

READING SUMMARY

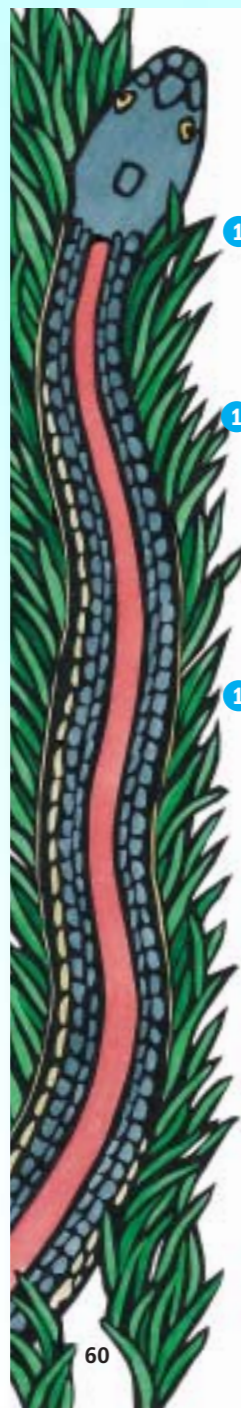
Emily Dickinson vividly describes her response to the always-surprising appearance of a snake.

GUIDED READING

1. How can you tell that a snake is moving through the grass? (*The grass divides.*)
2. What habitat does this snake like? (*a cool, boggy place*)
3. Where does the snake like to be in the morning? (*in the sun*)
4. What object does the poet think the snake is when she sees it in the sun? (*a whip*)

ABOUT THE POET

As an adult, Emily Dickinson seldom left her house and had few visitors, but she stayed connected to the outside world by writing many letters and by reading a wide range of books. She was one of the first poets to create a uniquely American literary voice.



# The Snake

1 A narrow fellow in the grass  
Occasionally rides; 2  
You may have met him,—did you not,  
His notice sudden is. 2

The grass divides as with a comb, 2  
1 A spotted shaft is seen;  
And then it closes at your feet  
And opens further on. 2

He likes a boggy acre,  
A floor too cool for corn.  
Yet when a child, and barefoot,  
I more than once, at morn,

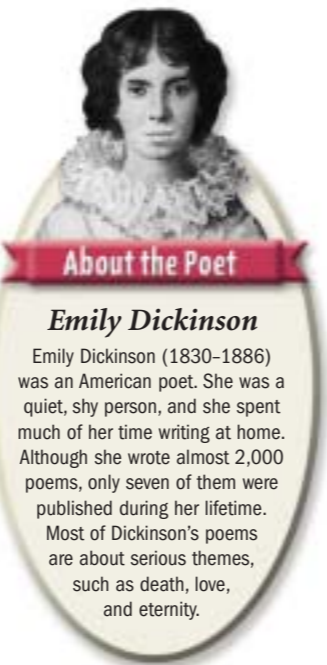
1 Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash  
Unbraiding in the sun,— 2  
When, stooping to secure it,  
It wrinkled, and was gone. 2

Several of nature's people  
I know, and they know me;  
I feel for them a transport  
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,  
Attended or alone,  
Without a tighter breathing,  
And zero at the bone.

Emily Dickinson

shaft, long, thin object  
boggy acre, wet and muddy ground  
barefoot, without shoes  
at morn, in the morning  
unbraiding, becoming straight  
cordiality, friendliness



About the Poet

Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) was an American poet. She was a quiet, shy person, and she spent much of her time writing at home. Although she wrote almost 2,000 poems, only seven of them were published during her lifetime. Most of Dickinson's poems are about serious themes, such as death, love, and eternity.

BEFORE YOU GO ON . . .

- 1 What words does the poet use to describe the snake?
- 2 How does she describe how it moves?

HOW ABOUT YOU?

- How do you feel about snakes? Why?

# Link the Readings

REFLECTION

“Ecosystems: The Systems of Nature” and the two poems describe organisms that live in different habitats. Copy the chart into your notebook. Reread “Ecosystems” and the poems. Then complete the chart.

Title of Selection	Type of Text (Genre)	Fiction or Nonfiction	Purpose of Selection	One Idea from the Text
“Ecosystems: The Systems of Nature”				
“The Bat”				
“The Snake”				Snakes scare the poet.

DISCUSSION

Discuss in pairs or small groups.

1. Compare how the two poets use rhyme.
2. Which poem do you think better describes how the animal actually looks? Which poem better describes how the animal moves? Discuss how the poets help you visualize the animals.
3. List ten animals in your notebook. What type of consumer is each animal? Is it a herbivore, a carnivore, or an omnivore?



REFLECTION

Have students read the introductory text aloud. Discuss the meanings of the chart headings. Then have students copy the chart into their notebooks and complete it. When they have finished, discuss their answers.

1. What kind of text is “Ecosystems”? How do you know? (*informational; its main purpose is to provide information.*)
2. What was the author’s purpose for writing “The Bat”? (*Possible answers: to express his thoughts and feelings about bats; to entertain readers*)

DISCUSSION

Form pairs or small groups to answer the Discussion questions. Then have students share their responses with the group and take turns reading their animal lists.

COOPERATIVE GROUPING

Form three student groups. Assign a different Discussion question to each group. Have each group discuss responses and then create posters to visualize their ideas. Have groups share their poster with the class as they answer their questions.

CRITICAL THINKING

Discuss how all three selections are tied to the theme of “The Natural World.” Ask students whether “The Bat” and “The Snake” are good choices to follow the nonfiction reading. Have them give reasons for their opinions.

## SPELLING MINILESSON

### Words with Short and Long o, Short and Long u

Tell students that words with short o and short u are often spelled with just u or o and the CVC pattern. Write these words on the board, and have students read them and discuss their spellings: *fog, top, cub, fun*. Explain that there are several spellings for words with the long o and long u sounds. Some follow the CVCe pattern. In some other words, the letters ew stand for the long u sound. Repeat the above procedure with these words: *home, nose, huge, blew*. Then write the following words on the board and have volunteers circle the letters that represent the long vowel sound in each of the words.

Long o Words	Long u Words
go, roll, told	music, unit, menu
boat, road, toast	knew, few, grew
low, row, bowl	

Challenge students to find one word with each spelling in the selection.

## REACHING ALL STUDENTS

LANGUAGE LEVELS

**Beginning:** Read “The Snake” aloud together slowly to understand the meaning of each phrase. Clarify lines in which Dickinson’s word choice and word order are unlike our normal speech. (“His notice sudden is” instead of “He appears all of a sudden”) Have students link Dickinson’s words to specific images.

**Advanced:** Write the following questions on the board: *What does it look like? Where does it live? How do you feel about it?* Have students read the questions and skim each poem for information to answer them. Ask students to write two paragraphs that answer the questions.

LEARNING MODALITIES

**Auditory:** Have students close their eyes and listen as you slowly read each stanza of “The Snake.” Pause to ask them what they are picturing in their minds as you read. Ask them to identify which words stand out. When you have finished reading, have them tell how they feel about the poem.