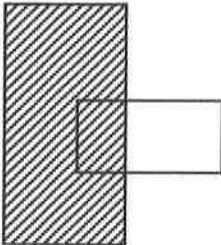


POETRY PACKET

Poetry is the human soul entire,
squeezed like a lemon or a lime,
drop by drop
into atomic words.

-- Langston Hughes




Poetry is not only dream or vision, it is
the skeleton architecture of our lives.

-- Audre Lorde



POETRY IS A SERIES OF EXPLANATIONS OF
LIFE, FADING OFF INTO HORIZONS TOO
SWIFT FOR EXPLANATIONS.

-- CARL SANDBURG



NAME:



**MORA
ROOM 29**



*Poetry can do a hundred and one things, delight, sadden, disturb, amuse, instruct –
it may express every possible shade of emotion, and describe every conceivable kind of event, but there is one thing that all poetry
must do: it must praise all it can for being and for happening.
-- W.H. Auden*

WHAT IS POETRY?

Just as we all play at games for the pleasure and challenge we find in them, so do poets play with words, rhymes, and rhythms. This does not mean that poets are not serious about their ideas and feelings. It means rather that poets “play” by using their imagination.

Play in poetry is like any other kind of play: It lets us use our imaginations; it gives us pleasure and satisfaction. The difference between poetry and other forms of play is that in poetry, the playing is done with words, and words always involve meaning. So, poets play with the language and the meaning words carry whereas other users of the language try to follow the rules and guidelines.

READING A POEM

Reading poetry is different from reading prose. Good readers of poetry are always looking for meaning, listening for sounds, and picturing images from poems in their heads. You can read poems for pleasure, but many students read poetry only because their teacher assigns it. Either way, at some point you will probably ask yourself, “what does this poem mean?”

Usually there is not one right answer to what a poem means. Poems talk to our senses and feelings and can mean many things to many people. Poems may say more than one thing. But don’t start believing that a poem can mean anything you want. Also keep in mind that poems don’t *have to* carry messages or have purposes, other than to arouse and surprise you and wake up all your senses. What you think a poem means needs to be supported by words or lines in the poem itself. So simply put, you need a plan for tackling poetry and this is what I suggest:

1. **Intend to read a poem more than once.** Even if the poem is short and minimal in its use of words reading it more than once will give you the time you need to process the message and find a deeper meaning. Each reading of a poem could have a different purpose like:
 - 1) Read for enjoyment
 - 2) Read for meaning
 - 3) Analyze the structure and language
 - 4) Read for feeling

By the way – it’s OK not to like a poem. Just be ready to explain and support your opinion with some specific parts of the poem. If you find a poem you like, you’ll probably enjoy rereading it. But even if you don’t think you “get” a poem, or you don’t really appreciate it, go back and reread. Poems will not always “read” the same way to you each time you return to them.

2. **Read slowly.** Reading a poem is not the time to rush. Think of what the words mean. Hear how they sound. Listen to what you are thinking as you read.
Hint: Do not stop at the end of the line if there is no period, comma, semicolon, or dash there. If a line of poetry has no punctuation at its end, the poet intends you to read right on to the next line to complete the sense of the sentence.
3. **Interact with the poem.** Underline, circle words, write side notes and questions, read it out loud, make a sketch based on the imagery, **connect** it to your own life and experience in some way. (You will provide evidence of this interaction through your Poetry Journal)

STEPS TO ANALYZING A POEM:

1. What is the importance of the title?
2. What is the subject of the poem?
3. What is the poet's purpose? What message or point is being made?
4. How does the structure and language affect the shape and theme of the poem?
5. Paraphrase – put it in your own words/ translate the text.
6. Who is the speaker and who is the audience?

Let's practice:

Read each poem at least twice and then discuss with a classmate. Use the questions below to help get the discussion going.

Fog by Carl Sandburg

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

"The yellow fog ..." by T.S. Eliot

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the windowpanes,
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the windowpanes
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,
And seeing that it was a soft October night,
Curled once about the house and fell asleep.

- o Why do you think these two poets chose to describe fog in terms of a cat's actions? Could fog just as well be compared to an elephant or a canary or a snake? Explain
- o What is the purpose of each poem?
- o How are the poems similar besides the obvious implied metaphor of fog being compared to a cat? Think about setting and mood.
- o Other literary devices besides metaphor?
- o Where does the fog end up in Sandburg's poem? In Eliot's?
- o Which "fog" poem did you like better and why?

One more poem to warm up with: **Beware: Do Not Read This Poem** by Ishmael Reed

Tonite, *thriller* was
abt an ol woman, so vain she
surrounded herself w/
many mirrors

It got so bad that finally she
locked herself indoors & her
whole life became the
mirrors

one day the villagers broke
into her house, but she was too
swift for them, she disappeared
into a mirror

each tenant who bought the house
after that, lost a loved one to
the ol woman in the mirror:
first a little girl
then a young woman
then the young woman/s husband

the hunger of this poem is legendary
it has taken many victims
back off from this poem
it has drawn in yr feet
back off from this poem
it is a greedy mirror
you are into this poem, from
the waist down
nobody can hear you can they?

this poem has had you up to here
belch

this poem aint got no manners
you cant call out frm this poem
relax now and go with this poem
move & roll on to this poem

do not resist this poem
this poem has yr eyes
this poem has his head
this poem has his arms
this poem has his fingers
this poem has his fingertips

this poem is the reader & the
reader this poem

statistic: the us bureau of missing persons reports
that in 1968 over 100,000 people disappeared
leaving no solid clues
nor trace only
a space in the lives of their friends



Girl with Book, 1999. Julie Delton.

①

Open it.

Go ahead, it won't bite.
Well . . . maybe a little.

More a nip, like. A tingle.
It's pleasurable, really.

You see, it keeps on opening.
You may fall in.

Sure, it's hard to get started;
remember learning to use

knife and fork? Dig in:
you'll never reach bottom.

It's not like it's the end of the world—
just the world as you think

you know it. ■

ETERNITY

②

Jason Shinder



A poem written three thousand years ago
 about a man who walks among horses
 grazing on a hill under the small stars
 comes to life on a page in a book
 and the woman reading the poem
 in her kitchen filled with a gold, metallic light
 find the experience of living in that moment
 so vividly described as to make her feel known
 to another; until the woman and the poet share
 not only their souls but the exact silence
 between each word. And every time the poem is read,
 no matter what her situation or age,
 this is more or less what happens.

