

Emily Dickinson Poetry Practice Guided Analysis (Poem 824 V2)

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“The Wind begun to Rock the Grass” by poet Emily Dickinson warns the reader on the dangers of ignoring warning signs such as in the lines ‘The Leaves unhooked themselves from Trees-’ (Dickinson 5) and “The Thunder hurried slow-” (Dickinson 10). It is not until it is too late when “... the Hands / That held the Dams had parted hold” (Dickinson 16, 17), that the narrator realizes the peril he/she is in. Through the use of an allegorical reference to domestic abuse and repetition of nature motifs, Dickinson conveys the dangers of ignorance.

To begin, the poem is written in the form of an allegory where there is a hidden meaning to the poem that can be interpreted. In the case of this poem, the brewing storm is metaphorical for the domestic abuse that has been long in the making. Domestic violence often is not a result of instantaneous decisions, but rather the buildup of tension over a long period of time. The storm within the poem can be metaphorically interpreted to be the buildup of the suspense and when it finally rains, the act of domestic violence has been committed. This idea is further reinforced within the final stanza of the poem when it did not rain on the narrator’s father’s house as shown in the line “But overlooked my Father’s House-” (Dickinson 19). The pathetic fallacy of rain is often symbolic change and the lack of the rain over the house of the narrator’s father shows that over the years, the narrator’s father still has not changed as a person. Throughout the entirety of the poem leading up to the final stanza, there have been plenty of warning signs about the imminent danger. As can be seen in the first stanza of the poem, the lines “The Wind begun to rock the Grass / With threatening Tunes and low-” (Dickinson 1, 2) , the rocking

of the grass in a threatening tune acts as a warning sign and foreshadows the violence. The dangers of ignoring all of the warning signs can be seen in the final stanza of the poem, where the “dam” that had held back the water broke and “The water wrecked the Sky” (Dickinson 18). The allegory of the poem as a case of domestic violence aids Dickinson in conveying the message that warning signs should not be ignored.

Dickinson further reinforces that the warning signs were plentiful through the use of partial parallelism throughout the poem. Parallelism is often used within poetry to establish rhythm and order. To establish disorder within the poem, instead of using perfect parallelism, Dickinson utilizes partial parallelism. Each stanza except the last stanza starts by describing the metaphorical warning sign of a single object. This can be seen in the lines “The Leaves unhooked themselves from Trees-” (Dickinson 5) and “The Wagons quickened on the Streets” (Dickinson 9) where an object is followed by a metaphorical description. The establishment of order and repetition brings a sense of calmness to the reader. However, the entropy is suddenly increased in the final stanza of the poem where the parallelism was not followed as the stanza began with the line “That held the Dams had parted hold” (Dickinson 17). The sudden change in pattern shows how unexpected the narrator felt towards domestic abuse even though there were many warning signs throughout the build up to the climax. This helps Dickinson reinforce the dangers of ignorance in light of impending danger. The sudden break in parallelism within the poem further persuades the reader on the dangers of not comprehending the warning signs and being left in the dark of the danger.

To summarize, Emily Dickinson's poem "The Wind begun to Rock the Grass" portrays the dangers of ignoring warning signs through an allegory about domestic abuse and parallelism. The build up of the storm can be metaphorically interpreted as the build up of the tension leading up to the occurrence of domestic abuse. Through the use of parallelism within the first four stanzas of the poem and a sudden change in format within the final stanza, Dickinson portrays the shock the narrator felt when the domestic abuse finally occurred as they had been blindsighted to be ignoring the warning signs. Although there have been more than enough warning signs of the imminent danger of the storm, the narrator chose to ignore them and eventually was caught in a storm that "wrecked the sky".