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# AS and A LEVEL

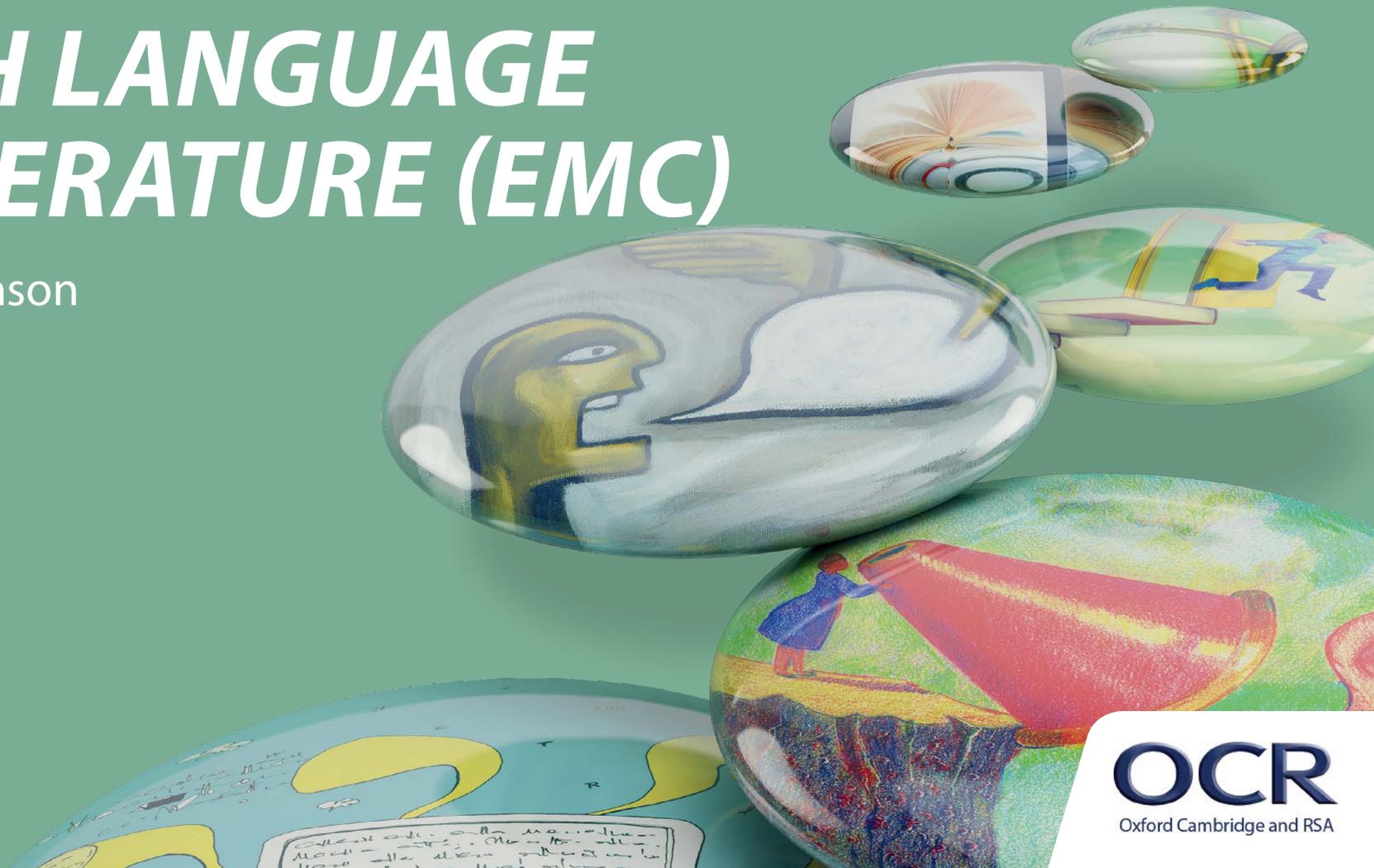
*Delivery Guide*

H074/H474

## ***ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (EMC)***

Theme: Emily Dickinson

January 2016



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# Introduction

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

- Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
- Thinking Conceptually: expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
- Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected that best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

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## KEY



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# Curriculum Content

## **Poetry – AS: Paper 2, Section B The Language of Literary Texts A Level Paper 2, Section A The Language of Poetry and Plays**

At both AS and A Level, this examined unit asks students to analyse the use and impact of poetic and stylistic techniques, demonstrating how meaning and effects are created.

**Topic:** Emily Dickinson, selected poems

Key skills:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a substantial poetry collection.
- Apply relevant methods for textual analysis, drawing on linguistic and literary techniques.
- Explore how linguistic and literary approaches can inform interpretations of texts.
- Identify how meanings and effects are created and conveyed in texts.
- Analyse the ways in which a poetry text draws on its literary, cultural and stylistic contexts.

