

Unit 3

Title: A Bird Came Down the Walk

Synonyms

Stanza 1

Bit: Chewed, chomped
Angleworm: Earthworm, nightcrawler
Halves: Divisions, sections
Fellow: Creature, being
Raw: Uncooked, fresh

Stanza 2

Dew: Moisture, droplets
Convenient: Handy, accessible
Hopped: Jumped, leaped
Sidewise: Sideways, laterally
Beetle: Insect, bug

Stanza 3

Glanced: Peaked, glimpsed
Rapid: Swift, quick
Hurried: Rushed, hasty, hastened
Frightened: Scared, terrified
Beads: Pearls
Stirred: Moved, shifted
Velvet: Soft, smooth

Stanza 4

Danger: Peril, risk
Cautious: Careful, wary
Offered: Presented, gave
Crumb: Morsel, bit
Unrolled: Spread, opened
Feathers: Plumes, plumage
Rowed: Paddled, glided
Softer: Gentler, smoother

Stanza 5

Oars: Paddles, sculls
Divide: Split, separate
Ocean: Sea
Silver: Silvery, gleaming
Seam: Line, crack
Banks: Shores, edges
Leap: Jump, spring
Plashless: Silent, noiseless
Swim: Glide, float

Question Answers

Q1. What is your initial reaction to the title "A Bird Came Down the Walk"? Does it evoke any specific imagery or emotions?

Ans. My first reaction is one of curiosity and simplicity—it paints an image of a bird casually walking down a path, almost like a small, everyday moment captured in time. It feels peaceful and slightly whimsical, as though the scene is taking place in a quiet garden. The title evokes a gentle, intimate observation rather than a dramatic event.

Q2. What does the title suggest about the subject of the poem? Is it straightforward, or does it hint at something deeper?

Ans. On the surface, the title is straightforward—it tells us about a bird walking along a path.

However, it may hint at something deeper, such as the idea of observing nature closely, the quiet beauty in small moments, or the delicate boundary between the human world and the animal world.

Q3. How does the simplicity of the title contrast with the possible complexity of the poem's themes? Consider how a seemingly simple observation could lead to deeper reflections.

Ans. The title's simplicity sets the stage for what appears to be a small, everyday event. Yet, Dickinson often uses such small moments to explore complex themes—here, the act of a bird walking might lead to reflections on the predator-prey cycle, the cautiousness of wild creatures, and the beauty of movement. This contrast draws attention to how even the most ordinary observations can hold layers of meaning.

Q4. In what ways might the title reflect the broader themes of the poem, such as the relationship between humans and nature, or the idea of seeing the extraordinary in the ordinary?

Ans. The title perfectly captures Dickinson's style of finding the extraordinary in the ordinary. It reflects the idea that nature is constantly around us, often unnoticed, and that careful observation can reveal moments of grace, beauty, and tension. The act of a bird coming down the walk becomes a symbol of the fragile, cautious connection between humans and the natural world—close enough to witness, yet distant enough to remain untamed.

Q5. Identify an example of personification in the poem. How does it enhance your understanding of the bird?

Ans. The line "He stirred his Velvet Head" is personification because it gives the bird a human-like quality. Saying its head is "velvet" makes us imagine the bird as soft and gentle, helping us see it as delicate and peaceful.

Q6. 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?

Ans. The line "Oars divide the Ocean" compares the bird's flight to oars moving through water. It makes us imagine the bird flying very smoothly and quietly, showing how graceful and calm its movement is.

Q7. Find a simile in the poem and explain its significance in the overall imagery.

Ans. The simile "They looked like frightened Beads" compares the bird's eyes to small, scared beads. It shows the bird is nervous and always alert, helping us picture how careful and watchful it is.

Q8. How does Dickinson use visual imagery to describe the bird's actions? Provide examples.

Ans. Dickinson uses clear images like "He bit an Angeworm in halves," "He hopped sidewise to the Wall," and "Unrolled his feathers." These help us clearly see what the bird is doing and make the scene feel real.

Q9. 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?

Ans. The words "Velvet Head" make the bird gentle and delicate. This makes the poem feel gentle and calm, especially after the earlier tense part. It adds to the peaceful mood at the end.

Q10. How does the mood shift from the beginning to the end of the poem? What words or phrases help create this shift?

Ans. The poem starts with a careful and tense mood, using words like "bit an Anglemorm" and "frightened Beads." Later, it becomes calm and peaceful with lines like "Too silver for a seam" and "Butterflies...plashless as they swim."

Q11. What do you think Dickinson is trying to convey about the relationship between humans and nature? Support your answer with evidence from the poem.

Ans. Dickinson shows that people should quietly watch and respect nature. The speaker doesn't disturb the bird but only offers a crumb. The bird leaves on its own, showing that nature is free and doesn't need human help. The line "He did not know I saw" shows quiet respect.

Q12. How does the bird's decision to fly away rather than accept the crumb reflect broader themes of freedom and independence?

Ans. The bird flying away instead of taking the crumb shows that it wants to stay free and not depend on anyone. It shows nature's independence and how living things want to make their own choices.

Q13. How does the poem explore the concept of natural beauty versus natural brutality? Give specific examples from the text.

Ans. The poem shows both the harsh side of nature—like when the bird "bit an Anglemorm in halves"—and the beautiful side, like the soft flight described as "plashless as they swim." It shows that nature can be both rough and graceful.

Q14. What is the significance of the speaker observing the bird without the bird's knowledge? How does this affect the tone of the poem?

Ans. The speaker watches the bird quietly without it knowing. This gives the poem a gentle and respectful tone. It shows the speaker's quiet admiration and the idea that we should not disturb nature.

Q15. What does the bird do after it comes down the walk?

Ans. The bird eats a worm, drinks dew, avoids a beetle, looks around carefully, and then flies away when the speaker offers a crumb.

Q16. How does the speaker interact with the bird?

Ans. The speaker just watches the bird and kindly offers it a crumb. The bird doesn't take it and flies away gently.

Q17. Identify the rhyme scheme in each stanza.

Ans.

- Stanza 1: ABCB
- Stanza 2: ABCB

- Stanza 3: ABCB
- Stanza 4: ABCB
- Stanza 5: ABCB

Each stanza follows the same rhyme pattern where the second and fourth lines rhyme.

Q18. How does the rhyme scheme contribute to the overall flow and rhythm of the poem?

Ans. The ABCB rhyme scheme makes the poem sound smooth and gentle. It matches the quiet and careful feeling of the poem and fits with how the bird moves softly and gracefully.