“Fame is a Bee”

Fame is a bee.

It has a song—

It has a sting—

Ah, too, it has a wing[[1]](#footnote-1).

--Emily Dickinson

Directions: Each of the final words in lines 2-4 requires careful analysis in order to arrive at a logical interpretation of this poem. Explore *both* denotations *and* connotations for these words, and write them in the spaces provided below.

1. What denotations for “song” are appropriate in this poem?

2. What connotations for “song” are relevant to this poem?

3. What denotations for “sting” are appropriate in this poem?

4. What connotations for “sting” are relevant to this poem?

5. What denotations for “wing” are appropriate in this poem?

6. What connotations for “wing” are relevant to this poem?

7. What device does the poet employ and what is its effect or purpose in describing fame?

1. Emily Dickinson uses the singular “wing” not to suggest the image of a one-winged bee but instead to simply form a true rhyme with “sting.” Therefore, students should not misinterpret the metaphor based on a misinterpreted image. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)