At AS Level the exam asks the students to compare two named poems from the collection they have been studying.

At A Level the exam asks the students to compare the named poem with one or two others of their choice from the collection they have been studying.



# Thinking Conceptually

This examined unit requires the students to read the following fifteen poems written by Emily Dickinson: "Going to Heaven!" (67), "There's a certain slant of light" (258), "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain" (280), "The Soul selects her own Society" (303), "He fumbles at your Soul" (315), "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" (341), "I heard a Fly buzz – when I died" (465), "This World is not Conclusion" (501), "It was not Death, for I stood up" (510), "The Soul has Bandaged moments" (512), "I like to see it lap the Miles" (585), "One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted" (670), "Because I could not stop for Death" (712), "My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun" (754), "A narrow Fellow in the Grass" (986).

In this Language and Literature specification, the students will analyse how meanings are shaped in poetry, exploring how the poet uses poetic and stylistic techniques to present ideas. They will focus on the way in which meaning is created through the use of pattern making and pattern breaking, (deviation) and through repetition.

This analysis will require the students to have an awareness of phonology, lexis and semantics, grammar and morphology, pragmatics and discourse.

They will also analyse the connections between the poems, and explore the influence of context on the poems. The context may be the literary context (the way in which the

poem uses the conventions of a particular genre, for example), or the broader social or historical context.

## **Conceptual links to other parts of the specification**

In common with AS Paper 2, Section A (The Language of Prose), and A Level Paper 3, Section A (Reading as a Writer, Writing as a Reader), this paper requires the students to think about how the texts are constructed, rather than simply analyse the themes, for example. The focus might be on how the choice of first person narrator shapes the meaning of the poem, for instance, rather than on who that narrator actually is.

The students closely analyse the language of poetry through poetic and stylistic techniques, and this is a useful skill that can be applied to other AS and A Level units. The knowledge they gain about the way in which language works, the effects that it creates, and the way in which it can be used, is also an excellent basis for the students' own A Level written work and for any analysis that they do of either spoken or written texts in almost any genre.

An understanding of the relevance of context is essential to any study that requires students to think about the purpose or audience of the text (particularly relevant in the exploration of the texts in the anthology in AS and A Level Paper 1, for example).



# Thinking Contextually

In this unit, the students are already required to make connections between two named poems (AS) or between one named poem and one or two poems of their choice (A Level), and this process of finding connections is part of thinking contextually. The students are exploring the poem in the light of at least one other poem in the collection, and are therefore thinking about the patterns that emerge or the patterns that are broken in terms of the poet's choice of lexis, syntax etc.

An awareness of the broader context of other genres is also required in order that the students can see how the poet breaks or follows those conventions.

Some knowledge of wider social or historical context may be useful, if that context affects the grammatical or lexical choices made by the poet.

The following activities in this guide are examples of the way in which the context of the poems can be explored:

Activity 1 – overview of poems and themes, with an introduction to the ways in which editors have organised the poems over the years.

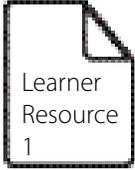
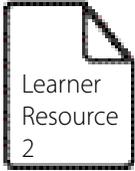
Activity 2 – creation of a 'found poem' from one of Dickinson's letters, with a focus on "Going to Heaven!"

Activity 3 – analysis of Dickinson's manuscripts (her alternative word choices and use of the dash), with a focus on "I felt a Funeral in my Brain".

Activity 4 – introduction to hymn metre and to Dickinson's knowledge of the hymns of Isaac Watts, with a focus on "It was not Death for I stood up".

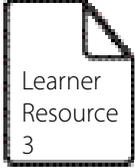
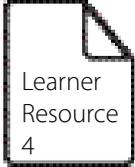
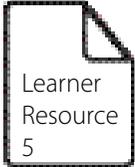


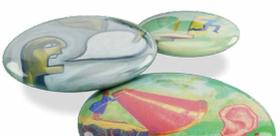
# Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p><b>1. Introduction and overview (AO3, AO4)</b></p> <p>This activity encourages the students to begin to think about characteristics of Dickinson's poems, as they analyse the titles both in terms of theme and also in terms of narrator, verbs, sentence types etc. They build on these initial responses, as they work on grouping quotes taken from the poems. It would then be possible to represent these ideas in a diagrammatic form for a wall display, to which the students could add as they learn more about Dickinson's poetry.</p> <p>For a useful overview of Dickinson's poetry see a study guide written by Dr Coghill entitled "Basic Characteristics of Emily Dickinson's Poetry": <a href="https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/poetry_characteristics">https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/poetry_characteristics</a></p> <p>This activity could lead to Activity 2, (an activity that involves the students creating a 'found poem' from one of Dickinson's letters), that requires the students to think about the characteristic style of her poetry.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 1</p> 
<p><b>2. Poetic and stylistic techniques (including voice) with a focus on "Going to Heaven!" (AO2, AO3, AO4)</b></p> <p>In this activity the students look at a letter in order to identify what they consider to be 'poetic' images. This stimulates interesting debate about the nature of 'poetic', while also encouraging the students to recognise certain characteristics of Dickinson's poetry. In their comparison of their own found poem and "Going to Heaven!" they think about Dickinson's use of punctuation and the voice that emerges in this poem. They complete the activity in a discussion about the choice of persona.</p> <p>For further access to Emily Dickinson's letters, (in which many of the subjects of her poems are evident) see The Internet Archive: <a href="https://archive.org/details/lettersemilydic00toadgoog">https://archive.org/details/lettersemilydic00toadgoog</a></p> <p>This activity naturally leads to Activity 3 in which the students begin to think in more depth about the lexis and punctuation used in Dickinson's poetry.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 2</p> 

