

Pain presents an
internal pain which
cultivates into



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Pain is a reoccurring theme in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. In 'There is a certain slant of light', Dickinson presents an internal pain which cultivates into death itself, through forms of light and winter.

As with many of Dickinson's poetry, the speaker appears to Pain through nature. The first stanza of the poem opens with the image of a 'certain slant of light' which at first glance may set an optimistic and positive tone to the poem due to the connotations of life and vitality. The motif of light in Dickinson's poetry has been used to show its effect on the seasons as in 'A Light Exists in Spring' and in retaining a closeness to god in _____, however, in this poem it is employed to establish a setting of 'winter afternoons', creating a sombre tone for the poem. Dickinson's use of pathetic fallacy in the opening stanza of the poem creates a cold impression with winter being associated as the most extreme of the seasons, with the hibernation of animals and the decay of nature. It seems fitting that the winter 'oppresses' the speaker as with nature, with the 'Landscape' being personified even though it is bleak.

The light ultimately causes pain for the speaker, and as the poem progresses becomes a metaphor for an internal struggle, an 'imperial affliction' which is oxymoronic within itself showing the Pain through religion. However, the speaker potentially finds religion oppressive stating 'like the Heft of Cathedral Tunes' with Heft suggesting something heavy, reinforcing the 'oppressive' nature of them. Dickinson was raised in a Puritan family and in surroundings that were 'largely conventionally Christian' 2, which in turn created her own view on faith. She found it hard to connect fully with her Christian faith, which proved a great difficulty in the time of the Great

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Revival. The battle of finding faith is shown within the poem with the use of hyphens, as they create a disjointed sense.

The use of the hyphens within “ Shadows- hold their breath-“ reinforces the personification of the ‘ shadows’ as it replicates the sound of them holding their breath. The idea of religion being oppressive is continued into the second stanza with the simile ‘Heavenly Hurt’. 1A Light Exists In Spring – Emily Dickinson 2[http://www. tandfonline. com/doi/abs/10.1080/00393276208587268](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00393276208587268) – The Theme of Death in Emily Dickinson’s poetry