

Name: _____ Teacher: _____ School: _____

Grade 8: Lesson 8

Lesson Focus: The focus of today's lesson will be on Emily Dickinson and one of her poems, "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died."

Practice Focus: Students will analyze an informational text to determine the main ideas; students will also analyze one of Dickinson's poems using a strategy for unlocking its meaning.

Objective: Students will use "Emily Dickinson 1830-1866" and "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died" to learn about Emily Dickinson and one of her important poems with a focus on determining the main ideas in the texts as well as author's craft for creating meaning.

Academic Vocabulary: recluse, frail, retiring, prominent, botany, geology, zoology, natural philosophy, ideology, gleaned, correspondence, intriguing, connotation, personification, symbolism, detached

Texts for lesson:

Emily Dickinson, 1830-1866

"Although Emily Dickinson lived much of her adult life as a recluse, which is someone who likes to be alone, and is often described as a frail, or delicate, and retiring, which means shy figure, there is a much greater range and depth to the poet and her work than these descriptions suggest.

Emily Dickinson was born to a prominent, or famous, family in Amherst, Massachusetts. She spent her childhood studying subjects such as botany, which is the study of plants, geology, which is the study of earth, zoology, which is the study of animals, and natural philosophy, which is physical science, at Amherst Academy.

When her formal schooling ended, Dickinson was at an age when young women were expected to take care of the household and engage in social visits with friends and family. But as an independent woman and thinker, Dickinson often questioned the commonly held ideology, or set of ideas, of the time, including the expectations placed on women and the standard religious views supported by others she knew.

In particular, she dismissed the idea of marriage because of the burdens the role of wife placed on a woman. She wanted the freedom to express her own ideas and engage in her own pursuits.

Many of Dickinson's views can be gleaned, or gathered, from the numerous letters she wrote to her brother, sister-in-law, and friends. Although Dickinson limited her contact with others, she used her correspondence, or communication, as a way of socializing. And she often shared poems within her letters. In fact, almost all of Dickinson's poetry—around 1,800 poems in all—was either kept private or shared only with family and friends during her lifetime.

After Dickinson's death, her family discovered hand-sewn books in which Dickinson had written her poems. It wasn't until years later that the poems were published in their entirety, and Dickinson became known as one of the greatest poets of all time."

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died

I heard a Fly buzz – when I died –
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air –
Between the Heaves, or strong winds, of Storm –

The Eyes around – had wrung them dry –
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset – when the King
Be witnessed – in the Room –

I willed my Keepsakes, which are items to remember, – Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable, which means transferred – and then it was
There interposed, or flew in-between, a Fly –

With Blue – uncertain – stumbling Buzz –
Between the light – and me –
And then the Windows failed – and then
I could not see to see –

TP-CASTT Poetry Analysis

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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 life and work? What personalities in society today are similar to Dickinson? Are they positive or negative influences? Why?
2. What did you learn the most in our analysis of Dickinson's poem, "I heard a Fly buzz - when I died"? What was the most important thing that you learned in using the TPCASTT tool to analyze his poem?
3. What are your thoughts about the poem? Is it silly or something important to consider? Explain your answer.