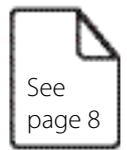


# Thinking Contextually

Activities	Resources
<p><b>3. Editions and manuscripts, focusing on lexis, grammar, and “I felt a Funeral, in my Brain” (AO4, AO2)</b></p> <p>Here, the students look at Manuscript 280, and are asked to make a choice between the two words that Dickinson offered as alternatives. In the process of choosing, the students are encouraged to think about the function of the word, and what qualities and connotations one word has over another. They then go on to analyse Dickinson’s use of the dash, in an activity that could as easily be applied to another poem as to this one. They culminate their exploration of this poem in an analysis of some of the word classes.</p> <p>All the manuscripts are available to see online at: <a href="http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/280.htm">http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/280.htm</a></p> <p>This activity could be used before Activity 4 (one that brings the strands of analysis together, but still with some support and guidance).</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 3</p> 
<p><b>4. Rhyme, rhythm, common hymn metre, focusing on “It was not Death, for I stood up” (AO2, AO4)</b></p> <p>In a performance of three contrasting songs, the students learn about the syllable count and stress rhythms of hymn metre. They can then apply their initial thoughts to a hymn written by Isaac Watts (whose work was well-known by Dickinson). Having discussed the differences between the common hymn metre and the ballad form, and thought about how each is relevant to Dickinson’s poetry, the students then divide into groups to analyse one aspect of the poem.</p> <p>For further examples of Isaac Watt’s work see: <a href="http://www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/w/a/t/watts_i.htm">http://www.cyberhymnal.org/bio/w/a/t/watts_i.htm</a></p> <p>This activity is a precursor to Activity 5: it asks the students to analyse metre, structure, form, imagery, symbolism, lexis, voice, context, grammar and rhyme of a single poem. Activity 5 asks the students to do the same, but in a comparison of two poems.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 4</p> 
<p><b>5. Bringing it all together in an exam-type question (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4), focusing on “The Soul has Bandaged moments” and “After great pain, a formal feeling comes”</b></p> <p>In addition to the activity offered in the Learner Resource, these two tables could be used in many ways in the classroom. They could be used after the students have done their own analysis, the students annotating the tables to add in their own ideas. The students could use them to help to think about the structure for their essay, numbering the boxes and discussing whether they agree as a class. They could work in groups, taking the notes as a starting point in order to produce a presentation on one of the poems, or on a comparison of the poems, to the rest of the class. They could be encouraged to do further research as PowerPoint slides for their presentations. They might decide to look in more depth into context at <a href="https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org">https://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org</a>, for example.</p> <p>This activity is designed to be done later on in the study of Dickinson, as it presumes that the students have an understanding of the terminology and of her characteristic use of language.</p>	 <p>Learner Resource 5</p> 



# Learner Resource 1 Introduction and overview (AO3, AO4)



When Emily Dickinson's manuscripts were first edited, letters were placed at the top of each page (D, F, L, P, S, N, W). Critics believe that the editor was organising and clustering the poems according to their themes: "N" for "Nature", "D" for "Death", and "L" for "Love/Life" etc.

In pairs, study the titles (which are also the first lines) of the poems below. Start by sorting them according to Dickinson's original editor: which seem to be about Nature? Which ones seem to be about Love and Life? Which seem to be about Death? Put N, L or D against each title, and discuss those that do not fit any of these categories.

"Going to Heaven!"  
"There's a certain Slant of light"  
"I felt a funeral, in my Brain"  
"The Soul selects her own Society"  
"He fumbles at your Soul"  
"After great pain, a formal feeling comes"  
"I heard a Fly buzz – when I died"  
"This World is not Conclusion"

"It was not Death, for I stood up"  
"The Soul has Bandaged moments"  
"I like to see it lap the Miles"  
"One need not be a Chamber – to be Haunted"  
"Because I could not stop for Death"  
"My Life had stood – a Loaded Gun"  
"A narrow Fellow in the Grass"

In class, compare your decisions. What do you notice about the use of the first person narrator? What do you notice about the use of emotive verbs ("I felt" etc)? What do you notice about the use of declarative sentences? As a class, can you predict the tone and subject matter of these poems?

