

**ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION**  
**SECTION II**  
**Total time—2 hours**

**Question 1 (1991)**

(suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay score.)

Read the following poem by Emily Dickinson. Then write an essay in which you describe the speaker's attitude toward the woman's death. Using specific references to the text, show how the use of language reveals the speaker's attitude.

The last Night that She lived  
It was a Common Night  
Except the Dying -- this to Us  
Made Nature different.

We noticed smallest things -- (5)  
Things overlooked before  
By this great light upon our Minds  
Italicized -- as 'twere

As We went out and in  
Between Her final Room (10)  
And Rooms where Those to be alive  
Tomorrow were, a Blame

That Others could exist  
While She must finish quite  
A Jealousy for Her arose (15)  
So nearly infinite--

We waited while She passed --  
It was a narrow time --  
Too jostled were Our Souls to speak  
At length the notice came. (20)

She mentioned, and forgot --  
Then lightly as a Reed  
Bent to the Water, struggled scarce --  
Consented, and was dead --

And We -- We placed the Hair -- (25)  
And drew the Head erect --  
And then an awful leisure was  
Belief to regulate --

## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION SECTION II

### Question 1 (1991)

**General Directions** : This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays you read, but cases in which it seems inadequate, consult your Table Leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Reward the writers for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than a 3.

**8-9** - These well-written essays demonstrate an awareness of the complexity of the speaker's attitude toward the woman's death. Using apt and specific reference to the text, they effectively analyze how the use of language (such as word choice, metaphor, simile, imagery, syntax, rhyme, ambiguity) reveals this attitude. These papers need not be without flaws, but they will be characterized by an understanding of the poem and consistent control over the elements of effective writing. They demonstrate the writer's ability to read with perception and to express ideas with clarity.

**6-7** - These essays present a plausible interpretation of the speaker's attitude toward the woman's death, and with specific references to the text, analyze how the use of language reveals this attitude. They are, however, less precise, less thorough, or less convincing than the best papers. They may contain minor flaws in interpretation and will probably deal with fewer elements of style than the 8-9 papers. These essays demonstrate the writer's ability to express ideas clearly ,but with less maturity and control than the top papers.

**5** - These essays attempt to answer the question, but they do so superficially or unconvincingly. The definition of the speaker's attitude may be oversimplified or vague and the analysis of language may be cursory or lacking appropriate examples. The writing is adequate to convey the writer's thoughts but these essays are typically pedestrian, not as well conceived, organized, or developed as upper half papers.

**3-4** - These essays respond to the question incompletely. Their discussion of the speaker's attitude may be limited and/or erroneous; they may not analyze the language in the poem. They may reveal a lack of understanding of the poem and/or the use of language in the poem. The writing demonstrates weak control over the elements of composition. These essays typically contain recurrent stylistic flaws or misreadings and lack persuasive evidence from the text.

**1-2** - These papers fail to respond adequately to the question. They may be confused by the poem and significantly misrepresent the speaker's attitude; they may omit a discussion of the use of language entirely. Generally these essays are unacceptably brief or poorly written on several counts. Although some attempt to answer the question may have been made, the writer's views typically are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence.

**0** - This score is for off-topic responses.

**-** - Indicates a blank response.

## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

### SECTION II

Question 1 (1991)

#### **Essay A**

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The fear of death is not uncommon. It festers inside all of us, increasing with no great dispatch, yet becoming ever more present as we add years to our lives. Emily Dickinson's poem explores the nature of death, and why it is sometimes more frightening to be left behind than to do die. With carefully selected adjectives and actions, Dickinson reveals the uncertainties which accompany the death of someone close.

The poem begins and concludes with calm, sandwiching the turbulent feelings and unpleasant waiting contained in the middle five stanzas. Dickinson's contrast between the "Common Night" and "Except the Dying" proposes that the event of the death was somehow enlightening, not an ordinary event. Something was to change in those who experienced it, as the "smallest things" were noticed, as well as things "overlooked" in the usual course of daily events.

