

# William cullen bryant vs emily dickinson

Life, Death



I have read much of Bryant's poems and life, and now, as a reader of Bryant's work, I'm finding it interesting to compare his style to that of other authors of the same time period such as; Emerson, Thoreau, and Dickinson. In this first comparison of *Thanatopsis* by Bryant and *Because I Could Not Stop For Death* by Emily Dickinson, I will contrast the different outlooks on death each author has. *Because I Could Not Stop For Death* 1. Poem lyrics of *Because I Could Not Stop For Death* by 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 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—* As I mentioned more in depth, in a previous email, *Thanatopsis* is a poem devoted to death. It shows the reader Bryant's views on death. He tells us through this poem to accept death as part of life. That death cannot be stopped so trust when you die, and be content with your life you have lived. "Thou go no, like the quarry-slave at night, Scourged to his dungeon, but, sustained and soothed By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave, Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams." (Lines 76-80) Emily Dickinson takes a slightly different view on the topic of death in her poem,

Because I Could Not Stop For Death. First of all I noticed her capturing use of personification, relating death to a gentleman, who " kindly stopped" for her and sat with her through the trip of memories to her final destination, death. She makes death seem like an adventure, she tells us she couldn't stop her life for " him", but she didn't have to, " he" came and stopped her. It wasn't extremely hard and she really had no say, she went with him and didn't seem to show any signs of sadness or remorse. It seemed in the last quote, " Were toward Eternity," as though she was ending her past life and just at the very beginning of a renewed one. As her life is going past her on her trip the quote, " We passed the Setting Sun," symbolizes, as the sun setting, so is her life, but also like the sun, it will again rise brightly. Emily Dickinson seems to have a more positive and reassuring outlook on dying then that of Bryant, she portrays death as a privilege, almost something to be enjoyed or looked forward to, whereas Bryant portrays it as something that must be done, as a part of the life cycle which everyone has to go through at some point. Although their feelings about death are slightly different, they are also very much the same in many ways. Both authors are very much aware of death, and seemed unfrightened by it, they both seem to almost embrace it as part of life, and encourage others to do the same. It takes a true intellectual who has much trust and faith to be unafraid of something so terrifying as death.

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