

Emily dickinson's success is counted sweetest

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



Emily Dickinson's "Success is Counted Sweetest" has been penned in iambic trimeter with the exception of the first two lines of the second stanza. The poem highlights aphoristic truths that are universal. In the first stanza, Emily Dickinson endeavors to define the true essence of success. The general impression is that success can be 'counted' by only those who have experienced it numerous times. Nevertheless, it is more precisely evaluated or counted by those who have never succeeded as they can apprehend its true value.

In another poem, "I Had Been Hungry, All the Years", Emily Dickinson writes that "Hunger-was a way / Of Persons outside Windows- / The Entering-takes away-".

For the true experience of life, failures are inevitable. For, what we learn from our failures, success can never teach us. The alliteration with the repetition of the 's' sound lays emphasis on 'success'. Success also tastes sweeter to the person who has persevered very hard for it, than to a person who has found success effortlessly.

The former is also more thankful to God, and cherishes his accomplishment. The word 'nectar' here implies water. However, it is perception that renders it 'nectar'. To the thirsty ones with parched throats, a drop of water tastes as sweet as nectar. Here 'sorest' is utilized with reference to its old meaning, that is 'greatest'. Only the one in the direst need, can treasure any sort of sanction.

Not one of all the purple host
Who took the flag to-day

Can tell the definition,
So clear, of victory!

Some people define success by virtue of positions that they acquire and assume in life. The poetess asserts how none of the purple leaders who took the flag to-day could describe what victory actually meant. The act of victory in such a stance of winning a battle is limited to the act of taking away a flag. It also points to the worldly act of hoisting a flag. Arundhati Roy in "The End of Imagination" toys with the word 'successful'. She echoes how the meaning of the word 'successful' depends upon perception. For instance, a soldier who dies at war is deemed by others to be 'unsuccessful'. Roy points out that it does not necessarily mean that the soldier is in any way 'unfulfilled'.

The poetess highlights the word 'to-day' to underline the presentness and transiency of the situation. 'Purple' is the colour of royalty because the fine clothes/robes of kings and emperors were dyed purple; and also connotes 'blood'. It was the trend that dynasties ruled over some countries. Being born to a royal family, one could never realize how difficult it was to achieve that position as it naturally came to them as a heirloom. Shakespeare said: Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon 'em. (Twelfth Night Quote Act ii. Scene 5.)Of these, only those who achieve it comprehend its worth according to Dickinson. As he, defeated, dying,

On whose forbidden ear
The distant strains of triumph
Burst agonized and clear!

In the above lines, the poetess exemplifies the frenzy of success, that one loses consciousness in. He loses the ability to evaluate himself objectively. In such a context, the person who loses the battle and is dying can perceive it better. The dying man's ears are not 'forbidden'. The figure of speech utilized here is a 'transferred epithet'. Rather what is forbidden to his ears is the sound of success, as he belonged to the defeated side.

He is successful in that he can realize the futility of war, and the meaninglessness of success as the speaker in Wilfred Owen's "Strange Meeting" does. The word 'strain' in "strains of triumphs" may be used as a pun in the above phrase. Here, the victory may also be 'strained'. The idea of distance and defeat is suggested by the alliteration of the 'd' sound. Moreover, the one who is caught in the noise and fury of success cannot, in fact hear its sound. The one who serenely lies away can perceive it better. It does not manifest itself subtly, but does "Burst agonized and clear!"

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