

ELA: Grade 8, Lesson 9, *Emily Dickinson Part II*

**Lesson Focus:** The focus of today’s lesson will be on Emily Dickinson’s poetry and argumentative writing.

**Practice Focus:** Students will analyze one of Dickinson’s poems, “Hope is the thing with feathers,” in order to determine its meaning. Students will also analyze an argumentative essay on Dickinson’s poem in order to study author’s craft in writing arguments.

**Objective:** Students will use “Hope is the thing with feathers” and “The Meaning of ‘Hope is a thing with feathers’” to learn about Emily Dickinson’s poem and to learn about author’s craft in writing arguments.

**Academic Vocabulary:** gale, abash, extremity, connotation, figurative, personification, symbolism, vibrant, perseverance, cohesion, transitional phrase, literary device

**TN Standards:** 8.RI.KID.1, 8.RI.KID.3, 8.RI.CS.4, 8.RI.IKI.8, 8.RL.KID.1, 8.RL.KID.2, 8.RL.KID.3, 8.RL.CS.4, 8.RL.CS.5, 8.RL.CS.6

**Teacher Materials:**

- Lesson script
- Chart paper
  - Will need to write out the TPCASTT template onto chart paper; you only need to include the headings for each section as the commentary will be covered in the script
  - Will need to write the independent practice questions on chart paper so students can see them and copy them onto their own paper

**Student Materials:**

- Paper, a pencil, and a surface to write on

Teacher Do	Students Do
<p><b>Opening</b> (1 min)</p> <p><b>Hello! Welcome to Tennessee’s At Home Learning Series for literacy! Today’s lesson is for all our 8th graders out there, though everyone is welcome to tune in. This lesson is the fourth in this series.</b></p> <p><b>My name is ____ and I’m a ____ grade teacher in Tennessee schools. I’m so excited to be your teacher for this lesson! Welcome to my virtual classroom!</b></p> <p><b>If you didn’t see our previous lesson, you can find it at <a href="http://www.tn.gov/education">www.tn.gov/education</a>. You can still tune in to today’s lesson if you haven’t seen any of our others. But it might be more fun if you first go back and watch our other lessons, since today we’ll be talking about things we learned previously.</b></p> <p><b>As a reminder, in this lesson set, we are studying some very well-regarded and widely studied poets. We have already learned about the English poet William Blake. We have begun learning about the American poet Emily Dickinson and will continue learning about her poetry today. In an upcoming lesson, we will also learn about English poet A.E.</b></p>	<p>Students gather materials for the lesson and prepare to engage with the lesson’s content.</p>

<p>Housman. Poetry has been a powerful mode of writing in American and British history and our goal is to gain a deeper understanding of some of the most successful poets and how they impacted their respective societies.</p> <p>Before we get started, to participate fully in our lesson today, you will need:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paper, a pencil, and a surface to write on</li> </ul> <p>Ok, let's begin!</p>	
<p><b>Intro</b> (1 minute)</p> <p>Today our goal is to read one of Emily Dickinson's poems, "Hope is the thing with feathers," and to use the TPCASTT strategy we used in the last few lessons to better understand the poem. We will also read an argumentative essay on the meaning of the poem. I will guide you through an analysis of this essay to see how the author crafted his argument.</p> <p>We will begin with me reading the poem as a whole and then we will reread it and pause along the way for deeper understanding.</p> <p>At the end of the lesson, I will assign you independent work you can complete after the video ends.</p>	<p>Students listen to the teacher's introduction.</p>
<p><b>Teacher Model/Read-Aloud</b> (10 minutes)</p> <p>Now, let's dig in to the first text we will be studying, which is Emily Dickinson's poem, "Hope is the thing with feathers." Once we have read through the poem, we will reread it and use the TPCASTT strategy we used in the previous lesson to break it down and determine its meaning.</p> <p>Let's read the text:</p> <p>"Hope is the thing with feathers"</p> <p>"Hope" is the thing with feathers— That perches in the soul— And sings the tune without the words— And never stops—at all—</p> <p>And sweetest—in the Gale, which is strong, forceful winds— is heard— And sore must be the storm— That could abash, which means embarrass, the little Bird That kept many so warm—</p>	<p>Students follow along, comprehending the text. They use teacher think-alouds and tips (e.g., definitions of words) to support their comprehension, and they think or write as directed in response to prompts and questions.</p>

I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity, or the worst situation,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.

Just like our previously studied poems, this poem contains layers of meaning. Remember that poetry is communicating meaning both directly and indirectly. It is a difficult genre of literature to analyze, which is why we are going to use a tool to help us do it. Let's refresh our memory of this tool before we dig into the poem deeper.

