



UNIT

A Bird Came Down the Walk

Emily Dickinson (1836 – 1886)

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade-level topics, texts, and issues.
- evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language considering the impact on the reader. discuss others' reading critically, taking account of their views.
- critique reading interpretations.
- identify rhyme schemes and figurative language in poems.
- analyse multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g., recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text.
- read, view and analyse a variety of readings grade-appropriate and high-interest books and texts from print and non-print sources: poetry (free verse, narrative and rhythmic)
- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as give inferences drawn from the text.
- interpret figures of speech (e.g., euphemism, oxymoron) in context and analyse their role in the text.
- identify and use compound prepositions and prepositional phrases in writing.
- use summary skills to write an objective summary of the given text and poems.

Pre-reading:

Read the title of the poem and discuss the following questions in groups of five. After the group discussion, come together as a class and discuss the questions with the teacher.

- What is your initial reaction to the title "A Bird Came Down the Walk"? Does it evoke any specific imagery or emotions?
- What does the title suggest about the subject of the poem? Is it straightforward, or does it hint at something deeper?
- How does the title set the tone for the poem? Is it casual, formal, or something else?
- How does the simplicity of the title contrast with the possible complexity of the poem's themes? Consider how a seemingly simple observation could lead to deeper reflections.
- In what ways might the title reflect the broader themes of the poem, such as the relationship between humans and nature, or the idea of seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary?

A Bird came down the Walk—
He did not know I saw—
He bit an **Angleworm** in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then he drank a **Dew**
From a **convenient** Grass—
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass—

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all around—
They looked like frightened **Beads**, I thought—
He stirred his **Velvet** Head

Like one in danger, **Cautious**,
I offered him a Crumb
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home—

Than **Oars** divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a **seam**—
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon
Leap, **plashless** as they swim.

While-reading

- What does the bird do after it comes down the walk?
- How does the speaker interact with the bird?
- Identify the rhyme scheme in each stanza.
- How does the rhyme scheme contribute to the overall flow and rhythm of the poem?



There are five stanzas in 'A Bird, came down the Walk'. The stanzas are quatrains, as each **stanza** is comprised of four lines.



For the Teacher:

- Assign students to research Emily Dickinson's life, focusing on how her reclusiveness, the era in which she lived, and her philosophical outlook on life influenced her poetry. This will give students a foundation to understand her perspective.
- Discuss the 19th century attitudes towards nature and the transcendentalist movement, which often influenced poets like Dickinson. This background can help students see how the poem fits within or reacts against these ideas.
- Introduce common motifs in Dickinson's poetry, such as nature, death, and the human psyche. Encourage students to predict how these might appear in "A Bird Came Down the Walk."

Background to the Poem "A Bird Came Down the Walk"

"A Bird Came Down the Walk" is one of Emily Dickinson's many poems that examines nature in a detailed and intimate manner. Written in the 19th century, during a time when nature was a common subject in literature, Dickinson's approach to nature is distinct in its close observation and subtle complexity. Unlike the more romanticised views of nature by her contemporaries, Dickinson often presents nature with a blend of beauty and raw reality, capturing both its grace and its underlying brutality.

About the Poet: Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) was an American poet known for her unique and unconventional style. Much of her poetry explores themes of nature, life, death, and the human experience, often through a deeply introspective and reflective lens. Like many of Dickinson's poems, "A Bird Came Down the Walk" was not published during her lifetime. It was only after her death that her work was brought to the public, and even then, it was often edited to fit more conventional poetic norms of the time. Today, Dickinson is celebrated for her original voice and her contributions to American poetry.



For the Teacher:

- Conduct a line-by-line reading of the poem, encouraging students to analyse the use of language, tone, and mood. Discuss how Dickinson's word choices and syntax contribute to the poem's meaning and emotional impact.
- As students read, help them identify and annotate examples of poetic devices. Discuss how these devices contribute to the layered meanings in the poem.
- Briefly explain the differences between free verse, narrative, and rhythmic poetry.
- Provide examples of each type:
 - **Free Verse:** "The Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams
 - **Narrative:** "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe
 - **Rhythmic:** "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth
- Show video performances or readings of the poems. Use sources like YouTube or educational websites that offer high-quality poetry recitations.
- Encourage students to create a cozy reading nook at home or in the classroom.
- Offer a diverse selection of fiction and poetry that students can relate to and find interesting.
- Encourage students to connect themes and characters in literature to their own experiences.
- Integrate multimedia resources to enhance the reading experience.
- Encourage creative writing to deepen appreciation for literature.

