

# This is what you shall do 52

WALT WHITMAN

“This is what you shall do; Love the earth and  
sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every  
one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy,

devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants,  
argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence  
toward the people,

take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or  
to any man or number of men, go freely with powerful  
uneducated persons and with the young and with  
the mothers of families,

read these leaves in the open air every season of every  
year of your life, re-examine all you have been told  
at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever  
insults your own soul,

and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the  
richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent  
lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of  
your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body.”

THE THING IS by Ellen Bass 53

to love life, to love it even  
when you have no stomach for it  
and everything you've held dear  
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,  
your throat filled with the silt of it.  
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat  
thickening the air, heavy as water  
more fit for gills than lungs;  
when grief weights you like your own flesh  
only more of it, an obesity of grief,  
you think, How can a body withstand this?  
Then you hold life like a face  
between your palms, a plain face,  
no charming smile, no violet eyes,  
and you say, yes, I will take you  
I will love you, again.

I walked a mile with Pleasure,  
She chatted all the way;  
But left me none the wiser  
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,  
And ne'er a word said she,  
But, oh! The things I learned from her,  
When Sorrow walked with me.

ROBERT BROWNING HAMILTON



54  
let it go - the  
smashed word broken  
open vow or  
the oath cracked length  
wise - let it go it  
was sworn to

go

- let them go - the  
truthful liars and  
the false fair friends  
and the boths and  
neithers - you must let them go they  
were born

to go

let all go - the  
big small middling  
tall bigger really  
the biggest and all  
things - let all go  
dear

so comes love

55 - e.e. cummings

You are not your age, <sup>56</sup>  
Nor the size of clothes you wear,  
You are not a weight,  
Or the colour of your hair.  
You are not your name,  
Or the dimples in your cheeks,  
You are all the books you read,  
And all the words you speak,  
You are your croaky morning voice,  
And the smiles you try to hide,  
You're the sweetness in your laughter,  
And every tear you've cried,  
You're the songs you sing so loudly,  
When you know you're all alone,  
You're the places that you've been to,  
And the one that you call home,  
You're the things that you believe in,  
And the people that you love,  
You're the photos in your bedroom,  
And the future you dream of,  
You're made of so much beauty,  
But it seems that you forgot,  
When you decided that you were defined,  
By all the things you're not.

~e.h



The thing about pain,<sup>51</sup>  
Is it won't last forever,  
And it kills you right now,  
But with time it gets better,  
The thing about scars,  
Is they all start to fade,  
Until nothing is left,  
Of the cuts that were made,  
The thing about today,  
Is there's always tomorrow,  
And if you can't find your smile,  
I have one you can borrow,  
The thing about help,  
Is beside you it stands,  
But it won't know it's needed,  
Unless you reach out your hand,  
The thing about love,  
Is you can't feel it's touch,  
Until you let someone know,  
That this world is too much.

~e.h



Aliens by Charles Bukowski <sup>58</sup>

You may not believe it  
but there are people  
who go through life with  
very little  
friction or  
distress.  
They dress well, eat  
well, sleep well.  
They are contented with  
their family  
life.  
They have moments of  
grief  
but all in all  
they are undisturbed  
and often feel  
very good.  
and when they die  
it is an easy  
death, usually in their  
sleep.

you may not believe  
it  
but such people do  
exist.

but I am not one of  
them.  
oh no, I am not one  
of them,  
I am not even near  
to being

one of  
them  
but they are  
there  
and I am  
here.

"Repetition"  
by Phil Kaye

"Counting Down  
From 21"

"POW"  
by Alicia Keys

### Break 59

*Dorianne Laux*

We put the puzzle together piece  
by piece, loving how one curved  
notch fits so sweetly with another.  
A yellow smudge becomes  
the brush of a broom, and two blue arms  
fill in the last of the sky.  
We patch together porch swings and autumn  
trees, matching gold to gold. We hold  
the eyes of deer in our palms, a pair  
of brown shoes. We do this as the child  
circles her room, impatient  
with her blossoming, tired  
of the neat house, the made bed,  
the good food. We let her brood  
as we shuffle through the pieces,  
setting each one into place with a satisfied  
tap, our backs turned for a few hours  
to a world that is crumbling, a sky  
that is falling, the pieces  
we are required to return to.

