**“Dickinson is a unique poet characterised by her unusual style and interesting view of the world.”**

One of the first things that strikes any reader when they look at a Dickinson poem is the unique way it announces itself on the page. My first thought when studying her poetry can best be described through a quote from Dickinson herself – “Here’s freedom”. While this phrase was used by Dickinson to describe the freedom she felt in her room in Amherst I felt there was a real sense of freedom in her poetry as she cast off the rules of punctuation and grammar to express her ideas. And it is these ideas and the view of the world that she brought to her poetry a really spoke to me as I read her poetry. It is an intense view of the world, full of joy and horror. What also interested me was how this world was not just outside her window in Amherst in the 1800’s but the more complex world of her inner thoughts. I found this fascinating as I got a real insight into Dickinson’s world and her mind. The poems I have studied are ‘I felt a Funeral, in my Brain’, ‘A Bird Came Down the Walk’, ‘Hope is the Thing with Feathers’,

What is it about her style that I found unique and unusual? The most obvious characteristics of her style are her use of the dash and capital letters. When I first read her poetry I was intrigued how she used the dash to create a pause for thought. It made me realize there can be so much more to poetry than just words and phrases she used. The dash creates such drama in *I felt a Funeral, in my Brain* when we read the line “kept beating- beating- til I thought my mind was going numb”. The powerful dash really emphasizes the beating and the anguish she was going through. In the same poem if you look at many of the words which have capital letters; Funeral, Brain, Mourners, Sense, Box, Soul it really helps the reader to understand the theme of the poem and also contributes to the oppressive and sinking atmosphere of the poem.

What I found most interesting and unique about her style was how she used concrete and literal images to explain human emotions and conditions. Her use of a funeral service to describe mental and emotional breakdown was very unusual but very appropriate. The image of the mourners “lift a Box and creak across my Soul” and “then a Plank in Reason broke” is a very unique and visual way of describing this mental breakdown. In stark contrast to these depressing images her comparison of hope to a bird in Hope is the thing with Feathers could not be more simple or appropriate. The idea of hope being a bird “that sings the tune without the words- And never stops- at all” is a very positive and uplifting image, but most importantly one that shows how clever Dickinson was at taking an abstract idea and making it realistic for the reader.

Perhaps the most unique set of images that she used was where she compared being drunk with the joy she got from the beauty of nature. When I first read it I was immediately struck by how unusual this comparison was, especially when you think of the Puritan world that she lived in. What a clever comparison to make. On one hand easy to understand, but on the other rebellious and unique. Even in today’s world drunkenness is seen as something to be shunned and ashamed of. Dickinson subverts this idea and produces a poem with great optimism and an intense feeling of happiness.

Another unusual thing about her poetry was the intensity and drama in each of her poems. Through her imagery, and use of verbs in particular she managed to create real drama and intense emotion in each of the poems I studied. I really enjoyed how she built up the drama of the moment in *A bird came down the walk* through her use of short sentences and the dash in the opening stanzas. Even such a simple quote as “HE glanced with rapid eyes that hurried all around” adds to the drama of the moment she is describing. Perhaps the most intense and even horrific moment in the poems I have studied was the moment in The Soul has Bandaged moments when “Fright “tries to “caress her freezing hair”. When I read this first I got a chill almost as if I was watching a horror movie. The development of this idea to include the Soul being “led along, with shackles on the plumed feet, And staples, in the Song, “ as “The Horror, welcomes her, again” is probably one of the most intense images I have encountered in my study of poetry, and really challenged my view of the world and the human soul.

Her view of the world changed in the poems I read. I found her view of hope in the world very uplifting in *Hope is the thing with feathers*. Dickinson reveals a more cheerful side to her character in this poem. In it, she explores the subject of hope by comparing it to a mysterious bird. The capital letter used for ‘Hope’ is emphatic, reflecting the poet’s intense feelings of about how human beings can show strength and relisience when faced with challenges. The poem contrasts greatly with Dickinson’s usual image as a poet who only writes about dark subjects. Her attitude to Hope is positive – it “perches in the soul”. The dynamic verb “perches” highlights the upbeat emotion. The poet shows the brave little bird weathering “the Gale” and surviving tough times even though “sore must be the storm”. The personal final stanza, “I’ve heard it in the chilliest land”, is also comforting. Dickinson expresses her gratitude for this simple human quality which has always helped her to cope. The image of the little bird “That kept so many warm” conveys a highly optimistic side to this unique poet.

In contrast I found her view of the world in The Soul has Bandaged moments quite depressing at times. The idea that the soul only has “moments of escape” and will end up “with shackles on plumed feet” is both interesting and unique. Yet it still leaves me with a sadness to think that this is what Dickinson thought.

When I reflect on my study of poetry I find it fascinating to think that all of her poetry was written in isolation, living as a recluse in her room. She was a unique individual, but more importantly a unique poet, whose poetry speaks to us even today. This is the most impressive thing about her poetry. Here was a poet, who was able to rebel against all that she would have been taught about poetry, grammar and punctuation. She created a unique style that has made her poetry recognizable and instantly unique. But even more impressive and interesting is the view of the world she was able to create. A world full of drama, despair and joy. It is ironic that the inner world that she created, on one hand so personal and private can be so relevant and interesting to all who read her poetry. That is what makes her unique. Her ability to speak to the world, to get us to think of the human mind and spirit, and all from a little bedroom in Amherst. As she said herself, “here’s freedom”.