Literary Devices

Caesura: a pause in a line of poetry that can be created using punctuation such as a comma (,), full stop (.), or a dash (-).

Enjambment: when one line of poetry continues into the next line without a pause to carry forward a point or idea.

Alliteration: the repetition of the same letter or sound at the start of words that are adjacent or close together.

Juxtaposition is a literary device where two or more ideas, characters, actions, settings, or phrases are placed side by side in a narrative or a poem to highlight their contrasts or differences. The purpose of juxtaposition is often to create a more nuanced understanding of each element or to emphasise particular qualities or themes by comparing them directly.

Theme

A Bird Came Down the Walk, by **Emily Dickinson** explores several interconnected themes:

1. **Nature's Balance:** The poem contrasts the beauty and brutality of nature, showing how these elements coexist harmoniously. The bird's actions, such as eating a worm and then gracefully avoiding a beetle, highlight this delicate balance.
2. **Human Interaction with Nature:** The poem explores the distance between humans and the natural world. The speaker observes the bird and offers a crumb, but the bird's decision to fly away underscores nature's independence and the boundary between human interaction and natural autonomy.
3. **Freedom and Independence:** The bird symbolises freedom and self-reliance. Its refusal of the crumb and its graceful flight reflect the theme of natural independence and the desire to remain untamed by human influence.
4. **Innocence and Danger:** The poem subtly contrasts innocence with the potential for danger. The bird's cautious behaviour, especially in the line "Like one in danger, Cautious," suggests an underlying awareness of the threats present even in peaceful moments.

Glossary:

Words

Meanings

angleworm	another term for an earthworm, commonly used in the 19th century.
beads	a small piece of glass, wood, etc., with a hole through it, that can be put on a string with others of the same type and worn as jewellery, etc.

cautious	being careful about what you say or do, especially to avoid danger or mistakes; not taking any risks
convenient	useful, easy or quick to do; not causing problems
dew	the very small drops of water that form on the ground, etc. during the night
oars	a long pole with a flat part at one end that is used for rowing a boat
plashless	an old-fashioned word meaning without splashing, used to describe the silent, graceful movement of the bird in flight.
seam	a line along which two edges of cloth, etc. are joined or sewn together
velvet	a type of cloth made from silk, cotton or nylon, with a thick, soft surface

Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Identify an example of personification in the poem. How does it enhance your understanding of the bird?
2. Discuss the metaphor in the final stanza, where the bird's flight is compared to "Oars divide the Ocean." What effect does this comparison create?
3. Find a simile in the poem and explain its significance in the overall imagery.
4. How does Dickinson use visual imagery to describe the bird's actions? Provide examples.
5. What is the effect of the tactile imagery in the phrase "He stirred his Velvet Head"? How does it contribute to the tone of the poem?
6. How does the mood shift from the beginning to the end of the poem? What words or phrases help create this shift?
7. What do you think Dickinson is trying to convey about the relationship between humans and nature? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.
8. How does the bird's decision to fly away rather than accept the crumb reflect broader themes of freedom and independence?
9. How does the poem explore the concept of natural beauty versus natural brutality? Give specific examples from the text.
10. What is the significance of the speaker observing the bird without the bird's knowledge? How does this affect the tone of the poem?

B. Choose the correct option for each question.

1. What is the bird's initial action when it comes down the walk?
 - a. It drinks from a puddle.
 - b. It bites an angleworm in half.
 - c. It flies away.
 - d. It hops to a wall.
2. How does the speaker describe the bird's eyes?
 - a. Bright as the sun.
 - b. Like sparkling jewels.
 - c. Like frightened Beads.
 - d. As calm and serene.
3. What does the bird do after the speaker offers it a crumb?
 - a. Eats the crumb.
 - b. Flies away.
 - c. Sings a song.
 - d. Hops closer to the speaker.
4. The bird's flight is compared to:
 - a. Leaves falling from a tree.
 - b. Waves crashing on the shore.
 - c. Oars dividing the ocean.
 - d. Wind blowing through the trees
5. What is the tone of the poem?
 - a. Joyful and celebratory.
 - b. Tense and suspenseful.
 - c. Calm and reflective.
 - d. Angry and resentful.

