

Analyzing the stanzas

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Analyzing the Stanzas * Notable end rhyme * You can see that this poem, like most of Dickinson's poems, has an ABCB rhyme scheme. Here, our rhyming pairs are " saw/raw" and " grass/pass." Extra note: Dickinson wasn't strict in her rhyming. Though she did take steps to fit her feelings into the rhyme (she kept a dictionary by her bed, to help her find just the right word), if she couldn't find the rhyme, she came close. * " Ballad-like" meter * " Ballad-like" implies song-like, and many folks have put Dickinson's words to music. The alternating stressed syllables and the rhyme create a pleasing sound to the reader. Most of Dickinson's poetry presents the same natural rhythm. Here are a couple of lines broken to emphasize the stressed syllables: " A bird came down the walk– He did not know I saw... " * Punctuation * Dickinson is famous for her use of dashes. See line 1 of this poem. She also plays with semicolons, commas, and periods. When you're reading, always follow the ideas—using the dashes, commas, and semicolons as cues—but not rules. Most often, the period will signal the end of an idea. Look at the second stanza of this poem, presented with standard punctuation. [The bird] drank a dew from a convenient grass, and then [he] hopped sidewise, to the wall, to let a beetle pass. * Capitalization * This poem doesn't show it much, but Dickinson played with capitalization, too. Easy to see, each line of every stanza, regardless of the significance of the word, is capitalized. And, certainly, she respected the expected language conventions, capitalizing the names of months, places, the pronoun " I," and beginnings of sentences. She also, however, gave special attention to words or concepts of importance—Sabbath, Poet, Mind, Sound, Death, Glory. As you

read more of Dickinson's poems, pay attention to internal words that she chooses to capitalize. Likely you'll find a link to a significant theme.