Now study the following quotes taken from the poems you are studying:

"Going to Heaven!  
How dim it sounds!" (79)

"And I'd like to look a little more  
At such a curious Earth!" (79)

"And I, and Silence, some strange Race  
Wrecked, solitary, here." (280)

"This is the Hour of Lead –  
Remembered, if outlived,  
As freezing persons, recollect the Snow –  
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –" (341)

"Much Gesture, from the Pulpit  
Strong Hallelujahs roll –  
Narcotics cannot still the Tooth  
That nibbles at the soul –" (501)

"When everything that ticked – has stopped –  
And Space stares all around –" (510)

"The soul has moments of Escape –  
When bursting all the doors" (512)

"The Soul has Bandaged moments –  
When too appalled to stir –" (512)



# Learner Resource 1

"I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away  
What portion of me be  
Assignable - and then it was  
There interposed a Fly -" (465)

"Ourself behind ourself, concealed -  
Should startle most."

"The Carriage held but just Ourselves -  
And Immortality." (712)

"For I have but the power to kill  
Without - the power to die -" (754)

"But never met this Fellow  
Attended, or alone  
Without a tighter breathing  
And Zero at the Bone" (986)

In *The Oxford Student Texts: Emily Dickinson Selected Poems*, Jackie Moore has "clustered" these poems into categories that include: Death/immortality, Dramatic monologues, Religion, Definition/mental trauma, Nature, Psychological experience/personal values.

Work in pairs, or individually, and take one quote, discussing which category it seems to fit and why. If your category is psychological experience/personal values, for example, what aspect of experience is your quote illustrating? What words in your quote suggest that this poem could be termed as being about nature/death/religion etc?

Now pick another that seems to be in the same category as yours. What similarities do you notice in terms of:

- Use of abstract nouns
- Use of punctuation
- Use of sound
- Use of capitals
- Choice of narrator
- Parallel lexis
- Use of figurative language?

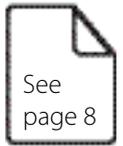
You may choose to compare your choices with Jackie Moore's categorisation of these poems on page 202 of *The Oxford Student Texts: Emily Dickinson Selected Poems*.

As a class, record your ideas into a diagram that summarises all your initial impressions of the characteristics of Dickinson's poems.

You may choose to return to this activity as you learn more about each poem: just how accurate were your initial assessments?



# Learner Resource 2 Poetic and stylistic techniques (including voice) with a focus on “Going to Heaven!” (AO2, AO3, AO4)



Read the following letter written by Dickinson in late summer of 1856 to her friend Mrs Holland:

“And I’m half-tempted to take my seat in Paradise of which the good man writes, and begin forever and ever *now*, so wondrous does it seem. My only sketch, profile, of Heaven is a large, blue sky, bluer and larger than the *biggest* I have seen in June, and in it are my friends – all of them – every one of them – those who are with me now, and those who were “parted” as we walked, and “snatched up to Heaven”.

If roses had not faded, and frosts had never come, and one had not fallen here and there whom I could not waken, there were no need of other Heaven than the one below – and if God had been here this summer, and seen the things that *I* have seen – I guess that He would think His Paradise superfluous. Don’t tell Him, for the world, though, for after all He’s said about it, I should like to see what He *was* building for us, with no hammer, and no stone, and no journeyman either. Dear Mrs Holland, I love, to-night – love you and Dr Holland, and “time and sense” – and fading things, and things that do **not** fade.

I’m so glad you are not a blossom, for those in my garden fade, and then a “reaper whose name is Death” has come to get a few to help him make a bouquet for himself, so I’m glad you are not a rose – and I’m glad you are not a bee, for where they go when summer’s done, only the thyme knows, and even were you a robin, when the west winds came, you would coolly wink at me, and away, some morning!”

From *Letters of Emily Dickinson* (edited by Mabel Loomis Todd, 1894) from The Internet Archive:

<https://archive.org/details/lettersemilydic00toadgoog>

Identify five phrases from this letter that seem ‘poetic.’ Be prepared in the class discussion to state what you think is poetic about them. (You might consider the use of figurative language, or syntactical repetition, archaic inversions etc.)

Write out your lines so that they look like a poem, for example:

My seat in Paradise – so wondrous does it seem  
My only sketch of Heaven is a large, blue sky  
etc

Now read “Going to Heaven!” How does it differ from your version? You may choose to use the following guidance to start you off:

“Going to Heaven!” has five exclamation marks in the first stanza. How many exclamatory sentences have you used? How does the use of exclamation marks affect the tone of the poem?

“Going to Heaven!” uses discourse markers (“Indeed”, “And yet”, “Perhaps”, “for” (x2)). Have you used them? How does the inclusion of these shape the meaning of the poem?

