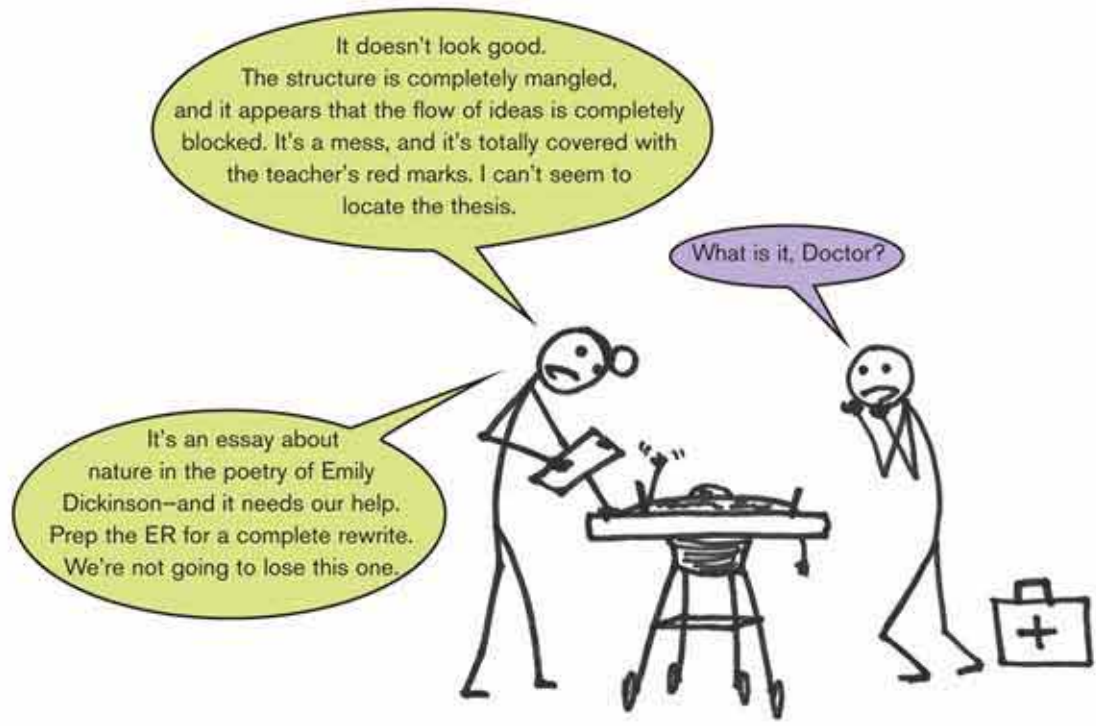


Can This Essay Be Saved?

Read the breathtaking tale of a writing doctor's desperate attempt to save a failing paper.

Story and illustrations by Jeffrey Ives

Sirens blare and tires screech as the academic ambulance pulls up to the writing hospital's gaping double doors. The patient is wheeled into the ER (Essay Room) by a panicked pair of paragraph paramedics. The chief EP (Essay Practitioner) runs beside the gurney, checking the patient's vital signs.



D- Rewrite!
If this essay hopes to pass, it needs major reconstructive surgery.

Low vital signs!
The introduction is deadly dull. It needs to grab the reader!

Thesis Transplant Needed!
The first paragraph is over and still no thesis statement.

Lost Connection!
There's no transition here!

Explanation Needed, stat!
How does this quote add to the purpose of the paper?

Lack of Support!
This argument will collapse unless it's explained a bit more.

Conclusion Confusion!
What's going on here? The essay doesn't mention Dickinson's being alone until now. This looks like an important point.

Unauthorized Person!
What are you doing here? Don't bring yourself into an essay unless it's about your own experience.

Sentence Shrapnel!
This is unimportant information. Who cares how she died? This is about nature in her poetry.

Cite Your Quotes!
Readers need to know where they come from.

Vocab Infusion!
Use literary terms when you can. Giving nonhuman things human characteristics is a literary device called personification.

Thesis Rescue
This looks like the essay's main point. What's it doing way down here? Move it up to the introduction so the reader knows what's going on!

Clogged Ending!
This final line doesn't make a broad statement that the reader can take away with him or her.

Nature in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson was born in Amherst, Mass., in 1830. She spent her life studying literature and writing poetry. **She died in 1886 of nephritis, which is a kidney disease.** After she died, Dickinson's family, led by her sister, Lavinia, and sister-in-law, Susan Dickinson, worked to have Dickinson's poetry published. Dickinson's poetry is often divided into categories. Many of her poems are about subjects such as nature, life, love, death, and eternity.

In the pages of Dickinson's poetry, all living creatures have equal status. In "The bee is not afraid of me," the poet alludes to insects as "pretty people in the woods." "The bee is not afraid of me, / I know the butterfly; / The pretty people in the woods / Receive me cordially."

Dickinson gives a variety of natural elements human characteristics. In "Dear March, come in!" the author describes the month of March as being "out of breath" and notes that the maples "never knew" that March was coming.

Nature is special in Dickinson's poetry. In "Nature, the gentlest mother," the author's voice claims that nature is "Impatient of no child." It goes on to imply that all living creatures are nature's children. At the end of the day, nature puts her children to sleep when she puts "Her golden finger on her lip, / Wills silence everywhere."

