



Wild Nights – Wild Nights!

Emily Dickinson
Poem 249

This is one of Dickinson's most famous poems with imagery of longing and desire, and a highly erotic tone.

Wild Nights – Wild Nights!
Were I with thee,
Wild nights should be
Our **luxury**!

5 **Futile** – the Winds –
To a Heart in port, –
Done with the Compass¹, –
Done with the **Chart**!

10 Rowing² in Eden –
Ah! the Sea!
Might I **but** moor³
Tonight – in Thee!

- 1 **Compass.** Bussola.
2 **Rowing.** Remare.
3 **Might I but moor.** Potessi ancorarmi.

READING COMPETENCE

1 READ the poem and match the highlighted words with their meaning.

- 1 abandon
2 map
3 ecstasy
4 only
5 useless

2 READ the poem again and do the following activities.

1 Complete these statements, one for each stanza.

- 1 The poet wishes
2 She thinks that a heart at rest does not need
3 She would like to

2 Write down examples of repetition.

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3 The effect of repetition in the poem is

- A to help memorisation.
B to create a tense atmosphere.
C to emphasise the ecstatic and sensual atmosphere.

4 What does the phrase 'Wild Nights' in line 1 express?

- A The speaker's love of wild nature.
B The speaker's intensity of desire.
C The speaker's fear of danger.

5 Where does Dickinson draw her love metaphors from?

6 Write down the two contrasting images in the poem.

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7 Complete the paragraph with the words from the box.

sea
compass

port
embrace
passion

destination
control

The image of the **(1)** in the poem suggests the lover's **(2)** The image of the **(3)** is linked to **(4)** Surrendering to lust, the lovers have no need for **(5)** or chart, which are used to get to a specific **(6)** and are instruments of **(7)** and reason.

8 What do lines 11-12 suggest as regards the theme of love?

➤ **COMPETENCE: LINKING LITERATURE TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE**

3 DISCUSS. Describe in detail your experience of extreme states of mind and emotion.

➤ **COMPETENCE: PRODUCING A WRITTEN TEXT ON A GIVEN SUBJECT**

4 WRITE a 10/12-line paragraph to comment the following statement: 'The turbulence of the love described in the poem reminds us of the seas that separate or unite the heroes and heroines of the Brontë sisters.'