

ANALYZING POETRY

“Hope” is the thing with feathers *by* **Emily Dickinson**

Directions: Answer the following questions about Emily Dickinson’s poem, “‘Hope’ is the thing with feathers.”

1. **Part A:** What is the primary metaphor that Dickinson uses in the poem?

- a. hope is a crumb
- b. hope is a bird**
- c. hope is a feather
- d. hope is a singer

Part B: Cite at least two words in the first stanza that support your answer in Part A.

The words “feathers,” “perches,” and “sings” all show that hope is being compared to a bird.

2. Reread the following lines from stanza 1 and consider the meaning of the bold word.

“Hope” is the thing with feathers –
That **perches** in the soul –

What can you infer about hope based on the action in these two lines?

- a. Hope waits patiently until it is needed.**
- b. Hope is chaotic and anxious to be used.
- c. Hope is comfortable and would rather not be needed.
- d. Hope wishes to be used only in hard times.

3. **Part A:** What is a synonym for “gale” as it is used in line 5?

- a. morning
- c. strong wind**
- b. church
- d. springtime

Part B: What does line 5 show about the subject of the poem?

Hope is most meaningful and/or beautiful when times are tough.

4. **Part A:** In a complete sentence, write the central idea or theme of the poem.

Hope provides strength, inspiration, and perseverance to a person facing obstacles.

Part B: Explain how stanzas 2 and 3 support the central idea or theme you described in Part A.

Stanza 2: It shows that hope is strong, and it would take significant strife and chaos to disturb it. The metaphor compares hope’s endurance to a bird’s endurance in the middle of a storm.

Stanza 3: Hope remains, helping a person to persevere when they’re in their darkest and most difficult moments.

5. Explain what lines 11 and 12 reveal about the subject of hope.

Lines 11 and 12 show that “hope” is selfless as it does not ask for anything in return for its presence or inspiration. Even in extreme circumstances, hope remains constant.

6. Read the poem out loud. How does the rhythm of the poem match its meaning and tone?

The song-like rhythm of the poem matches the positive feeling of hope in the poem.