INSIDE A POEM

③

It doesn't always have to rhyme,
 but there's the repeat of a beat, somewhere
 an inner chime that makes you want to
 tap your feet or swerve in a curve;
 a lilt, a leap, a lightning-split:—
 thunderstruck the consonants jut,
 while the vowels open wide as waves in the noon-
 blue sea.

You hear with your heels, your eyes feel
 what they never touched before:
 fins on a bird, feathers on a deer;
 taste all colors, inhale
 memory and tomorrow and always the tang is
 today.

Read this poem aloud so you can hear the poet's playful voice as she describes how she wants to "capture" someone she loves—maybe her reader.

Jones Beach and Coney Island are popular beaches and amusement centers near New York City.

④ Kidnap Poem

Nikki Giovanni

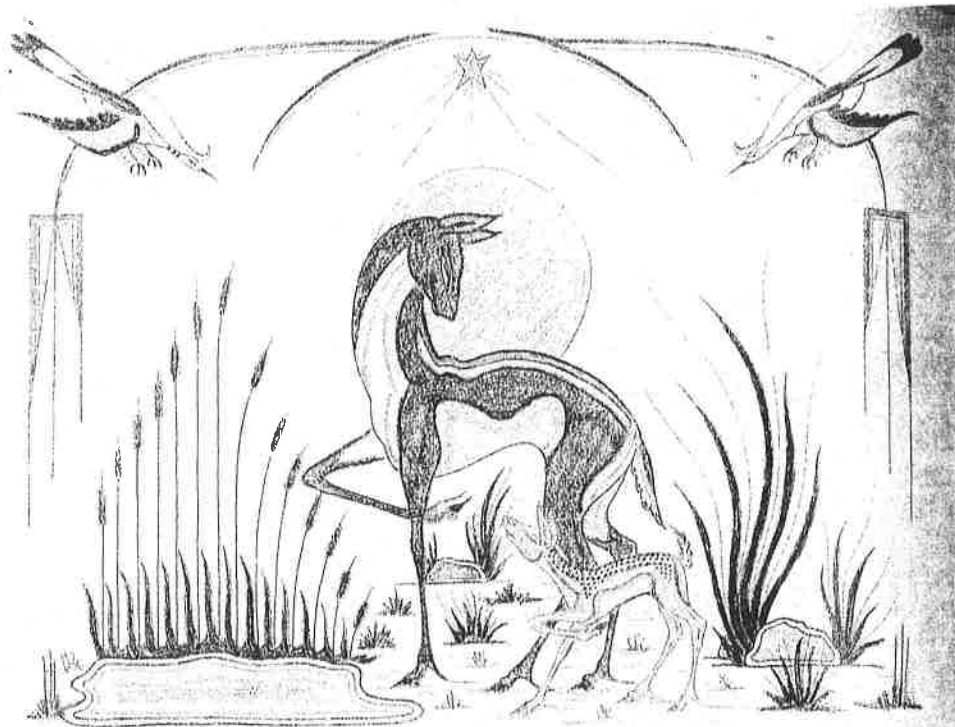
ever been kidnapped
 by a poet
 if i were a poet
 i'd kidnap you
 5 put you in my phrases
 and meter you to jones beach
 or maybe coney island
 or maybe just to my house
 lyric you in lilacs
 10 dash you in the rain

alliterate the beach
 to complement my see

play the lyre for you
 ode you with my love song
 15 anything to win you
 wrap you in the red Black green
 show you off to mama

yeah if i were
 a poet i'd kid
 20 nap you

15 Pretty Words



Deer, 1939. Woodrow Crumbo. National Museum of American Art, Washington, D.C.

Elinor Wylie

Poets make pets of pretty, docile words:
 I love smooth words, like gold-enameled¹ fish
 Which circle slowly with a silken swish,²
 And tender ones, like downy-feathered birds:
 5 Words shy and dappled, deep-eyed deer in herds,
 Come to my hand, and playful if I wish,
 Or purring softly at a silver dish,
 Blue Persian³ kittens, fed on cream and curds.

I love bright words, words up and singing early;
 10 Words that are luminous in the dark, and sing;
 Warm lazy words, white cattle under trees;
 I love words opalescent,⁴ cool, and pearly,
 Like midsummer moths, and honied⁵ words like bees,
Gilded and sticky, with a little sting.

GUIDED READING
 What do poets
 "make pets of"?

GUIDED READING
 What words sound
 "playful" or
 "purring" to the
 speaker?

GUIDED READING
 To what does the
 speaker compare
 "honied words"?

1. **gold-enameled**. Covered with a hard, protective layer of gold
 2. **swish**. Light sweeping or brushing sound
 3. **Blue Persian**. Long-haired domestic cat with blue-grayish fur
 4. **opalescent**. Reflecting iridescent light, meaning the rainbow display of colors that can be seen on soap bubbles
 5. **honied**. Honeyed, or filled with honey

