

Emily Dickinson Poetry Practice Guided Analysis (Poem 410)

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“The first Day’s Night had come-” is a poem written by world renowned poet Emily Dickinson and follows the narrator’s descent into madness. After experiencing repeated traumatic events in the narrator’s life, shown in the first stanza “So terrible - had been endured”, his/her “...Brain - begun to laugh-” and “keeps giggling - still”, which shows a loss of control to her thoughts. Throughout the poem, Dickinson elegantly uses personification and em-dashes to convey how two separate disturbing incidents, that took place early in the narrator’s life, have derailed her life into madness.

To begin, Dickinson personifies the “Soul” through the capitalization of the word in the first stanza of the poem as well as specify the soul to be a female voice through the use of an abundant amount of feminine pronouns such as “She” and “Her”. Within the first stanza of the poem, she depicts “... Soul to sing-”, which is symbolic for the forecast of a difficult period. Furthermore, within the second stanza, the narrator’s “Strings were snap’t”, which suggests that she has been traumatized and figuratively broken and her soul requires to be “mend”. In order to demonstrate the extent of the trauma, the author must mend her soul for the entirety of the night as seen in the following line: “Until another Morn”. Personification is also used in the fourth stanza to show her descent into madness. The word brain is personified within this stanza, and was described to “begun to

laugh-" and "keeps giggling still-". By describing the brain to be in a state of uncontrollable laughter, the narrator depicts a loss of control. As the human brain is often representative of a person's cognitive abilities, if the brain is no longer in control, then the narrator has truly derailed into insanity.

Dickinson further reinforces the idea that the narrator has truly lost control of her life through the use of em-dashes throughout the poem. Em-dashes are often used to replace punctuation within a poem, and emphasizes the inability to pause as it pushes the reader towards the next phrase. The first and third stanzas of the poem is when the narrator was met with two separate traumatic events. As can be seen in the amount of em-dashes present within each stanza, a total of four em-dashes can be found in the first stanza, while the third stanza only contains three. This demonstrates that once it was the second time that she was traumatized, she was able to handle it a lot better than the first time and shows self restraint to prevent herself from descending into madness. However, it did not work, as in the fourth stanza, which is when she begins to derail into insanity, there are a total of seven em-dashes. This is evident that after repeatedly being traumatized, she could no longer restrain herself and finally gives in to the madness and loses control. In the final stanza of the poem, the narrator compares and contrasts her present and past self. The em-dashes within this stanza show a sense of distortion within the poem as they are used to connect grammatically improper sentences

together such as “Could it be Madness - this?” to show that the narrator is in a state of mania and is unable to properly communicate herself.

To summarize, “The first Day’s Night had come-” is a beautiful yet saddening work of literature written by famous American poet Emily Dickinson. The author’s use of personification and repetitive use of em-dashes conveys a depressing atmosphere of uncontrolled spiral into madness. Although she tries to control herself after being repeatedly traumatized, in the end, she gives in to the insanity and loses control of herself and her life.