

# **Hope is the Thing with Feathers**

## **By Emily Dickinson**

Emily Dickinson's poem *Hope is the Thing with Feathers* is perceived to have been published circa 1861. It was published posthumously as *Poems by Emily Dickinson* in her second collection by her sister. Emily uses *hope*, an abstract entity ( वेगळे अस्तित्व असणारी व्यक्ती, वस्तू इ ) holding human spirits tightly, **manoeuvring** कुतूहल their desire, trust and spirits with its **utter relentlessness**. कठोरपणा

For her, hope can be **signified** (to be a sign of something; to mean;) as a bird, almost a living entity as humans. The narrator perceives hope a-la a bird which resides inside humans. It persists dutifully without a break, singing constantly. Using metaphor, she emphasizes it sings **vigorously** जोमाने during a hurricane, requiring a heavy storm to lay the bird in peace. As per the speaker, this bird never wavers by her side in coldest of lands and strangest of seas, yet it never demanded a bread crumb, singing away merrily. The poetic analysis has been segmented into:

- Poetic Form
- Poetic Structure
- Historical Perspective
- Stanza Analysis
- Personal Commentary

### **Poetic Form**

As is the case with Emily Dickinson's poems, 'Hope is the Thing with Feathers' employs an iambic trimeter which uses a fourth stress at each line's end 'And sings the tune without the words'. As her poetic trait, the rhythmic flow is modified and broken using dashes and breaks such as 'And never stops-at-all'. In case of stanzas, the verses of Emily Dickinson employs **A-B-C-B** scheme, whereas in 'Hope' is the thing with feathers often uses carryover rhyming words for instance *heard*, *extremity* and *bird* rhyme within their respective stanza. As a result, this forms the A-B-B-B rhyme scheme.

### **Poetic Structure**

Emily Dickinson's short poem, *Hope is the Thing with Feathers* makes use of the following poetic devices:

- Repetition
- Rhythm
- Comparison
- Rhyme

### **Rhyming and Techniques**

Using approximate rhyme and quatrain, Emily successfully weaves a compelling poem. The rhyming scheme used is a-b-c-b is an erratic one. Each second and fourth are rhyming automatically. In case of second stanza, using rhyming scheme a-b-a-b, first and third verses rhyme with each other as does fourth and second. In concluding stanza, rhyming scheme is a-b-b-b, as per which, second, third and fourth verses rhyme.

### **Rhythm**

Using erratic punctuation is a key constituent of her poem. Using many dashes and hyphens in order to break and modify the flow of poetic rhythm is commonplace here. It's done to give breaks and pauses while reading the poem. The rhythmic flow follows an iambic trimeter, accommodating fourth stress as well.

### **Repetition**

Emily uses '*that*' and '*and*' during the entirety of *Hope is the Thing with Feathers*. Emily has used '*And*' is used five times in the poem, showing the flip-flopping nature of humans.

### **Comparison**

The poet has made use of personification and metaphor in this poem. As hope is an inanimate object, therefore it is referred to as bird/ thing with feathers. Dickinson gives hope some wings so as to keep it alive in human hearts.

### **Historical Context**

Being a globally **renowned** प्रख्यात poet of her time, Emily Dickinson lived quite a **prosaic** सर्वसाधारण banal, prosaic, ordinary life. During years of **American Civil War** when **Walt Whitman** (contemporary American legend himself) tended to the wounded and addressing American themes; at a time when war had brought poverty and pain with Abraham Lincoln getting assassinated in the process, American years were tumultuous to say the least, yet Emily Dickinson lived far from the madding crowd in Amherst, Massachusetts. She was born in the same house and met her demise there as well. Popular myth being that Emily was a literary **hermit-genius**, एकांतवासी she was active in social circles and **adored** प्रेमळ human interaction company. Moreover, her travels were limited to her countryside and native town, evidenced by her poetry which remains aloof of political connotations/ commentary altogether.

Lastly, Emily Dickinson hardly ever published her massive stock of 1800 poems, **succumbing** आत्महत्या to depths of **obliviousness**. विस्मृती Only her sister stumbled upon the **prolific** विपुल collection and took the liberty to publish the massive literary work.

