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## Analysis Of Emily Dickinson's Because I Could Not Stop For Death

At least at surface level of Emily Dickinson's famous poem "Because I Could Not Stop for Death," the poem includes a personified Death who contradicts his classic trope of a terror inducing entity in American literature, especially at the time. Upon meeting Death, the narrator proceeds on a journey with him and Immortality in order to spend the narrator's assumedly last day visiting several locations. The poem ends in a twist with the narrator stating that the carriage ride had occurred an eternity ago. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death" can represent a countless number of subjects concerning Death and what comes after. Despite the almost limitless interpretations, readers often choose to classify the poem one of two ways: a comforting view of death and the afterlife or as an ironic, even devious, plethora of darker undertones set to mess with the reader's mind.

The beginning of the poem appears similar to other writers at the time considering that the narrator "could not stop for Death" (Levine, et al. 101). In fact, without reading any further, the reader could presume that she feared Death, which would explain why she would not stop for him. However, the second line reveals that Death has "kindly" stopped for the narrator (Levine, et al. 101). At this point, Dickinson shows that the narrator's relationship with Death strays far from more conventional interactions concerning him. It becomes apparent that the narrator does not dread Death and that he, in turn, acts as a courteous gentleman towards her. The term "kindly" feels ironic when comparing Death to his more traditional roles as an evil entity that takes as he pleases, with no consideration for the outcome of what he does. Afterwards, the reader learns that the narrator, Death, and the ever-silent Immortality accompany each other in a carriage. This carriage represents the journey to the afterlife. Which brings up the question that if Death had chosen to leave her there, would she have to wander around aimlessly, in between worlds, for the rest of eternity? This could indicate why she views Death as benevolent.

Death knowing "no haste" could be taken in various ways (Levine, et al. 101). It could have a literal meaning and merely imply that he did not feel rushed to go anywhere else. Yet, numerous people die each minute, so why would he not have to rush off to attend to them? Does this suggest that Death cannot abide by the same rules of time that all humans endure? Otherwise, this might have a representational meaning behind it and refer to a hearse taking her body to a cemetery. Next, we find out that the narrator has "put away" her "labor, and [...] leisure too, for his civility" (Levine, et al. 101). The aforementioned line could signify that she has disregarded her duties and things that she cares for in favor of giving Death her undivided attention. Although the poem is lacking a reason as to why she would do this.

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Vibrant imagery that begins to affect the audience's interpretation of the poem saturates the entirety of stanza three. The first two lines could reflect the narrator's own childhood, when she used to play games with her friends. Dickinson's choice to use the word "children" instead of pupils or students could support this interpretation (Levine, et al. 101). Still, the phrase could also point to the concepts of youth, innocence, and knowledge. Many Romantic and pre-Romantic writers, poetry and books that Dickinson would have familiarized herself with, often used children to symbolize youth and innocence (Fletcher 2018). The following line is of particular interest. Dickinson does not only capitalize "Ring," but she goes as far as to put dashes around it to ensure that her audience stops for a second and digests the phrase (Levine, et al. 101). The line could have a literal, childlike notation and solely talk about children playing with "the Ring" referring to a game. Still, the choice of "Ring" brings to memory the famous childhood song, "Ring Around the Rosie," which is said to be a song about 'The Black Plague.' But with this discovery, brings on the startling contrast of Death characterized as "kind" in this poem to a more malevolent interpretation of him condemning thousands of lives including children in just a few years. The third line can be taken in two ways similar to the previous lines. The imagery of grain could symbolize food, a substance vital to life. Yet, with the line comes another hidden allusion to Death's more traditional role as the Grimm Reaper. Finally, the line about them passing the Sun could also indicate a darker side to Death seeing as how death and night are often linked to each other in literature.

The first line of stanza four paired with the previous stanza could reference to the classic trope of one's life flashing before their eyes as they die. On the other hand, the Sun could symbolize life passing them. The notion that Life passes them works well with the ideas of previous lines representing phenomena such as youth, knowledge, food, beauty, and happiness. The subsequent line uses phrases such as "quivering [and] chill," which could indicate that the temperature has dropped substantially. The coldness could signify that there are ghosts present due to the trope of temperature dropping whenever a spirit comes near. The next line goes on to indicate that the narrator has a "gossamer" gown on (Levine, et al. 102). The gossamer gown could symbolize a multitude of notions. The first concept states that the narrator's dress could be a wedding gown (Patchava & Aroustamian 2017). Though, that raises the question of who she intends to marry. A more obvious presumption would suggest that she aims to marry Death. Besides, the audience tends to forget about another entity in the carriage along with the narrator and Death, Immortality. This idea gains weight when pondering the last stanza given that she recalls that it has been years since the carriage ride and Immortality would assumedly go hand-in-hand with eternity. In fact, Immortality's silence could indicate that their union is not a loving one and could symbolize how Dickinson felt about marriages. Still Ian Fletcher in the Literary Yard has a different perspective on Dickinson's word choice. He explains that gossamer also means "a spider's web" and that it could indicate that the narrator feels trapped inside a web with Death acting as the spider (Fletcher 2018).

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The final stanza concludes the motion that the poem began with. In this stanza, the narrator starts off with calling her grave a house which is as discomfoting as it is disorienting. Houses remain associated with feelings of warmth, safety, contentless, even family whilst graves typically provoke feelings of unease, fear, and cold. The narrator starts to sound vaguer and more abstract, almost cold, disinterested, and depersonalized. The ending, especially, feels almost bitter and

After reviewing the entirety of the poem, it becomes apparent that it could hold one last emblem for Death. Although the individual lines may hold a comforting or ominous atmosphere depending on the reader's perspective, it becomes apparent that the poem, as a whole, feels more reassuring about the subjects of death and the afterlife. This could show that the poem itself is symbolic for Death. Society deems him as "evil," even though they only focus on one part of him: the end. Dickinson alludes to there being no true Death in the poem, the spirit prevails and goes onto eternity. This could indicate why she felt comfortable around Death, because she was heading towards a new beginning, not the end.

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