

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## I heard a Fly buzz - when I died - (591)

BY EMILY DICKINSON 1830 - 1886

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -  
The Stillness in the Room  
Was like the Stillness in the Air -  
Between the **Heaves** of Storm -

The Eyes around - had **wrung** them dry -  
And Breaths were gathering firm  
For that last **Onset** - when the King  
Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away  
What portion of me be  
Assignable - and then it was  
There **interposed** a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -  
Between the light - and me -  
And then the Windows failed - and then  
I could not see to see -

- 
1. Define the **bolded words**:

**Heaves-**

**Wrung-**

**Onset-**

**Interposed-**

2. According to the second and third stanzas, how has the speaker and those around her prepared for death?
3. The dying person and those around her expect to see the “the King” in line 7. What concept might “the King” personify?
  - a. What do they see instead? How is this ironic?
4. What might it mean when Dickinson says “the Windows failed” in line 15? (Hint: “I could not see to see”)
5. How would you describe the **tone** of this poem? What words specifically create that tone? How might Dickinson feel toward death?

## Because I could not stop for Death (479)

BY EMILY DICKINSON 1830 - 1886

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 –

1. Define the **bolded words**:

**Civility-**

**Gossamer-**

**Cornice-**

**Surmised-**

2. How is Death **personified**? What are his human characteristics? How is this **ironic**?
3. What three things does the carriage pass in the third stanza? What’s the significance of these things (and their order)?
4. What’s the significance of the sunset and the temperature change in the fourth stanza?
5. What does the speaker realize in the final stanza? How would you describe her **tone**? What words specifically create that tone?