

Name: _____ Teacher: _____ School: _____

Grade 7: Lesson 14 Analyze the words and structure of “The Railway Train” by Emily Dickinson

THE RAILWAY TRAIN.

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks,
And then, prodigious, step
Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare
To fit its sides, and crawl between,
Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill
And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star,
Stop-docile and omnipotent-
At its own stable door.

Emily Dickinson

Questions

1. In the first stanza, what does the word “prodigious” mean? What action is the word describing?
2. What does the use of the word “prodigious” suggest about Dickinson’s point of view about trains?
3. What does Dickinson mean when she says the train peers at the shanties in a supercilious manner?
4. What does the second stanza reveal about Dickinson’s perspective about the train?
5. Dickinson describes the train as “prodigious and supercilious.” What do these word choices suggest about her attitude toward the train?
6. How does the change in structure add to the image of a train, and the message of the poem?

Independent Practice: The fourth stanza is different from the rest of the poem, in both its rhythm and message. How does Dickinson use the fourth stanza to reinforce her viewpoint of the train?

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