



Because I could Not Stop for Death

Emily Dickinson



Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- Apply dramatic techniques with confidence in two/three act play, or assembly/ class presentation, preferably on SDGs.
- Perform a drama showing different roles and scenarios through deliberate choice of dialogues, speech, gestures and movements preferably on SDGs.
- Distinguish cause from effect, fact from opinion (e.g., by noting outcomes, personal comments, beliefs and biases), and generalized statements from evidence-based information with specific reference to informational texts.
- Apply skimming and scanning strategies for relevant information and main points in texts to identify the writer's purpose, and intended audience. Infer the theme/main idea of the text, distinguishing between fact and opinion where necessary.
- Demonstrate knowledge and application of parts of speech in oral and written communication in varying degrees of complexity.
- Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
 - Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences claim(s), counter claims and evidence.
 - Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
 - Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
 - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
 - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented.



Pre-reading:

- What images or ideas come to your mind when you think about Death and immortality?

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**
And I had put away
My labor and my **leisure** too,
For His Civility –



We passed the School, where Children **strove**
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew **quivering** and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
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 –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first **surmised** the Horses' Heads
Were toward **Eternity** –



While-reading

what does this poem tell us about the poet's attitude toward Death?



While-reading

How does the description of the cold and delicate clothing reflect the speaker's experience of the journey with Death?



While-reading

Why does the speaker say that centuries feel shorter than a day, and what does this reveal about her perception of eternity?

For the Teacher:



- Help students understand that the poem uses a carriage ride as a metaphor for the speaker's journey from life to death and into eternity, presenting death as a calm and natural transition rather than something frightening.

Theme

The poem *"Because I could Not Stop for Death"* by Emily Dickinson explores the theme of death as a calm and inevitable part of life. It presents Death not as something frightening, but as a kind and polite companion who gently leads the speaker toward eternity. The journey in the carriage symbolizes the passage from life to death, highlighting different stages of human life. Through peaceful and reflective imagery, the poem suggests that death is a natural transition rather than an end. It also conveys the idea that time loses its meaning after death, as centuries feel shorter than a single day. Overall, the poem emphasizes acceptance of mortality and the continuity of existence beyond physical life.

About the poetess

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) was an American poetess, widely regarded as one of the most original voices in English literature. She was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, and spent most of her life in seclusion, rarely leaving her family home. Despite her reclusive lifestyle, Dickinson produced nearly 1,800 poems, though only a handful were published during her lifetime. Her poetry is known for its unconventional style, with short lines, slant rhymes, and unusual punctuation, particularly her frequent use of dashes. She explored themes such as death, immortality, nature, love, faith, and the search for meaning. Her unique voice was not fully appreciated until after her death, when her poems were collected and published. Today, Emily Dickinson is celebrated as one of the greatest poets of the 19th century and a pioneer of modern American poetry.



Glossary

Words	Meanings
cornice	the top edge or decorative border of a building or structure
eternity	endless time; life that has no end
haste	great speed or hurry
immortality	the state of living forever; never dying
leisure	free time when one is not working
quivering	shaking or trembling slightly
scarcely	hardly; almost not
strove	tried very hard
surmised	guessed or understood something without full proof



Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Who kindly stops for the speaker in the poem?
2. What does the carriage symbolize in the poem?
3. How does the speaker describe the pace of the journey with Death?
4. Which places do they pass on their journey, and what might each represent?
5. How is the school described, and what could it symbolize about life?
6. What imagery does Dickinson use to describe the fields of grain?
7. How is the setting sun described, and what could it signify in the poem?
8. What does the "House that seemed a Swelling of the Ground" represent?
9. How does the speaker describe her clothing, and what effect does it create?
10. How does the poem convey the idea of time passing differently after death?

B. Choose the correct option.

1. Who accompanies the speaker in the carriage besides Death?
a) a child b) a friend c) immortality d) a teacher
2. What does the "setting sun" most likely symbolize?
a) morning b) birth c) the end of life d) happiness
3. What kind of journey is described in the poem?
a) a joyful trip b) a journey to school
c) a journey from life to death d) a journey through a city
4. How is Death portrayed in the poem?
a) frightening and cruel b) kind and polite
c) angry and loud d) weak and helpless
5. What does the "house" in the ground represent?
a) a palace b) a school c) a grave d) a garden



Vocabulary and Grammar

Parts of speech are categories of words based on their function in a sentence. They help us understand how words are used to form meaningful sentences. There are eight main parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection.

Example:

Sentence: *The happy child quickly ran to the park.*

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- The – Article (determiner)
 - happy – Adjective (describes the noun)
 - child – Noun (name of a person/thing)
 - quickly – Adverb (describes the verb)
 - ran – Verb (action)
 - to – Preposition (shows relationship)
 - the park – Noun phrase



Oral Communication Skills

Dramatic techniques are methods used by writers and playwrights to make a play or performance more interesting, engaging, and effective. These techniques help convey emotions, build tension, and communicate ideas to the audience.

Example: In a play, a character speaks aloud before the audience about their thoughts and feelings: this is called a soliloquy. It helps the audience understand the character's inner emotions.

A. Identify the dramatic technique used in the following situation:
A character shares its private thoughts aloud while alone on stage.



Writing Skills

Writing Arguments with Valid Reasoning and Evidence: Writing arguments with valid reasoning and evidence means presenting a clear opinion or claim and supporting it with logical thinking and reliable facts, examples, or data. This helps make the argument strong, convincing, and trustworthy.

Example:

Claim: School uniforms should be compulsory.

Reasoning: Uniforms reduce distractions and promote equality among students.

Evidence: For example, many schools report fewer cases of bullying related to clothing when uniforms are required.

A. Write a short argument of 3 to 4 sentences on the topic:
"Students should have homework every day."