

Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death—

Because I could not stop for Death—
He kindly stopped for me—
The Carriage held but just Ourselves—
And Immortality.

We slowly drove—He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility—

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess—in the Ring—
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain—
We passed the Setting Sun—

Or rather—He passed Us—
The Dews drew quivering and Chill—
For only Gossamer, my Gown—
My Tippet—only Tulle—

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground—
The Roof was scarcely visible—
The Cornice—in the Ground—

Since then—'tis Centuries—and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity—

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Comment [1]: In addition to appearing in hymns, common meter (alternating lines of four and three beats) is typical in a more narrative form of poem, the ballad. In "Because I could not stop for Death—," Dickinson uses her characteristic rhythm for the purpose of telling a story, one that follows the speaker on a strange and supernatural journey.

Stefanie Wortman 1/19/2016 3:40 PM

Comment [2]: Dickinson's personified Death is like a genteel suitor. When he comes to take the speaker out for a carriage ride, his demeanor is kind and polite.

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Comment [3]: When the poem arrives at the grave, Dickinson describes it as a house, one that is neither cozy nor fearsome. The speaker does not express contentment with this home in the afterlife, nor does she admit any distaste for it. Her only comment is about the new way she experiences time.