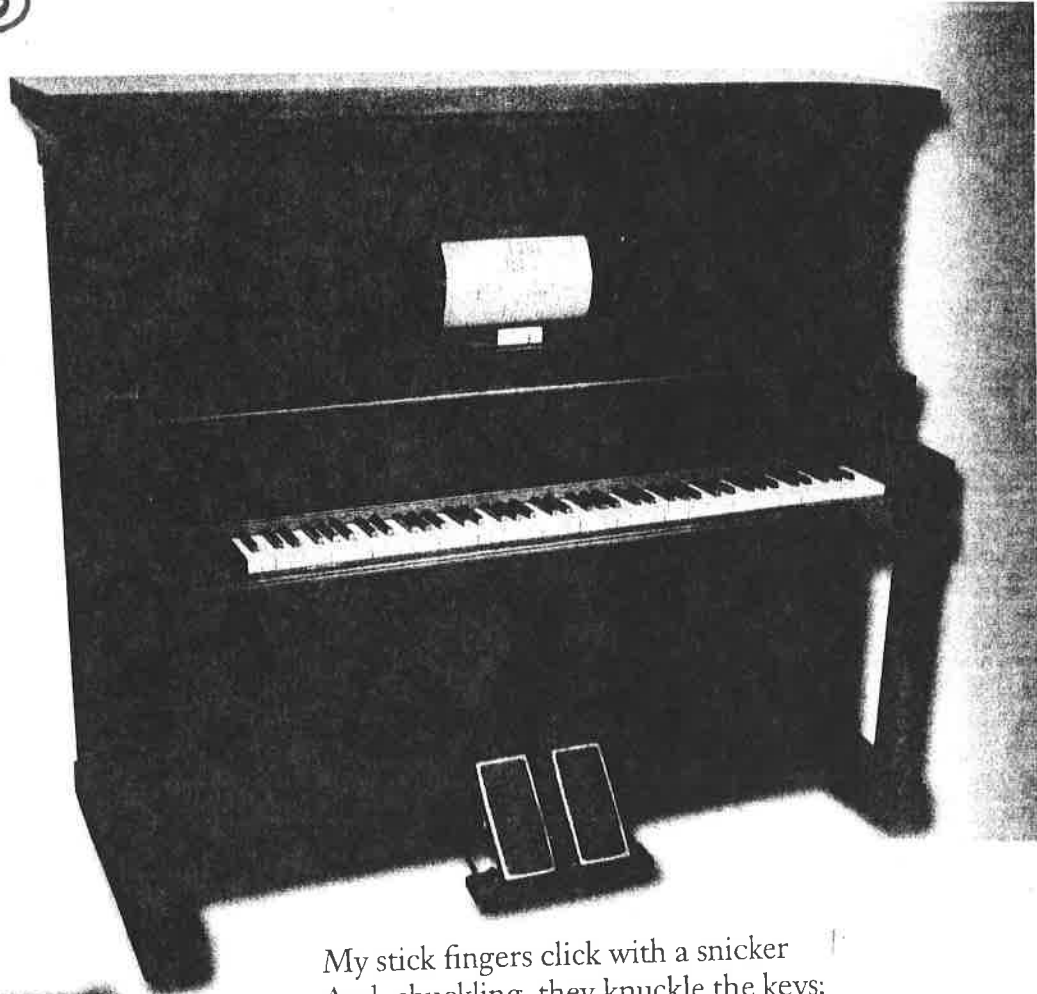
WORDS
 FOR
 EVERYDAY
 USE

doc • ile (də' səl) *adj.*, obedient. *Jimmy was disobedient, but Stephen was docile.*
dap • pled (də' pləd) *adj.*, spotted. *Some of the cows were pure black or pure white, while others were white dappled with black.*
lu • mi • nous (lū' mə nə's) *adj.*, glowing; bright. *Lit up by the setting sun, the lake appeared to be a pink luminous jewel.*
gil • ded (gil' dəd) *adj.*, covered with a thin layer of gold. *After hanging many years on many Christmas trees, the gilded ornaments were peeling, so you could see the gray metal in places beneath the gold coating.*

6

PLAYERS

Piano



My stick fingers click with a snicker
And, chuckling, they knuckle the keys;
Light-footed, my steel feelers flicker
And pluck from these keys melodies.¹

5 My paper can caper; abandon
Is broadcast by dint of² my din,
And no man or band has a hand in
The tones I turn on from within.

10 At times I'm a jumble of rumbles,
At others I'm light like the moon,
But never my numb plinker³ fumbles,
Misstrums me, or tries a new tune. ■

John Updike

- 1. melodies. Pleasing musical sounds
- 2. by dint of. By force or effort of
- 3. plinker. Something that makes a light, sharp ringing or clinking sound

WORDS
TO
KNOW

flick • er (fli' ker) v., flutter or move unsteadily; burn or shine fitfully. *In the sunlight, gleams of gold seemed to flicker on top of the waves.*
ca • per (kā' pār) v., leap or prance about in a playful manner. *Our new puppy capers about, leaping and skittering across the floor to meet us when we come home from school.*
din (din') n., loud, continued noise. *Whenever you walk by the door of the school's music room and hear the students who have just begun to learn musical instruments practicing, the din is dreadful.*

I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud by William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

7

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling leaves in glee;
A poet could not be but gay,
In such a jocund company!
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Picture Puzzle Piece by Shel Silverstein

8

One picture puzzle piece
Lyin' on the sidewalk,
One picture puzzle piece
Soakin' in the rain.
It might be a button of blue
On the coat of the woman
Who lived in a shoe.
It might be a magical bean,
Or a fold in the red
Velvet robe of a queen.
It might be the one little bite
Of the apple her stepmother
Gave to Snow White.
It might be the veil of a bride
Or a bottle with some evil genie inside.
It might be a small tuft of hair
On the big bouncy belly
Of Bobo the Bear.
It might be a bit of the cloak
Of the Witch of the West
As she melted to smoke.
It might be a shadowy trace
Of a tear that runs down an angel's face.
Nothing has more possibilities
Than one old wet picture puzzle piece

9 **Painting the Gate**

May Swenson

I painted the mailbox. That was fun.
I painted it postal blue.
Then I painted the gate.
I painted a spider that got on the gate.
5 I painted his mate.
I painted the ivy around the gate.
Some stones I painted blue,
and part of the cat as he rubbed by.
I painted my hair. I painted my shoe.
10 I painted the slats, both front and back,
all their beveled edges, too.
I painted the numbers on the gate—

I shouldn't have, but it was too late.
I painted the posts, each side and top,
15 I painted the hinges, the handle, the lock,
several ants and a moth asleep in a crack.
At last I was through.
I'd painted the gate
shut, me out, with both hands dark blue,
20 as well as my nose, which,
early on, because of a sudden itch,
got painted. But wait!
I had painted the gate.

LITANY ⑩

billy collins » track 11 read by the poet

You are the bread and the knife,
The crystal goblet and the wine...
—Jacques Crickillon

You are the bread and the knife,
the crystal goblet and the wine.
You are the dew on the morning grass
and the burning wheel of the sun.
You are the white apron of the baker,
and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.

However, you are not the wind in the orchard,
the plums on the counter,
or the house of cards.
And you are certainly not the pine-scented air.
There is just no way that you are the pine-scented air.

It is possible that you are the fish under the bridge,
maybe even the pigeon on the general's head,
but you are not even close
to being the field of cornflowers at dusk.