Let's get started. The tool is called TPCASTT.

[display TPCASTT template for students to see]

Notice that each of the sections begins with the respective letter in the acronym:

T = Title

P = Paraphrase

C = Connotation

A = Attitude/Tone

S = Shift(s)

T = Title (Revisiting the Title)

T = Theme

Let's create a fresh template for today so you can use it for the new poem. On a clean sheet of paper, sketch 7 sections going down your paper like the one I'm showing you. Don't worry about labeling yet as I will go over each section individually. Your template does not need to look fancy or perfect. Just give yourself enough room in each section to take notes. It is important to take notes on what goes in each section so you will know how to complete them.

[Pause for 30 seconds]

Now, let's talk about each section. Each of these sections should be completed in sequential order. Label your first section "Title." You may want to make a note that in this section, your goal is to consider the title of the poem and to make a prediction about what the poem is about. Poets are very intentional, or purposeful, about how they label their poems. There are always very important clues to the poem's meaning in the title, which is why it is a great place to start. For what reasons might the author have chosen the title,

Students sketch out the sections for the TPCASTT template on their papers.

**“Hope is the thing with feathers”? Take a moment to jot down your thoughts about the title of this poem.**

[pause for 30 seconds]

**Thank you. In my notes, I wrote down the title “Hope is the thing with feathers” makes me consider a couple of things. First, I know hope is going to be the central focus of the poem from the title. And second, it seems like the poet is going to use a metaphor of something with feathers to describe it.**

**Let’s read the poem again before we begin the next section. Pay close attention as you will be paraphrasing the poem after we read it.**

[read the poem]

**“Hope is the thing with feathers”**

**“Hope” is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—**

**And sweetest—in the Gale, which is strong, forceful winds—  
is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash, which means embarrass, the little Bird  
That kept many so warm—**

**I’ve heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity, or the worst situation,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.**

**Ok, let’s try the next section in TPCASTT, “Paraphrase.” Here the goal is to write *in your own words* exactly what happens in the poem. You are trying to write down what the poem says literally, on the surface, not its many layers of meaning. This is really a simple paraphrase. Take a few moments to paraphrase what you remember in the poem.**

[pause for 30 seconds]

**Thank you. In my notes, I have the following as a brief paraphrase:**

Hope is something with feathers that stands in the human soul. It sings wordless songs that never stop. The songs are really sweet and only an angry storm could hush the bird that gives so many people hope. I've heard its song in the hardest times and in faraway places, and yet, regardless of how bad things got, it never asked anything of me.

Can you see I kept my paraphrase casual and simple? I am simply trying to capture the literal ideas I find.

Let's try the next section, "Connotation." Remember "connotation" means "an idea or feeling a word invokes in addition to its literal meaning." Here is where we start to dig a bit deeper. We're looking for meaning beyond the literal. Poets use a lot of tools to do this, including figurative language, or non-literal language, imagery, sound devices, word choice, etc. Some of the most common figurative language devices are simile, metaphor, personification, which is when a thing such as an idea or animal is given human characteristics, and symbolism, which is the use of symbols to represent ideas. Did you notice any of these present in this poem on the first or second reads? Let's read through the poem again. Look for any of these elements and take notes on your paper. You are not trying to capture every single one - only the ones you think are the most important to understanding the meaning of the poem.

[reread the poem]

"Hope is the thing with feathers"

"Hope is the thing with feathers"

"Hope" is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—

And sweetest—in the Gale, which is strong, forceful winds—  
is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash, which means embarrass, the little Bird  
That kept many so warm—

I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity, or the worst situation,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.

I will pause a moment to allow you to finish your notes.

[pause 1 minute]

Great work. Here are some things I noticed. First, I noticed the obvious metaphor for hope is the bird but most of the poem focuses on the bird's song, how it affects the speaker and others. Hope, when sung, carries. It spreads. Also, you may have heard a lot of pauses when I read. These are hyphens when you see the poem written. Dickinson likes to use these when she writes poems. I think in this poem the pauses seem to imitate the stops and starts of a bird song, making the poem have a greater effect on the reader. Finally, I noticed her use of symbols in nature - the sore storm, the chilliest land, the strangest sea - all represent challenging circumstances where hope is needed the most.

Let's take a look at the next section of the TPCASTT tool, "Attitude." In this section, we are trying to figure out the speaker's attitude or tone of the poem. Is it humorous? Sarcastic? In awe? Jot down on your paper some adjectives you think capture the speaker's tone in this poem.