In the next two stanzas (3 and 4), the author presents two clearly defined feelings: Blame and Jealousy. She explores blame by carefully separating those who were alive and could continue to exist and "she" who would not. The choice of the adjective "infinite" to describe the Jealousy indicates the tenacity of this feeling. Such feelings of jealousy from the fourth stanza permeate the next, as the loved ones of the dying woman endure waiting. The contrast between the reality of a short period of time and the antithetical feelings of those who must wait is expressed in the phrases "narrow time" and "at length the notice came" (ll 18 and 20).

As the poem progresses, Dickinson provides a beautiful image of the woman's death. Her use of the simile, "lightly as a Reed" verifies the woman did not die in pain. Instead, perhaps her soul consented to death and exited her body, leaving behind an empty shell. It seems, then, the death of the woman was easier than the pain left behind for those survivors to endure. Such an attitude is present throughout the entire piece, as Dickinson provides clear distinctions between the "We" and "Us" versus the "She." It was "We - We" who were left to place the hair (L 25), not "she" who had passed on.

The death of the woman and the experience of those who endured it is not unlike something every human being must at one time face. With a simple, consistent tone, Dickinson provides not only an account of death, but great insight into the feelings of those who must remain.

#### **Essay B**

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In this poem by Emily Dickinson, the speaker's attitude toward the woman's death is that when the woman was dying, the speaker really cared and payed close attention to the woman. Then when the woman had died, the speaker was very upset.

In the phrase "We noticed smallest things -- things overlooked before ...," the speaker was trying to make the best out the dying woman. The speaker tried to look on the bright side and notice things that people usually don't see when everything is going the perfect way.

When the woman actually died, the speaker was upset even though they knew it was going to happen. The use of language reveals the speaker's attitude when at first the speaker was saying that it was just a normal night except for the woman that was dying. The speaker's language use was very good because she explained why she was upset and she described the woman.

#### **Essay C**

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Ms Dickinson reveals in "The last Night that She lived ..." an attitude of jealousy toward the living at the death which she describes. She expresses the pain of loss, the sorrow, in her grief through word choices and by capitalizing initial letters of important words in each stanza.

In the first stanza, she contrasts this night with any other by using an upper-case "N." Although, as she admits, "It was a Common Night," the "Dying" was excepted. "... this to Us/Made Nature different," meaning that all present in the society of bereavement could sense the difference of this night as opposed to any other.

The second stanza suggests that the dying lady had been important to each person, for each person was in attendance, however, "We noticed smallest things - / Things overlooked before." Details of this woman's character were now important, more important than they had been in life. Perhaps the narrator wishes that these characteristics had been better explored before it had become too late.

With the third and fourth stanza, the jealousy arises. As the people visiting the dying lady walk from the room, they pass the rooms "where Those to be alive / Tomorrow were," and "a Jealousy for her arose." By observing the others around themselves, the bereaved found it unfair that they were to suffer such a loss and the friends and relatives of these others would not.

The death was described in stanzas five and six. She gave in to death easily - "lightly as a Reed / Bent to the Water, struggled scarce -- / Consented, and was dead." When this news at length came to those who waited, "Too jostled were Our Souls to speak." They felt the grief, the sense of loss, and were speechless in it.

The seventh stanza describes the funeral, where their only hope was in religion, though it was an "awful leisure." It was unpleasant for the narrator to place her faith in something as intangible as religion.

Ms Dickinson expresses her grief and jealousy at the death of this woman by stressing setting, feelings, using language and capitalization of initial letters of important words.

#### Essay D

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In this poem written by Emily Dickinson, the speaker conveys an attitude of great sorrow. The speaker was shocked and disturbed on how something like this could happen. Yes, there were clues, but they were so small that they were easily overlooked. The night before they had walked near her room and noticed nothing, but now a large depression lingered there. The speaker was puzzled on why it was her and not someone else, and what if it had been. Now she is dead and their is nothing the speaker can do but mourn.