Dickinson lived life alone. But she might not have lived a lonely life. **I think** she had more companionship than you might think. Her poetry about nature shows how everything surrounding her, from the smallest butterfly and insect to the entirety of the natural world, was like a friend to her. And that explains why she wrote so much poetry about nature.

Examining the Bones

The intern looks up from the injured essay, flustered and barely able to speak.



Inside the X-Ray room, the doctor walks over to a diagram on the wall. "A healthy five-paragraph essay should have a structure that looks something like this."

- I. Introduction
 - A. Attention-grabbing lead
 - B. More specific statements and ideas
 - C. Thesis—the main idea of the essay
- II. Paragraphs 1–3
 - A. Quotes or facts that support the thesis
 - B. Explanation of quotes or facts
 - C. Linking of the quotes or facts to thesis
- III. Conclusion
 - A. Restatement of thesis
 - B. Explanation of thesis
 - C. General statement connecting thesis to the larger subject matter

"Unfortunately," the doctor says, pointing to another diagram, "this is what our poor essay looks like."

- I. Introduction
 - A. Specific information about Emily Dickinson
 - B. General statement about Dickinson's poetry

*Missing a thesis!
- II. Quotes from "The bee is not afraid of me"
 - A. Quote from the poem
 - B. Brief explanation of the quote

*Missing connection to the essay's main idea!
- III. Quotes from "Dear March, come in!"
 - A. Statement about personification
 - B. Quotes from the poem

*Missing connection to the essay's main idea!
- IV. Quotes from "Nature, the gentlest mother"
 - A. Statement: nature as mother of all creatures

- B. Quotes from the poem
- *Missing connection to the essay's main idea!
- V. Conclusion
 - A. Statement that Dickinson lived alone but was not lonely
 - B. Thesis statement that nature was like a companion in Dickinson's poetry

*Missing broad concluding statement!

The Diagnosis

"You can see that most of this essay's problems come from not having a thesis (or main idea) in the introductory paragraph," says the doctor, examining the X-ray under a glowing light. "The thesis is way down at the bottom. If we bring it into the first paragraph, it will give the other paragraphs something to relate to."

"Brilliant, but can it work?" asks the intern, peering over the doctor's shoulder.

"We've got to try. Prepare the OR (Organization Room). I'm going in!"

Post-Op Examination

After several anxious hours in the OR, the intern comes bouncing into the lobby, beaming with happiness. "We've done it!" The lobby explodes in applause.

All's Well That Ends Well

The intern turns to the doctor. "That was some great work in there, Doctor. I can't imagine I'll ever be able to do that." In the distance, there's the sound of a siren blaring. Another ambulance is on its way.

The doctor chuckles and smiles. "Sure you will. It just takes some practice. Starting now."

A Excellent! You take an important theme in Dickinson's work and explain it in a way that makes sense.

Nature in the Poetry of Emily Dickinson

There's no need to be lonely when Mother Nature is around. The poetry of Emily Dickinson shows how the natural world of plants and animals can comfort someone living a secluded life. Dickinson was born in 1830. She was often described as a hermit, or a loner cut off from society. Although Dickinson spent much of her time alone, her poetry shows that she was not truly lonely because her poems personify elements of the natural world and treat them as friends and family.

Dickinson's poetry expresses a special relationship with nature. In the poem "Nature, the gentlest mother," the poet claims that nature is "Impatient of no child." At the end of the day, nature puts her children to sleep when she puts "Her golden finger on her lip, / Wills silence everywhere." (Complete Poems, D). If all natural creatures are Mother Nature's children, Dickinson had no need to be lonely. She was always surrounded by her brothers and sisters, even if those siblings were lowly insects and plants.

Even the smallest living things hold a special place in Dickinson's poetry. For example, in "The bee is not afraid of me," the author alludes to insects as "pretty people in the woods": "The bee is not afraid of me, / I know the butterfly; / The pretty people in the woods / Receive me cordially." (Complete Poems, LVIII). Dickinson felt that the smallest creatures welcomed her as an appreciated visitor.

Dickinson uses personification, the attribution of human characteristics to natural elements. In "Dear March, come in!" the poet describes the month of March as being "out of breath," and notes that the maples "never knew" that March was coming. Rushing and being caught off guard are both human things to do. By describing natural elements that way, Dickinson transforms them from things to friends.

Those poems show that Dickinson gave careful thought and attention to the natural world. Though she might not have talked to maples, butterflies, and bees, she did think about them and write about them as if they were companions. Her poetry shows how nature can comfort a lonely person. Though it is never easy to find a feeling of belonging and acceptance, Dickinson shows that such a connection may be as close as walking outside.

Nicely written introduction! The purpose of the essay is clear from the beginning.

Smooth Transitions! Each paragraph is connected to the next by key words and ideas.

Smooth Connection! Nice way to relate the paragraph back to the thesis idea.

Great Explanation! This sentence shows how the quote relates back to the thesis.

Cool Conclusion! Everyone wants to feel like a part of something.

Great Thesis! It clearly states an idea about the author and her work.

Nice vocab!

This is interesting!