“Going to Heaven!” uses the singular personal pronoun “you” three times, the inclusive plural possessive pronoun “our”, the inclusive plural pronoun “we”, the personal pronoun “I” seven times and “me” three times. Does your poem address a reader, and if not, what effect does this create? Does your poem include such a strong narrative voice? If not, how does this change the tone?

Discuss as a class how the choice of language affects our understanding of who is speaking. The narrator of the letter is clear: it is Dickinson writing to the audience of her friend Mrs Holland, but who is the narrator of the poem?

You might choose to decide in your pair with which of the statements on the next page you most agree, before you discuss your ideas as a class.

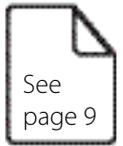


# Learner Resource 2

1. This is a dramatic monologue in which the character, who is the poet, speaks directly to the reader.
2. This is a persona, with a child-like voice, used to innocently question the value of Heaven over Earth.
3. This excited, naïve, genderless voice (that focuses, for example, on the clothes they might wear to go to Heaven), actually enables Dickinson to raise controversial questions about the validity of Heaven that might have been less tolerated in her own voice.
4. Dickinson writes an ironic, subversive, existential poem, hiding behind the voice of a persona.



# Learner Resource 3 Editions and manuscripts, focusing on lexis, grammar, and “I felt a Funeral, in my brain” (AO4, AO2)



Very few of Dickinson's poems were published in her lifetime, and she wrote for friends and family, including poems in letters, or for herself, sewing them together into books (“fascicles”). When she died, her sister Lavinia found almost two thousand poems. Because Dickinson rarely published, she did not have to give a final, definitive version of her poems; instead she listed alternative words at the bottom of the poem that could be used instead of the ones in the main body of the poem. She marked the words in the poem with a cross.

In pairs, look at the manuscript on the website: [http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/dickinson/280.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/dickinson/280.htm). Decide which word works best in your opinion.

What qualities does “plunge” have, compared to “crash”?

Are they different? What does the poem lose or gain by each word?

What qualities does “finished” have, compared to “got through”?

What does the poem lose or gain by each word?

Now compare the manuscript with the version you have in *The Oxford Student Texts: Emily Dickinson Selected Poems*. Discuss, as a class, what you notice about the dashes in the manuscript. Is it by accident that some slant upwards, and some downwards, that some are shorter than others?

A volunteer could read the poem from the manuscript version, and then from the typed version in your collection, and the class could discuss what happens to the rhythm in the two readings. Does it change? If so, why?

Look at the following statements individually or in pairs. Rate them from 1 to 10, with 1 being strongly disagree, to 10 being strongly agree. You should provide examples, writing the line number or quote from either the manuscript or from the *The Oxford Student Texts: Emily Dickinson Selected Poems*.

The dash is used to control the pace at which you read the poem.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**

The dash is used to indicate a lack of resolution at the end of a poem.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**

The dash breaks the regularity of the hymn-metre, making it more complicated.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**

The dash draws attention to particular words, often forcing stress to be placed on them.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**

The dash is used as a punctuation mark, that is stronger than a comma but weaker than a full stop.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**

The dash marks an interruption in thought, and is considered typical of female, colloquial writing of the time.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**

The downwards slanting dash suggests an end-stopped line, the upwards slanting dash indicates enjambment; the shorter dashes indicate a break in pace.

**Strongly disagree** 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 **Strongly agree**



# Learner Resource 3

Divide into three groups. Each group is responsible for one aspect of the poem.

## Group 1: Verbs

Look at the following verbs: felt, treading (x2), seemed, breaking, seated, beating (x2), thought, heard, creak, began, broke, dropped, hit, finished, knowing.

What patterns or links can you find?

You might, for example, look for present continuous tense, or past, or imperfect tense.

You might think about those verbs associated with sound.

You might think about those that are stative, and those that are dynamic.

Take the poem and highlight the verbs in it. Make notes on anything that you notice about the repetition of those verbs within the poem. How does this repetition shape the meaning?

## Group 2: Nouns

Look at the following nouns or noun phrases: Funeral, Brain, Mourners, Sense, Service, Drum, Mind, Box, Soul, Boots of Lead, Space, Heavens, Bell, Being, Ear, Silence, Race, Plank in Reason, World.

What patterns or links can you find?

You might start by sorting them into abstract and concrete nouns.

You might think about semantic fields that are evident.

Now look back at the poem and highlight the nouns in it. What do you notice about the distribution of concrete and abstract nouns? How does this shape the meaning of the poem?

## Group 3: Pronouns

Look at the following list of pronouns: I (x5), my (x3), they, them.

What does the frequency of first person pronouns suggest about the narrative voice in the poem?