#### Essay E

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In the poem by Emily Dickinson the speaker experiences a range of emotions towards the woman's death which lead to her final attitude that even through death life will go on with nature regulating your time until the end. This attitude is shown through the speaker's diction beginning in the first stanza where she describes the night as "common" (l 2) but already is realizing that there is something different about this particular night when she says "Except the Dying -- this to Us / Made Nature different" (ll 3-4). It is clear that throughout the next six stanzas the speaker makes further use of language to reveal her attitude towards the woman's death.

In the second stanza the speaker begins to notice the small and trivial things in life that were normally overlooked, but now that there is, "this great light upon [their] minds" (l 7) which is the knowledge of the woman's impending death, the speaker and the people around her notice more things because they realize their importance now.

The speaker experiences feelings of guilt in the next two stanzas over the thought that she will go on living while this woman dies. She states that there was , "a Blame / That others could exist / While She must finish ..." (ll 12-14). In this same stanza the speaker also feels jealousy towards the woman because she feels that through the woman's death, the woman will now be "so nearly infinite." (l 16)

In the fifth stanza the speaker's attitude undergoes another change, moving from guilt and jealousy to a new realization that death comes swiftly, "We waited while She passed -- It was a narrow time --" (ll 17-18). The speaker's attitude towards the woman's death is now of sadness and feeling disturbed. She states when news of the woman's death came their souls were "Too jostled ... to speak" (l 19)

In the next stanza the speaker uses imagery of a reed bending to water to reveal the peacefulness of the woman's death and she recalls that the woman "consented" (l 24) to her death. The simile of the woman like a reed and the imagery of this entire stanza portray the speaker's peacefull attitude at this point.

In the last stanza the speaker realizes that their life will still go on and that they will continue to do the normal routine, day to day things, but that their life is only an "awful leisure" that time and nature will regulate until their own death. As in the last two lines the speaker says that "And then an awful leisure was / Belief to regulate" (ll 27-28). The speaker's attitude here shows that people may belief they regulate their own lives, but in reality they do not.

Through the use of language such as the speaker's diction, imagery, and use of simile, the attitude of the speaker is shown. The death of the woman inspires many feelings in the speaker which are revealed throughout the seven stanzas.

#### Essay F

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In the poem, Emily Dickinson attitude towards the deceased in one of dislike and anger. She shows this thru the language she uses in the poem. Emily Dickinson's attitude towards the deceased is of dislike and anger. This is shown in the middle of the poem, with the Line "And Rooms Where Those to be alive Tomorrow were, a Blame" 11-12. This line is showing how the people today are sorry and sad but tommorow they will be blaming the dead woman for thing she did to them. Also "A Jealousy For Her arose. So nearly infinite--" 15-16 shows the same resentment. It shows that some people might have been jealous of her when she lived and how thinking back on it, are jealous of her when she is in her death bed. Finally "Too jostled were Our Souls to speak" 19 show the emotions they have. They are not upset and telling her that it will be better in heaven. They feel a anger and dislike for her but do not want to express it while she is dying.

The language of the poem reveals the speaker's attitude in the above noted lines. Also the last line "And then an awful leisure was Belief to regulate --" shows the way the the people felt about the ladys death.

Overall Emily Dickinson effectively shows her negative feelings for the deceased through her use of language. She does this with emotions shown and hidden in the play.

### Essay G

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It often takes the death of a friend or an acquaintance to reveal the power of life and death, and humankind's vulnerability to fate. In this poem, the speaker's attitude towards the woman's death is shown by the speaker's heightened sense of the nature of existence, the capriciousness of fate, and sense of the unyielding quality of death.

The first hints of the speaker's attitude towards the woman's death are found in the first two stanzas. The woman's death, the speaker says, "made Nature different," and those present "... noticed smallest things -- / Things overlooked before." The speaker has been moved to observe the world of existence with a heightened sensitivity by the woman's death; things usually considered trivial or banal receive importance because of their place in the realm of the living -- they exist, and the woman does not. What would have been a "Common Night" has been embossed into the speaker's memory, and all of its details will be remembered. Thus the speaker implies that it is Death and "Dying" that reveals the world of life and existence.