### You Learn by Veronica Shoffstall <sup>61</sup>

After awhile you learn  
the subtle difference between  
holding a hand and chaining a soul  
and you learn that love doesn't mean possession  
and company doesn't mean security.  
And you begin to learn that kisses aren't contracts  
and presents aren't promises and you begin to accept  
your defeats with your head up and your eyes ahead  
with the grace of an adult not the grief of a child.  
And you learn to build your roads today  
because tomorrow's ground is too uncertain for plans  
and futures have ways of falling down in mid-flight.  
~~After awhile you learn that even sunshine~~  
burns if you get too much so you plant your  
own garden and decorate your own soul  
instead of waiting for someone to bring you flowers.  
And you learn that you really can endure  
that you really are strong  
and you really do have worth  
and you learn  
and you learn...

<sup>60</sup>  
"Because of Poems" by Naomi Shihab Nye

Words have secret parties.  
Verbs, adjectives, and nouns  
meet outside their usual boundaries,  
wearing hats.

MOODY feels doubtful about attending  
and pauses near the door, ready to escape.  
But she's fascinated by DAZZLE.  
BEFRIEND throws a comforting arm  
around her shoulder.

LOST and REMEMBER huddle  
in the same corner, trading  
phone numbers.

I serve punch.

# We Real Cool <sup>62</sup>

## Gwendolyn Brooks, 1917 - 2000

THE POOL PLAYERS.  
SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.

### Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906) <sup>64</sup> We Wear the Mask

WE wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
We wear the mask!

Famous <sup>63</sup>

By Naomi Shihab Nye

The river is famous to the fish.  
The loud voice is famous to silence,  
which knew it would inherit the earth  
before anybody said so.

The cat sleeping on the fence is famous to the birds  
watching him from the birdhouse.

The tear is famous, briefly, to the cheek.

The idea you carry close to your bosom  
is famous to your bosom.

The boot is famous to the earth,  
more famous than the dress shoe,  
which is famous only to floors.  
The bent photograph is famous to the one who carries it  
and not at all famous to the one who is pictured.

I want to be famous to shuffling men  
who smile while crossing streets,  
sticky children in grocery lines,  
famous as the one who smiled back.  
I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous,  
or a buttonhole, not because it did anything spectacular,  
but because it never forgot what it could do.

*And If I Did Not Make Mistakes* 65  
By Katie Paton

*And if I did not make mistakes  
And give too brief a thought to heavy questions  
And too much time to little matter;  
Or if I always knew which road to travel  
Where every step would lead me into daylight  
And if each face that turned to watch me pass  
Was broken by a smile;  
Or if whenever I should choose to lay my heart  
Bare upon the sun-warmed grass,  
It always was returned with tender touches  
And carried by a song;  
And if my heaviest burden were only to be  
A breeze upon my back, and blossom in my hair,  
And my brow was never crossed with lines of pain;  
If all this endless summer were my lot  
And winter's fury never beat me back,  
Then I never would have seen the stormy nights  
Through which I've struggled, fought and won;  
I never would have known the joy of needed comfort given,  
Or the essence of a friend.*

Learn To Be Quiet by Franz Kafka 66

You need not do anything.  
Remain sitting at your table and listen.  
You need not even listen, just wait.  
You need not even wait,  
just learn to be quiet, still and solitary.  
And the world will freely offer itself to you unmasked.  
It has no choice, it will roll in ecstasy at your feet.

Early Memory 67  
by January Gill O'Neil

I remember picking up a fistful  
of sand, smooth crystals, like hourglass sand  
and throwing it into the eyes of a boy. Johnny  
or Danny or Kevin—he was not important.  
I was five and I knew he would cry.

I remember everything about it—  
the sandbox in the corner of the room  
at Cinderella Day Care; Ms. Lee,  
who ran over after the boy wailed for his mother,  
her stern look as the words *No snack* formed on her lips.  
My hands with their gritty, half-mooned fingernails  
I hid in the pockets of my blue and white dress.  
How she found them and uncurled small sandy fists.