Whereas Walt Whitman adored and **eulogized to praise** Lincoln has his political champion, Emily was known as poetess of inwardness. Reading her poetic collection can indicate almost zero evidence of the timeline she lived in.

### **Introduction of the poem**

"Hope is the thing with feathers" (written around 1861) is a popular poem by the American poet Emily Dickinson. In the poem, "Hope" is metaphorically transformed into a strong-willed bird that lives within the human soul—and sings its song no matter what. Essentially, the poem seeks to remind readers of the power of hope and how little it requires of people. The speaker makes it clear that hope has been helpful in times of difficulty and has never asked for anything in return. "Hope is the Thing with Feathers" is one of a number of poems by Dickinson that breathes new life into an abstract concept by using surprising imagery and figurative language.

### **Hope is the Thing with Feathers Analysis**

#### **Stanza 1**

*Hope is the Thing with Feathers* (पंख/ bird)  
*That perches in the soul,* ( alights, roosts )  
*And sings the tune—without the words,* (song)  
*And never stops at all,*

Emily Dickinson is an expert employer of **metaphors**, as she uses the **small bird** to convey her message, indicating that hope burns in **harshest** सर्वात कठोर of storms, coldest of winds and in unknown of seas for that matter, yet it never demands in return. It persists continuously within us, keeping us alive.

In case of first stanza, the narrator feels that hope can be **deemed** मानले **to consider** as bird with feathers, singing in its own tune merrily. It may not speak any specific language, yet it's certainly present within human souls. Just as importantly, Emily Dickinson voices that hope is an **eternal spring**, as it's **a vital** अत्यंत महत्त्वचा **constituent** घटक ( **one of the parts that a substance** ) of human beings, enabling us to conquer uncharted territories. अबाधित प्रदेश

#### **Stanza 2**

*And sweetest in the gale is heard;* (very strong wind/ वादळ storm, tempest )  
*And sore must be the storm* (causing great pain)  
*That could abash the little bird* (make uneasy, make it keep quiet)  
*That kept so many warm.*

In case of second stanza, the poetess **elucidates to explain** the **expansive** विस्तृत power hope **wields to have or use power**, over us. It gets **merrier** and sweeter as the storm gets **mightier** and **relentless**. सामर्थ्यवान आणि कठोर The poetess **deems to consider** that no storm can sway

to move slowly from side to side: hope and its **adamant** <sup>ठाम</sup> attitude. According to the poetess, it would take a deadly storm of **astronomical proportions** to **flatten** the bird of hope that has kept the ship sailing for most men.

### **Stanza 3**

**I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.**

In the last stanza, Emily Dickinson concludes her poem by **stressing** that hope **retains** its clarity and **tensile** strength in **harshest** of conditions, yet it never demands in return for its **valiant** services. Hope is **inherently** powerful and certainly needs no polishing, as it **steers** the ship from one storm to another with **efficacy**. The metaphorical aspect of *Hope is the Thing with Feathers* is an old practice, used by well-known poets, the small bird represents hope in this poem. When **abstract concepts are under study such as death, love and hope**, they are often represented by an object from nature, in this case, the bird.

In this poem the author tries to compare hope with a bird that exist everywhere; and she explains why hope is a thing with feather. By using symbolic pictures the author creates an excellent picture of hope. She mentions that nobody can stop hope from accompanying a person; even though it is so small and so weak . At the end of the poem the author emphasizes that hope comes with you wherever you go, yet it asks nothing from you. Dickinson compares hope with feather, because feathers are symbols of flying.

Just like a bird hope flies in people's mind. It enables a person to go wherever he/she cannot. For example, if you want to go somewhere and you do not afford going there, you can hope and think of being in that place. So, hope makes impossible things possible. Similar to a bird, hope has perches to sit on. Hope perches on our souls because souls are the homes for hope. The author explains that by saying, " That perches in the soul.

" It rests in our souls the way a bird rests on its perch. In the next line the author makes a very good point by saying, " And sings the tune without the words," If someone hopes day and night and there is a person next to him/her, the person will never know what the other person is hoping for. So, hope has no voice but it still sings like a bird. In fact, hope never stops from singing because no one is able to stop a person from thinking and hoping.