The speaker is also impressed by the strength of the role that fate and destiny play in one's life. In the third and fourth stanzas the speaker finds the world divided into the kingdoms of the living and the dead, literally and symbolically, as can be seen in the lines "Her final Room / And Rooms where Those to be alive / Tomorrow were." The finality of death and one's assignment to either the realm of the living or the dead are sensed by the speaker. In addition, there is in the speaker's attitude a sense of iniquity that "Others could exist / While she must [italics mine] finish quite." The speaker is made aware of the lack of control people have over their lives; if, in fact, the power to end or continue one's existence is not and can not be held by humankind.

Lastly, the speaker relates his impressions of the weakness of life. Perhaps what seemed to be a powerful, full existence is defeated by Death in a trifling matter of minutes. The speaker compares the woman to a "Reed / Bent to the Water." From this we can infer that the speaker is aware of the hopelessness of the woman's ability to fight with Death to keep her life. Rather, as the speaker relates, the woman "struggled scarce -- / consented, and was dead --." The speaker's attitude towards the woman's 'agreement' to concede to Death's will seems to be one of sympathy towards the woman because of her weakness as compared to the omnipotence of Death. The understanding is derived from the speaker's realization of the inseparable nature of Death and the futility of a struggle. Like many sensitive people who witness the fading of a person's life into nothingness, the speaker is left with a feeling of his own lack of control over death, and over the time remaining in his own existence.

### Essay H

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In the poem by Emily Dickinson, figurative language and language of praise, reveal the speaker's major attitudes of distress and sorrow towards the woman's death.

In line 22-23 figurative language appears as a simile to compare the woman's death to a reed bent to the water. This very delicate simile exposes the speaker's attitude that the woman died a graceful painless death. The speaker says that "... as a Reed bent to the water struggled scarce consented and was dead." As well as reflect the attitude of a peaceful death, this line also reveals the attitude of distress & sorrow that the woman just consented to death instead of giving death a harder time about taking her life away from her and the speaker.

In addition to figurative language, language of praise played a important if not more important role in revealing the speaker's attitudes. Exemplary of this praising language is the statement found on lines 9-15 where the speaker finds jealousy while walking through rooms where other would live while she would die. The speaker is jealous for the woman because it does not seem fair to him/her that other should live while death takes the woman away. This language praises the woman indirectly by making her life seem more precious than others to the speaker. Within those lines, sorrow, and distress also appear to show the speakers sorrow at her death and distress in the fact that she would pass away and other would be alive tomorrow.

### Essay I

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The poem by Emily Dickinson is written in a minimalist style. The sentences are fragmented and disjointed and the use of capital letters and hyphens helps to accentuate the brusque tone of the poem. Though periods do exist, the sense of when a sentence begins or ends is unclear. It is perhaps an intentional irony of Miss Dickinson that a poem concerning such a final thing as death would temporarily disregard conventional beginnings and endings of sentence structure.

The intentional irregularity of the poem serves the purpose of presenting a bare skeleton of emotion which hasn't yet been decorated with dramatic, high-blown imagery. Miss Dickinson observes the feelings and actions that accompany death with an almost objective formality. For example, in lines 1-4, Miss Dickinson observes the significance that a normally ordinary day takes on when it is marked by death. She remarks on the changed perspective that death causes in those affected by it. "We noticed smallest things -- / Things overlooked before", she comments in

line 5, things that are "italicized" by "this great light upon our minds." It is interesting to note the poet's depiction of death as a light which illuminates, as opposed to a more common association of death with darkness.

In the second and third stanzas, the poet gives the reader a look into the dying woman's mind. The unfairness of death is implied by words such as "Blame" and "Jealousy" -- i.e. the dying woman's blame and jealousy of those who don't have to die.