Highlight the pronouns in the poem, using one colour for "they/them" and another for "I/my": what do you notice about the distribution of the pronouns in the poem? Are there verses with no pronouns at all, for example? What does this reveal about the poem's meaning?

Compare your findings as a class and discuss whether the analysis of the lexis has helped you to understand this poem.

## Putting it all together:

Each group take a copy of the poem, and write an introductory paragraph on the use of the particular word class you have had as your focus. You may choose to use the prompts below:

### Group 1: Verbs

"There is a clear sense of movement in this poem, from the extended, oppressive metaphor of the funeral and the treading mourners, to the beating drum, to the graveyard, to pure sound, to space, to a final state of unconsciousness that the poet suggests cannot be captured in words. The way in which this poem is told in a detached tone, is shaped, in part, by the poet's use of verbs..."

### Group 2: Nouns

"This poem could be seen to be the account of a descent into nothingness, possibly madness. The metaphor of a funeral is used to describe the process, and the nouns reveal..."



# Learner Resource 3

## Group 3: Pronouns

"The poem opens with a confidence, with the first-person stating an apparent impossibility. This voice continues throughout, as the narrator relays what has happened in a chronological, impartial tone, and when you analyse the use of the pronouns, it becomes clear that..."

## The Final Verse

When Dickinson's poems were first published, the editors made a decision to leave out the final verse of many of the poems. "I felt a Funeral" was one of those poems.

Divide into two teams.

Team one will take the line that the editors were right: the final verse lacks closure and is too confusing.

Team two will argue that structurally and thematically, the final verse is essential to the poem.

Team one might:

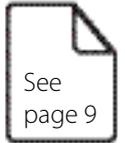
- Look at the way in which the final word is surrounded by dashes
- Consider the juxtaposition of "Plank" and "Reason", for example:
  - Consider the impossibility of hitting a world
  - Consider the sense of including a verse that expresses the inability to express this state of being in words.

Team two might

- Think about how this is the logical conclusion to a poem where the persona starts alone, unsupported by God or religion, disconnected from her mind, from the world, falling through space
- Consider the repeated "and", "and", "and" as an echo of the beating drum etc
- Consider the sense of having this conclusion in a poem that moves from enclosure, through pure sound, to limitless space.



# Learner Resource 4 Rhyme, rhythm, common hymn metre, focusing on “It was not Death, for I stood up” (AO2, AO4)



Look at the three verses below:

Oh little town of Bethlehem  
How still we see thee lie  
Above thy dark and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.

(Words: Phillip Brooks (1867) Music: Lewis Redner (1868))

Amazing Grace! How sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

(Newton: 1772)

There is a house in New Orleans  
They call The Rising Sun  
It's been the ruin of many a poor boy  
And God, I know, I'm one.

(The Animals, 1964 from Lomax, 1937)

Divide into three groups, and read all three verses out loud together in unison. This might take practice; as you read you should find that the rhythm of all three verses should match exactly.

Isaac Watts was a prolific and popular hymn writer in the 18th century in America, writing, for example, *Christian Psalms and Psalms: Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. Dickinson had a copy of this in her house.

Look at the verse below, written by Isaac Watts, and compare it with the first verse of Dickinson's “It was not Death, for I stood up”.

Death may dissolve my Body now  
And bear my spirit home  
Why do my minutes move so slow  
Nor my salvation come?

In pairs, read out Watts' verse and then Dickinson's. As one of you reads, the other should note where the stress falls. (Which words do you emphasise in each line?)

Compare your findings as a class, and discuss whether Dickinson's use of punctuation might affect the way in which the metre is evident in her poetry.

Look at the following summaries:

The Ballad Form:

- Was a form originally designed for dancing
- Is written in quatrains, with a rhyming scheme of A, B, C, B
- Alternates between an iambic, four-stressed line (tetrameter) and an iambic three-stressed line (trimeter)
- Traditionally the subject matter is not drawn from scripture, but rather tells a story
- Often features a refrain or repeated phrase.



# Learner Resource 4

The Common Metre or Hymn Metre:

- Is written in quatrains, with a rhyme scheme of A, B, A, B
- Uses alternating tetrameter and trimeter (three and four stress lines)
- Uses both iambic (unstress, stress) and trochaic feet (stress, unstress)
- Is often formal, always sacred.

Return to “It was not Death” and use the summaries above to decide the way in which Dickinson uses the common metre and the ballad forms. What does she take from each? You could go on to look at “Because I could not stop for Death-” and “I like to see it lap the Miles”, to analyse this further.

Divide into four groups. Each group is responsible for one aspect of the poem. After you have studied the poem and answered the questions you have been given, you will all be asked to move onto another table, so that you have one representative from each group on each table. You can then tell the other students what you have learned, and listen and make notes on what they have learned. This activity is commonly known as jigsawing.

## Group 1: Metre, structure, form

### Overview of the poem’s meaning:

This is often considered to be a poem of definition, where the poet is attempting to explain the psychological state of despair by using concrete objects as analogies.