[pause 30 seconds]

I wrote down in my notes, "admiring," "passionate," and "vibrant," or full of energy and enthusiasm. I chose "admiring" as the speaker admires the "song" of hope, "passionate" as the speaker clearly believes in hope against all odds, and "vibrant," as the poem is lively and paints a clear picture of the metaphor of hope. Remember the tone is an important tool the poet uses to affect how you as the reader are interpreting the poem.

Let's look at the next section, "Shift." Most poems have a shift, though it may be subtle. It is the moment there is a realization or a change in something. Look for key shift words like "but," "however," "though," or "although." There could also be punctual changes such as commas, periods, ellipses, semicolons, line breaks, etc.

Let's read the text once again to see where we can identify a shift.

[reread the poem]

"Hope is the thing with feathers"

**"Hope" is the thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—**

**And sweetest—in the Gale, which is strong, forceful winds—  
is heard—  
And sore must be the storm—  
That could abash, which means embarrass, the little Bird  
That kept many so warm—**

**I've heard it in the chilliest land—  
And on the strangest Sea—  
Yet, never, in Extremity, or the worst situation,  
It asked a crumb—of Me.**

**As you hear the text, where do you hear a shift? Take a few moments and write down on your paper where the shift happens and what you think it means.**

**[pause 1 minute]**

**In my notes, I marked that I think the shift happens right before the end of the poem. When the speaker says, "Yet, never, in Extremity, It asked a crumb - of Me." Most of the poem tracks the song of the bird and the tough situations in which it is found. But the speaker shifts at the end and closes with a powerful statement that there is no cost to hope. It is simply up to us to embrace it.**

**Let's consider the next section, "Title, revisited." Here, we are looking at the title again to see if it has taken on new meaning after our deeper analysis. Take a moment to write down on your paper any changes from your initial thoughts regarding the title.**

**[pause for 30 seconds]**

**Great thinking. After a deeper analysis, I thought the title "Hope is the thing with feathers" was purposefully simplistic, like the song of a bird in its simplistic beauty. The "feathers" part of the title stands out to me now as it re-emphasizes the theme of hope "carrying" or "flying" as does the song of the bird.**

**We've reached the final section, "Theme." In this section, we are bringing everything together to determine the underlying**

<p>message of the poem. What does it say about humanity or the world we live in? Take a moment and write down your thoughts on your paper.</p> <p>[pause 30 seconds]</p> <p>In my notes, I believe this poem boldly asks us to consider the beauty of hope. When we stop and hear the beauty of a bird's song and its ability to carry and penetrate the souls of humans and uplift us, we can hear the possibility of what hope can give us as well. And nothing is stopping us from embracing that hope.</p> <p>I hope you have found the TPCASTT tool useful in understanding the poem. Keep in mind that is all it is intended for - a helpful tool to assist you in uncovering a poem's meaning.</p>	
<p><b>Guided Practice</b> (15 minutes)</p> <p>Now that we've had an opportunity to analyze the poem ourselves, we're now going to look at a professional review of the poem called "Meaning of 'Hope is the thing with feathers.'" This is an argumentative essay that is designed to convince the reader of his/her interpretation of the poem. This is by no means the "correct" or "accurate" interpretation as there can be several valid interpretations of poems, as we have mentioned before.</p> <p>Let's pause and think a moment before we read the article. This is not the first time you have read and analyzed argumentative texts. We did so earlier this week, actually. Let's take a moment to review, though. What are some of the most important elements of an argumentative essay? What does an author need to include in his/her argumentative essay for it to be successful in persuading the reader? Take a moment and write your answers to these questions on your paper.</p> <p>[pause 90 seconds]</p> <p>Let's discuss some possibilities you may have written. We will not discuss every element of argumentative writing but only the most important ones. Perhaps the most important piece is it is very clear as to what the writer is arguing. This is usually represented in a thesis, or argument statement. It is also important that an author includes evidence to support his/her claim. The stronger the evidence is to support the claim, the stronger the argument. The author also needs to do an effective job of providing analysis that connects the</p>	<p>Students follow along and think and act as instructed, gradually gaining confidence and competence.</p> <p>Students will be able to use the TPCASTT tool to analyze poetry.</p>



evidence to the claims. If this analysis is not effective, there is too much work to be done on the audience's part to fit the pieces together. Without good analysis, the audience is usually not persuaded. Perhaps another critical element to arguments is "cohesion," or how effectively the ideas connect together. It's important to be able to clearly follow the author's ideas.

Now, we've talked about arguments enough. Let's read an argument from an unnamed author on his/her interpretation of the poem we read earlier in the lesson, "Hope is the thing with feathers." We will read the argument in its entirety first so you can get the big picture. We will then revisit the argument and analyze it for its effectiveness.