Time is another theme which appears in different forms. At first time is the infinity of death. The rapid passage of time in anticipation of death and the confusion which accompanies it reflects itself not only in the jumbled structure of the poem but in the "jostled" souls of line 19 which are unable to speak.

The actual instance of death is again not described as heavy, morbid, and dark, but is likened to the bending "lightly" of a Reed to the water, hardly struggling. The lack of subjects preceding the verbs (i.e. "forgot", "Bent", "struggled", "consented") in the sixth stanza simplifies the whole action of death by presenting it as a series of uncomplicated events.

The reaction to death in the seventh stanza is one dominated by routine. Only after the hair has been placed and the head drawn erect must they face the "awful leisure" of accepting and believing the finality of death. The poem ends on another image of time. The time here is "awful" because they have too much of it to deal with the death of the woman, whereas before time had passed quickly and in fragments, not allowing them the opportunity to reflect.

### Essay J

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In Emily Dickinson's poem, the speaker reflects on the death of a woman in the household. The speaker reveals his "jealousy for Her" through the different viewpoints and images he portrays. The language used by the speaker reveals his realization of the transitory nature of life, and the virtual insignificance of the individual.

The speaker illustrates his views on life before and after the death through his choice of words and imagery. He mentions that the night "She" died was a "Common Night," and that the only thing that made it uncommon was the death. The death made the speaker look more closely at "Things overlooked before." While the speaker had never noticed some things before, he began to notice the "smallest things." Additionally in the "narrow time" of waiting for word of "Her" death, the speaker realizes that he too would like to die. "A jealousy for Her arose" when he discovered that she was dying, but that he had to continue living. This epiphany leads to the speaker's final conclusion that the time between "Her" death and his own was an "awful leisure."

Furthermore, the speaker notes the insignificance that each person had in life. By noting that the death "made Nature different" only to the speaker and "Her" family, and not to others in the "Common Night," the speaker illustrates the idea that her death really made no difference to the world in general. When the speaker compares the woman to a reed that is "bent to the water," he implies that Nature can do what he will to us; that we are all like reeds before water, pliable to currents and tides. In the final stanza, the words become impersonal, signifying also "Her" insignificance. "The Hair" and "the Head" are arranged, not her hair or head. The insignificance of the individual is further portrayed through the point of view. The speaker describes his ideas and feelings by referring to them through "we" and "Us." Though seemingly including a group of people, the "we" illustrates only a single realization and idea; "we" are not waited upon and surrounded by nature, "we" must obey nature.

Yet the speaker also notes that although the death of the woman is insignificant to the world, it has a great impact on her own life. While waiting for word of "Her" death, he notes: "Too jostled were Our Souls to speak." The death had a great impact on his life, changing his views toward death and life. The "great light" comes upon his mind and he realizes that the time between "her" death and his own was an "awful leisure" to try to maintain belief in the so-called normal world.

### Essay K

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The woman died quietly + without a fight. The speaker's attitude toward the woman's death is the same as how she died. Her death did not shock them. "It was a Common Night Except the Dying." However, the speaker is disturbed and affected by the woman's death. "We noticed smallest things -- Things overlooked before."

Although she died quickly the speaker's soul is dangled during the woman's dying time. The speaker is envious of the woman's sleeplike death.

The speaker didn't see the woman's death as a horrible overpowering monster but rather a gentle occurrence. "Then lightly as a Reed Bent to the water, struggled scare." The speaker uses purposeful words in a subtle tone to reveal how his/her attitude of the subtle but emotion stirring death.

### Essay L

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The speaker in this poem was remarkably calm considering the death that was to come. The speaker describes calmly the events that take place on this certain evening, as if she were detached from the scenario. Things the woman had done, even the smallest, were recognized, even though the speaker says he had overlooked them before. This brings the speaker to realize feelings and emotions that were buried beneath his soul, yet exist and are uncovered

during the dying process of the woman. Though the speaker told the events with a calming tone, he was confused and burdened with the sadness that was building. This is best described in lines 18 & 19 where the speaker says:

"It was a narrow time --  
Too jostled were Our Souls to speak"

A certain type of fleeting wistful jealousy is realized as the speaker grasps the concept that the woman will soon slip away from life's mere existence to one perhaps of a greater nature, while those left behind are to continue to roam the paths of the living.