There is a movement in the poem from an exploration of all the things that despair is not, through to a sense of what the state feels like (trapped and unable to breathe), finishing with an image of a rudderless boat, drifting far out at sea.

### Metre, structure, form

1. Start by counting the syllables in each line. Note whether the patterns are broken. If they are broken, does it support or shape the meaning of the poem?
2. Read it aloud to discover the stress pattern: are the lines trochaic (stress unstress) or iambic (unstress stress)? Is there a pattern of four stresses (tetrameter) followed by three stresses (trimeter)? Is this pattern broken? If so, how does this shape the meaning?
3. How does the punctuation in the poem break the regularity of the metre? Are there punctuation marks that seem to echo the meaning of the line, for example? You might find the dash being used to control the pace of the poem perhaps.
4. Is there a turning point in the poem? Does it reach a resolution? Is this reflected in the metre?
5. In general, think about how Dickinson departs from the conventions of the common metre or the ballad form.

## Group 2: Imagery, symbolism, lexis

### Overview of the poem’s meaning:

This is often considered to be a poem of definition, where the poet is attempting to explain the psychological state of despair by using concrete objects as analogies.

There is a movement in the poem from an exploration of all the things that despair is not, through to a sense of what the state feels like (trapped and unable to breathe), finishing with an image of a rudderless boat, drifting far out at sea.

### Imagery, symbolism, lexis

1. List the nouns that Dickinson uses to define despair. Can you group them into patterns: those associated with entrapment, for example? Are there the characteristic Dickinson patterns of contrasting light and dark, heat and cold, for instance?
2. Look at the nineteenth-century American English definitions of “Siroccos”, “Chancel”, “Repeal”, in Webster’s 1844 dictionary (one that Dickinson regularly used): do they differ from your understanding of these words? (see Emily Dickinson’s Lexicon at <http://edl.byu.edu/lexicon/term/498377>)



# Learner Resource 4

3. Which senses do the images in this poem draw on (sound, taste etc) and how does this add to your understanding of the poem?
4. What is the setting of this poem? Is it a recognisable place, or somewhere more abstract, or both?

## Group 3: Voice and context

### Overview of the poem's meaning:

This is often considered to be a poem of definition, where the poet is attempting to explain the psychological state of despair by using concrete objects as analogies.

There is a movement in the poem from an exploration of all the things that despair is not, through to a sense of what the state feels like (trapped and unable to breathe), finishing with an image of a rudderless boat, drifting far out at sea.

### Voice and context

1. Is this written with a first or third person narrator? What effect does the choice of narrator have on your understanding of the poem? (More distanced/more personal, for example)
2. Is the speaker evident throughout the poem? Contrast Verse 1 and Verse 6, for example.
3. Is it significant that this poem is thought to have been written the year after Dickinson experienced depression?
4. Dickinson questioned her religious (Calvinist) upbringing: what role does God have in this poem?
5. One of the characteristics of the Metaphysical poets was the way in which they put two unlikely objects together in their imagery in order to illustrate an idea: to what extent is this true of this poem?
6. What tone is evident in this poem? Does it change?
7. If you have time, look at "After great pain" and identify three ways you could link these two poems.

## Group 4: Grammar and rhyme

### Overview of the poem's meaning:

This is often considered to be a poem of definition, where the poet is attempting to explain the psychological state of despair by using concrete objects as analogies.

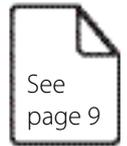
There is a movement in the poem from an exploration of all the things that despair is not, through to a sense of what the state feels like (trapped and unable to breathe), finishing with an image of a rudderless boat, drifting far out at sea.

### Grammar and rhyme

1. Analyse the rhyme scheme in this poem.
2. How many half or slant rhymes are there? How many full rhymes? In what way does Dickinson's use of rhyme support the meaning of this poem?
3. There are only two full stops in this poem. Why do you think this is? Why are there none in verses two to four? What effect does the use of dashes create?
4. What repetitions of syntax do you notice in verses one and two?
5. Why do you think the poet chose to repeat the conjunction "and" in verse 4?
6. What do you notice about the types of verbs used at the start of the poem and those used at the end?
7. Are there predominantly declarative or interrogatory sentences? How does this shape the meaning of the poem?
8. What do you notice about the tenses used in the poem? How does the tense change shape the meaning of the poem?



# Learner Resource 5 Bringing it all together in an exam-type question (AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4), focusing on “The Soul has Bandaged moments” and “After great pain, a formal feeling comes”



In the exam you are asked to compare two poems. This activity poses the following exam-type question:

Explore how Emily Dickinson presents ideas and feelings about states of mind in “The Soul has Bandaged moments” and in “After great pain, a formal feeling comes”.

You should consider her use of stylistic techniques, as well as any other relevant contexts.

