

# Example of because i could not stop for death essay

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



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## **Interpreting poetry**

‘ Because I could not stop for death’ is a highly-acclaimed poem written by Emily Dickinson in the 19th century. It basically illuminates death through personification. It has been regarded as one of the best English poems composed ever. There are several literary devices used in this lyric poem like alliteration, assonance, consonance, metaphor, meter, personification and rhyme. But this essay illuminates one literary aspect of the poem which stands out- imagery. Death has been personified as a man who takes a ride with the poetess to her grave in a carriage. Still, it’ s the imagery which deserves an ovation here. The way every sentence brings a scene in mind to present the interaction between death and poetess is incredible. An analysis of imagery in each stanza has been given in the paragraphs below.

## **The Imagery in first and second stanza**

“ Because I could not stop for Death—He kindly stopped for me  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—And Immortality.”

These lines very well depict how the poetess is busy with certain things and hence, cannot stop for death. So, he (death personified) stops for her instead with the carriage which has space for only two. The way a carriage and man have been picturesquely presents an image to the mind about how this journey began. Even it appears that immortality is accompanying the two in carriage. A wonderful example of imagery! Moving to the second stanza- “ We slowly drove—He knew no haste And I had put away My labor and my leisure too, For His Civility”

These lines depict how gentle a man death is and he shows no haste in moving the carriage. It's his civility how he drives slowly. So, she too puts away her labor and leisure for him.

## **The imagery in Third , Fourth and Fifth Stanza**

“ 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— These three stanzas have been phenomenal in exhibiting an image, a moving one in the mind's eye of the reader. Very well-phrased yet simple sentences tell how the poetess along with death passes through the

school and watch the children strive at recess. It depicts how before death, a person goes through memories and finds how life has been- striving in this case. They also come across a field of grazing grain and setting sun. Such imagery enlivens the immediate journey before death- how past swiftly flashes across mind yet it's cold. The coldness of death is portrayed in the next stanza very effectively. A reader can feel how the dew turn frosty and poetess's dress appears to her- tulle which hardly provides any warmth or covering. So, the cold is felt. It's the coldness of death.

The next stanza describes how they arrive at their destination. The lines depict as if a carriage reaches a house. It is followed by an excellent imagery of a grave- swelling in the ground, with no roof visible which is the sky in fact and the decoration on grave has been presented as cornice.

### **The final stanza**

“ Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet Feels shorter than the DayI first surmised the Horses' HeadsWere toward Eternity—”

The last stanza is philosophical which explains how poetess takes death to be a way towards eternity. But this too has been very well pictured through the carriage. The horses' heads were toward eternity- it tells the direction to which the carriage was moving.

### **Conclusion**

The poem ' Because I could not stop for death' has been composed very wisely. It's not only its message and a picturesque description which make it one of the best poems. The simple sentences which hardly contains a

difficult word or complex phrase still sound qualitatively efficient. The alternating meters and very well-chosen words like carriage, cornice, tulle, tippet and surmised give a musical effect to the poem. It has excelled at personification. And above all, it has excelled at imagery. The poetess imagined as well as depicted death to be so considerate initially and she gradually moved to portray how life is full of strife and eventually to the coldness and eternity of death. The description of the grave and significance of death in concluding stanza provide strength to the poem. As one reads, there is a mental visualisation of how a woman takes a carriage which was stopped by a man, how they move through various events- each picturesque in their own way and finally, how they attain eternity at graveyard. As the story being told is solely related to death and it's gentle behaviour, the reader gets a dark backdrop in mind while reading and yet is not haunted with negative thoughts of violence, bloodshed or pain. The finest use of imagination and phrasing has been employed to create ' Because I could not stop for death'.

As Allen Tate had written about this poem in 1936, " Every image is precise and, moreover, not merely beautiful, but inextricably fused with the central idea. Every image extends and intensifies every other " , every reader and reviewer would agree that the imagery in this poem is worth remembering and learning from.

### **General Purpose: To analyze the literary device in a poem**

Specific purpose: To analyse imagery in ' Because I could not stop for death'

Central idea: How to read and analyse a poem to find its specialities