

Water, Is Taught By Thirst

By: Emily Dickinson

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Water, is taught by thirst.
Land - by the Oceans passed.
Transport - by throe -
Peace - by its battles told -
Love, by Memorial Mold -
Birds, by the Snow.

Summary

- This poem is a comparison of words.
- This poem shows how several things are “taught” by trial.
 - “Taught”- refers to when one learns the meaning/significance of a particular thing.
- In other words, the things that Dickinson mentions in the poem are often not appreciated because we take them for granted.

Summary (cont.)



- Water, is taught by thirst.
 - You learn that water is good for you and quenches thirst only by being thirsty (suffering).
 - Only by being thirsty can one appreciate water, and learn the value of water.

Summary (cont.)

- Land – by the Oceans passed.
 - Land and the ocean are opposites.
 - One cannot appreciate land (being on land) until they experience a long period of time off of land.



Summary (cont.)



- Transport – by throe –
 - We cannot have a truly good experience without first experiencing pain.
 - “Throe” literally refers to a violent spasm.
 - In this poem, “throe” refers to a bad, or negative experience.

Summary (cont.)

- Peace – by its battles told –
 - One cannot truly appreciate peace until they have lost it, like when a battle or a war starts.
 - We often take peace for granted.



Summary (cont.)



- Love, by Memorial Mold –
 - One only realizes that they really love someone after they are gone.
 - Dickinson was in a period in her life when she was losing people close to her. This is reflected in this line.
 - “Memorial Mold” refers to grieving after a loss.

Summary (cont.)



- Birds, by the Snow.
 - This line refers to the wintertime, when birds migrate south.
 - A lack of birds in the wintertime allows for an appreciation of birds that one did not have in the summertime
 - One doesn't truly appreciate the beauty of birds until they are gone for the winter.
 - This line is perhaps the most interesting line of the poem.

Universal Themes and Meanings

- “One does not realize what he or she had until it is lost.”
- The significance of something in our lives is not fully appreciated until we lose it.
- Too often we take things for granted when instead we should focus on what we already have.

Universal Themes and Meanings (cont.)

- There will always be trial (hard times) in life. If not, then we would never appreciate anything in life, and the good things that come would not seem as good. Even though there is trial, there is always a better side to it. The solution is to stay strong and wait for the bright side. By doing that, one will appreciate things in life that are usually taken for granted.

Significance of the Title

- Water Is Taught By Thirst
 - The title is the same as line 1.
 - It says that the gift of water cannot be appreciated without first going without it; without first being thirsty.



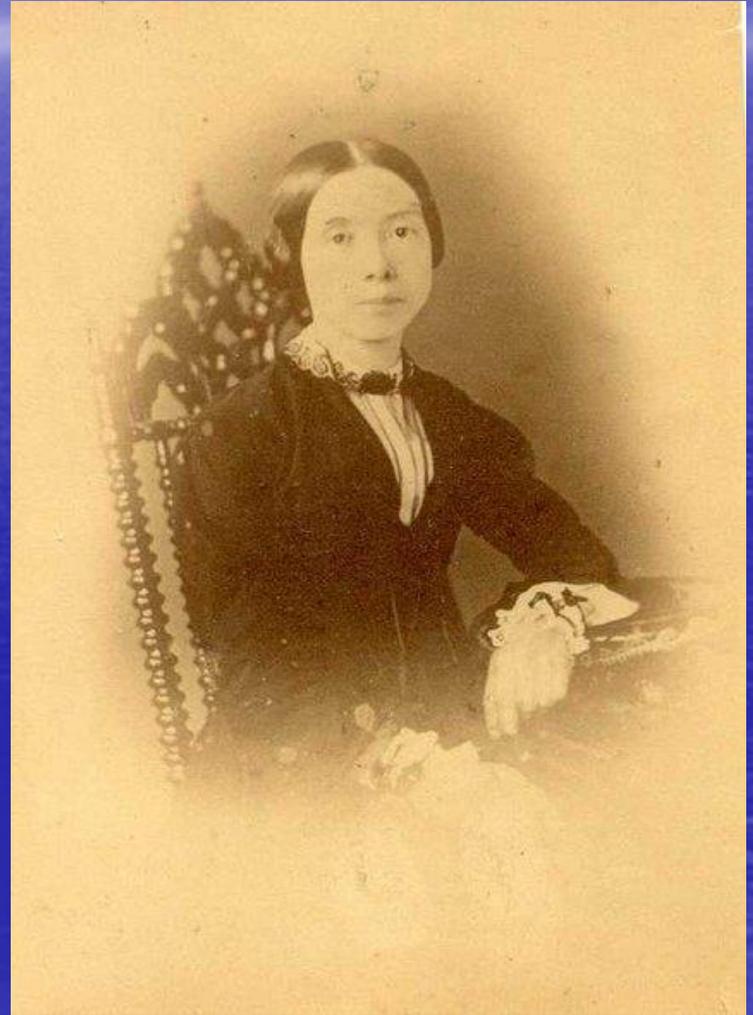
Modern Day Relevance

- An example of not knowing how important something is until it is gone is the Twin Towers and 9/11.
- After 9/11, the Twin Towers were missed, now that we know what it is like without them.
- We didn't fully appreciate them until they were gone.

Author Background Info

- Born in Massachusetts in 1830.
- Studied at Amherst Academy for 7 years.
- After Amherst, she returned to her home.
- She was very secluded, didn't greet guests, and later in life, she barely left her room.
- Most Dickinson poems were not published until after her death.
- A lot of her poems deal with death and immortality

Emily Dickinson



Poetic Devices

- **End Rhyme**
- **Connotation**
 - “throe” refers to struggles in life.
 - not its literal definition (violent spasm).
- Water, is taught by thirst.
Land - by the Oceans passed.
Transport - by **throe** -
Peace - by its battles **told** -
Love, by Memorial **Mold** -
Birds, by the Snow.

Poetic Devices (cont.)

- **Figurative Language**
 - “Oceans passed” refers to time spent away from land.
- **Allusion**
 - The reader has to be familiar with Dickinson’s life (she lost many close people).
- Water, is taught by thirst.
Land - by the **Oceans passed**.
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Love, by **Memorial Mold** -
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Poetic Devices (cont.)

- Symbol

- The whole poem is a symbol for under appreciation of things in life.

- Irony

- The poem suggests that **things** are taught by their **opposite**

- Each line contains an opposite: **Water**, is taught by **thirst**.
Land - by the **Oceans** passed.
Transport - by **throe** -
Peace - by its **battles** told -
Love, by **Memorial Mold** -
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Discussion Questions

1. Do you agree that good always comes out of bad? Why or why not?
2. Discuss the theme of this poem: "We do not realize what we have until we lose it."
3. After reading and analyzing the poem, is there anything in your life that you now realize you take for granted, and should appreciate more?