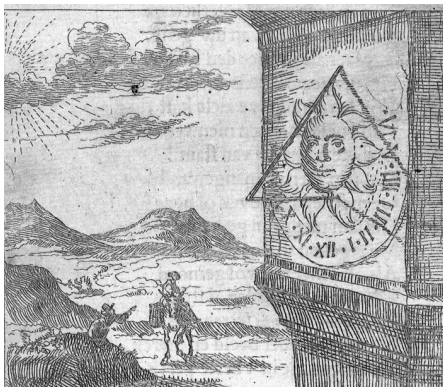
Name _____ Class _____ Date _____



Forever Is Composed of Nows

by Emily Dickinson

Grades 7–10 · Common Core RL.8.4, RL.8.2, RL.8.5

Dickinson wrote the poem around 1863; it was published after her death. It has three four-line stanzas. Like many of her poems, it takes a big idea (forever, eternity) and makes it plain and almost mathematical: remove the dates, and years become infinite. "Anno Domini" means "in the year of our Lord," the way Western calendars number years.

THE POEM

Forever is composed of Nows—
'T is not a different time,
Except for infiniteness
And latitude of home.

From this, experienced here,
Remove the dates to these,
Let months dissolve in further months,
And years exhale in years.

Without certificate or pause
Or celebrated days,
As infinite our years would be
As Anno Domini's.

VOCABULARY

composed — made up of

infiniteness — endlessness; having no limit

latitude — range or breadth; here, room or extent

dissolve — melt away, disappear into

exhale — breathe out; here, fade away slowly

certificate — an official paper that proves something

celebrated days — special marked dates (birthdays, holidays)

Anno Domini — "in the year of our Lord"; calendar years (A.D.)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Restate the first line in your own words. How can “Forever” be made of “Nows”?

2. What does the speaker say is the only real difference between forever and ordinary time?

3. Explain “Let months dissolve in further months, / And years exhale in years.” What happens if we “Remove the dates”?

4. What do “certificate,” “pause,” and “celebrated days” stand for? Why would years without them feel “infinite”?

5. Do you agree that forever is just endless nows? What does the poem leave out (memory, death, hope)?

WRITING PROMPT

Write two short paragraphs or a 12-line poem that begins “My forever is composed of ___.” Fill the blank with ordinary moments, then show what happens when you take away clocks and calendars.

Forever Is Composed of Nows — Answer Key

1. Eternity is not a separate place or time; it is present moments added together without stopping.
2. "'T is not a different time, / Except for infiniteness / And latitude of home": forever is the same kind of time, only endless and roomy.
3. Months and years blur into more of the same. Without numbered dates, time has no edges; it just goes on.
4. Official markers and special holidays that chop time into pieces. Without them, years would feel as boundless "As Anno Domini's" (as the whole numbered calendar itself).
5. Accept supported answers. The poem makes forever feel simple and continuous; students may say it leaves out endings, grief, or the way memory makes some "Nows" larger than others.

Read the full poem online: poetrycatalog.com/forever-is-composed-of-nows-emily-dickinson/