C. Read the following sentences and identify the cause and effect.

1. The bird hopped sideways to the wall to let the Beetle pass.
 - Cause: _____
 - Effect: _____
2. The speaker offered a Crumb to the bird.
 - Cause: _____
 - Effect: _____

D. Read the following statements and identify whether each is a fact or an opinion.

1. The bird's eyes looked like "frightened Beads."
 - Fact
 - Opinion
2. The bird's flight was graceful and beautiful.
 - Fact
 - Opinion

E. Read the following sentences and distinguish generalized statements from evidence-based information.

1. The bird moved cautiously, as if in danger.
 - Generalized Statement
 - Evidence-Based Information
2. The bird "bit an Angleworm in halves and ate the fellow, raw."
 - Generalized Statement
 - Evidence-Based Information

F. Read the following statements and identify the explicit textual evidence from the poem that supports each one.

1. The bird ate an Anglemorm raw.

- Textual Evidence: _____

2. The bird's eyes appeared frightened.

- Textual Evidence: _____

G. Read the following inferences drawn from the poem. Cite the specific line(s) from the poem that support each inference.

1. The bird is cautious around the speaker.

- Supporting Evidence: _____

2. The bird prefers natural freedom to human interaction.

- Supporting Evidence: _____

H. Explain how the textual evidence supports each inference.

1. Cautious Bird:

- Explanation: _____

2. Natural Freedom:

- Explanation: _____



For the Teacher:

- Explain to students the importance of citing strong and thorough textual evidence when analyzing a poem. Emphasize that they need to support their interpretations and inferences with specific lines from the text.
- Guide students to identify what the poem explicitly states. Use the examples provided to demonstrate how they can locate direct statements in the text.

Example:

Statement: The bird ate an Anglemorm raw.

Expected Student Response: "He bit an Anglemorm in halves / And ate the fellow, raw."

- Discuss with students how inferences go beyond the literal meaning of the text and require reading between the lines. Encourage them to think about the emotions, actions, or themes suggested by the poem that aren't explicitly stated but can be deduced.
- Explain that **nuance** refers to a subtle or slight difference in meaning, expression, tone, or feeling. When we talk about nuances in language, we are considering the fine shades of meaning that distinguish similar words or expressions. These small differences can significantly impact the tone, mood, or interpretation of a text.

Vocabulary and Grammar

A. Find the connotative and denotative meanings of these words.

Word	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
velvet		
cautious		
glanced		
stirred		
oars		
plashless		

B. Identify whether each word typically carries a positive or a negative connotation and provides examples or contexts where these connotations might apply.

Word	Positive Connotation	Negative Connotation	Example
glance			
glide			
feathers			

C. Compare each pair of words that have similar basic definitions but evoke different feelings or ideas. Discuss the different nuances each word carries and how these nuances affect the tone and interpretation when used in various contexts.

1. glance vs. stare

glance: _____

stare: _____

nuance in meaning: _____

2. glide vs. slide

glide: _____

slide: _____

nuance in meaning: _____

3. cautious vs. paranoid

cautious: _____

paranoid: _____

nuance in meaning: _____

D. Read the following sentences from the poem. Use the context provided in the sentence and the surrounding lines to infer the meaning of the underlined word or phrase.

1. "He stirred his Velvet Head."

contextual clue: _____

inferred meaning: _____

2. "And then hopped sidewise to the Wall To let a Beetle pass—"

contextual clue: _____

inferred meaning: _____

- **How did the context of each sentence help you determine the meaning of the word or phrase?**
- **Why is it important to consider a word's position or function in a sentence when trying to understand its meaning?**

Figurative Language in the Poem

A. Simile:

- **Definition:** A figure of speech that compares two different things using "like" or "as."
- **Example from the Poem:**
"They looked like frightened Beads, I thought—"
 - **Explanation:** The poet compares his loneliness to a cloud drifting in the sky, emphasizing his sense of isolation and aimlessness.

B. Personification:

- **Definition:** A figure of speech that gives human qualities to animals, objects, or ideas.
- **Example from the Poem:** "He stirred his Velvet Head."
 - **Explanation:** The bird's head is described as "Velvet," giving it a human-like softness and delicacy, which adds a sense of gentleness and tenderness to the bird's actions.

