

Read Like This—A Strategy for Close Reading of Literature

“Hope” is the thing with feathers Worksheet

Directions:

1. Read the poem on the following page aloud to yourself.
2. After the first read, go back and read the poem again. Circle or underline phrases that stick out at you. Look for words and phrases that get your attention or that seem really confusing and hard to understand. Try to paraphrase the lines of the poem in an effort to understand its meaning.
3. Map out the poem and make margin notes about the connections you find. Use the left-hand margin for comments about what the author is saying and the right-hand margin for digging deeper and asking yourself questions. Remember, the more you use your pen to mark up the poem, the more likely you are to make relevant connections and understandings.
4. Revisit the poem again. Look at the words. Identify any unfamiliar words, look them up, and see if you can figure out any connections or relationships. Write down some notes about what you see.
5. Examine the form of the poem. What does it look like? How is it divided? What kinds of punctuation are used? How long are the lines? Are there stanzas or is it in one block? Write down some notes about what you see. Pay attention to how Dickinson structured the poem to get us to realize what she was trying to tell us about the concept of hope.
6. Write down some big ideas you found in the poem. Point out details that illustrate what you think Dickinson is trying to tell us about hope. If a fellow student is working on the same module as you, take a moment to discuss the poem with him or her. Talking about your findings is a great way to gather your thoughts about the poem.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers —
That perches in the soul —
And sings the tune without the words —
And never stops — at all —

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 —
And on the strangest Sea —
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb — of Me.

– Emily Dickinson