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Emily Dickinson
Because I Could Not Stop for
Death
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In “Because I Could Not Stop for Death,” Emily Dickinson has a vision about her own Life and Death. In her vision, Dickinson is transported into the future—well beyond her lifetime—and experiences her own Death, which appears in a masculine form: her match for Eternity. Because of her busy and fulfilling life, she never had a moment to think about Death. It probably took her by surprise while she was striving at what she did best—her work. Dickinson chooses to tell her story in the first-person point of view. This way, she can provide detailed personal information and feelings, while, at the same time, causing the readers to wonder if she is dreaming instead of having a vision.

Her life seems to pass in front of her eyes in slow-motion—from childhood (represented by School), maturity (represented by the Fields of Gazing Grain), and beyond (represented by the Setting Sun). Dickinson accomplishes this by choosing a series of symbols (School, Fields of Grain, and Setting Sun), which complete and close the circle of life (Ring). Although she isn’t prepared to die, she accepts her destiny without struggle, because she is ready to embrace her Immortality. In her vision, her work is successfully acclaimed by posterity; and because of that, she is ready to embrace her Eternity and its untapped resources. Accepting Death is the best way to explore the Unknown, and although centuries passed by, it seems less than a day.

Through her poem, Dickinson attempts to inspire her posterity to try its best, at all times. Death is not the end, but only the beginning. That is why she thinks that working hard at all times and ages is the right thing to do. She conveys to the readers the message that it's better to get the most out of your life, rather than to waste it. In Eternity, there's so much more to experience; that is why, although very short, life is very important. Although her vision of the trip toward Eternity doesn't seem very scary at first, the darkness after the sun sets seems terrifying, and the readers can almost feel the last rays of the sun that touch her eyes before dying. Dickinson is not dressed appropriately, as she was unprepared for this event. She feels the cold through her thin clothes, and the tone of her poems grows colder as well.

Dickinson uses the word *House* for her final destination, although she means her grave. The *House* will hold the remains of her body, while Immortality will hold her spirit and her soul. She reaches her new *House* in a carriage that symbolizes Death, which carries her to her final destination. She is the only passenger in the carriage, because we all have to face Death alone. Dickinson compares her time in Eternity to her time in life, although it flows at a different rate—much slower. In the end, after dropping her physical body at the *House*, the carriage sails on into Eternity with her spirit, and Dickinson finally understands the concept of Eternity.

Through her wonderful poem, Dickinson helps the readers to get a glimpse of Eternity, by bravely trying to experience Eternity and Death on her own, long before it's due time. Although in her poem she didn't stop for death, in her real life, she obviously gave it very serious thought.

Works Cited

Dickinson, Emily . “Because I Could Not Stop for Death.” *Literature: An Introduction to Writing*. Roberts, Edgar V. and Jacobs, Henry E. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2001. 671-672.