C. Imagery:

- **Definition:** Descriptive language that appeals to the senses and creates mental images.
- **Example from the Poem:**
"He bit an Angleworm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,"
 - **Explanation:** This vivid visual imagery allows readers to picture the bird's actions clearly, illustrating the raw, unfiltered aspect of nature.

D. Symbolism:

- **Definition:** A literary device where an object, person, or situation represents something beyond its literal meaning.
- **Example from the Poem:** The bird's flight at the end of the poem.
 - **Explanation:** The bird's graceful, untroubled flight symbolizes freedom and the seamless, natural world, contrasting with the human world's boundaries and limitations.

Euphemism and Oxymoron

Euphemism

A euphemism is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

Examples in General Literature:

- "Passed away" instead of "died"
- "Let go" instead of "fired"
- "Senior citizen" instead of "old person"

Usage and Effect:

- **Purpose:** Euphemisms are used to soften the impact of unpleasant information or to avoid offending or upsetting the audience.
- **Effect:** They make communication more polite and can help to mitigate emotional responses.

Oxymoron

An oxymoron is a figure of speech in which apparently contradictory terms appear in conjunction.

Examples in General Literature:

- "Bittersweet"
- "Deafening silence"
- "Jumbo shrimp"

Usage and Effect:

- **Purpose:** Oxymorons are used to create dramatic effects, highlight complexities, or convey deeper meanings through contrast.
- **Effect:** They provoke thought and can emphasize the multifaceted nature of certain concepts or situations.

Euphemism in Context:

Dickinson does not use euphemism in the poem. Her descriptions of the bird's actions, such as "He bit an Angleworm in halves / And ate the fellow, raw," are direct and do not soften the reality of nature's brutality. Instead, she portrays the scene with raw honesty, without resorting to euphemistic language.

Oxymoron in Context:

There is **no clear use of oxymoron** in the poem. The language Dickinson uses is more straightforward, focusing on the contrast between the bird's delicate actions and the harsh realities of nature, but not by combining contradictory terms in a single phrase. Instead, she uses other literary devices such as simile, metaphor, and personification to convey her themes.

E. Read the following lines from Emily Dickinson's poem "A Bird Came Down the Walk" and choose the correct option that best identifies the type of imagery or figurative language used in each.

1. Which of the following lines from the poem contains an example of figurative language?
 - a. "He bit an Angleworm in halves"
 - b. "And he unrolled his feathers"
 - c. "Than Oars divide the Ocean"
 - d. "He stirred his Velvet Head"
2. The phrase "stirred his Velvet Head" is an example of:
 - a. euphemism
 - b. oxymoron
 - c. simile
 - d. metaphor
3. In the context of the poem, the poet's description of the bird's killing of the worm is an example of:
 - a. oxymoron
 - b. simile
 - c. euphemism
 - d. hyperbole
4. Which of the following best represents an oxymoron, even if not explicitly used in the poem?
 - a. "He glanced with rapid eyes / That hurried all abroad"
 - b. "They looked like frightened Beads"
 - c. "The Grass divides as with a Comb"
 - d. "A bird came down the Walk"
5. Which poetic device is most clearly used in the line: "They looked like frightened Beads"?
 - a. oxymoron
 - b. euphemism
 - c. metaphor
 - d. simile
6. "He bit an Angleworm in halves." What type of imagery is used in this line?
 - a. Visual Imagery
 - b. Auditory Imagery
 - c. Tactile Imagery
 - d. Olfactory Imagery
7. "Butterflies, off Banks of Noon / Leap, plashless as they swim."
Which figure of speech is used here?
 - a. personification
 - b. simile
 - c. alliteration
 - d. metaphor
8. "And then hopped sidewise to the Wall." What type of imagery is used here?
 - a. Tactile Imagery
 - b. Gustatory Imagery
 - c. Auditory Imagery
 - d. Visual Imagery

Compound Prepositions

A compound preposition (also called a complex or double preposition) is formed by prefixing a simple preposition with another word (such as in-, be-, under-, with-, etc.). It acts as a single unit and is usually one word (not a phrase). It functions as a preposition and shows a relationship between a noun/pronoun and another word in the sentence, such as direction, time, place, cause, or manner.

