

Samples of American Poetry
Because I Could Not Stop for Death
A Poem by **Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)**

- first published in 1890 in *Poems*
- “Because I Could Not Stop for Death” is a lyric poem
- theme of death
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- Characters
- **Speaker**: A woman who speaks from the grave
- **Death**: Suitor who called for the narrator to escort her to eternity
- **Immortality**: A passenger in the carriage.
- **Children**: They symbolize childhood as a stage of life.
- Notes
- **gossamer my gown**: Thin wedding dress for the speaker's marriage to Death
- **tippet**: Scarf for neck or shoulders.
- **cornice**: Horizontal molding along the top of a wall
- **tulle**: Netting.
- **Since . . . centuries**: The length of time she has been in the tomb.

- Figures of Speech
- Personification We passed the setting sun. **Comparison of the sun to a person**
Or rather, he passed us (lines 12-13) **Death is personified throughout the poem**
- Paradox
- Since then 'tis centuries, and yet each
- Feels shorter than the day
- I first surmised the horses' heads (lines 21-23)
- Anaphora
We passed the school, where children strove
We passed the fields of gazing grain,
We passed the setting sun. (lines 9-12)

Hope is the Thing with Feathers
A Poem by Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Poetry of Harlem Renaissance
“If We Must Die”
by Claude McKay Limns

The Negro Speaks of Rivers
by **Langston Hughes**

- **Anaphora** The deliberate repetition of a word or phrase
Example: **We passed the** school, where children strove At recess, in the ring; **We passed the** fields of gazing grain , **We passed the** setting sun
- **Paradox** reveals a kind of truth which at first seems contradictory. Two opposing ideas. **Example** Stone walls do not a prison make, Nor iron bars a cage.
- **Personification** is giving human qualities to animals or objects . *Making inanimate as animates.* **Example:** We passed the **setting sun** Or rather, **he** passed us Comparison of the sun to a person Death is personified throughout the poem **Example** a smiling moon, a jovial sun
- **Metaphor** the comparison of two UNLIKE things. **Example:** He is a horse.
Thou art sunshine
- **Rhyme:** When two similar sounding words are repeated in a stanza of a poem,
- **Simile:** Simile is a figure of speech in which two objects are compared using adverbs such as "like" and "as". **Example:** *He eats like a horse.*
- **Theme** is the general idea or insight about life that a writer wishes to express. All of the elements of literary terms contribute to theme. A simple theme can often be stated in a single sentence.