And a quick look in the mirror will show
that you are neither the boots in the corner
nor the boat asleep in its boathouse.

It might interest you to know,
speaking of the plentiful imagery of the world,
that I am the sound of rain on the roof.

I also happen to be the shooting star,
the evening paper blowing down an alley
and the basket of chestnuts on the kitchen table.

I am also the moon in the trees
and the blind woman's tea cup.
But don't worry, I'm not the bread and the knife.
You are still the bread and the knife.
You will always be the bread and the knife,
not to mention the crystal goblet and—somehow—the wine.



USED BOOK SHOP

x. j. kennedy
⑪

Stashed in attics,
stuck in cellars,
forgotten books
once big best-sellers

now hopefully sit
where folks, like cows
in grassy meadows,
stand and browse.

In a yellowed old history
of Jesse James
two earlier owners
had scrawled their names.

I even found
a book my dad
when he was in high school
had once had,

and a book I found—
this is really odd—
was twice as much fun
as my new iPod.

I always get hooked
in this dusty shop.
Like eating popcorn,
it's hard to stop.

PERMANENTLY (12)

kenneth koch

One day the Nouns were clustered in the street.
An Adjective walked by, with her dark beauty.
The Nouns were struck, moved, changed.
The next day a Verb drove up, and created the Sentence.

Each Sentence says one thing—for example, "Although it was
a dark rainy

day when the Adjective walked by, I shall remember the
pure and sweet

expression on her face until the day I perish from the
green, effective earth."

Or, "Will you please close the window, Andrew?"

Or, for example, "Thank you, the pink pot of flowers on the
window sill

has changed color recently to a light yellow, due to the
heat from the

boiler factory which exists nearby."

In the springtime the Sentences and the Nouns lay silently on
the grass.

A lonely Conjunction here and there would call, "And! But!"

But the Adjective did not emerge.

As the Adjective is lost in the sentence,

So I am lost in your eyes, ears, nose, and throat—

You have enchanted me with a single kiss

Which can never be undone

Until the destruction of language.

THE SACRED (13)

stephen dunn

After the teacher asked if anyone had
a sacred place
and the students fidgeted and shrunk

in their chairs, the most serious of them all
said it was his car,
being in it alone, his tape deck playing

things he'd chosen, and others knew the truth
had been spoken
and began speaking about their rooms,

their hiding places, but the car kept coming
up, the car in motion,
music filling it, and sometimes one other person

who understood the bright altar of the dashboard
and how far away
a car could take him from the need

to speak, or to answer, the key
in having a key
and putting it in, and going.

NEW CLOTHES (14)

kay ryan » tracks 36 & 37 read by the poet

The emperor who
was tricked by the tailors
is familiar to you.

But the tailors
keep on changing
what they do
to make money.

(Tailor means
to make something
fit somebody.)

Be guaranteed
that they will discover
your pride.

You will cast aside
something you cherish
when the tailors whisper,
"Only you could wear this."

It is almost never clothes
such as the emperor bought

but it is always something close
to something you've got.

CINDERELLA'S DIARY (15)

ron koertge

I miss my stepmother. What a thing to say
but it's true. The prince is so boring: four
hours to dress and then the cheering throngs.
Again. The page who holds the door is cute
enough to eat. Where is he once Mr. Charming
kisses my forehead goodnight?

Every morning I gaze out a casement window
at the hunters, dark men with blood on their
boots who joke and mount, their black trousers
straining, rough beards, callused hands, selfish,
abrupt...

Oh, dear diary—I am lost in ever after:
Those insufferable birds, someone in every
room with a lute, the queen calling me to look
at another painting of her son, this time
holding the transparent slipper I wish
I'd never seen.

CAROLINE (16)

allison joseph

In eighth grade, we teased that girl
as much as we could, mocking

her clothes, her stringy hair,
her flat, pallid face that revealed

little protest. Used to being
the one white girl in our class

of blacks, Hispanics, she endured
our taunts on her lack of rhythm,

on her stiff, flat-buttred walk.
How we pitied her—brown hair

parted straight, pulled back
in a dull ponytail, her jeans

or corduroy pants in washed-out
shades of gray or blue,

her homework neatly done
in pained, legible print.

How weak it was to be white,
we thought, not able to dance

or run fast, to have skin
that peeled from too much sun.

We never let Caroline forget
that she was white and we

were black, that we could
swing our hips and snap

our fingers without trying,
privy to street-slang rhythms.

But she was our white girl,
and if anyone else dared

to touch her or call her names,
we'd be on them in a second,

calling them ugly right back,
slapping offenders if necessary.

With one of us by her side,
she could walk the school

safely, knowing she was ours
even if we didn't let her in

all the way, even if we laughed
at her white speech, thin lips.



HOW I DISCOVERED POETRY

17

marilyn nelson » track 33 read by the poet

It was like soul-kissing, the way the words
filled my mouth as Mrs. Purdy read from her desk.
All the other kids zoned an hour ahead to 3:15,
but Mrs. Purdy and I wandered lonely as clouds borne
by a breeze off Mount Parnassus. She must have seen
the darkest eyes in the room brim: The next day
she gave me a poem she'd chosen especially for me
to read to the ~~all~~ except for me white class.
She smiled when she told me to read it, smiled harder,
said oh yes I could. She smiled harder and harder
until I stood and opened my mouth to banjo playing
darkies, pickaninnies, disses and dats. When I finished
my classmates stared at the floor. We walked silent
to the buses, awed by the power of words.

WORTH 18

marilyn nelson » track 16 read by the poet

For Ruben Ahoueya

Today in America people were bought and sold:
five hundred for a "likely Negro wench."
If someone at auction is worth her weight in gold,
how much would she be worth by pound? By ounce?
If I owned an unimaginable quantity of wealth,
could I buy an iota of myself?
How would I know which part belonged to me?
If I owned part, could I set my part free?
It must be worth something—maybe a lot—
that my great-grandfather, they say, killed a lion.
They say he was black, with muscles as hard as iron,
that he wore a necklace of the claws of the lion he'd fought.
How much do I hear, for his majesty in my blood?
I auction myself. And I make the highest bid.

