



Class: 11th

Subject: English

**Unit 3: A Bird Came Down the Walk
(Poem)**

Author: Emily Dickenson (1836-1886)

📌 Introduction of the Poet:

Background to the Poem "A Bird Came Down the Walk"

"A Bird Came Down the Walk" is a famous nature poem written by Emily Dickinson. In this poem, Dickinson closely observes the actions and

behavior of a bird in a natural setting. Unlike many poets of her time who presented nature as only beautiful and peaceful, Dickinson shows both the beauty and the harsh reality of nature. The poem highlights the bird's graceful movements as well as its survival instincts, such as eating the worm. Through detailed imagery and careful observation, Dickinson presents nature as delicate, free, and realistic.

About the Poet: Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson was a great American poet known for her unique writing style and deep thoughts. She wrote poems about nature, life, death, emotions, and human experiences. Her poetry is famous for its simplicity, powerful imagery, and originality. During her lifetime, most of her poems were not published. After her death, her poetry became widely recognized and she was celebrated as one of the greatest poets in American literature. "A Bird Came Down the Walk" is one of her most admired poems because it beautifully combines natural beauty with realistic observation.

Stanza-wise Explanation

Stanza 1

- A Bird came down the Walk-
- He did not know I saw-
- He bit an Angleworm in halves
- And ate the fellow, raw,

Explanation:

In this stanza, the poet describes a bird walking along a path. The bird is unaware that the poet is watching him. The bird catches an angleworm, cuts it into two pieces, and eats it raw. The poet presents a realistic picture of the bird's natural habits and behavior.

Stanza 2

- And then he drank a Dew
- From a convenient Grass-
- And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
- To let a Beetle pass-

Explanation:

Here, the bird drinks drops of dew from the grass. After drinking, it jumps sideways toward the wall to allow a beetle to pass. This stanza shows the bird's graceful, careful, and gentle movements in nature.

Stanza 3

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

Explanation:

In this stanza, the bird looks around quickly with fear and caution. The poet compares its tiny eyes to frightened beads because they move rapidly in every direction. The bird softly moves its smooth and velvety head as if it senses danger nearby.

Stanza 4

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

Explanation:

The bird behaves like a creature that feels unsafe and remains very cautious. The poet offers the bird a crumb of bread, but instead of taking it, the bird spreads its feathers and flies away smoothly toward its home. The poet beautifully describes the softness and elegance of its flight.

Stanza 5

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

Explanation:

In the final stanza, the poet compares the bird's flight to the smooth movement of oars in the ocean. The bird flies so gracefully and silently that no line or mark appears in the air. The poet also compares it to butterflies flying lightly in the bright sunlight. This stanza highlights the beauty, smoothness, and freedom of the bird's movement.

❖ Exercise

A. Answer the following questions

1. Identify an example of personification in the poem. How does it enhance your understanding of the bird?

Answer:

An example of personification in the poem is:

“To let a Beetle pass”

The bird is described as if it politely moves aside for the beetle like a human being. This personification makes the bird appear gentle, careful,

and civilized. It helps the reader feel closer to the bird and better understand its graceful behavior.

2. Discuss the metaphor in the final stanza, where the bird's flight is compared to "Oars divide the Ocean." What effect does this comparison create?

Answer:

In the final stanza, the bird's flight is compared to oars smoothly moving through the ocean. This metaphor creates an image of softness, smoothness, and beauty. It shows that the bird flies silently and gracefully without disturbing the air, just as oars move gently through water. The comparison makes the bird's movement appear calm and elegant.

3. Find a simile in the poem and explain its significance in the overall imagery.

Answer:

A simile in the poem is:

"They looked like frightened Beads"

Here, the bird's eyes are compared to frightened beads. This simile emphasizes the bird's fear and alertness. It creates vivid imagery in the reader's mind and helps us imagine the bird's tiny, shining, and nervous eyes. It adds beauty and realism to the poem.