There must have been such rage in me, to give such pain  
to another person. This afternoon,  
I saw a man pull a gold chain off the neck  
of a woman as she crossed the street.  
She cried out with a sound that bleached me.  
I walked on, unable to help,  
knowing that fire in childhood  
clenched deep in my pockets all the way home.



**End of April** 6<sup>9</sup>

Under a cherry tree  
I found a robin's egg,  
broken, but not shattered.

I had been thinking of you,  
and was kneeling in the grass  
among fallen blossoms

when I saw it: a blue scrap,  
a delicate toy, as light  
as confetti

It didn't seem real,  
but nature will do such things  
from time to time.

I looked inside:  
it was glistening, hollow,  
a perfect shell

except for the missing crown,  
which made it possible  
to look inside.

What had been there  
is gone now  
and lives in my heart

where, periodically,  
it opens up its wings,  
tearing me apart.

—Phillis Levin



13. ***Like Math***  
by Chad Anderson
14. ***What Kind of Asian Are You?***  
by Alex Dang
15. ***I Wanna Hear A Poem***  
by Steve Colman
16. ***Selfie***  
by Jenna Robinson, William Giles
17. ***Dear Future Generations: Sorry***  
by Prince Ea
18. ***Names***  
by Rachel Rostad
19. ***Shake The Dust***  
by Anis Mojgani
20. ***P.O.W.***  
by Alicia Keys
21. ***Counting Down From 21***  
by Patrick Roche
22. ***Repetition***  
by Phil Kaye
23. ***Please Don't Take My Air Jordans***  
by Lemon Anderson
24. ***Sometimes Silence Is The Loudest... Kind of Noise***  
by Bassey Ikpi

MORA'S LIST OF SPOKEN WORD POETRY TASTING FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL

1. ***Changing the World***  
by Belissa Escobedo, Rhiannon McGavin, Zariyah Allen
2. ***To This Day***  
by Shane Koyczan
3. ***Totally Like Whatever, You Know?***  
by Taylor Mali
4. ***Knock Knock***  
by Daniel Beaty
5. ***Today***  
by Billy Collins
6. ***B***  
by Sarah Kay
7. ***Kumulipo***  
by Jamaica Osorio
8. ***Tamara's Opus***  
by Joshua Bennett
9. ***Scratch and Dent Dreams***  
by Eric Darby
10. ***What Guys Look For In Girls***  
by Savannah Brown
11. ***Shrinking Woman***  
by Lily Myers
12. ***For Teenage Girls***  
by Clementine von Radics

Poetry is how we say to the world, and to each other, "I am here." Some of my most beloved poets -- Walt Whitman, Langston Hughes, Billy Collins and Naomi Shihab Nye -- talk about poetry as a way to document the world and our common experiences, to say what needs to be said in a direct, powerful and beautiful way.

After 9/11, when poetry was flowing in a steady and necessary stream across the Internet, someone asked Billy Collins why that phenomenon was happening and he said: "Because poetry tells the story of the human heart." Poems were the kind of urgent and comforting storytelling we needed then, and the kinds of stories we need every day. Poetry matters to the little girl in Philippines who is discovering who she is and why her language sounds like a song in her poem. It matters to the boy in foster care who is trying to find new ways to express his frustrations, but also his deepest dreams. It matters to Syrian refugees who are longing to hold tight to their dearest memories of home and to tell their stories of strength and resilience going forward.

Through poetry, children find freedom to share their story in a way that feels good and is true to their own deepest selves. From urban communities to the most rural areas, we are all the same humanity: we hunger for ways to express ourselves that feel the most true, and bend to our most human voices to create new shapes in the world.

Poetry matters because it is both free and deeply structured. There is a certain kind of freedom that comes from writing a poem without ending punctuation, or playing with sentence fragments, but there is also the joy that comes from operating within the constraints of poetry's unique structures: from haiku to sonnets to ballads to cinquains to odes. For a child seeking to express and share an idea, the structure of a poem provides a container, a vessel to hold onto a big idea or to generously share the most tender moments of the heart and mind.

