in his manners. She expresses pleasantness about the steady handling of the chariot by Death. In response, she forgets all her labour and leisure to enjoy the ride. This description of the chariot ride can be interpreted as a smooth passing of the soul after death and the person has left the world without having to struggle too much nor with pain.

Stanza-3:

The third stanza in the poem – Because I could not stop for Death – through three various descriptions gives a complete cycle of life. The chariot passes children playing joyfully indicating the innocent childhood, the grazing grain attaining fruitfulness indicating manhood and the setting sun dawning light indicating the old age where one waits for the darkness to take over.

Stanza-4:

The speaker shows uncertainty about the passing of the sun as she feels that they didn't pass over, but it was the Sun who crossed them. This glimpses that the speaker is resting somewhere and it is her soul travelling in the chariot. The realization slowly creeps into the speaker as she feels the chill and understands the way she dresses, which is inappropriate for a pleasant chariot ride and feels as if it is an abrupt gesture (from Death).

Stanza-5:

The chariot pauses at her grave, which she calls as her “house” and it is nothing but a swelling on the ground. It is indeed no house but the speaker's grave where she rests and watches the world eternally. The journey of the speaker after witnessing different marvels of the world pauses at the grave and goes on,

indicating that there is an after-life for her (human race) and she must continue her journey. The grave is only the resting place.

Stanza-6:

The first line of the last stanza in “Because I could not stop for Death” reveals that it has been centuries since the death of the speaker. Although, it was so many years ago she feels the memory as fresh and it feels as if it happened on that very day. She believes that it is the day she died when the horses’ of the chariot were pointing her towards eternity. It is the reason for the inclusion of “Immortality” in the first stanza, as death though appears to be a gentleman apprehends the soul for eternity and one has to journey through without any respite.

The poem – Because I could not stop for Death – deals with heavy subjects such as death, time and eternity. But Emily Dickinson deals with them in a simple manner so that the idea or intention of the poem is clearly visible to the reader. One can comprehend infinite meanings on the poem and this is one of the crowning pieces of Dickinson; because of the way Death is personified as a gentleman and how the true nature of death causes a realization in the speaker about the eternity of being in a grave.

ROBERT FROST

Robert Frost, in full **Robert Lee Frost**, (born March 26, 1874, San Francisco, California, U.S.—died January 29, 1963, Boston, Massachusetts), American poet who was much admired for his depictions of the rural life of New England, his command of American colloquial speech, and his realistic verse portraying ordinary people in everyday situations.

Life

Frost's father, William Prescott Frost, Jr., was a journalist with ambitions of establishing a career in California, and in 1873 he and his wife moved to San Francisco. Her husband's untimely death from tuberculosis in 1885 prompted Isabelle Moodie Frost to take her two children, Robert and Jeanie, to Lawrence, Massachusetts, where they were taken in by the children's paternal grandparents. While their mother taught at a variety of schools in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Robert and Jeanie grew up in Lawrence, and Robert graduated from high school in 1892. A top student in his class, he shared valedictorian honours with Elinor White, with whom he had already fallen in love.

Robert and Elinor shared a deep interest in poetry, but their continued education sent Robert to Dartmouth College and Elinor to St. Lawrence University. Meanwhile, Robert continued to labour on the poetic career he had begun in a small way during high school; he first achieved professional publication in 1894 when *The Independent*, a weekly literary journal, printed his poem "My Butterfly: An Elegy." Impatient with academic routine, Frost left Dartmouth after less than a year. He and Elinor married in 1895 but found life difficult, and the young poet supported them by teaching school and farming, neither with notable success. During the next dozen years, six children were born, two of whom died early, leaving a family of one son and three daughters. Frost resumed his college education at Harvard University in 1897 but left after two years' study there. From 1900 to 1909 the family raised poultry on a farm near Derry, New Hampshire, and for a time Frost also taught at the Pinkerton Academy in Derry. Frost became an enthusiastic botanist and acquired his poetic persona of a New England rural sage during the years he and his family spent at Derry. All this while he was writing poems, but publishing outlets showed little interest in them.