Structure

Compound prepositions are usually formed by:

Prefix/Adverb + Preposition = Compound Preposition

Prefix/Adverb	Preposition	Compound Preposition	Sentence Example
in	to	into	The child ran into the room.
on	to	onto	The cat leapt onto the windowsill.
with	in	within	All tasks must be completed within the deadline.
with	out	without	He went to the event without any preparation.
be	side	beside	She sat beside her best friend during the seminar.
under	neath	underneath	The missing file was found underneath a stack of old newspapers.
be	neath	beneath	The treasure was hidden beneath the old oak tree.
be	hind	behind	The attacker was hiding behind the curtain.

F. Read each sentence carefully and choose the correct answer that identifies or correctly uses a compound preposition.

1. Which of the following is a compound preposition?

- a. on b. by c. into d. at

2. Choose the sentence that correctly uses a compound preposition.

- a. She lives at the house. b. He stood by the road.
c. The child jumped onto the bed. d. They walked over the hill.

3. What is the meaning of the compound preposition "within" in this sentence?

"You must complete the work within two days."

- a. outside the limit b. in between
c. beyond the limit d. inside a time limit

4. Select the sentence that contains two compound prepositions.

- a. She ran into the house and sat beside her brother.
- b. They arrived late and left quietly.
- c. The letter was written by hand.
- d. He stood near the door and looked around.

5. Which of the following is not a compound preposition?

- a. without
- b. beside
- c. during
- d. into

Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition followed by a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase (the object of the preposition), which provides additional information about the time, location, direction, cause, manner, or condition.

Structure:

- **Preposition + Object of the Preposition**

Examples:

1. Time:

- *Before the meeting* - We should discuss the plan before the meeting.
- *During the summer* - She likes to travel during the summer.

2. Location:

- *In the park* - They had a picnic in the park.
- *On the table* - The keys are on the table.

3. Direction:

- *To the store* - He went to the store.
- *Towards the mountain* - They walked towards the mountain.

4. Cause:

- *Because of the rain* - The game was postponed because of the rain.
- *Due to his illness* - He was absent due to his illness.

5. Manner:

- *With a smile* - She greeted him with a smile.



For the Teacher:

Prepositional Phrases Usage Tips:

- **Placement:** Prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a sentence. Ensure their placement does not disrupt the flow of the sentence.
- **Multiple Phrases:** You can use multiple prepositional phrases in a sentence, but ensure they don't confuse the reader.
- **Modifiers:** Prepositional phrases can act as adjectives (modifying nouns) or adverbs (modifying verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs).

- *By hand* - The invitation was delivered by hand.

6. Condition:

- *In case of fire* - In case of fire, use the emergency exit.
- *In the event of an emergency* - In the event of an emergency, call 1122.

Usage in Sentences

Adjective Phrase: These prepositional phrases describe nouns.

- The book *on the shelf* is interesting.
- The boy *with the red hat* is my brother.

Adverb Phrase: These prepositional phrases describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs.

- She sang *with joy*.
- He arrived *after school*.

Common Errors:

1. **Misplaced Prepositional Phrases:** Ensure the prepositional phrase is close to the word it modifies to avoid confusion.
 - **Incorrect:** She found *the book in the park that I lost*.
 - **Correct:** She found the book *that I lost in the park*.
2. **Overuse:** Avoid overloading sentences with too many prepositional phrases as it can make the sentence cumbersome.
 - **Cumbersome:** He went *to the store on the corner near the park with the big fountain*.
 - **Improved:** He went to the store near the park with the big fountain.

G. Read each sentence and underline the prepositional phrase. Then, write whether it is an adjective phrase (Adj) or an adverb phrase (Adv).

1. The cookies in the jar are delicious. (_____)
2. She spoke with confidence during the presentation. (_____)
3. They drove through the city at night. (_____)
4. The dog behind the fence barked loudly. (_____)
5. He left before sunrise to catch the train. (_____)
6. The flowers by the window are blooming. (_____)

H. Use the given prepositional phrases to create your own sentences.

1. **During the meeting:** _____
2. **Beside the couch:** _____
3. **Without a doubt:** _____

4. **Before the concert:** _____
5. **Near the river:** _____
6. **Over the hill:** _____

Oral Communication

A. Respond to the text through oral discussion.

- i. Organize the students into small groups, with each group being assigned a specific stanza of the poem.
- ii. Appoint a group leader to guide the discussion and a note-taker to record key points. Discuss the assigned stanza and answer the following questions:
 - What is the main idea of the stanza?
 - What imagery or figurative language is used to convey this idea?
 - How does the stanza contribute to the overall meaning of the poem?
- iii. Present your group's findings to the class.
(Spend about 10-15 minutes discussing the stanza before moving on to prepare your presentation.)
- iv. Participate in a whole-class discussion based on the groups' presentations.

