

E-Content

American Literature

Semester: III

Lecture 17

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COURSE CONTENT UNIT-IV

Course Code : XXXXX

Course Name: Data structures using C

Lecture 17: Emily Dickinson: ' A Bird Came Down the Walk'

• "**A Bird came down the Walk**" is a short poem by Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) that tells of the poet's encounter with a worm-eating bird. The poem was first published in 1891 in the second collection of Dickinson's poems.

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- Reading the Poem

- A Bird came down the Walk—He did not know I
saw—He bit an Anglemorm in halvesAnd ate the
fellow, raw,

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•And then he drank a DewFrom a
convenient Grass—And then hopped
sidewise to the WallTo let a Beetle
pass—

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•He glanced with rapid eyes That hurried all around—They looked like frightened Beads, I thought—He stirred his Velvet Head

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- Like one in danger, Cautious, I offered him a Crumb And he unrolled his feathers And rowed him softer home—

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- Than Oars divide the Ocean, Too silver for a seam—Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon Leap, splashless as they swim.

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- Helen Vendler regards the poem as a "bizarre little narrative" but one that typifies many of Dickinson's best qualities. She likens the poet to a reporter observing a murderer in the act, and later, pretending fear that the murderer may be dangerous to herself and must be mollified by a "crumb".

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- The bird takes flight and Vendler regards what follows - the description of the bird in flight - as "the astonishing part of the poem". Vendler notes that the poem typifies Dickinson's "cool eye, her unsparring factuality, her startling similes and metaphors, her psychological observations of herself and others, her capacity for showing herself mistaken, and her exquisite relish of natural beauty".

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- Harold Bloom notes that the bird displays a "complex mix of qualities: ferocity, fastidiousness, courtesy, fear, and grace", and writes that the description of the bird's flight is that seen by the soul rather than the "finite eyes"

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- Vendler observes that Dickinson wrote two versions of the middle portion of the poem. The version she sent to her literary mentor Thomas Wentworth Higginson has no punctuation after "Head" and a period after the word "Cautious".

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• In Dickinson's personal copy, there is a comma (not a period) after "Cautious". In the first version then, the bird is cautious, but in the second version, it is the poet who is cautious. In the fair copy, both a period and a dash follow "Head", and a comma follows "Cautious". The fair copy version is the one usually printed, and, as Vendler notes, this version accords with Dickinson's comic sense

School of Liberal Education

Course Code : ENG2012

Course Name: American Literature

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Reference Page

<http://gn009.k12.sd.us/Fluency%20Norms%20and%20Fluency%20Passages/4th%20Grade%20Poetry%20Fluency/A%20Bird%20came%20down%20the%20Walk.pdf>

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