"As we went out and in  
Between her final Room  
And Rooms where Those to be alive  
Tommorrow were, A Blame  
That Others could exist  
While she must finish quite  
A Jealousy for her arose ..." (lines 9-15)

Near the end of the poem, the speaker ceases to speak of the woman as a person and speaks of her merely as an object. This could be done to hide the speaker's grief and detach him from the grievous situation.

"And we -- We place the Hair --  
And drew the Head erect" lines 25-26

### Essay M

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In this poem by Emily Dickinson, the speaker's attitude towards the woman's death is one of disbelief. The speaker doesn't feel that it is fair for the woman to be taken away. The speaker feels that both the time and the conditions are unworthy of the woman's death.

The speaker describes the night as ordinary and typical except for the death. Dickinson's simple language such as "a common night" and "...made nature different," emphasizes the misplaced event. The "narrow time" in which death takes place is in contradiction with the magnitude of the event. So much has happened in so little time. The woman "struggled scare -- consented, and was dead --." The speaker knows that it will only be a matter of time before the woman dies and feels helpless. Confused, the speaker found no words to describe any feelings, as "Too jostled were Our Souls to speak." The speaker couldn't understand how others could live while the woman was dying. The woman's death was unfair. The speaker could not believe that an entire death could take place on such an ordinary day in such a short time.

The author's use of simple, declarative sentences reveals this attitude of disbelief. In the end, the speaker reluctantly accepts the fact that it is over.

### Essay N

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Through its unique use of language, Emily Dickinson's poem evokes a feeling of restlessness, and an acute awareness of one's aliveness, mortality, and powerlessness in the face of nature. The persona describes the night of the woman's death in a quiet and thoughtful manner, without using particularly vivid imagery, and as such, creates a setting that is more psychological than sensory. In fact, the poem itself flows like thought, with pauses but without breaks or conclusive cadences. The last stanza exemplifies this characteristic through its employment of dashes (most notably at the end itself) but avoidance of stronger punctuation or conclusive language.

One of the most immediately apparent characteristics of the poem is its frequent use of capitalization to highlight certain significant words. In general, the words Dickinson has chosen to capitalize relate to the dying woman, the observers, or to the world as it appears to the observers in this strange time. For example, the first stanza capitalizes the words, "She" and "Dying" (which relate to the woman herself), the word "Us" (which relates to the observers, and the words "Night," "Common Night," and "Nature" (which relate to the perceived environment).

The element of time is handled in an unusual way within the poem. It seems nearly to stand still, as the speaker implies through the use of the phrase "It was a narrow time --." Its flow is hampered through the use of pauses, and through the relative lack of action in the poem. Time may even be seen as a restricting element; before the woman died, it was precious and dwelled upon (a time too sacred to speak or act), after her death its very abundance is oppressive to the observers, who must return to their lives in the solemnity of the aftermath, having glimpsed their mortality, and even envied the simplicity of the dying woman's state.

The death itself is not portrayed so much a tragedy as a disruption, and aberration in Nature and Time in which a human being ceases to exist. All others present at this event are sensitized to their own existence and aliveness in a remarkable way. As the poet herself writes, "We noticed smallest things -- / Things overlooked before / By this great light upon our Minds." Strangely enough, the bystanders experience feelings that may almost be called "guilty." Though they have done no wrong, they cannot help but feel privileged to be alive and healthy. Furthermore, through no fault of their own, they play a very peripheral role in the event itself.

In this poem Dickinson effectively creates a psychological setting that is at the same time quiet and disturbed, by simulating with her use of language, the flow of thought and time. She deals with one of the inevitabilities of human existence in an understated and contemplative way that somehow serves to heighten the solemnity of the occasion - and in doing so, she has created a fascinating commentary on the temporary nature of human existence.

