

# An interpretation and explanation of hope in hope is the thing with feathers

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



## **Introduction**

The poem “ Hope is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickinson, is an interpretation and explanation of hope. Essentially, I conclude that the poem explores the answer to the question; “ What is hope?”. In my opinion, the poem also establishes what hope means to the speaker on personal terms. The topic of hope is investigated through an overarching metaphor between a bird and hope. There are many other literary devices that contribute to the idea of explaining and providing an interpretation of hope. The literary devices that contribute to the theme of the poem, include metaphors, imagery, personification and synesthesia.

## **Metaphors**

To begin, metaphors that describe hope can be viewed throughout the poem. The first metaphor that catches my eye, is the general comparison between hope and a bird throughout the poem. Comparing hope to a bird establishes the meaning of hope. Through the juxtaposition of a bird and hope, the poem implies that hope can be a symbol of freedom, grace, and peace. These implications are drawn because birds have these attributes; therefore in light of the poem, so does hope. Moving on, another metaphor is present in the second stanza with the lines: “ sore must be the storm that could abash the little bird”. This is a metaphor for how hope can be lost and disproved by a negative or difficult situation in one’s life. One can view the “ storm” as difficulty in one’s life, and the “ abashed bird” as their hope being lost, or being in a state of despair.

## **Imagery**

Next, imagery is present in the final stanza. The lines that render imagery are: “ I’ve heard it in the chilliest land and on the strangest sea”. The adjectives utilized are, “ chilliest” and “ strangest” which provide the reader with an image of isolation and cold. The words transport the reader to a place that is seemingly uncomfortable and crisp. This may create the image of a person sitting on a boat in far away, frigid waters. This manifests the meaning of hope and what it entails. The imagery employed portrays that when in difficulty, one feels out of place and generally, cold. It reminds the reader that hope materializes when one is experiencing a tough situation in their life or are in despair.

## **Synesthesia**

A final literary device used to explain hope in the poem is synesthesia. The line, “ I’ve heard it in the chilliest land”, evokes the reader’s sense of touch and hearing at the same time. It ties into the theme of explaining hope because it reminds the reader that the “ song” of hope can be heard during the “ coldest” of times. That is to say, that hope can be felt even when one’s life is proving difficult and emotionally challenging.

## **Personification**

The final stanza holds personal meaning to the speaker. The pronoun “ I” is used when describing the feelings of “ chilliness” and isolation in the line; “ I’ve heard it in the chilliest land and on the strangest sea”. The speaker clearly has had an experience with the “ bird” otherwise known as hope. The final stanza portrays that the speaker experienced hardship and difficulty. As

the poem comes to an end, the speaker says, “ Yet, never, in extremity, it asked a crumb of me”. The bird did not ask for “ a crumb”, which shows that hope never asks for a “ crumb” either. The final line is a sort of personification that connects to the idea that hope materializes when one is in difficulty, but it never requires anything in return. It relates that hope, like a human being, needs food to survive.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, “ Hope is the thing with feathers” by Emily Dickinson aims to establish an explanation of hope. I think this poem is a unique and sophisticated way of portraying and explaining how hope functions and relates to individuals.