

# The soul selects her own society

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



Emily Dickinson wrote "The Soul selects her own Society" in 1862. It is a ballad with three stanzas of four lines each, or three quatrains. Dickinson uses slant rhyme, with each stanza rhyming ABAB.

The theme of The Soul selects her own Society is that individuals in society often live in seclusion, only maintaining communication with a select few and how their decisions are generally incontrovertible. Throughout the poem, Dickinson uses an extended metaphor, stating that the soul physically "shuts the Door" and prevents any outsiders to enter.

She continues to reinforce this idea of creating a barricade around the conscience with references to "Chariots" and "an Emperor" that pause at the "Gate" of her soul. This recurring motif that nothing ever penetrates the door once it is shut strengthens just how far people are willing to go to remain secluded from society. Dickinson puts a lot of emphasis on the rigidity of the "Gate" by stating that it is hard "Like Stone" and unbreakable.

Dickinson's uses explicit imagery to portray the firmness of barrier around her soul. Chariots are considered the most grandeur of transportation and Emperors are the most powerful of people, yet even these majestic things cannot sway the soul's defenses. It gives the reader an image of the soul rejecting even the most incredible objects. No amount of monetary objects or power may alter or affect the decisions made by the soul. The closed "Valves of her attention" isolates the mind and protects it from outside influence, however, these valves are "Like Stone". The soul blocks out

change and the only way for change to occur is if the valve opens, but the soul's valve is like stone - solid and unchanging.

This poem is written with a voice of authority, almost like by a higher power. Rather than the door merely closing, the soul physically "shuts the Door" with a gesture of clear power. However, it is also interesting to note Dickinson's word choice. Unlike walls or other barriers, a door can be opened once closed. This signifies that individuals who isolate themselves have the ability to come out of their shell and change for the better. The idea of change also makes reappearance in the final stanza when Dickinson chose to use "Valves of her attention".

Valves are like switches; they can be turned on and off at will. This flexibility is quickly followed by the phrase "Like Stone". Dickinson does this to remind readers of the original premise, which is that the decisions made by the soul are still firm and unyielding as ever, though change is possible. Dickinson also uses a paradox, referring to those selected individuals as the "divine Majority". The word "divine" refers to the most elite of individuals, who certainly do not comprise the "Majority" of the population. However, by claiming these chosen few are the majority, Dickinson notes the importance of these individuals to the person - that they mean the world.