In the next stanza, Dickinson says, "And sweetest in the gale is heard;" Here she means that people hope and think more if they are at their hardest time of their life; just like a bird who flies all over when there is a storm, hope comes in people's mind when there in trouble. In the next line Dickinson explains that it is not easy to kill or abash hope because no one is able to stop a person from hoping. No matter where you are, hope still exists in your mind. As Dickinson says, " I've heard it in the chilliest land, and on the strangest sea;" In this sentence there is an obvious similarity between birds and hope.

Just like a bird hope exists everywhere. People can hope and think even though they are on the farthest spot on the earth. In fact, hope is in its strongest form when people are away from their families and home. In the last two lines the author informs us that the bird of hope asks for no favor or price in return for its sweet songs. In conclusion, the author made a very good choice by comparing hope with a bird because both have so many things in common. Both exist everywhere, both can fly, and both ask for no favor or price in return for their sweet songs.



## Personal Commentary

Hope is the bird with feathers is a beautiful metaphorically driven poem, using the bird in her usual **homiletic** style, inspired from religious poems and **Psalms** for that matter. Introducing her metaphorical device (the bird), and further elucidates its purpose of existence. Hope, according to Emily Dickinson is the sole abstract entity weathering storms after storms, bypassing hardships with eventual steadiness. It remains unabashed in harshest of human conditions and circumstances, enabling a thicker skin on men. *Hope is the Thing with Feathers* was one her of simplistic poems with a typified metaphorical connotation and device upon which rests the entire poem. Her themes, poems and artistic flights of fancy took a wild turn during 1860s. However, unlike her normative style, she uses the term 'abashed' brings the casual reader into grounded reality. In essence, a bird cannot be abashed but the connotation is clear as per which hope remains afoot regardless of the severity of the storm. Emily Dickinson had the unique trait of writing aphoristically, being able to compress lengthy detail into some words was her natural gift. Her prose is sweet, diamond-hard, delivering her message eloquently. As a result, at times, some of poems can be taken at face-value yet, layers upon layers are peeled off on later readings. Certain verses can have dual-meanings, but its underlying message is irrevocably clear. As opposed to Hope is the bird with feathers poem, her various poems demonstrate heavy-handed difficulty with respect to description and observation. Some of her poems are twisted death-fantasies and metaphorical conceits, whereas she is an expert at addressing issues, amalgamating nature in her poetic fold with her usual flights of fancy, blending both with superior adroitness.

## Beginning

Dear friends, today whole world is suffering from corona pandemic. Experts and scientists are still unable to invent medicine on this horrible covide 19. However, we are trying to survive and looking toward bright future because we have Hope. That rays of Hope gives us energy, and confidence that one day we will be concurred, and covide-19 will destroy from this world. So friends today we are going to learn one of the motivational poem that is Hope is the with feathers, written by Emily Dickinson.....

## 1.3 'Hope' is the thing with feathers –

### Warming up!

#### Chit-Chat

- Do you ever feel nervous?
- Do you ever feel really depressed?
- What makes you nervous or depressed?
- What do you hope for on these occasions?
- Have you hoped for something that you knew was difficult?
- What do you have to do to fulfil your hopes?



Ans:

1. No, I never feel nervous.  
Yes, some time I feel nervous.
2. Yes, once I felt really depressed.  
No, I never feel...
3. Whenever the people misbehave or cheat anyone, that makes me nervous or depressed.

4. On these occasions I hope those people should give punishment for their misbehaving or cheating.

## The Only Ray of Hope

Divide the class into groups of 4-6. Each group selects for itself, one of the difficult situations listed below. They imagine themselves to be in that situation and carry on with the rest of the activity.

(a)

A group of passengers are marooned on an island in the middle of the ocean



- **Describe your surroundings** in 4-5 sentences.
- Write the reactions of your companions using **exclamations**.
- Using your imagination, write what is the only ray of hope for you.
- Two members of your group are going out to try to get help. They can take any five things with them. **Write what** they choose, **and why** they choose it.