### Essay O

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The speaker of Emily Dickinson's poem reacts to the womens death on two levels. First, she is confronted with the death of the specific women, with the loss of an individual. This, however, serves briefly as a prelude to a larger reaction to the more basic spectre of death. The details of the women's identity become lost in the "great light" of death and mortality. The speaker, overwhelmed by the death of the body, gains a new attitude and perspective on the life that surrounds her.

In the very first lines of the poem, Emily Dickinson sets out the contrast between the ladys death and the presence of death itself. "The last night that she lived" It was a common night "Except the Dying." The specific death itself, the reference to the individual, is mundane as compared to the process of dying. The speaker does, however, react to the death of the individual in a limited manner. The actual moments of death seem to be portrayed on a specific level, to the benefit of the lady with great elegance and delicacy. The body succumbs to the force that so disturbs the speaker. There is also a personal reaction in the jealousy inspired by the ladys death; read in one way, line 15 grants a unique meaning and value to the lady. She should not be taken while others remain. And finally, those at the bedside show some specific concern for the lady after she dies, caring for her hair and her posture.

This final specific grief is swiftly lost in the overwhelming presence of death. The final cares taken over the dead women seem trivial, and are forgotten as the more fundamental thoughts and concerns run through the mourner's minds. Also, through the poem we see little sense of remorse for the loss of the woman. The jealousy line (15) can be read not as a individual reference, but more as a jealousy for her relation with the infinity that she approaches. In addition, the lady has little personal value for the speaker, for there is little sense of personal loss. All reactions and thoughts are generalized to the first person plural; the ladys death transcends individual reaction to become something universal.

Death as a force profoundly effects the speaker even as the specific loss does not. In the second stanza, the speaker describes a change in perspective on the world. Details gain a heightened significance, as the speaker is reminded of her own mortality. The power of death forces an evaluation of the things around the speaker for their value is magnified. The force of death is even too devastating to permit conversation in line 19. Most significantly, when the women finally dies, the last stanza demonstrates the release of thought and the personal self-directed anguish and fear that the speaker feels. The specific death releases her thoughts, unregulated, to assail the comforts of her beliefs and her faith.

So the night certainly was not a common one for the speaker. The women passed on, one detail lost to infinity. But the reminder of life's fragility and the awesome threat of death has evoked a fundamental change in the speaker's attitude. Now, nothing can seem common anymore. Nature is changed, because the details of life are rendered infirm. Questions must abound in the speaker's mind, questions that are too grand and powerful to answer.

### Essay P

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Many times in poetry the poet uses language in such a way as to reveal his/her attitude. In this poem by Emily Dickinson we are aware of her attitude toward the woman's death through language. Not only are we aware of her attitude but we develop our own.

In the beginning of the poem the speaker is unable to comprehend the Death which had occurred. We know this when she states, "It was a Common Night." To her it was a normal day "Except the Dying." This first attitude is quickly altered when she states "this to Us Made Nature different." The woman's death had brought about a change in her attitude toward life which we experience in the following stanza.

The speaker begins to "notice things -- Things overlooked before." She had had her eyes opened, a "great light upon her mind," causing her to experience nature to the fullest. Things for the speaker have become clearer now and the woman's death has caused her appreciation of the smaller, "unimportant" things to come about.

The speaker in this poem before the woman's death feels some pity for the woman. We are made aware of this when the speaker states, "That others could exist While She must finish quite a Jealousy for Her arose so nearly infinite." The woman is jealous of the living and wants to go on living, causing the speaker to feel pity.

As the woman passes away, we get the feeling of solemnness. This feeling arrives from when the speaker says "We waited while She passed -- It was a narrow time." The speaker feels helpless to do anything but wait for the woman to pass away.

The speaker grows very upset as the realization of the death sets in. "Too jostled were Our Souls to speak At length the notice came." The reality of the situation has finally hit the speaker, and she is forced to face it.

