

Emily Dickinson And A Summary of Because I Could Not Stop For Death

Because I Could Not Stop For Death is one of Emily Dickinson's longest and most fascinating poems.

The title comes from the first line but in her own lifetime it didn't have a title - her poems were drafted without a title and only numbered when published, after she died in 1886.

- This is a 6 stanza poem with full rhyme and slant rhyme, and in typical Emily Dickinson fashion is full of dashes between and at the end of lines.
- Her subject choice, death, is dealt with in an odd, imaginative way. The poet takes the reader on a mysterious journey through time and on into a world beyond time.

So the obvious theme of the poem is death, specifically, a personal encounter with the character, Death, who is male and drives a carriage.

This is special transportation from one world to the next, with a steady four to three beat rhythm, a supernatural experience captured in 24 lines.

Analysis of Because I Could Not Stop For Death

Emily Dickinson And The Subject of Death

Emily Dickinson wrote several poems about death, a subject she had a particular talent for exploring. In this poem Death becomes a carriage and a driver, or a driver and carriage, metaphor or personification, and arrives in taxi fashion to take the speaker on a supernatural journey beyond the grave.

We can take it that the speaker has no fear of Death. Death is kind, drives with care and has a formal politeness about him.

The most striking feature of this poem is the use of the dash (-) to temporarily pause a sentence or clause, where the reader takes a fleeting breath before continuing. This tends to isolate a phrase in a manner different to, say, a comma or colon and is used frequently by Emily Dickinson in most of her poems.

There is a regular four beat/three beat rhythm in each quatrain which helps reinforce the idea of a steady drive in a horse-drawn carriage. The rhyme scheme is **abcb**, each second line being full or slant with the fourth line:

me/immortality

away/civility

ground/ground

me/immortality

away/civility

ground/ground

day/eternity

Note that in stanza four the rhythm is changed, three beats begin and end, suggesting a simple strange twist to proceedings as the Sun passes them and chills the scantily dressed occupant.

A *tippet* is a long cape or scarf and tulle is fine silk or cotton net. Gossamer is a delicate, light material, bringing an unreal aspect to the speaker, who may well be a spirit form.