

## On Emily Dickinson and “A CLOCK stopped”

**E**mily Dickinson (1830-1886) is one of America’s best-known and most prolific poets. She produced more than 1,800 poems, although fewer than a dozen were published during her lifetime.

I recently toured her home, now the Emily Dickinson Museum, in Amherst, MA. Two family clocks are in the house museum: one an Attleboro-style banjo clock hanging in the library and the other, a small round-top Seth Thomas mantel clock, sitting on a dresser in her bedroom. Either may partially have inspired her 1861 poem.

Literary critics have studied this poem, reaching conclusions about its obvious death-related metaphors, and noting the poet’s innovative techniques of connecting concrete and symbolic imagery. Scholar David Porter refers to it as “perhaps her most artful metaphorical excursion in the early period.” Other in-depth analyses are available online for people hoping to contemplate the poet’s deep thoughts on clocks and mortality.

—Bob Frishman (MA)

A CLOCK stopped—not the mantel’s;  
Geneva’s farthest skill  
Can’t put the puppet bowing  
That just now dangled still.

An awe came on the trinket!  
The figures hunched with pain,  
Then quivered out of decimals  
Into degreeless noon.

It will not stir for doctors,  
This pendulum of snow;  
The shopman importunes it,  
While cool, concernless No

Nods from the gilded pointers,  
Nods from the seconds slim,  
Decades of arrogance between  
The dial life and him.



## Five Bucks for Springtime

So I bought that broken-down  
Waltham cushion  
Hopefully hopeless  
The way I like  
And winding it over  
Pines through my window  
And peals of neighborhood  
Children in snow  
I swear by Omega  
That snowbanks and ice dams  
Like mountains this year  
Melted around my wrist

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