



Emulate Emily

Student name _____ Date _____

*There's a certain Slant of light,
Winter Afternoons—
That oppresses, like the Heft
Of Cathedral Tunes—*

*Heavenly Hurt, it gives us—
We can find no scar,
But internal difference,
Where the Meanings, are—*

*None may teach it—Any—
'Tis the Seal Despair—
An imperial affliction
Sent us of the Air—*

*When it comes, the Landscape listens—
Shadows—hold their breath—
When it goes, 'tis like the Distance
On the look of Death—*

Activities

1. Read through Emily Dickinson's poem "There's a certain Slant of light," and consider the images she uses, the words she selects, and the rhythm of the lines. How do these choices affect the overall mood of the poem and your response to it? How does she use metaphors to help the reader understand her condition? Jot down some of your impressions here.

2. Now, think about a sound, sight, or smell that always leaves an impression on you. Write your own "certain Slant of light" in the top row of the chart below and fill in the rest of the boxes, as guided.

Where and when do you experience this sound, sight, or smell?	
How does it make you feel?	
Does it change you? If so, in what way? If not, why not?	
What images do you associate with it?	
What mood does it create?	

3. Once you have carefully thought through why your sound, sight, or smell leaves an impression on you, create a poem based on Emily Dickinson's example. You should replace all substantive nouns, action verbs, and adjectives with words of your own.
4. When your poem is complete, exchange it with your partner. Critique your partner's poem using the following guidelines.
- a) Is the theme of the poem clear? How? If not, how can it be made more evident?

 - b) Do the images contribute to the theme? In what way? Which ones are muddled?

c) Does the poem progress in a way that supports the poet's intent? If so, how? If not, why not?

d) Do you have any other observations or suggestions for the poet?

Exchange poems again, and revise your poem according to your partner's critique. Then, read through the poem you created and consider how it is both similar to and different from Dickinson's poem. Write a one-page essay describing these similarities and differences and discussing how your poem achieves its goal. Be sure to address how your partner's critique informed your revision: Did he or she help you maintain a consistent voice? How much is the voice your own, and how much of it was constructed for the goal?