INDIAN EDUCATION (19)

sherman alexie

Crazy Horse came back to life
in a storage room in the Smithsonian,
his body rising from a wooden crate
mistakenly marked ANONYMOUS HOPI MALE.

Crazy Horse wandered the halls, found
the surface of the moon, Judy Garland
and her red shoes, a stuffed horse named
Comanche, the only surviving

member of the Seventh Cavalry
at Little Big Horn. Crazy Horse was found
in the morning by a security guard
who took him home and left him alone

in a room with cable television. Crazy Horse
watched a basketball game, every black and white
western, a documentary about a scientist
who travelled the Great Plains in the 1800s

measuring Indians and settlers, discovering
that the Indians were two inches taller
on average, and in some areas, the difference
in height exceeded a foot, which proved nothing

although Crazy Horse measured himself
against the fact of a mirror, traded faces
with a taxi driver and memorized the city,
folding, unfolding, his mapped heart.

SNOWMEN (20)

agha shahid ali

My ancestor, a man
of Himalayan snow,
came to Kashmir from Samarkand,
carrying a bag
of whale bones:
heirlooms from sea funerals.
His skeleton
carved from glaciers, his breath
arctic,
he froze women in his embrace.
His wife thawed into stony water,
her old age a clear
evaporation.

This heirloom,
his skeleton under my skin, passed
from son to grandson,
generations of snowmen on my back.
They tap every year on my window,
their voices hushed to ice.

No, they won't let me out of winter,
and I've promised myself,
even if I'm the last snowman,
that I'll ride into spring
on their melting shoulders.

In the early 1940's, thousands of Japanese American citizens received notices requiring them to report to Relocation Centers—or internment camps—where they became virtual prisoners. They had committed no crimes. But America was at war with Japan, and Executive Order 9066 made it legal for the Federal Government to restrict citizens of Japanese descent to these camps.

Today, to many Americans, this internment is an unfamiliar historic event. But it was a painful reality for over 120,000 Japanese Americans. Many of the camps were harsh places, enclosed

with barbed wire and located in areas with severe climates. A number of those detained were elderly; most were women and children. Ironically, many of the families had sons or brothers serving with the United States Army in Europe.

As you read this poem, remember that, in literature, characters often don't know what awaits them, while the reader knows all along. How do you feel when you read the first two lines of the poem, where the girl is so cheerful on the eve of her family's relocation?

In Response to Executive Order 9066: (21)

All Americans of Japanese Descent Must Report to Relocation Centers

Dwight Okita

Dear Sirs:

Of course I'll come. I've packed my galoshes
and three packets of tomato seeds. Janet calls them
"love apples." My father says where we're going
5 they won't grow.

I am a fourteen-year-old girl with bad spelling
and a messy room. If it helps any, I will tell you
I have always felt funny using chopsticks
and my favorite food is hot dogs.

10 My best friend is a white girl named Denise—
we look at boys together. She sat in front of me
all through grade school because of our names:
O'Connor, Ozawa. I know the back of Denise's head very well.
I tell her she's going bald. She tells me I copy on tests.
15 We're best friends.

I saw Denise today in Geography class.
She was sitting on the other side of the room.
"You're trying to start a war," she said, "giving secrets away
to the Enemy. Why can't you keep your big mouth shut?"

20 I didn't know what to say.
I gave her a packet of tomato seeds
and asked her to plant them for me, told her
when the first tomato ripens
to miss me.

I, Too, Sing America by Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America. (22)

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed--

I, too, am America

The New Colossus by Emma Lazarus

23

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*



Freedom

24

William Stafford

Freedom is not following a river.

Freedom is following a river,
though, if you want to.

It is deciding now by what happens now.

It is knowing that luck makes a difference.

No leader is free; no follower is free—
the rest of us can often be free.

Most of the world are living by
creeds too odd, chancey, and habit-forming
to be worth arguing about by reason.

If you are oppressed, wake up about
four in the morning: most places,
you can usually be free some of the time
if you wake up before other people. ■

GUIDED READING
Who is not free?

GUIDED READING
When can a
person usually
be free?

WORDS
FOR
EVERYDAY
USE

creed (krēd) *n.*, set of beliefs; guiding principle. *The Boy Scouts' creed is to always be prepared.*

op • press (ə pres') *v.*, to crush or burden by abuse of power or authority. *The government oppressed the people by making them obey harsh and unfair laws.*

Conquerors

Henry Treece

25

By sundown we came to a hidden village
Where all the air was still
And no sound met our tired ears, save
For the sorry drip of rain from blackened trees
And the melancholy song of swinging gates.
Then through a broken pane some of us saw
A dead bird in a rusting cage, still
Pressing his thin tattered breast against the bars,
His beak wide open. And
As we hurried through the weed-grown street,
A gaunt dog started up from some dark place
And shambled off on legs as thin as sticks
Into the wood, to die at last in peace.
No one had told us victory was like this;
Not one amongst us would have eaten bread
Before he'd filled the mouth of the gray child
That sprawled, stiff as a stone, before the
shattered door.
There was no one who did not think of home.

Roads Go Ever Ever On

J.R.R. Tolkein

27

Roads go ever ever on,
Over rock and under tree,
By eaves where never sun has shone,
By streams that never find the sea;
Over snow by winter sown,
And through the merry flowers of June,
Over grass and over stone,
And under mountains in the moon.

Roads go ever ever on
Under cloud and under star,
Yet feet that wandering have gone
Turn at last to home afar,
Eyes that fire and sword have seen,
And horror in the halls of stone
Look at last on meadows greens
And trees and hills they long have known.

"To the Virgins to Make Much of Time"
by Robert Herrick

26

Gather ye Rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is Still a Flying;
And this same flower that smiles today,
To morrow will be dying.

The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun,
The higher he's a getting;
The sooner his Race be run,
And neerer he's to Setting.

That Age is Best, which is the first,
When Youth and Blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst,
Times, still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;
And while ye may, goe marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.

"Carpe Diem" 28
by Henry David Thoreau

Build not on to-morrow
But seize on to-day!
From no future borrow,
The present to pay.

Wait not any longer
Thy work to begin;
The worker grows stronger, --
Be steadfast and win!

Forebode not new sorrow --
Bear that of to-day
And trust that the morrow
Shall chase it away.

The task of the present
Be sure to fulfill;
If sad, or if pleasant,
Be true to it still.