When the woman passed away there was not much struggle but only agreement. "... struggled scarce -- consented, and was dead --" Although this was the case, the speaker does not receive much comfort from it. Instead,

the speaker resents the fact that she was left behind to deal with everything. We become aware of this when she states, "And we -- We placed the Hair -- and drew the Head erect." We is repeated to emphasize the importance of the fact that "We," the family (+ speaker) were left behind.

In the last stanza and conclusion, the speaker comes to another realization and this is the fact that life must go on. She must pick up the pieces and pick up where she left off, "And then an awful leisure was Belief to regulate ---"

Through the speaker's use of language we have been able to understand her attitude towards the woman's death. Not only have we come to understand her attitude, but we've been able to develop our own.

### Essay Q

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Emily Dickinson describes the events surrounding a woman's death with a very pensive, highly tense attitude. She sets the tone in line 4 with her statement that Nature itself was made "different" by the death. The speaker perceives things with a heightened awareness, as if by a "great light" upon her mind (line 7), noticing the "smallest things -- things overlooked before (lines 5-6)." Her perception is "italicized (line 8)," or heavily affected by the death.

The speaker's attitude assumes a more emotional, irrational tone in lines 9-16, as she begins to blame herself for the fact that she and "others can exist," while the dying woman must pass away alone. The speaker then reveals empathy for the dying woman, saying that she feels "a jealousy for her (line 15)."

The speaker's attitude changes to one of nervous impatience in lines 17-20, as she and the others await the coming of death. The speaker describes herself as "too jostled ... to speak (line 19)" and refers to these final hours as "a narrow time (line 18)," building upon the theme of thick anxiety.

The awful moment arrives with unexpected delicacy in lines 21-24, presented simultaneously as climax and denouement. "Lightly as a reed (line 22)," the woman "was dead (line 24)." The speaker exhibits a matter-of-fact, perhaps stunned reaction to this development. The worst is yet to come, for here is the most dramatic shift of all in the rapidly changing attitude of the speaker -- "an awful leisure (line 27)," the quiet after the storm, when the survivors are left to pick up their lives. The speaker subtly implies that it is worse for her than for the deceased.

### Essay R

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Emily Dickinson, in the poem, conveys to the reader, through the use of language, an attitude of both sorrow and curiosity about the process and "atmosphere" of death.

The emotion of sorrow seems to control the underlying tone of the poem. Dickinson uses hyphenation -, as if she were sobbing, to talk about especially sorrowful parts of this death. For example, in the second to last stanza, ion which the woman actually dies, the poem is broken up with three hyphens, as well as in the last stanza when the "full" sorrow of death is realized in the absence of her soul.

A curious attitude towards her own reaction and the reactions of those around her seems to be less apparent. This idea is conveyed in the first stanza - "Except the dying, this to us made nature different." Why, Dickinson might be asking does the reality and immediacy of death change our comprehensions and views of Nature and our surroundings. And, through this question, Dickinson asserts that being close to death, experiencing it through this woman, enhances life - as is apparent from the second stanza - "We noticed smallest things, things overlooked before, by this great light upon our minds, italicized (that is to say certain valued traits of life are standing out during this death) as 'twere."

Through this sudden appreciation of life that death had brought to Dickinson, a deeper sorrow - "A Blame" has arisen. Dickinson wonders why nature must perform this actual taking life. This blame seems to come from the attitude - "Why must it be her" and stems back to the question of why must life end. The jealousy Dickinson refers to exists in the people who love the woman and do not want to give her up. They, perhaps, are jealous of death who will possess her for eternity the minute she is gone - "A jealousy for her arose so nearly infinite."

The last two stanzas describe the sorrow and the actual moment. Instead of clinging to life in the final moment the woman enters "eternity" with consent, without a struggle.

In the last stanza, Dickinson replaces the word her with the word "the" to emphasize the fact that the beauty of the woman, the beauty of the human, exists not in the physical but rather in the soul in the spirit.