**(1) Describe your surroundings in 4-5 sentences :**

**Ans.** We are trapped on a small island in the middle of the ocean. It is a desolate, uninhabited island. We are all alone on this island. There are thick forests around us and frightening pythons and other poisonous snakes are slithering around us. Nothing can be seen except the thick forests, marshy land and vast waters of the ocean.



**(2) Write the reactions of your companions using exclamations :**

(उद्गारचिन्ह वापरून तुमच्या सहयात्रींची प्रतिक्रिया लिहा :)

(1) "What a horrifying experience!"

(2) "Look, oh God! Our ship has left the shore without us on this desolate island!"

(3) "What shall we do now?"

(4) "How can we escape from this dangerous situation!"

(5) "Nothing on earth would save us !"

**(3) Using your imagination, write what is the only ray of hope for you.**

(तुमची कल्पनाशक्ती वापरून, तुमचा एकच एक आशेचा किरण कोणता आहे, ते लिहा :)

**Ans.** Let us hope that the people on our ship find us missing and return back to this island or some other ship, helicopter or a plane notices our movements and save us from this horrible situation that would be our only ray of hope.



1. Match the following.

- | (A)                | (B)                           |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1) Hope           | (a) difficulties and problems |
| (2) Gale / storm   | (b) toughest times in life    |
| (3) keep warm      | (c) a very small bit          |
| (4) chilliest land | (d) a nest in the tree        |
| (5) a crumb        | (e) provide comfort           |
|                    | (f) Bird                      |

Ans:

**Ans.** (1) Hope – Bird, (2) Gale/storm – toughest times in life, (3) keep warm – provide comfort, (4) chilliest land – difficulties and problems, (5) a crumb – a very small bit.

2. Use the proper form of the verb in each line.

‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers –  
That perch in the soul –  
And sing the tune without the words –  
And never stop at all –

Ans:

‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers  
(1) That perch in the soul  
**Ans.** That perches in the soul  
(2) And sing the tune without the words  
**Ans.** And sings the tune without the words  
(3) And never stop at all  
**Ans.** And never stops at all



3. Read the examples and fill in the blanks in the same pattern.

(a) Examples : • sweet – sweeter – sweetest

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • fast – faster – .....  | • slow – slower – .....  |
| • high – ..... – highest | • low – ..... – lowest   |
| • great – ..... – .....  | • bright – ..... – ..... |
| • warm – ..... – .....   | • cold – ..... – .....   |

Ans:

| (a) Examples of degrees : sweet – sweeter – sweetest |                   |                    |
|--|-------------------|--------------------|
| (1) fast   | – faster          | – <u>fastest</u>   |
| (2) slow   | – slower          | – <u>slowest</u>   |
| (3) high   | – <u>higher</u>   | – highest          |
| (4) low  | – <u>lower</u>    | – lowest           |
| (5) great  | – <u>greater</u>  | – <u>greatest</u>  |
| (6) bright   | – <u>brighter</u> | – <u>brightest</u> |
| (7) warm   | – <u>warmer</u>   | – <u>warmest</u>   |
| (8) cold   | – <u>colder</u>   | – <u>coldest</u>   |

(b) Examples : • strange – stranger – strangest

- |                           |                         |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| • brave – ..... – bravest | • fine – ..... – finest |
| • simple – ..... – .....  | • large – ..... – ..... |
| • close – ..... – .....   | • wise – ..... – .....  |

Ans:

|            |                  |                   |
|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| (1) brave  | – <u>braver</u>  | – bravest         |
| (2) fine   | – <u>finer</u>   | – finest          |
| (3) simple | – <u>simpler</u> | – <u>simplest</u> |
| (4) large  | – <u>larger</u>  | – <u>largest</u>  |
| (5) close  | – <u>closer</u>  | – <u>closest</u>  |
| (6) wise   | – <u>wiser</u>   | – <u>wisest</u>   |



- (c) Examples : • pretty – prettier – prettiest (Note the changes in the last letter.)
- nasty – ..... – .....
- hungry – ..... – .....
- angry – ..... – .....
- naughty – naughtier – naughtiest