Let's read:

#### The Meaning of "Hope is the thing with feathers"

"Emily Dickinson describes the persistence of hope in her poem "Hope is the thing with feathers" by using an extended metaphor that compares hope to a bird whose song continues to provide comfort in difficult situations. The poet's imagery and word choices develop this metaphor to effectively convey the poem's theme that hope is an essential part of the human spirit.

In the first stanza, Dickinson establishes the metaphor when the speaker says that "'Hope' is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul." The use of the word *perch*, instead of *sit*, for example, immediately leads the reader to picture a bird. Also in this stanza, Dickinson describes the bird's wordless tune that "never stops at all." In other words, hope remains strong no matter what challenges a person faces.

This idea is further developed in the second stanza when the speaker says that hope's song is "sweetest" when heard in the "gale." The literal meaning of *gale*—a powerful wind—becomes a symbol of difficult times in one's life. It is during these dark times that hope's song is especially strong and "sweet," giving us encouragement.

Building on this extended metaphor, the speaker says, "And sore must be the storm / That could abash the little Bird / That kept so many warm." Here, the speaker suggests that even the word of storms cannot diminish hope. In these lines, Dickinson uses different soft and hard s-sound combinations to emphasize the contrast between the

sweetness of the bird's song and the sore storm that would be needed to break its confidence.

Finally, the speaker concludes the poem with another example of hope's perseverance, which means to do something despite difficulty in achieving success, by saying she has heard it in the "chilliest land" and "on the strangest Sea." And despite all of these harsh conditions, hope has never asked anything in return. As the speaker puts it: "Yet, never, in Extremity, / It asked a crumb—of me." The feeling of hope is such a powerful force within each of us that it needs no special nourishment or attention. Even in the darkest times it is always there, "perched" within us, ready to soar."

Now that you have heard the argument in its entirety, let us revisit the argument paragraph by paragraph to determine whether it is effective. Let's read the first paragraph again. You'll notice this paragraph is two sentences long, although they are long sentences. I'll pause after the first sentence to let you know I'm beginning the second sentence. As I read, let's see which one you think is the thesis statement. Be prepared to defend your answer.

"Emily Dickinson describes the persistence of hope in her poem "Hope is the thing with feathers" by using an extended metaphor that compares hope to a bird whose song continues to provide comfort in difficult situations.

[pause]

The poet's imagery and word choices develop this metaphor to effectively convey the poem's theme that hope is an essential part of the human spirit."

Now, take a moment and write on your paper which one you think is the more effective thesis statement. Explain why.

[pause 60 seconds]

The last time we studied an argumentative essay, both sentences in the first paragraph could have been considered to be valid thesis statements. In today's argumentative essay, the first sentence is the better choice. It captures fully in one sentence what the author does in the poem, how she does it, and why she does it. The second sentence only mentions how and why and does not fully capture the full picture of the poem. Keep in mind, however, although a

thesis statement frequently occurs in the first sentence of an argument, it does not necessarily have to be placed there. The author can place a thesis statement anywhere in an argument, as long as it is clear and effective in communicating the argument.

Let's take a look at the second paragraph again. As I read, pay attention to the transitional phrases the author uses. Transitional phrases are phrases that typically occur at the beginning of a sentence and assist in clarifying relationships among ideas in the passage. As I read, I will pause after each transitional phrase to indicate where it is. As I read, try to determine the importance of including these phrases for this author's argument.

"In the first stanza,"

[pause]

"Dickinson establishes the metaphor when the speaker says that "'Hope' is the thing with feathers / That perches in the soul." The use of the word *perch*, instead of *sit*, for example, immediately leads the reader to picture a bird. Also in this stanza,

[pause]

Dickinson describes the bird's wordless tune that "never stops at all." In other words,

[pause]

hope remains strong no matter what challenges a person faces."

Now, take a moment to write on your paper what you consider to be the significance, or importance, of these phrases to this paragraph and the argument presented.

[pause 30 seconds]

Thank you. The importance of these phrases is they help guide the reader through the steps of the argument. They help indicate the lines in the poem that the author is discussing. In this case, the author notes he is discussing words and phrases from the poem only in the first stanza. The transitional phrases help the reader locate the words and connect his ideas to them. Also, he uses the transitional

phrase “in other words” to indicate he is summarizing and restating something in a clearer fashion.

Notice the author has begun to present evidence to support his argument. These transitional phrases guide us in understanding his evidence.

