

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

## Grade 8: Lesson 9

**Lesson Focus:** The focus of today's lesson will be on Emily Dickinson's poetry and argumentative writing.

**Practice Focus:** Students will analyze one of Dickinson's poems, "Hope is the thing with feathers," in order to determine its meaning. Students will also analyze an argumentative essay on Dickinson's poem in order to study author's craft in writing arguments.

**Objective:** Students will use "Hope is the thing with feathers" and "The Meaning of 'Hope is a thing with feathers'" to learn about Emily Dickinson's poem and to learn about author's craft in writing arguments.

**Academic Vocabulary:** gale, abash, extremity, connotation, figurative, personification, symbolism, vibrant, perseverance, cohesion, transitional phrase, literary device

Texts for lesson:

### "Hope is the thing with feathers"

"Hope" is the thing with feathers—

That perches in the soul—

And sings the tune without the words—

And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale, which is strong, forceful winds—is heard—

And sore must be the storm—

That could abash, which means embarrass, the little Bird

That kept many so warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—

And on the strangest Sea—

Yet, never, in Extremity, or the worst situation,

It asked a crumb—of Me.

## The Meaning of “Hope is the thing with feathers”

“Emily Dickinson describes the persistence of hope in her poem “Hope is the thing with feathers” by using an extended metaphor that compares hope to a bird whose song continues to provide comfort in difficult situations. The poet’s imagery and word choices develop this metaphor to effectively convey the poem’s theme that hope is an essential part of the human spirit.

In the first stanza, Dickinson establishes the metaphor when the speaker says that “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul.” The use of the word *perch*, instead of *sit*, for example, immediately leads the reader to picture a bird. Also in this stanza, Dickinson describes the bird’s wordless tune that “never stops at all.” In other words, hope remains strong no matter what challenges a person faces.

This idea is further developed in the second stanza when the speaker says that hope’s song is “sweetest” when heard in the “gale.” The literal meaning of *gale*—a powerful wind—becomes a symbol of difficult times in one’s life. It is during these dark times that hope’s song is especially strong and “sweet,” giving us encouragement.

Building on this extended metaphor, the speaker says, “And sore must be the storm / That could abash the little Bird / That kept so many warm.” Here, the speaker suggests that even the word of storms cannot diminish hope. In these lines, Dickinson uses different soft and hard s-sound combinations to emphasize the contrast between the sweetness of the bird’s song and the sore storm that would be needed to break its confidence.

Finally, the speaker concludes the poem with another example of hope’s perseverance, which means to do something despite difficulty in achieving success, by saying she has heard it in the “chilliest land” and “on the strangest Sea.” And despite all of these harsh conditions, hope has never asked anything in return. As the speaker puts it: “Yet, never, in Extremity, / It asked a crumb—of me.” The feeling of hope is such a powerful force within each of us that it needs no special nourishment or attention. Even in the darkest times it is always there, “perched” within us, ready to soar.”

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## TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis

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**TITLE:** Consider the title and make a prediction about what the poem is about.

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**PARAPHRASE:** Translate the poem line by line into your own words on a literal level. Look for complete thoughts (sentences may be inverted) and look up unfamiliar words.

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**CONNOTATION:** Examine the poem for meaning beyond the literal. Look for figurative language, imagery, and sound elements.

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**ATTITUDE/TONE:** Notice the speaker's tone and attitude. Humor? Sarcasm? Awe?

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**SHIFTS:** Note any shifts or changes in speaker or attitude. Look for key words, time change, punctuation.

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**TITLE:** Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level.

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**THEME:** Briefly state in your own words what the poem is about (subject), then what the poet is saying about the subject (theme).

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**Independent Practice questions:**

1. What stood out to you the most regarding Emily Dickinson's poem, "Hope is the thing with feathers"? What are some lessons you can learn from it that you can apply to your own life?
2. What did you learn the most in our analysis of the argumentative essay? How can you apply what you have learned to improving your own ability to present arguments?



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