God sendeth us sorrow
And cloudeth our day;
His sun on the morrow
Shines bright on our way.

Don Marquis (1878–1937) was a newspaper columnist who commented humorously on the society and politics of the early twentieth century. He was also the creator of an unlikely philosopher—“archy,” a cockroach. According to his creator, archy learned to produce poems by jumping on typewriter keys. Reading this poem, we are supposed to believe that it was composed by archy during the night and left on the desk where the newspaperman he called “boss” would be sure to

see it the next morning. archy often left poems for the “boss.”

Since archy is too small to use the shift key, he provides no capitalization for his poem, and he does not bother with punctuation. Read the poem aloud. Let your own sense of speech rhythms and inflections tell you when to pause, where to begin and end sentences, and how to distinguish between the voice of the moth and the voice of archy.

The Lesson of the Moth



29

Don Marquis

i was talking to a moth
the other evening
he was trying to break into
an electric light bulb
5 and fry himself on the wires

why do you fellows
pull this stunt i asked him
because it is the conventional
thing for moths or why
10 if that had been an uncovered
candle instead of an electric
light bulb you would
now be a small unsightly cinder
have you no sense
15 plenty of it he answered
but at times we get tired
of using it
we get bored with the routine
and crave beauty
20 and excitement
fire is beautiful
and we know that if we get
too close it will kill us
but what does that matter
25 it is better to be happy
for a moment
and be burned up with beauty
than to live a long time

and be bored all the while
30 so we wad all our life up
into one little roll
and then we shoot the roll
that is what life is for
it is better to be a part of beauty
35 for one instant and then cease to
exist than to exist forever
and never be a part of beauty
our attitude toward life
is come easy go easy
40 we are like human beings
used to be before they became
too civilized to enjoy themselves

and before i could argue him
out of his philosophy
45 he went and immolated himself
on a patent cigar lighter
i do not agree with him
myself i would rather have
half the happiness and twice
50 the longevity

but at the same time i wish
there was something i wanted
as badly as he wanted to fry himself
archy

As you read this poem, be sure you know just what the poet is personifying. Suppose the poem

had no title: would you know what "they" are? What clues would tell you?

The Legend of the Paper Plates

30

John Haines

They trace their ancestry
back to the forest.
There all the family stood,
proud, bushy, and strong.

5 Until hard times,
when from fire and drought
the patriarchs^o crashed.

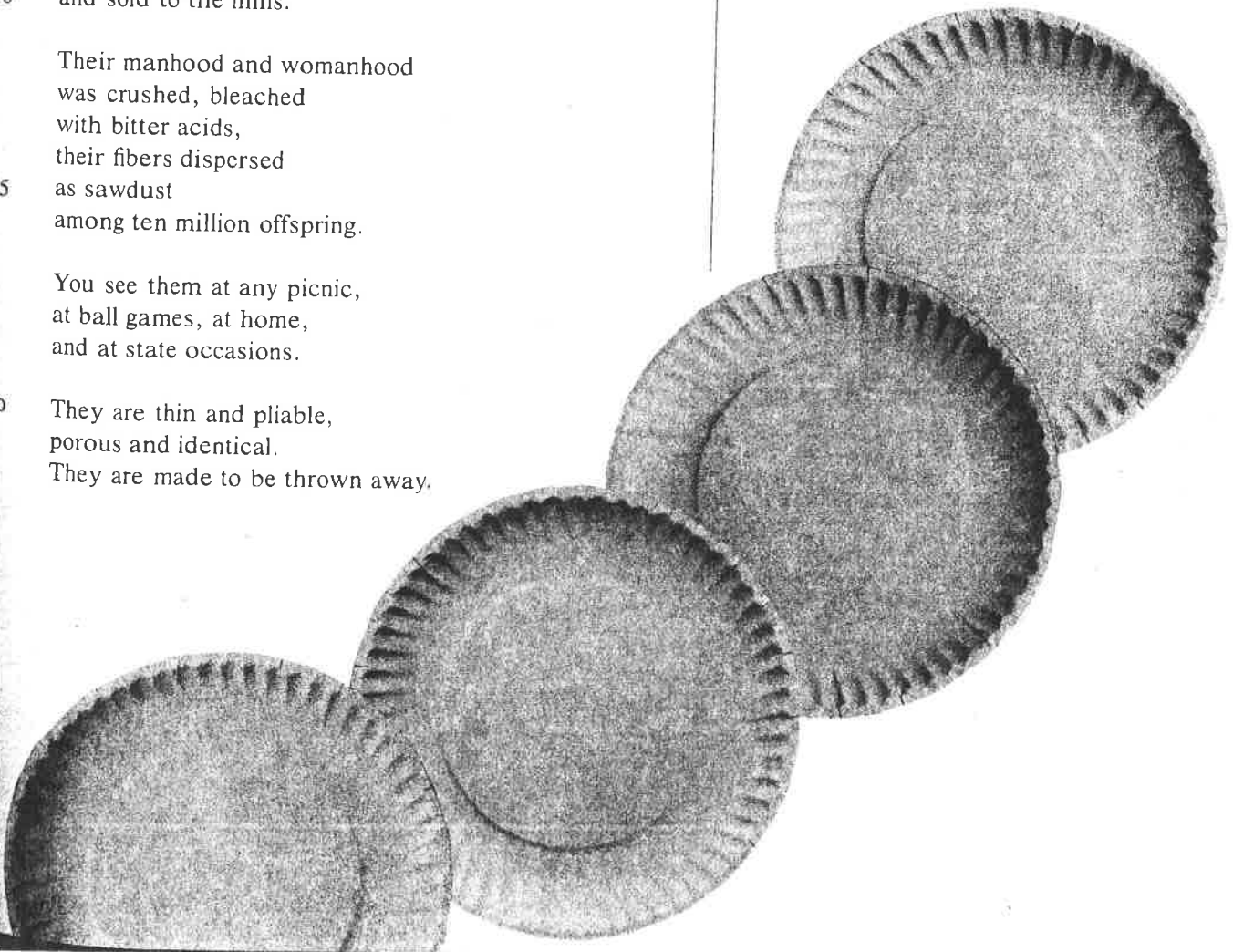
10 The land was taken for taxes,
the young people cut down
and sold to the mills.