B. Respond to the text by telling short stories and role play.

- i. Research Emily Dickinson, focusing on her life, her reclusive nature, and how her observations of the natural world influenced her poetry, particularly "A Bird Came Down the Walk."
- ii. Based on your research, create and share a short story that reflects Dickinson's experiences with nature. Consider how these experiences might have inspired the imagery and themes in the poem.
- iii. Perform key moments from Dickinson's life or scenes inspired by the poem. Use the following prompts:
 - Enact a scene where Dickinson observes a bird in her garden.
 - Role-play a conversation where Dickinson describes her inspiration for the poem.
 - Create a scene showing Dickinson writing the poem, focusing on her thought process.

Writing Skills

Summary Writing

A summary is a concise version of an oral, visual, or written text. Below are four basic steps to prepare a summary, providing a logical and organized approach to the process of summary writing.

1. Reading:

To write a good summary, thorough reading and understanding of the original text are essential. Pay attention to the main ideas, themes, and significant details.

2. Outlining:

Outlining involves making notes that may help in composing a summary. Focus on noting the author's purpose, the main topic sentence, key supporting details, and the central idea of the text.

3. Drafting:

Begin drafting the summary by combining your notes into coherent sentences and paragraphs. Ensure the summary is brief and covers only the essential points without personal opinions or unnecessary details.

4. Reviewing:

Review your summary to ensure accuracy and completeness. Check for any omitted key points and refine the language for clarity and conciseness.

- A. Write a summary of Emily Dickinson's poem "A Bird Came Down the Walk." Include the main idea, key imagery, and the emotional tone of the poem as it portrays the interaction between the speaker and the bird. Focus on conveying the essence of the poem without including personal opinions or interpretations.**

Critical Appreciation and Literary Critique

To critique means to carefully examine and evaluate a piece of work or an idea. In literature, this involves analysing different interpretations of a text and deciding how valid or convincing those interpretations are, based on textual evidence.

- B. Critique different interpretations of the imagery and figurative language in A Bird Came Down the Walk. To what extent do you agree with the view that Dickinson presents nature as both beautiful and threatening? Support your analysis with textual evidence.**

Step 1: Read the Poem Carefully

- Read *A Bird Came Down the Walk* multiple times.
- Pay attention to images (e.g., how the bird is described) and figurative language (e.g., metaphors, similes, personification).
- Identify lines that seem to show nature as beautiful, threatening, or both.

Step 2: Analyse the Key Literary Devices

- Imagery: How does Dickinson describe the bird and its surroundings? What senses does she appeal to (sight, touch, taste, etc.)?
- Figurative Language: Look for metaphors, personification, similes, etc. How do these enhance the poem's themes of nature and its complexity?
- Tone: Consider the tone of the poem (e.g., detached, curious, ominous). How does it affect your interpretation of nature?

Step 3: Identify Different Interpretations

- First interpretation: Some readers may see nature as beautiful, focusing on the gentle descriptions (e.g., the bird's delicate movements or soft imagery).
- Second interpretation: Other readers might view nature as threatening, pointing to the bird's raw behavior or its alertness as signs of danger.
- Third interpretation: A balanced view might suggest that Dickinson presents nature as both beautiful and threatening — delicate yet instinctively fierce.

Step 4: Take a Position

- Agree or disagree with the view that nature is both beautiful and threatening.
- Think about how much of the poem supports both views versus one or the other.
- Form a clear opinion based on your analysis of the imagery and figurative language.

Step 5: Support Your Opinion with Evidence

- Use direct quotes from the poem to back up your point of view.
- Explain how these quotes contribute to your interpretation of the poem's portrayal of nature.
- For example: "The bird 'bit an Angleworm in halves' could be seen as an image of violence, which suggests that nature is threatening. However, the delicate image of the bird's 'velvet head' presents nature as beautiful and fragile."

Step 6: Conclude Your Critique

- Summarize your findings: What have you concluded about the portrayal of nature in the poem?
- Reaffirm your position based on the evidence you've analysed.