

# Poetry analysis – i took my power in my hand by emily dickinson

[Profession](#), [Poet](#)



I Took my Power in my Hand

by Emily Dickinson

I took my Power in my Hand-

And went against the World-

'Twas not so much as David-had-

But I-was twice as bold-

I aimed my Pebble-but myself

Was all the one that fell-

Was it Goliath-was too large-

Or was myself-too small?

At first glance, “ I Took my Power in my Hand” seems like a short, simple poem. However, the poem actually conveys the poet’s puzzlement about a failure.

In the first stanza, the poet reflects on her actions. This reflection serves to let the reader know that the poet did something against a greater power, something like a David vs. Goliath, but with an even more diminutive hero(ine) against an even more incredible giant. Perhaps her Goliath is a law that she opposes or a corporation she feels is corrupt.

Regardless of the “ enemy,” the allusion to David and Goliath serves to show that the poet is clearly undertaking a difficult task.

The second stanza expresses the poet’s bemusement at her failure, despite the difficulty of the task. She says that she clearly aimed her “ pebble,” as David had against Goliath, but she was the one that fell. The reader can see that the poet cannot comprehend her failure. Finally, she concludes that there are two possibilities for her failure. Either her Goliath, or goal, was quixotic, or she was just not strong enough.

Throughout the poem, the poet uses unorthodox punctuation and capitalization to help communicate her confusion. Liberal usage of dashes is the most noticeable deviation from standard punctuation. The poet does this to show her discontinuous thinking. The dashes force the reader to stop, mimicking the pauses in the poet’s reflections. In addition to the punctuation, the poet capitalizes “ Power,” “ Hand,” “ World,” and “ Pebble,” words that normally would not be capitalized.

“ Power” and “ Hand” are capitalized to show how much stock the poet puts in her personal strength and ability. Because she is used to this strength and skill, she is all the more bewildered when she fails in conquering her Goliath. “ World” is capitalized because this is the poet’s Goliath, or undertaking. “ Pebble” is capitalized because it is a symbol. Just as “ World” symbolizes the poet’s task, the “ Pebble” represents the poet’s solution to the problem. The poet is confused because David slew Goliath with a pebble, but her “ Pebble”

didn't slay her Goliath. Although she did what she was "supposed to do," she wasn't able to accomplish her goal.

"I Took my Power in my Hand" is a poem about a poet accustomed to succeeding with her own strength and ability. However, she goes against the "World" and fails, even though she follows David's example, doing everything she could and should do.

How Happy is the Little Stone

by Emily Dickinson

How happy is the little stone

That rambles in the road alone,

And doesn't care about careers,

And exigencies never fears;

Whose coat of elemental brown

A passing universe put on;

And independent as the sun,

Associates or glows alone,

Fulfilling absolute decree

In casual simplicity.

“ How Happy is the Little Stone” is a poem that conveys its theme in its structure. The poem is one stanza written in couplets, which for the most part, rhyme. This simple structure complements the message of happiness in simplicity and independence. The one couplet that doesn’t rhyme is the second to last one. However, this break in format is for a good reason. In this couplet, the poet talks about being independent and “ glow[ing] alone.” She really wants to express the idea that happiness lies in simplicity and independence, using a stone as a paragon of simplicity. It doesn’t care about it’s future in a career, it lets the “ passing universe” color it brown, and it independently fulfills the absolute decree of living.

Basically, the stone goes on existing, not really affecting or getting affected by anything. I think the poet’s message is for the readers to live like the stone, living life independently and simply to enjoy it, rather than living life worrying about a career, exigencies, and what other people think.

Considering this message, perhaps Emily Dickinson’s Goliath in “ I Took my Power in my Hand” was to live life like the little stone in this poem.