15 Their manhood and womanhood
was crushed, bleached
with bitter acids,
their fibers dispersed
as sawdust
among ten million offspring.

You see them at any picnic,
at ball games, at home,
and at state occasions.

20 They are thin and pliable,
porous and identical.
They are made to be thrown away.

7. **patriarchs**: the aged and respected male heads of families. (The female equivalents would be matriarchs.)



Courage

Robert Service

31

To-day I opened wide my eyes,
And stared with wonder and surprise,
To see beneath November skies
An apple blossom peer;
5 Upon a branch as bleak as night
It gleamed exultant
on my sight,
A fairy¹ beacon
burning bright
Of hope and cheer.

10 “Alas!” said I, “poor foolish thing,
Have you mistaken this for Spring?
Behold, the thrush has taken wing,²
And Winter’s near.”

Serene it seemed to lift its head:
15 “The Winter’s wrath I do not dread,
Because I am,” it proudly said,
“A Pioneer.³”

20 “Some apple blossom must be first,
With beauty’s urgency to burst
Into a world for joy athirst,
And so I dare;
And I shall see what none shall see—

December skies gloom over me,
And mock them with my April glee,
And fearless fare.⁴

25 “And I shall hear what none shall hear—
The hardy robin piping clear,
The Storm King gallop dark and drear⁵
Across the sky;
And I shall know what none shall
know—

30 The silent kisses of
the snow,
The Christmas
candles’ silver glow,
Before I die.

“Then from your frost-gemmed window
pane
One morning you will look in vain,
35 My smile of delicate disdain
No more to see;
But though I pass before my time,
And perish in the gale and grime,⁶
Maybe you’ll have a
little rhyme
40 To spare for me.” ■

1. **fairy.** Fairylike; graceful, delicate

2. **thrush . . . wing.** Birds have flown away.

3. **Pioneer.** Here it means both a person who explores the way before others as well as a plant that starts a new cycle of life in a barren place.

4. **fare.** Condition

5. **drear.** Melancholy, depressing

6. **gale and grime.** Dirt

WORDS
FOR
EVERYDAY
USE

bleak (blék') *adj.*, lacking life; cold and raw. *When Lucia first moved from the Caribbean to the northern United States, she thought the landscape looked bleak compared to her lush homeland.*

ex • ult • ant (ig zál' tant) *adj.*, joyful. *We did not have to ask Joel how he did on the test because he wore an exultant grin.*

wrath (rath') *n.*, extreme anger; harshness. *Do you think it is better to treat the guilty with wrath or with mercy?*

dis • dain (dis dān') *n.*, feeling of contempt for something that is beneath you; scorn. *Rick was a talented and hard-working student, so he felt disdain for those students who did not bother to study for important tests.*

per • ish (per' ish) *v.*, die. *Jerome learned the sad truth about death when his beloved dog grew old and finally perished.*

Sympathy (32)

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing
grass
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opens,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wings!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep
core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings
I know why the caged bird sings.

— Paul Laurence Dunbar

Caged Bird (33)

A free bird leaps on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

— Maya Angelou

STILL I RISE

34

maya angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

POEMS by Emily Dickenson

Hope (35)

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune--without the words,
And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,
And on the strangest sea;
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.

I'm nobody! Who are you? (36)

I'm nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there's a pair of us -- don't tell!
They'd advertise -- you know!

How dreary to be somebody!
How public like a frog
To tell one's name the livelong day
To an admiring bog!

There is No Frigate Like a Book

(37)
There is no frigate like a book
To take us lands away,
Nor any coursers like a page
Of prancing poetry.
This traverse may the poorest take
Without oppress of toll;
How frugal is the chariot
That bears a human soul.

The Lost Thought (38)

I felt a cleaving in my mind
As if my brain had split;
I tried to match it, seam by seam,
But could not make them fit.

The thought behind I strove to join
Unto the thought before,
But sequence ravelled out of reach
Like balls upon a floor.

The wind tapped like a tired man (39)

The Wind -- tapped like a tired man --
And like a Host -- 'Come in'
I boldly answered -- entered then
My Residence within

A rapid -- footless guest --
To offer whom a Chair
Were as impossible as hand
A sofa to the Air --

No Bone had he to bind him --
His speech was like the Push
Of numerous Humming Birds at once
From a superior bush.

His Countenance -- a Billow --
His fingers, as He passed
Let go a music --as of tunes
Blown tremulous in Glass.

He visited -- still flitting --
Then like a timid Man,
Again, he tapped -- 't was flurriedly --
And I became alone --

Dust of Snow

Robert Frost

(40)

The way a crow
Shook down on me
The dust of snow
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart
A change of mood
And saved some part
Of a day I had rued.

A Cloud Shadow

(41)

A breeze discovered my open book
And began to flutter the leaves to look
For a poem there used to be on Spring.
I tried to tell her 'There's no such thing!'

For whom would a poem on Spring be by?
The breeze disdained to make reply;
And a cloud shadow crossed her face
For fear I would make her miss the place.

Wind and Window Flower

(43)

Lovers, forget your love,
And list to the love of these.
She a window flower,
And he a winter breeze.

When the frosty window veil
Was melted down at noon,
And the caged yellow bird
Hung over her in tune,

He marked her through the pane
He could not help but mark,
And only passed her by,
To come again at dark.

He was a winter wind,
Concerned with ice and snow,
Dead weeds and unmated birds,
And little of love could know.

But he sighed upon the sill,
He gave the sash a shake,
As witness all within
Who lay that night awake.

Perchance he half prevailed
To win her for the flight
From the firelit looking-glass
And warm stove-window light.

But the flower leaned aside
And thought of naught to say,
And morning found the breeze
A hundred miles away.

Robert
Frost

THE ROAD NOT TAKEN

(42)

Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

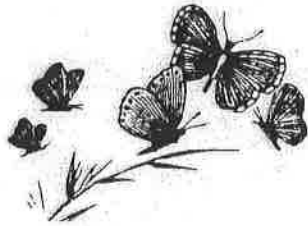
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Storm Fear

(44)

When the wind works against us in the dark,
And pelts with snow
The lower chamber window on the east,
And whispers with a sort of stifled bark,
The beast,
"Come out! Come out!"—
It costs no inward struggle not to go,
Ah, no!
I count our strength,
Two and a child,
Those of us not asleep subdued to mark
How the cold creeps as the fire dies at length,—
How drifts are piled,
Dooryard and road ungraded,
Till even the comforting barn grows far away,
And my heart owns a doubt
Whether 'tis in us to arise with day
And save ourselves unaided.



