



**Edna St. Vincent Millay** (February 22, 1892 - October 19, 1950) was an American lyrical poet and playwright. Millay was a renowned social figure and noted feminist in New York City during the Roaring Twenties and beyond. She wrote much of her prose and hackwork verse under the pseudonym Nancy Boyd.

**Travel English Poem BY Edna St. Vincent Millay Class  
4th**



### **First stanza explanation**

**The railroad track is miles away,  
And the day is loud with voices speaking,  
Yet there isn't a train goes by all day  
But I hear its whistle shrieking.**

'Travel' begins with the speaker describing a part of her everyday life that is not directly before her, but is always in her sight, a railroad track. The track is miles from where she lives but it weighs on her mind throughout her days. At the present moment, the speaker is in the middle of another noisy day of her life.

The voices that surround her work in two different ways, first, they are an irritant that she is unable to escape, and second, their volume, and the fact that she is still able to hear the train as it goes by, proves how important they are to her.

The speaker says that of all the trains that go by, there is not one that she doesn't hear. She is always able to pick out the "whistle shrieking" in amongst the chaos of her everyday life.

### **Second stanza explanation**

**All night there isn't a train goes by,  
Though the night is still for sleep and dreaming,  
But I see its cinders red on the sky,  
And hear its engine steaming.**

In the second stanza, the speaker continues to discuss the importance of this moving train in her everyday life.

It is night time at this point and she is describing how once it gets dark, there isn't a train that goes by.

Unfortunately for the speaker, this is not the case. Even though she says, "the night is still for sleep and dreaming" she sees in her mind's eye, and in the dreams of her sleep, the "cinders red on the sky."

Even when there is no train there to see, she can't help imagining "its engine steaming," and feeling the same way she does in its actual presence. She knows exactly what it would sound, smell, and look like if she was directly before it, watching it pass.

### **Third stanza explanation**

**My heart is warm with the friends I make,  
And better friends I'll not be knowing,  
Yet there isn't a train I wouldn't take,  
No matter where it's going.**

The first topic that the speaker brings up in this stanza is the "warm[th]" she feels towards her friends. She does not dislike her life, it is full of good friends that fulfill that part of her. The second line takes a step back from the first statement as she says that there are "better friends" out there that she doesn't know, and will "not be knowing" because she cannot board a train.

In the last two lines, the poet considers the fact that a reader will be curious about where the trains are going, and where it is exactly that her narrator would like to end up. The speaker concludes this debate by stating that she doesn't care where the trains are going. She would get on any one of them without even considering the destination. Her greatest desire is to leave, or, as the title states, to 'Travel.'

### Summary of the poem

The poem begins with the speaker stating that from where she lives, there is a railroad track 'miles away.' It is a feature in her life that is constant. Although she cannot physically see it every moment, it is always there weighing on her mind.

It becomes clear that the speaker has developed an obsession with the train and where it might take her. She can hear the sounds it makes all day, even over the sounds of the many voices around her.

The speaker dreams about the train and pictures it perfectly as she sleeps. By the end of the poem, it becomes clear that she is uninterested in where the train is going, as long as it will take her somewhere to a new place.

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### WORD GALAXY

1. **Shrieking:** Making a high -pitched sound
2. **Cinder-** Small pieces of partly burnt coal
3. **Steaming-** Giving off steam
4. **Railroad:** the roads for the train
5. **Warm:** having pleasant temperature that is fairly high
6. **Better:** much good
7. **Matter:** a subject of situation that you must think about and give your attention to
8. **Dreaming:** to see or experience pictures and events in your mind

### MAKE SENTENCES:

1. **Warm:** Be sure to keep **warm** when you go outside
2. **Hear:** Did you **hear** that?
3. **Sleep:** I can never **sleep** on airplanes.
4. **Engine:** This car has a new **engine**.
5. **Train:** You can go by express **train**.
6. **Travel:** They like to **travel** separately.

**FILL IN THE BLANKS:**

1. The railway **track** is miles away.
2. The voices of the people are **loud** during the day.
3. The red cinders of the train are seen on the **sky**.

**Answer the following questions in one sentence:**

1. **What is the central idea of the poem?**

Ans: The central idea of the poem is the narrator's childhood full of wonder and imagination.

**2.What happens during the day?**

**Ans:** During the day, there is a lot of noise with the loud voices of people talking. The shrieking whistle of the train is heard above all these voices.

**3.What according to the speaker is the night for? What is she doing instead?**

**Ans:** According to the speaker, the night is meant for sleeping and dreaming but instead of sleeping, she visualizes the train in her imagination and she sees the small pieces of partly burnt coal which makes the sky

look red and glow and she can hear its engine steaming.

**4. In the first stanza, the speaker talks about two different sounds.**

**(a) What are these sounds?**

**Ans:** The two sounds mentioned in the first stanza are:

- i. Voices of people speaking.

ii. Shrieking of the train's whistle.

**(b) Which of these sounds does she actually hear?**

**Ans:** The sound that the speaker actually hears is that of human voices.

**(c) How is it that the other sound appears to ring out so clearly to the speaker, even though the source of the sound is nowhere nearby?**

**Ans:** The speaker thinks about the train so often with such a deep desire to travel that the sound of its whistle in her dreams seems real to her. Thus, it appears to ring out so clearly even though the source is nowhere nearby.

**5: What are the speaker's feelings towards the people who are currently in her life? Yet, despite her feelings, what does she want to do?**

**Ans:** The speaker expresses warm feelings towards the people she has in her life. She seems happy and content with them. Despite this, she is keen to meet new people, have new experiences and make new friends.

**6: What, according to the speaker, is the night for? What is she doing instead?**

**Ans:** The speaker says that the night is meant for sleeping and dreaming. But instead of sleeping, the poet is thinking about what it would feel like to get away on a train.

**7: Read the line and answer the questions:**

**'And better friends I'll not be knowing.'**

**(a) Who are these 'better friends'?**

**Ans:** These 'better friends' are people who the speaker imagines she will meet if she were to take a train and travel.

**(b) Where is the railroad track?**

**Ans.** Miles away.

**8: What does the train represent in this poem?**

(a) a means to get from one place to another

(b) a noisy object that the poet can never see but always hears

(c) an opportunity to go out and see the world

**Ans:** For the speaker, the train represents **an opportunity to go out and see the world.**

**9: Why does the speaker seem to be willing to take any train to any place?**

**What does this tell you about her state of mind and the way she feels about her life?**

**Ans:** The speaker seeks the thrill of adventure and the excitement of new experiences. This comes from the fact that she is unable to break away from her dull existence. She wants to travel and see more places and meet different people and thus is willing to take a train to any place. This tells us that she wants to experience something new, exciting and different in her life and perhaps finds her current routine a little dull and boring.

**10. Although the poet tells us that the train is far away, we are still able to see it and hear it for ourselves, as we read the poem.**

**Which words or phrases bring about this effect in the poem?**

**Ans:** The following phrases bring the effect:

i. 'hear its whistle shrieking' ear its engine steaming'

iii. 'see its cinders red on the sky'

**11. How does the poet's depiction of the train help you understand the feelings she associates with it?**

**Ans:** The poet uses simple phrases to depict the longing she has for a train. There is no train that ever goes by, yet she sees it coming and hears its sounds. This shows us the feelings she has towards the train.

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