

LESSON 31

HOPE

This famous poem by the American poet Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) uses a very arresting metaphor for hope. Living in Massachusetts, the poet would have been very familiar with the image that she presents of a bird singing in a winter storm. Birdsongs are very sweet and have a certain optimism to them; they are as warm and cheery as the sun shining in a bright blue sky. Hope, Emily Dickinson is saying, is very much like that singing bird.

It seems a little out of place for a bird to be singing in the circumstances of winter’s gray gloom and cold, but birds, like hope, will do that. It is most comforting, in fact, to hear a bird singing in the gloomiest gale of winter, just as hope is most welcome when our circumstances are “sore,” or bad. Everyone needs hope. It cheers the spirit. It encourages us to press on in life despite bad circumstances. And it allows us to wait for a better day. Though it gives us so much, it does not ask a “crumb” of us—in other words, it costs nothing. Before reading the poem, parents may want to introduce some of the ideas Emily Dickinson expresses in her poem through the following questions.

PRE-READING ORAL QUESTIONS

1. What is hope?

Hope is a positive outlook about the future. A person who has hope can be happy even when things are not going well, because he believes that things will get better or that in one way or another, he will profit from the bad circumstances.

2. Do you think that everyone needs to hope?

Everyone needs hope to live. If a person cannot look forward to good or better things in the future, such an outlook would be unbearably grim.

3. If the world were perfect, would people need hope?

If the world were perfect, hope would be unnecessary, as hope involves looking forward to something good or better in the future, and if all is well in our present life, there would be no need for hope. Christina Rossetti presents this idea of hope in her poem “Rainbow,” which is printed in the appendix. In the poem, the rainbow represents hope, the rain represents suffering and the sun represents pleasant circumstances.

4. What hopes do you have for yourself, your family, your community, and the world?

Of course students will have a variety of answers to this question. A follow up question might be how they would feel if what they hoped for were granted to them right now.

5. If you were to choose an animal that hope is most like, what animal would you say it is?

Emily Dickinson compared hope to a bird, as it has such a beautiful song that cheers the soul.

The image of a bird singing in a cold winter storm is an excellent one to communicate the idea of being happy despite our circumstances.

READING QUESTIONS A

1. a
2. a
3. b
4. c
5. c

WINTER NIGHT

“Winter Night,” published by Christina Rossetti in her children’s poetry book *Sing-Song* (1872), is a poignant poem about a mother walking on a cold winter night. From the poem we learn that the child that the woman is holding—she calls it her *darling*—is all that she has. In the second stanza, the reader learns that the mother has no husband, no friends, and no family members. Her child is her “one”—she has no other. “Winter Night” may be summed up as a sad but beautiful picture of the relationship between a mother and her child in the face of extremity.

The poem has been set to music by the popular singer Natalie Merchant in an album titled *Leave Your Sleep*. The album contains many other poems that younger students can easily understand and enjoy.

READING QUESTIONS B

1. c
2. b
3. a
4. c
5. c

WRITING EXERCISE: PROCESS

Parents may refer to Lesson 25 in the student textbook which gives instruction for the process essay and an example.

PHONICS EXERCISE A

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. b
5. c
6. a

7. b
8. b
9. a
- 10.c

PHONICS EXERCISE B

1. fight
2. mighty
3. flight
4. knight
5. blight
6. slight
7. all right
8. nightmare
9. nightingale
- 10.delight

1. GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION: PRONOUNS

Parents may want to go over the following oral exercise on homophones before students complete the written exercises. Read the sentences and ask the students to spell the italicized words.

ORAL GRAMMAR EXERCISE

1. Yes, I believe that *you're* telling the truth.
2. *They're* not working hard enough.
3. Are you going over *there* for lunch?
4. June's younger siblings have lost *their* baby teeth.
5. Are his parents selling *their* old car?
6. Was *their* house in the country or in the city?
7. *There* are several books I want to read this summer.
8. I think *you're* going to like the new blue bike that I bought.
9. *Your* father thought that your hair needs to be cut.
- 10.Were *there* enough slices of bread for lunch?

GRAMMAR EXERCISE A

1. (They're, Their, There) are not enough table settings for our guests.

2. Will Tommy be (they're, their, there) for our July 4th celebration?
3. I went to see John and Susan but (they're, their, there) mother said that they were sick and couldn't come out to play.
4. Our uncle and aunt were supposed to visit us this winter, but David said that (they're, their, there) plans have changed.
5. The squirrels are building a nest in the tree, but my father said that the birds will make sure that (they're, their, there) not going to be there for long.
6. Elise believes that (they're, their, there) coming over to her house today.
7. Samuel and his brother are going over (they're, their, there) to help Mrs. Giegrich with her weeding.
8. (They're, Their, There) collie was racing across our yard with a stick in its mouth.
9. Tom is going (they're, their, there) to learn more about vegetable gardens.
10. (They're, Their, There) incredibly delicious tomatoes!

GRAMMAR EXERCISE B

1. (You're, Your) not listening to what she is trying to tell you.
2. I think that (you're, your) house is the oldest in the neighborhood.
3. I put (you're, your) dirty towel in the laundry pile in the basement.
4. Please make sure that (you're, your) ready when your Uncle Joe comes to pick you up.
5. I don't understand how Sandy can say that (you're, your) cute little poodle is so vicious.
6. When (you're, your) very thirsty, any drink seems refreshing.
7. If (you're, your) mother allows you to get another dog, will you get another Labrador?
8. Marty said to me, "Next year (you're, your) welcome to come over for our Thanksgiving celebration.
9. I know that (you're, your) busy reading, but could you help me for just one moment?
10. Felicity said to Caroline, "That rose bush that (you're, your) going to plant next to the house will look beautiful in late spring!"