

ANALYZING POETRY

# “Hope” is the thing with feathers

by Emily Dickinson

**Directions:** Read the poem and answer the questions that follow.

- 1 “Hope” is the thing with feathers –  
That perches in the soul –  
And sings the tune without the words –  
And never stops – at all –
- 5 And sweetest – in the Gale – is heard –  
And sore must be the storm –  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm –
- I’ve heard it in the chilliest land –
- 10 And on the strangest Sea –  
Yet – never – in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb – of me.

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# “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.

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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      b. church
- c. strong wind      d. springtime

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

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

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

Stanza 2: \_\_\_\_\_

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Stanza 3: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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