Poetry can be a game-changer for struggling writers and language learners. Once liberated to express themselves in a way that makes sense to them, suddenly, they realize that their thoughts and feelings can make sense to others. A whole new pathway opens up and writers and readers, speakers and listeners speak the same language -- the language of human experience.

Simple language can convey big and important ideas. No one understood this better than Langston Hughes. He wrote at a time when the nation was changing before his eyes, and yet when so many of his friends and family members were struggling readers themselves. His poems, from *April Rain Song* "Let the rain kiss you..." to *The Black Man Speaks*: "I swear to the Lord/I still can't see/ Why Democracy means/ Everybody but me." spoke in a troubled time in a clear and direct way. His powerful call for a more beautiful and just world resonated with all. Someone once said: "Poetry, like bread, is for everyone." And these, our greatest poets, know this to be true.

Recently, the Syrian writer and translator Ghada Alatrash spoke about how poetry has deeply mattered to the Syrian people throughout history. Today, she is seeing an explosion of new poetry, which expresses the anguished voices of the people at a time when their country is experiencing catastrophic losses. In spite of the flames of tragedy, a poem is a glowing ember, making visible the power of hope, and the human spirit. We must not only read and watch, we are called by the poet to bring the flame back to the ember, to do what we can to help people not only to survive, but to thrive.

Let poetry matter to you, to your children, and let's together give it a chance to matter to many more children around the world. Be courageous and put your own story, what you are feeling and experiencing right now, into a poem, today. Encourage children to fall in love with poetry by reading aloud to them from the great poets whose names you know, and also the ones who are publishing now on their own, whose names will matter to us because we want to know their stories. Find a way to support children's stories, poems and voices around the world by championing their right to go to school and to learn to read and write. In this way, we can all break bread with people around the world, through their own voices and their own stories, through the vessels they build with the words they create out of the lives they live.





## LEARNING ABOUT POETRY

Poetry is the most musical literary form. Poets choose words for both sound and meaning. Poets use some or all of the following to do this:

- **Sensory language** is writing or speech that appeals to one or more of the five senses—sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- **Figurative language** is writing that is imaginative and not meant to be taken literally. The chart below contains different types of figurative language.

Figurative Language	Definition	Example
<b>Metaphor</b>	• describes one thing as if it were another	Her eyes were saucers, wide with expectation.
<b>Simile</b>	• uses <i>like</i> or <i>as</i> to compare two unlike things	The drums were as loud as a fireworks display.
<b>Personification</b>	• gives human qualities to something that is not human	The clarinets sang.

**Sound devices** add a musical quality to poetry. Some sound devices include these:

Sound Device	Definition	Example
<b>Alliteration</b>	• repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words	feathered friend
<b>Repetition</b>	• repeated use of a sound, word, or phrase	water, water everywhere
<b>Assonance</b>	• repetition of a vowel sound followed by different consonants in stressed syllables	fade/hay

Other sound devices include these:

Sound Device	Definition	Example
<b>Consonance</b>	• repetition of a consonant sound at the end of stressed syllables with different vowel sounds	end/hand
<b>Onomatopoeia</b>	• use of words that imitate sounds	buzz, whack
<b>Rhyme</b>	• repetition of sounds at the ends of words	dear, cheer, here
<b>Meter</b>	• the rhythmical pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables	A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse!

The structure of a poem determines its form. Most poems are written in lines. These lines are grouped into stanzas. This list describes several forms of poetry.

- **Lyric** poetry expresses the thoughts and feelings of a single speaker. The **speaker** is the person who speaks in the poem. Lyric poetry is usually very musical.
- **Narrative** poetry tells a story in verse. It often has the same elements that are found in short stories, including characters, setting, and plot.
- **Ballads** are songlike poems that tell a story. They often tell about adventure and romance.
- **Free verse** is poetry that is defined by its lack of strict structure. It does not have to rhyme or have regular meter. Lines do not have to be a specific length. There may be no specific stanza pattern.
- **Haiku** is a three-line Japanese form. The first and third lines have five syllables each. The second line has seven syllables.
- **Rhyming couplets** are a pair of rhyming lines that usually have the same meter and length.
- **Limericks** are humorous poems with five lines. They have a specific rhythm pattern and rhyme scheme.