**Ans:**

|             |   |                  |   |                   |
|-------------|---|------------------|---|-------------------|
| (1) nasty   | – | <u>nastier</u>   | – | <u>nastiest</u>   |
| (2) hungry  | – | <u>hungrier</u>  | – | <u>hungriest</u>  |
| (3) angry   | – | <u>angrier</u>   | – | <u>angriest</u>   |
| (4) naughty | – | <u>naughtier</u> | – | <u>naughtiest</u> |

4. Find the phrases/lines in the poem that mean the following :
- (a) Hope is a light, delicate thing : .....
- (b) Hope offers comfort to your soul : .....
- (c) Hope is not a wordy thought, it is more like a feeling, an emotion : .....
- (d) In the most difficult times, hope offers the greatest comfort : .....
- (e) Hope is not easily defeated : .....
- (f) Hope has given comfort to many people : .....
- (g) Hope lives on in very hard times, even when it gets nothing from you : .....

**Ans:**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| (1) Hope is a light, delicate thing                                       | : Hope is the thing with feathers.                      |
| (2) Hope offers comfort to your soul                                      | : that perches in the soul and sings.                   |
| (3) Hope is not a wordy thought, it is more like a feeling, an emotion    | : And sings the tune without words.                     |
| (4) In the most difficult times, hope offers the greatest comfort         | : Second stanza – And sweetest ... so many warm         |
| (5) Hope is not easily defeated   | : And never stops-at all                                |
| (6) Hope has given comfort to many people                                 | : That kept so many warm                                |
| (7) Hope lives on in very hard times, even when it gets nothing from you. | : Yet – never – in extremity, It asked a crumb – of me. |

5. We can relate many of our feelings and experiences to events or things in nature. Which of our feelings or experiences can we relate to the following?

- |               |   |       |                  |   |       |
|---------------|---|-------|------------------|---|-------|
| • darkness    | : | ..... | • a storm        | : | ..... |
| • sunrise     | : | ..... | • a light shower | : | ..... |
| • sunshine    | : | ..... | • earthquake     | : | ..... |
| • a rainbow   | : | ..... | • dawn           | : | ..... |
| • dark clouds | : | ..... | • dusk (evening) | : | ..... |
| • a peacock   | : | ..... | • flood          | : | ..... |

**Ans:**

- |                    |   |                             |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| (1) darkness       | : | evil sign                   |
| (2) a storm        | : | difficulties                |
| (3) sunrise        | : | beginning, progress, growth |
| (4) a light shower | : | pleasure                    |



|                     |                                  |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| (5) sunshine        | : happiness                      |
| (6) earthquake      | : a sudden violent damage        |
| (7) a rainbow       | : unexpected joy                 |
| (8) dawn            | : the beginning of something     |
| (9) dark clouds     | : sad or difficult situation     |
| (10) dusk (evening) | : almost the end of something    |
| (11) a peacock      | : pleasant feeling               |
| (12) flood          | : a lot of difficulties, damages |

6. **Write in a few lines**, about an experience of your own where you scored in your exams much more than you hoped for. What did that experience teach you?

**Ans:**

**Ans.** I could get much more marks in exams than I hoped for and I was on the cloud nine. Really very happy ! Everyone admired me for my effort. It was a great experience. It taught me that if you hope for something heartily and work accordingly, you can achieve anything according to your hope and expectation. Hoping is achieving !

7. This poem is an example of **personification**. When we refer to inanimate objects, ideas, emotions as living things, it is an example of personification. Here, 'hope' is portrayed as a little bird. Describe it in your own words.

Find other examples of personification.

**Ans:**

**Ans.** 'Hope' in this poem is described as a bird sitting in our soul. Here 'Hope' is a non-living thing, but it is described as a living thing, bird. Hope is represented here as a living thing. So it is the example of personification.

**Ans. Some examples of personification :**

- (1) The grass was dancing with the wind. Here dancing is the quality/action of a person. Grass is personified as a person.
- (2) Trees were shivering with fear when they saw the woodcutter. Trees are given the human quality of 'shivering with fear'
- (3) The moon was laughing in the sky. Here the moon is given the human quality of laughing.