

# Analysis of emily dickensons poem: a narrow fellow in the grass essay sample



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Emily Dickinson's poem, "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass", is believed to have been written in 1865, and is a vivid portrayal of one of the most infamous creatures of the natural world, the snake. "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" is a short six stanza, narrative which tells the story of an encounter with a snake. The poem expresses emotions of intrigue, "His notice sudden is"; apprehension, "But never met this Fellow/Attended or alone/ Without a tighter breathing/And Zero at the Bone."; and regard for nature, "Several of Nature's People/ I know, and they know me; I feel for them a transport/Of cordiality". The speaker of the poem is Dickinson herself and the poem is written from first person point of view. The first quatrain sets the story up to be told like a riddle. Dickinson doesn't come right out and identify the subject as a snake, but instead refers to it as "A Narrow Fellow".

Dickinson uses the word Narrow to give the reader the clue to the slenderness of the subject. She chooses to name the subject "Fellow", using the familiar term for a man or a boy and applying it to the snake. This clues the reader into the commonness of the subject. Her posing of the question to the reader in the third line "You may have met him, -did you not?" is playful and, like a riddle, draws the audience into her poem as a participant in the experience. She does this very subtly by inserting a pause near the end of the line after the word "him", however, she forgoes the question mark, which has a subliminal effect on the reader compelling him or her to read on. The final line states that the sighting of the subject comes unexpectedly, planting yet another clue for the reader to draw upon in order to solve the riddle. In stanza two the reader's focus is brought towards how the subject looks as it moves through the grass. Because of her vivid imagery "The

grass divides as with a comb/ A spotted shaft is seen", the reader is now sure that the answer to the riddle is a snake.

She continues to clearly describe how the grass closes and opens further on, suggesting the movement of the snake, and delighting the reader in his own personal recall of such an encounter. In the third quatrain, the poet suddenly becomes introspective. Dickinson engages the reader by sharing her recollection of childhood encounters with snakes. Dickinson uses the word " Boy" and " Barefoot" in line eleven to portray a spirit of adventure, curiosity, and also to reveal to the reader a sense of closeness with nature, " Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot-/I more than once at Morn". In the first line of the fourth stanza Dickinson uses " Whiplash" to describe the mistaken identity of the snake at first glance, but also to illustrate the danger and the quickness of a snake. In stanza five Dickinson continues with her introspection, allowing the reader a more intimate insight into her innermost feelings. At this point Dickinson reveals that she is actually terrified of the snake and always has been " But never met this Fellow/Attended, or alone/Without a tighter breathing/And Zero at the Bone".

" A Narrow Fellow in the Grass," is written in six stanzas of four lines each. Dickinson employs slant rhyming in the second and fourth lines of stanzas one, two and four. The first two quatrains of the poem are laid out in common meter, alternately eight and six syllables to the line. However Dickinson narrows the pattern from then on to lines of six and seven syllables. The poem begins as if it is a riddle and Dickinson is attempting to draw the reader into the story by getting them to try to guess who or what the " narrow fellow" is. The second stanza serves more clues and draws us to <https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-emily-dickensons-poem-a-narrow-fellow-in-the-grass-essay-sample/>

the answer. With the unfolding of memories in the third and fourth stanzas, the climax of the story is reached as the Boy attempts in vain to grasp the snake. The fifth stanza is the beginning of the dénouement of the poem. The reader is brought out of the memory sequence and Dickinson begins to wrap up the story with a final sentiment of love and fear. In the last two stanzas there is a dramatic change from an attitude of love for all creatures, “ I feel for them a transport/ of cordiality”, to an attitude of fear of the snake, “ Without a tighter breathing/ And Zero at the Bone”.

In writing the poem, Dickinson uses many “-” marks to indicate a pause after certain lines, most likely meant to give the reader some time to think about the words he just read. In Line three of the first quatrain the pause after the word “ Him” is meant as an indication for the reader to ask himself if he has met the “ narrow fellow” that “ rides” “ in the Grass”. Dickinson likely chose to reference the snake as the narrow fellow to express her friendliness towards nature. In Stanza one Dickinson uses the word “ rides” rather than slither to describe the how the snake moves along the earth likely as a means to draw the reader away from any negative mythology associated with snakes. In Line eleven of the poem Dickinson uses the word “ Barefoot” to further instill a sense of closeness with nature.

In Stanza five Dickinson further solidifies the sentiment of equality that she feels for animals by regarding them as “ Nature’s People” and using “ transport/Of cordiality” which suggests that Dickinson feels that animals return the same friendliness. In Line thirteen of the poem, when the Boy mistakes the snake for a whiplash, Dickinson subliminally gives the reader the similarity of the quickness and the sting of a snake bite to the quickness  
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and sting of a “ Whip lash”. This comparison is the first introduction to any form of threat from the snake being expressed in the poem. The final quatrain of the poem is very unique from the rest of the poem because it holds a very dramatic change from a mood of warmth to a cold, fearful mood which is exemplified in the final line “ Zero at the Bone”.

### Bibliography

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<http://www.americanpoems.com/poets/emilydickinson/10938>