Below are two tables to help you to find ideas for your essay. Divide the class in two groups: one group is responsible for completing Table one and the other for completing Table two.

Once you have completed your half of the table, you can either take it in turns to feed back to the class, or swap one of your completed tables with another pair, so that you have the two halves to refer to when you write your essay.

## Table one:

The Soul has Bandaged moments	After great pain, a formal feeling comes
<p><b>Voice:</b> Third person narrator with the personified soul as the central character or focalisation. ‘Poem of Definition’ in the sense that concrete images are used to capture a psychological state. Goblin addressed directly with an imperative, but generally declarative sentences, creating a sense of certainty.</p>	
<p><b>Lexical groups:</b> Soul (x3), Fright – Horror, Lover – Song, Bomb, Hours – moments, Bee – Rose, Liberty – Dungeoned, Escape – shackles – bandaged, plumed feet: indicating the sharp contrast between the states of the soul. The moments of escape are marked by dynamic verbs of action: (bursting, dances, swings) – she is “led” when recaptured: groups of restriction and entrapment.</p>	
<p><b>Context:</b> Considered to have been written in 1862 – year after Dickinson’s depression – possibly autographical, but not delivered by a first person narrator, to increase universality.</p> <p>Link to other poems of definition, for example, “It was not Death...”</p> <p>Echoes of ballad form (in verse 3, for example), broken in verse 2 and verse 6 as the soul is subjected to the attentions of Fright and Horror.</p> <p>Reference to the Bee – a sacred symbol of Isaac Watts (a popular hymn writer of the time) – a characteristic symbol of Dickinson’s used to suggest complete freedom.</p>	



# Learner Resource 5

The Soul has Bandaged moments	After great pain, a formal feeling comes
<p><b>Syntax:</b> Parallelism – direct repetition of “the”, “when”, “She”, “And” (at the start of each line) in verses 1 and 3 – repeated again in verse 5 with “she” replaced by “with” – highlights contrast between entrapment, liberty and recapture.</p> <p><b>Verbs:</b> contrast of “bursting”, “dances”, “swings” in verse 3 and no verbs attached to the soul in verses 4 and 5 (except for “led”) – she has no power to initiate movement.</p> <p>Present tense suggesting ongoing truth about the nature of the soul. “Soul” capitalised throughout except in verse 3.</p>	
<p><b>Figurative language:</b> Personification of Soul, Fright, Horror and Liberty – they look at, salute, caress, lead and welcome the soul – the soul is powerless against them.</p> <p>Similes of “like a Bomb”, “as do the bee” – associated with the state of freedom – entrapment is captured in the figurative language of the metaphor (which is more immediate).</p> <p>Patterns and contrasts: characteristic contrasts of freedom and entrapment.</p>	

**Table two:**

The Soul has Bandaged moments	After great pain, a formal feeling comes
	<p><b>Voice:</b> No pronouns to illustrate the speaker. Delivered in declarative sentences – sense of certainty given to the description of the experience of pain. Considered to be a ‘Poem of Definition’ in the sense that concrete images are used to capture a psychological state.</p>
	<p><b>Lexical groups:</b> Pain, Nerves – Heart – Feet, Yesterday – Centuries – Hour, Ground – Air, mechanical – wood, Quartz – stone – Lead, freezing – chill – snow, remembered – recollect, outlived – letting go, formal – ceremonious – stiff – Tombs: indicating the leaden, cold nature of this pain, and the effect it has on the body, apparently disconnected from the speaker.</p>
	<p><b>Context:</b> Considered to have been written in 1862 – year after Dickinson’s depression – possibly autographical, but not delivered in a first person narrative, to increase universality.</p> <p>Link to other poems of definition, for example, “One need not be a Chamber to be Haunted” – a poem that explores the fear of a mental state through Gothic images of castles, bolted doors and a vulnerable speaker.</p>



# Learner Resource 5

The Soul has Bandaged moments	After great pain, a formal feeling comes
	<p><b>Syntax:</b> Parallelism – the Nerves sit ... the stiff Heart questions ... the feet ... go round – the disconnection of mind and body.</p> <p><b>Verbs:</b> Present tense suggesting an ongoing state – an accepted truth.</p> <p>Dash – used to separate the opening statement from the nerves, the feet, the final state of resolution – in the final line, marks the stages of the process, leaving an uncertainty.</p>
	<p><b>Figurative language:</b> The parts of the body are personified – the nerves, heart and feet move and question, contrasting with the speaker who (by implication) just “remembers”.</p> <p>Incongruous juxtaposition – Quartz contentment, Wooden way.</p> <p>Similes of “like Tombs”, “like a Stone” – connoting weight and coldness and death – the formality of this feeling, perhaps.</p> <p>Patterns and contrasts: characteristic contrasts of life and death (“if outlived”) of mind and body.</p>





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