

# Readings from the Book of Emily

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Dates and order and text of poems are, for the most part, conjectural and are based on R. W Franklin's 1999 edition of her work. Date indicated is first finished draft.

## Words and Form

785 (1863)

It dropped so low – in my Regard –  
 I heard it hit the Ground –  
 And go to pieces on the Stones  
 At bottom of my Mind –

Yet blamed the Fate that flung it – less  
 Than I reviled Myself,  
 For entertaining Plated Wares  
 Upon my Silver Shelf –

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1263 (1872)

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant —  
 Success in Circuit lies  
 Too bright for our infirm Delight  
 The Truth's superb surprise  
 As Lightning to the Children eased  
 With explanation kind  
 The Truth must dazzle gradually  
 Or every man be blind –

## Nature and God

236 (1861)

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –  
 I keep it, staying at Home –  
 With a Bobolink for a Chorister –  
 And an Orchard, for a Dome –

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice –  
 I just wear my Wings –  
 And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,  
 Our little Sexton – sings.

God preaches, a noted Clergyman –  
 And the sermon is never long,  
 So instead of getting to Heaven, at least –  
 I'm going, all along.

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1577 (1882)

The Bible is an antique volume  
 Written by faded men,  
 At the suggestion of Holy Spectres–  
 Subjects–Bethlehem–  
 Eden–the ancient Homestead–  
 Satan–the Brigadier,  
 Judas–the great Defaulter,  
 David–the Troubadour.  
 Sin–a distinguished Precipice  
 Others must resist,  
 Boys that “believe”  
 Are very lonesome–  
 Other boys are “lost.”  
 Had but the tale a warbling Teller  
 All the boys would come–  
 Orpheus’ sermon captivated,  
 It did not condemn.

## Individualism

740 (1863)

On a Columnar Self –  
 How ample to rely  
 In Tumult – or Extremity –  
 How good the Certainty

That Lever cannot pry –  
 And Wedge cannot divide  
 Conviction – That Granitic Base –  
 Though None be on our Side –

Suffice Us – for a Crowd –  
 Ourselves – and Rectitude –  
 And that Assembly – not far off  
 From furthest Spirit – God –

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620 (1863)

Much Madness is divinest Sense –  
 To a discerning Eye –  
 Much Sense – the starkest Madness –  
 'Tis the Majority  
 In this, as All, prevail –  
 Assent – and you are sane –  
 Demur – you're straightway dangerous –  
 And handled with a Chain –

## Master

269 (1861)

Wild Nights – Wild Nights!

Were I with thee

Wild Nights should be

Our luxury!

Futile – the Winds –

To a Heart in port –

Done with the Compass –

Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden –

Ah – the Seal!

Might I but moor – tonight –

In thee!

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409 (1862)

The Soul selects her own Society –

Then – shuts the Door –

To her divine Majority –

Present no more –

Unmoved – she notes the Chariots – pausing –

At her low Gate –

Unmoved – an Emperor be kneeling

Upon her Mat –

I've known her – from an ample nation –

Choose One –

Then – close the Valves of her attention –

Like Stone –

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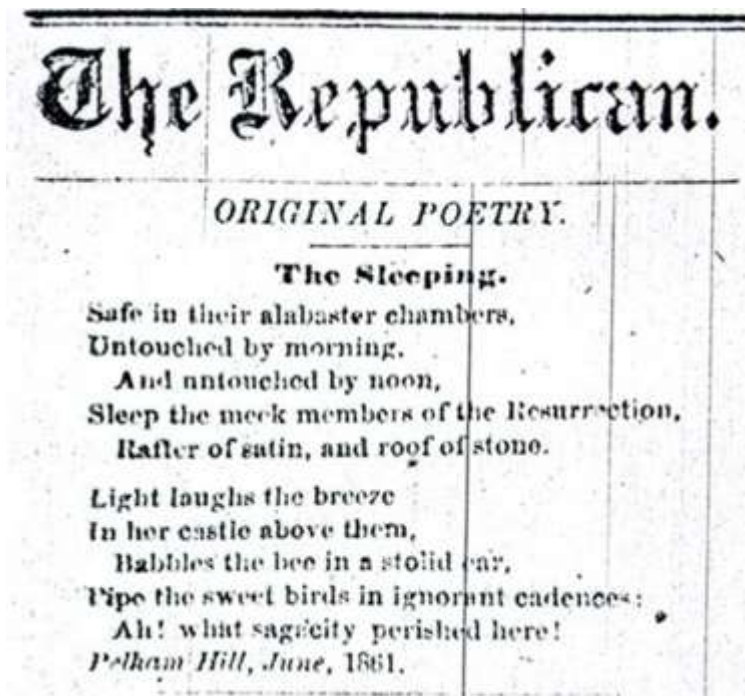
## Immortality

124 (1859, 1862)

Safe in their Alabaster Chambers –  
 Untouched by Morning –  
 And untouched by Noon –  
 Sleep the meek members of the  
 Resurrection –  
 Rafter of satin, and Roof of stone –

Grand go the years  
 In the crescent above them;  
 Worlds scoop their arcs –  
 And firmaments – row –  
 Diadems – drop –  
 And Doges – surrender –  
 Soundless as Dots  
 On a Disc of snow.

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448 (1862)

I died for Beauty – but was scarce  
 Adjusted in the Tomb  
 When One who died for Truth, was lain  
 In an adjoining room –

He questioned softly "Why I failed"?  
 "For Beauty", I replied –  
 "And I – for Truth – Themselves are One –  
 We Brethren, are", He said –

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night –  
 We talked between the Rooms –  
 Until the Moss had reached our lips –  
 And covered up – our names –

## Art and Imagination

598 (1863)

The Brain – is wider than the Sky –  
 For – put them side by side –  
 The one the other will contain  
 With ease – and You – beside –

The Brain is deeper than the sea –  
 For – hold them – Blue to Blue –  
 The one the other will absorb –  
 As Sponges – Buckets – do –

The Brain is just the weight of God –  
 For – Heft them – Pound for Pound –  
 And they will differ – if they do –  
 As Syllable from Sound

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466 (1862)

I dwell in Possibility –  
 A fairer House than Prose –  
 More numerous of Windows –  
 Superior – for Doors –

Of Chambers as the Cedars –  
 Impregnable of eye –  
 And for an everlasting Roof  
 The Gambrels of the Sky –

Of Visitors – the fairest –  
 For Occupation – This –  
 The spreading wide my narrow Hands  
 To gather Paradise –