

Name _____

Class _____

Date _____

Wild Nights! Wild Nights!

by Emily Dickinson

Grades 10–12 · Common Core RL.11–12.4, RL.11–12.2, RL.11–12.5

Emily Dickinson wrote “Wild Nights” around 1861; it was first published in 1891. It has three short quatrains. The speaker uses a sea voyage as an extended metaphor for love and desire.



THE POEM

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 compass,
Done with the chart.

Rowing in Eden!
10 Ah! the sea!
Might I but moor
To-night in thee!

VOCABULARY

luxury — great pleasure or delight**futile** — useless**port** — a harbor where ships are safe**compass** — a tool for finding direction**chart** — a map used by sailors**Eden** — the paradise garden in the Bible**moor** — to tie up a boat in one place

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the tone of the first stanza? Which punctuation creates it?

2. Why are the winds “Futile” to “a heart in port”?

3. Why would the speaker be “Done with the compass, / Done with the chart”?

4. What two images come together in “Rowing in Eden”?

5. What does the speaker wish for in the last two lines?

WRITING PROMPT

Write a short poem about longing for a person or place, using one extended metaphor (a journey, weather, a game). Use exclamations to show strong feeling.

Wild Nights! Wild Nights! — Answer Key

1. Excited, passionate and urgent; the exclamation points in “Wild nights! Wild nights!” and “Our luxury!”
2. A ship safe in harbor cannot be harmed by storms; a heart that has found its love is safe from life’s storms.
3. Once she has arrived with her beloved, she no longer needs directions or maps; her searching is over.
4. A sea voyage (rowing) and paradise (Eden): the journey of love feels like heaven.
5. “Might I but moor / To-night in thee!”: she wishes to be anchored with, and at rest in, the beloved tonight.

Read the full poem online: poetrycatalog.com/wild-nights-wild-nights-emily-dickinson/