BLUE-BUTTERFLY DAY (45)

It is blue-butterfly day here in spring,
And with these sky-flakes down in flurry on flurry
There is more unmixed color on the wing
Than flowers will show for days unless they hurry

But these are flowers that fly and all but sing:
And now from having ridden out desire
They lie closed over in the wind and cling
Where wheels have freshly sliced the April mire.

FIREFLIES IN THE GARDEN (47)

Here come real stars to fill the upper skies,
And here on earth come emulating flies,
That though they never equal stars in size,
(And they were never really stars at heart)
Achieve at times a very star-like start.
Only, of course, they can't sustain the part.

FIRE AND ICE (49)

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Once by the Pacific (46)

The shattered water made a misty din.
Great waves looked over others coming in,
And thought of doing something to the shore
That water never did to land before.
The clouds were low and hairy in the skies,
Like locks blown forward in the gleam of eyes.
You could not tell, and yet it looked as if
The shore was lucky in being backed by cliff,
The cliff in being backed by continent,
I looked as if a night of dark intent
Was coming, and not only a night, an age.
Someone had better be prepared for rage.
There would be more than ocean-water broken
Before God's last *Put out the Light* was spoken.

A MINOR BIRD (48)

I have wished a bird would fly away,
And not sing by my house all day;

Have clapped my hands at him from the door
When it seemed as if I could bear no more.

The fault must partly have been in me.
The bird was not to blame for his key.

And of course there must be something wrong
In wanting to silence any song.

Robert Frost

Casey at the Bat



This is the most famous poem about the great American pastime—baseball. Shortly after the poem appeared in a newspaper, it was given to an actor who was about to go onstage in New York's Wallack's Theater for a Baseball Night.

Ernest Lawrence Thayer

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play;
And so, when Cooney died at first, and Burrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

5 A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought, if only Casey could but get a whack, at that,
They'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.

10 But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a pudding, and the latter was a fake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

15 But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much-despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe on second, and Flynn a-hugging third.

20 Then from the gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell;
It bounded from the mountaintop, and rattled in the dell;
It struck upon the hillside, and recoiled upon the flat;
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing, and a smile on Casey's face;
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

25 Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

30 And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there;
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped.
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

35 From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm waves on a stern and distant shore;
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

40 With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and the echo answered, "Fraud!"
But a scornful look from Casey, and the audience was awed;
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lips, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh! somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright;
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out!

BASEBALL (51)

bill zavatsky

We were only farm team
not "good enough" to
make big Little League
with its classic uniforms,
deep lettered hats.

But our coach said
we *were* just as good,
maybe better,
so we played
the Little League champs
in our stenciled tee shirts
and soft purple caps
when the season was over.

What happened that afternoon
I can't remember—
whether we won or tied.

But in my mind I lean back
to a pop-up hanging
in sunny sky,
stopped,
nailed to the blue,
losing itself in a cloud
over second base
where I stood waiting.

Ray Michaud, who knew,
my up-and-down career
as a local player,
my moments of graceful genius,
my unpredictable ineptness,
screamed arrows at me
from the dugout
where he waited to bat:
"He's gonna drop it! He
don't know how to catch,
you watch it drop!"

The ball kept climbing
higher, a black dot,
no rules of gravity, no
brakes, a period searching
for a sentence, and the sentence read:
"You're no good, Bill.
You won't catch this one now;
You know you never will."

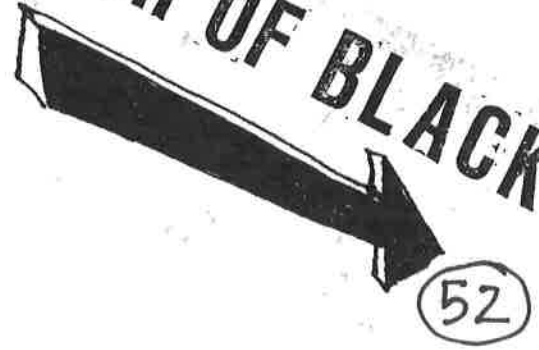
I watched myself looking up
and felt my body rust, falling
in pieces to the ground,
a baby trying to stand up,
an ant in the shadow of a house.

I wasn't there—
had never been born,
would stand there forever,
a statue squinting upward,
pointed out, laughed at
for a thousand years
teammates dead, forgotten,
bones of anyone who played baseball
forgotten
baseball forgotten, played no more,
played by robots on electric fields
who never missed
or cried in their own sweat.

I'm a lot older now.
The game was over
a million years ago.
All I remember
of that afternoon
when the ball
came down
is that
I caught it

THE SUMMER OF BLACK WIDOWS

sherman alexie



The spiders appeared suddenly
after that summer rainstorm.

Some people still insist the spiders fell with the rain
while others believe the spiders grew from the damp soil like weeds
with eight thin roots.

The elders knew the spiders
carried stories in their stomachs.

We tucked our pants into our boots when we walked through fields
of fallow stories.

An Indian girl opened the closet door and a story fell into her hair.

We lived in the shadow of a story trapped in the ceiling lamp.

The husk of a story museumed on the windowsill.

Before sleep, we shook our blankets and stories fell to the floor.

A story floated in a glass of water left on the kitchen table.

We opened doors slowly and listened for stories.

The stories rose on hind legs and offered their red bellies to the most
beautiful Indians.

Stories in our cereal boxes.

Stories in our firewood.

Stories in the pocket of our coats.

We captured stories and offered them to the ants, who carried the
stories back to their queen.

A dozen stories per acre.

We poisoned the stories and gathered their remains with broom
and pan.

The spiders disappeared suddenly
after that summer lightning storm.

Some people insist the spiders were burned to ash
while others believe the spiders climbed the lightning bolts and
became a new constellation.

The elders knew the spiders
Had left behind bundles of stories.

Up in the corners of our old houses
we still find those small, white bundles
and nothing, neither fire
nor water, neither rock nor wind,
can bring them down.