4. How does Dickinson use visual imagery to describe the bird's actions? Provide examples.

Answer:

Dickinson uses visual imagery by describing the bird's actions in a detailed and vivid manner. For example:

“He bit an Angleworm in halves” shows the bird catching and eating a worm.

“He drank a Dew / From a convenient Grass” creates the picture of the bird drinking dew drops.

“He unrolled his feathers” helps the reader imagine the bird spreading its wings before flying.

These descriptions allow the reader to clearly visualize the bird’s movements and behavior.

5. What is the effect of the tactile imagery in the phrase “He stirred his Velvet Head”? How does it contribute to the tone of the poem?

Answer:

The phrase “Velvet Head” is an example of tactile imagery because it appeals to the sense of touch. The word “velvet” suggests softness and smoothness. This imagery makes the bird seem delicate and gentle. It contributes to the calm, peaceful, and admiring tone of the poem.

6. How does the mood shift from the beginning to the end of the poem? What words or phrases help create this shift?

Answer:

At the beginning of the poem, the mood is realistic and slightly tense because the bird is busy eating a worm. Words such as “bit an Angleworm in halves” and “ate the fellow, raw” create this feeling. As the poem progresses, the mood becomes calm, peaceful, and admiring. In the final stanza, phrases like “rowed him softer home” and “Too silver for a seam” create a sense of beauty, grace, and freedom.

7. What do you think Dickinson is trying to convey about the relationship between humans and nature? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.

Answer:

Dickinson shows that nature is beautiful, delicate, and independent. Humans can observe and admire nature, but they cannot fully control it. The speaker watches the bird carefully and even offers it a crumb, yet the bird chooses to fly away. This suggests that nature values freedom and should be respected rather than disturbed.

8. How does the bird's decision to fly away rather than accept the crumb reflect broader themes of freedom and independence?

Answer:

The bird's decision to fly away instead of accepting the crumb shows its desire for freedom and self-reliance. Although the speaker offers food kindly, the bird prefers to remain independent and return to nature. This highlights the theme that wild creatures value liberty more than comfort or human support.

9. How does the poem explore the concept of natural beauty versus natural brutality? Give specific examples from the text.

Answer:

The poem presents both the beauty and brutality of nature. The brutal side is shown when the bird "bit an Angeworm in halves / And ate the fellow, raw." This reflects the harsh reality of survival in nature. On the other hand, beauty is shown in the bird's graceful movements and flight, especially in lines like "He unrolled his feathers" and "Than Oars divide the Ocean."

Dickinson balances these opposite aspects to present nature as both gentle and fierce.

10. What is the significance of the speaker observing the bird without the bird's knowledge? How does this affect the tone of the poem?

Answer:

The speaker observes the bird secretly, which allows the bird to behave naturally and freely. Because the bird does not know it is being watched, its actions appear genuine and realistic. This creates a quiet, thoughtful, and admiring tone in the poem. The speaker carefully notices every small movement, showing deep appreciation for nature.

B. Choose the correct option for each question.

1. What is the bird's initial action when it comes down the walk?

- a. It drinks from a puddle.
- b. It bites an angleworm in half. ✓
- c. It flies away.
- d. It hops to a wall.

2. How does the speaker describe the bird's eyes?

- a. Bright as the sun.
- b. Like sparkling jewels.
- c. Like frightened beads. ✓
- d. As calm and serene.

3. What does the bird do after the speaker offers it a crumb?

- a. Eats the crumb.

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- b. Flies away. ✓
 - c. Sings a song.
 - d. Hops closer to the speaker.

4. The bird's flight is compared to:

- a. Leaves falling from a tree.
- b. Waves crashing on the shore.
- c. Oars dividing the ocean. ✓
- d. Wind blowing through the trees.

5. What is the tone of the poem?

- a. Joyful and celebratory.
- b. Tense and suspenseful.
- c. Calm and reflective. ✓
- d. Angry and resentful.

Note:

This chapter is designed to provide a solid foundation of knowledge, with the goal of deepening understanding and encouraging further exploration of the subject. The content has been carefully selected to support effective learning and inspire students to engage with the topic more deeply.

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