By 1911 Frost was fighting against discouragement. Poetry had always been considered a young person's game, but Frost, who was nearly 40 years old, had not published a single book of poems and had seen just a handful appear in magazines. In 1911 ownership of the Derry farm passed to Frost. A momentous decision was made: to sell the farm and use the proceeds to make a radical new start in London, where publishers were perceived to be more receptive to new talent. Accordingly, in August 1912 the Frost family sailed across the Atlantic to England. Frost carried with him sheaves of verses he had written but not gotten

into print. English publishers in London did indeed prove more receptive to innovative verse, and, through his own vigorous efforts and those of the expatriate American poet Ezra Pound, Frost within a year had published *A Boy's Will* (1913). From this first book, such poems as "Storm Fear," "The Tuft of Flowers," and "Mowing" became standard anthology pieces.

A Boy's Will was followed in 1914 by a second collection, *North of Boston*, that introduced some of the most popular poems in all of Frost's work, among them "Mending Wall," "The Death of the Hired Man," "Home Burial," and "After Apple-Picking." In London, Frost's name was frequently mentioned by those who followed the course of modern literature, and soon American visitors were returning home with news of this unknown poet who was causing a sensation abroad. The Boston poet Amy Lowell traveled to England in 1914, and in the bookstores there she encountered Frost's work. Taking his books home to America, Lowell then began a campaign to locate an American publisher for them, meanwhile writing her own laudatory review of *North of Boston*.

Without his being fully aware of it, Frost was on his way to fame. The outbreak of World War I brought the Frosts back to the United States in 1915. By then Amy Lowell's review had already appeared in *The New Republic*, and writers and publishers throughout the Northeast were aware that a writer of unusual abilities stood in their midst. The American publishing house of Henry Holt had brought out its edition of *North of Boston* in 1914. It became a best-seller, and, by the time the Frost family landed in Boston, Holt was adding the American edition of *A Boy's Will*. Frost soon found himself besieged by magazines seeking to publish his poems. Never before had an American poet achieved such rapid fame after such a disheartening delay. From this moment his career rose on an ascending curve.

Frost bought a small farm at Franconia, New Hampshire, in 1915, but his income from both poetry and farming proved inadequate to support his family, and so he lectured and taught part-time at Amherst College and at the University of Michigan from 1916 to 1938. Any remaining doubt about his poetic abilities was dispelled by the collection *Mountain Interval* (1916), which continued the high level established by his first books. His reputation was further enhanced by *New Hampshire* (1923), which received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. That prize was also awarded to Frost's *Collected Poems* (1930) and to the collections *A Further Range* (1936) and *A Witness Tree* (1942). His other poetry volumes include *West-Running Brook* (1928), *Steeple Bush* (1947), and *In the Clearing* (1962). Frost served as a poet-in-residence at Harvard (1939–43), Dartmouth (1943–49), and Amherst College (1949–63), and in his old age he gathered honours and awards from every quarter. He was the poetry consultant to the Library of Congress (1958–59; the post was later styled poet laureate consultant in poetry), and his recital of his poem "The Gift Outright" at the inauguration of President John F. Kennedy in 1961 was a memorable occasion.

Works

The poems in Frost's early books, especially *North of Boston*, differ radically from late 19th-century Romantic verse with its ever-benign view of nature, its didactic emphasis, and its slavish conformity to established verse forms and themes. Lowell called *North of Boston* a "sad" book, referring to its portraits of inbred, isolated, and psychologically troubled rural New Englanders. These off-mainstream portraits signaled Frost's departure from the old tradition and his own fresh interest in delineating New England characters and their formative background. Among these psychological investigations are the alienated life of Silas in "The Death of the Hired Man," the inability of Amy in "Home Burial" to walk the difficult path from grief back to normality, the rigid mindset of the neighbour in "Mending Wall," and the paralyzing fear that twists the personality of Doctor Magoon in "A Hundred Collars."

MENDING WALL**- Robert Frost**

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
The work of hunters is another thing;
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us as we go.
We keep the wall between us as we go .

To each the boulders that have fallen to each .
And set are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
Stay where you are until our backs are turned!’
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall :
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, ‘Good fences made good neighbour’.
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
‘Why do they make good neighbours? Isn’t it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn’t love a wall,
That wants it down” I could say ‘Elves’ to him.
But it’s not elves exactly, and I’d rather
He said it for himself. I see him there,
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

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