Let’s take a look at the last sentence of the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph again:

“In other words, hope remains strong no matter what challenges a person faces.”

Here the author is making an implied claim in the sense that he is stating his interpretation of what the text is saying. He develops this idea further in the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph. As I read, consider the relationship of this paragraph to the sentence I just read. Try to note which sentences are claims, evidence, or analysis.

[read the text below]

“This idea is further developed in the second stanza when the speaker says that hope’s song is “sweetest” when heard in the “gale.” The literal meaning of *gale*—a powerful wind—becomes a symbol of difficult times in one’s life. It is during these dark times that hope’s song is especially strong and “sweet,” giving us encouragement.”

Take a moment and write in your notes which of the three key elements of arguments - claims, evidence, and analysis - are represented in this paragraph. You do not need to remember the sentences. Just label what you heard in the paragraph.

[pause 15 seconds]

Thank you. In this paragraph, the author continues the idea introduced in the 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, but with more evidence from the text. The author here is quoting the text and thereby introducing more evidence to support the idea that hope remains strong in the face of challenges. But he also provides analysis. This is demonstrated when he explains how the powerful wind is a symbol of difficult times and how the song of hope is what should be our encouragement during those times. The author is tying the ideas together to persuade the reader of his interpretation.

Let's read the 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph and do the same thing. As I read, try to note which sentences of the paragraph are claims, evidence, or analysis.

"Building on this extended metaphor, the speaker says, "And sore must be the storm / That could abash the little Bird / That kept so many warm."

[brief pause]

Here, the speaker suggests even the word of storms cannot diminish hope.

[brief pause]

In these lines, Dickinson uses different soft and hard s-sound combinations to emphasize the contrast between the sweetness of the bird's song and the sore storm that would be needed to break its confidence."

What did you think? On closer look, it appears to me the first sentence is clearly stating evidence from the passage. The second sentence interprets this evidence and makes a claim on its interpretation. The third sentence uses the evidence quoted in the first sentence to support the claim represented in the second sentence.

Ok, let's take a look at the last paragraph of the essay, the conclusion. As I read, pay special attention to see if the author summarizes all of his claims and wraps them up in such a fashion that the conclusion effectively supports the thesis we found in the introduction. Let's read:

"Finally, the speaker concludes the poem with another example of hope's perseverance, which means to do something despite difficulty in achieving success, by saying she has heard it in the "chilliest land" and "on the strangest Sea." And despite all of these harsh conditions, hope has never asked anything in return. As the speaker puts it: "Yet, never, in Extremity, / It asked a crumb—of me." The feeling of hope is such a powerful force within each of us that it needs no special nourishment or attention. Even in the darkest times it is always there, "perched" within us, ready to soar."

What do you think? Does the conclusion provide a good ending to his argument? Does it support his thesis? Take a moment to write your thoughts on your paper.

<p>[pause 60 seconds]</p> <p><b>Thank you. Although the last paragraph continues to provide new analysis of the poem, the last two sentences represent the conclusion and do a good job of bringing the argument to a final statement of the poem’s meaning that echoes what was presented in the thesis. Again, could it be improved? Absolutely. But it did enough to close the argument and restate the thesis.</b></p> <p><b>Overall, this was an effective argument that presented a clear interpretation of Dickinson’s poem. I hope you enjoyed learning the elements of an effective argument.</b></p>	
<p><b><u>Independent Work</u></b> (1 minute)</p> <p>[Teacher - will need to write the independent practice questions on chart paper so students can see them and copy them onto their own paper.]</p> <p><b>Let’s reflect on today’s lesson. Today we learned about Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Hope is the thing with feathers,” and we analyzed an argumentative essay to determine effective components for argumentative writing. For your independent work, please respond in writing to the following prompts:</b></p> <p>[teacher - display paper for students to read]</p> <p><b>Students, please write these questions down on your notebook paper so you will have them handy for when you are responding in writing.</b></p> <p><b>1. What stood out to you the most regarding Emily Dickinson’s poem, “Hope is the thing with feathers”? What are some lessons you can learn from it that you can apply to your own life?</b></p> <p><b>2. What did you learn the most in our analysis of the argumentative essay? How can you apply what you have learned to improving your own ability to present arguments?</b></p>	<p>Students will respond to a writing prompt that synthesizes their knowledge from today’s lesson.</p>
<p><b><u>Closing</u></b> (1 min)</p> <p><b>I enjoyed working on analyzing Emily Dickinson’s poetry and studying an argumentative essay with you today! Thank you for inviting me into your home. I look forward to seeing you</b></p>	

in our next lesson in Tennessee's At Home Learning Series! Bye!	
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