

The poem



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Emily Dickenson Emily Dickinson was a reclusive poet working during the second half of the nineteenth century. She was born into a wealthy family in Massachusetts and was given a strong education at the Amherst Academy. She considered religious service and spent some time at the Mount Holyoke Female Seminary but returned home to her family after only a short time there (McNeil, 1986). She stayed in her family home after that, usually refused to greet guests but maintained friendships through mail and always wore white.

The time period that she wrote in is labeled the Romantic period. The period idolized the imagination as the highest of human capacities. This was largely because of its creative abilities and as a means of reacting to sweeping change in every aspect of life. It also esteemed nature because of the creative element inherent in it and because of the manifestation of the imagination that could be found within it. This refers to the idea that we create what we see, reflecting a growing awareness of our co-existence with our environment. The world was full of symbols and signs that would portend future events and actions which were knowable through their relationship to the myths and legends of antiquity. The period had some overlap with the transcendental movement as well in which everything encountered in life had a higher spiritual meaning.

These concepts of using natural symbols to convey a deeply spiritual idea by pushing the reader's imagination can be traced through much of Dickenson's poetry. By avoiding titles, she forces her readers to pay closer attention to what the poem says as a means of identification at least. Once she has her reader engaged in her poem, she then uses natural imagery to make a closer connection with the reader. This can be found in lines such as "invisible as

music / But positive as sound" (This world is not conclusion 3-4); " They went to God's right hand / That hand is amputated now" (Those dying then 3-4); and " Tell all the truth but tell it slant / Success in circuit lies" (Tell all the truth but tell it slant 1-2). In each of these lines, Dickinson encourages her readers to create a mental image analogy of her idea, but this also requires the engagement of the imagination at the same time.

The young eye sees a vessel there

The next eye learns it's empty

But none attempt to fill this vase

Although it's the vase of plenty

As sunlight upon shadow shows

The details of the fruit tree

The manna of the vessel

Requires a different light to see

Works Cited

McNeil, Helen. Emily Dickinson. London: Virago Press, 1986.