

Name _____

Individual work first

Pre-reading of Dickinson's "Hope' is a thing with feathers" in *The Bedford Reader* p. 510

- Define hope in your own words:

- Is hope worth having? Why/why not?

Read and annotate:

"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.

What is this poem about?

This poem is an extended metaphor. What is being compared?

Group work

1. What makes Dickinson's metaphor particularly effective? In other words, examine that metaphor -- what is good about it? What doesn't work as well?
2. The second stanza (lines 4-8) seems at first glance to describe the absence of hope. What is the EFFECT of this note of pessimism? Why do suppose Dickinson included it?
3. To get a better grasp of the poem's overall meaning, PARAPHRASE the third stanza in modern prose, supplying any missing words and your own punctuation as necessary. What does the conclusion reveal about the poet's attitude toward hope?
4. Dickinson uses most of her poem to explain what hope gives, waiting until the final two lines to mention what it asks. How does this structure reinforce her main idea?
5. How is this selection similar to and different from "Needs." Jot down notes on back to prepare.
6. Can you detect a pattern or reason for Dickinson's use of capital letters? Try to explain why for each example. Also, see if you can determine her decision to use dashes in each place. Remember these are structural choices.