

Emily dickinson's views on mortality



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Emily Dickinson's poems " Because I Could Not Stop for Death", " I Heard A Fly Buzz-When I Died", and " I Felt A Funeral In My Brain" all deal with one of life's few certainties, death. Dickinson's intense curiosity towards mortality was present in much of her work, and is her legacy as a poet. " Because I could Not Stop for Death" is one of Emily Dickinson's most discussed and famous poems due to its ambiguous, and unique view on the popular subject of death. Death in this poem is told as a woman's last trip, which is headed toward eternity. This poem helps to characterize and bring death down to a more personal level.

Different from the more popular views of death being brutal and cruel, Dickinson makes death seem passive and easy. The theme of the poem being that death is natural and unstoppable for everybody, but at the same time giving comfort that it is not the end of a soul's journey. The reader can recognize the poem's theme by analysing its voice, imagery, figures of speech, form, diction and especially symbolism; all of which help the reader to understand the poem's meaning. The precise form that Dickinson uses throughout the poem helps convey her message to the reader. The poem is written in five quatrains.

The way in which each stanza is written in a quatrain gives the poem unity and makes it easy to read. " Because I Could Not Stop for Death" starts to give the reader a feeling of forward movement throughout the second and third quatrain. For example, in line 5, Dickinson begins death's journey with a slow, forward movement, which can be seen as she writes, " We slowly drove-He knew no haste. " The third quatrain seems to speed up as the

trinity of death, immortality, and the speaker pass the children playing, the fields of grain, and the setting sun one after another.

The poem seems to get faster as life goes through its course. In lines 17 and 18, however, the poem seems to slow down as Dickinson writes, “ We paused before a House that seemed / A Swelling of the Ground-.” The reader is given a feeling of life slowly ending. Another way in which Dickinson uses the form of the poem to convey a message to the reader occurs on line four as she writes, “ And Immortality.” The word “ Immortality” is given a line by itself to show its importance. Perhaps the most notable way in which Dickinson uses form is when she ends the poem with a dash, which seems to indicate that the poem is never ending, just as eternity is never ending. “ I heard a Fly buzz-when I died,” points to a disbelief in heaven or any form of afterlife. In this poem, a woman is lying in bed with her family and friends standing all around waiting for her to die. While the family is waiting for her to pass on, she is waiting for “... the King...” This symbolizes some sort of god that will take her away. As the woman dies, her eyes, or windows as they are referred to in the poem, fail and then she “... could not see to see-.” As she died she saw “ the light” but then her eyes, or windows, failed and she saw nothing.

This is the suggestion of there being no afterlife. The woman's soul drifted off into nothingness because there was no afterlife for it to travel to. This is the complete opposite belief about afterlife in Dickinson's other poem, “ Because I Could Not Stop for Death”, which indicated that life is a never-ending journey. These two poems deal with similar topics however they are entirely different in that one believes in life after death and the other does

not. Life, death, and reincarnation are portrayed in Emily Dickinson's poem "I Felt A Funeral In My Brain". The use of words associated with death gives the poem an ominous and dark persona. To add to this tone, important words that are strong in meaning are capitalized. At the beginning of this poem the feelings of grief and pain are evident. Throughout the rest of the poem, there was a strong sense that the speaker needs to make a choice between a world full of trouble and pain or a heaven that brings solitude and peace. This is all part of a vicious cycle. Sometimes when life doesn't turn out for the best, you need to wait until your cycle is up. This is reflected clearly at the end of the poem.

The speaker lives life, passes away, and is reborn again into this world all throughout this poem's entirety. The first two words of this poem reveal strong feelings. The words "I felt" show that the speaker is talking about themselves. In line 1, the words "I felt a funeral in! my brain," sparks thoughts of death. The word "funeral" combined with the word "brain" can be simplified into the fact that death was inside the speaker. "and mourners to and fro/kept treading-treading-till it seemed/that sense was breaking through-"(2, 3, 4). Here the speaker is bothered by their inner death that keeps mourning throughout their head.

The dashes between "treading-treading-," allow a pause between the two words, inducing a long, repetitive treading. This repetition causes irritation. Finally, "sense was breaking through" (4). This simply means that the constant repetition is now starting to make sense. A feeling of relief has surfaced, but only for a short while. In the third stanza voices start to take over by opening a box. Shown in lines 9 through 11, "and then I heard them

lift a box/and creak across my soul/with those same boots of lead. " This box is opened and all the problems and troubles lingering inside are released upon the speaker like " boots of lead" weighing the speaker down. These problems build up and " the space began to toll. " Portraying suicidal thoughts, the speaker can't take anymore and it's all beginning " to toll," meaning that it is coming close to the end. This poem has a darker persona than the others, because of the suicidal implications. The word " finished" is emphasized like other words throughout the poem, but the use of " finished" at the end of this poem fits accordingly. It also fits well at the end of this poem because not only was the poem over but it also signifies the end of life and the start of a new one.

The lines separating " then" at the very end make it seem as though the words are fading away as did the thoughts of the speaker from the past. The speaker made it through the cycle of life, living, dying and rebirth. Each stage was a hard endeavour, with some, followed a period of relief, and others followed with a sense of desperation, as if things will never get better. Heaven and Earth's descriptions contrast each other so much, but no matter how peaceful heaven seems, the gloomy tone still lurks throughout. The vicious cycle of life will always continue, as was reflected in the poem.