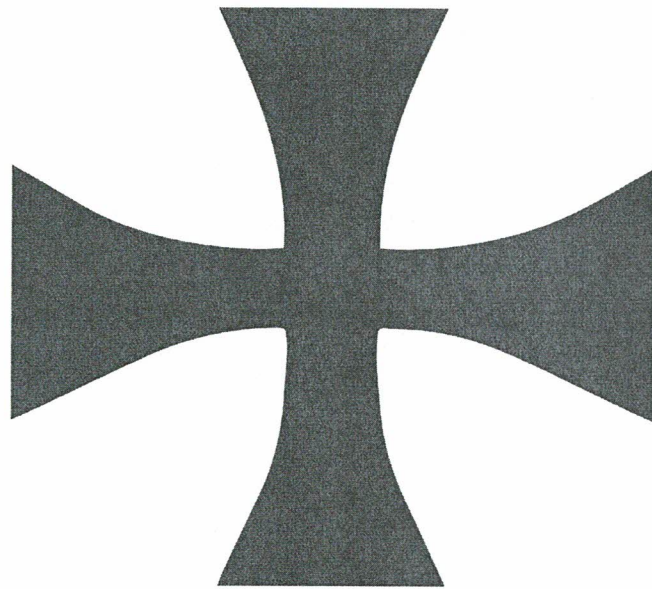


Kubus AP English Literature
Poetry Reader
2023-2024



AMDG

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2021 Poem: “The Man with the Saxophone” by Ai

Prompt: In Ai’s poem “The Man with the Saxophone,” published in 1985, the speaker encounters a man playing a saxophone. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Ai uses literary elements and techniques to convey the complexity of the speaker’s encounter with the saxophone player at that particular time and place.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

The Man with the Saxophone

New York. Five A.M.
The sidewalks empty.
Only the steam
pouring from the manhole covers seems alive,
5 as I amble from shop window to shop window,
sometimes stopping to stare, sometimes not.
Last week’s snow is brittle now
and unrecognizable as the soft, white hair
that bearded the face of the city.
10 I head farther down Fifth Avenue
toward the thirties,
my mind empty
like the Buddhists tell you is possible
if only you don’t try.
15 If only I could
turn myself into a bird
like the shaman¹ I was meant to be,
but I can’t,
I’m earthbound
20 and solitude is my companion,
the only one you can count on.
Don’t, don’t try to tell me otherwise.
I’ve had it all and lost it
and I never want it back,
25 only give me this morning to keep,
the city asleep
and there on the corner of Thirty-fourth and Fifth,
the man with the saxophone,

his fingerless gloves caked with grime,
30 his face also,
the layers of clothes welded to his skin.
I set down my case,
he steps backward
to let me know I’m welcome,
35 and we stand a few minutes
in the silence so complete
I think I must be somewhere else, not here,
not in this city, this heartland of pure noise.
Then he puts the sax to his lips again
40 and I raise mine.
I suck the air up from my diaphragm
and bend over into the cold, golden reed,
waiting for the notes to come,
and when they do,
45 for that one moment,
I’m the unencumbered bird of my imagination,
rising only to fall back
toward concrete,
each note a black flower,
50 opening, mercifully opening
into the unforgiving new day.

¹A spiritual leader who is believed to be endowed with magical powers.

“The Man with the Saxophone.” Copyright © 1985 by Ai, from **THE COLLECTED POEMS OF AI** by Ai. Used by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc

Mother Country

To love a country as if you've lost one: 1968,
my mother leaves Cuba for America, a scene
I imagine as if standing in her place—one foot
inside a plane destined for a country she knew
only as a name, a color on a map, or glossy photos
from drugstore magazines, her other foot anchored
to the platform of her patria, her hand clutched
around one suitcase, taking only what she needs
most: hand-colored photographs of her family,
her wedding veil, the doorknob of her house,
a jar of dirt from her backyard, goodbye letters
she won't open for years. The sorrowful drone
of engines, one last, deep breath of familiar air
she'll take with her, one last glimpse at all
she'd ever known: the palm trees wave goodbye
as she steps onto the plane, the mountains shrink
from her eyes as she lifts off into another life.

To love a country as if you've lost one: I hear her
—*once upon a time*—reading picture books
over my shoulder at bedtime, both of us learning
English, sounding out words as strange as the talking
animals and fair-haired princesses in their pages.
I taste her first attempts at macaroni-n-cheese
(but with chorizo and peppers), and her shame
over Thanksgiving turkeys always dry, but countered
by her perfect pork *pernil* and garlic *yuca*. I smell
the rain of those mornings huddled as one under
one umbrella waiting for the bus to her ten-hour days
at the cash register. At night, the *zzz-zzz* of her sewing
her own blouses, *quinceañera* dresses for her nieces
still in Cuba, guessing at their sizes, and the gowns
she'd sell to neighbors to save for a rusty white sedan—
no hubcaps, no air-conditioning, sweating all the way
through our first vacation to Florida theme parks.

To love a country as if you've lost one: as if
it were you on a plane departing from America
forever, clouds closing like curtains on your country,
the last scene in which you're a madman scribbling
the names of your favorite flowers, trees, and birds
you'd never see again, your address and phone number
you'd never use again, the color of your father's eyes,
your mother's hair, terrified you could forget these.
To love a country as if I was my mother last spring

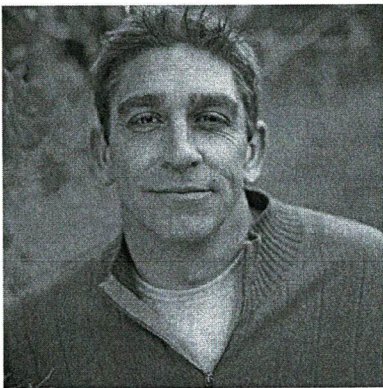
hobbling, insisting I help her climb all the way up
to the U.S. Capitol, as if she were here before you today
instead of me, explaining her tears, cheeks pink
as the cherry blossoms coloring the air that day when
she stopped, turned to me, and said: You know, *mijo*,
it isn't where you're born that matters, it's where
you choose to die—that's your country.

Credit

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Author

Richard Blanco



Richard Blanco is the Education Ambassador of the Academy of American Poets. In his role, he helps champion the organization's free resources for teachers, student projects, and other education initiatives. He is the author of several poetry collections, including *How to Love a Country* (Beacon Press, 2019). In 2013, Blanco was selected to read at Barack Obama's second Presidential Inauguration. He lives in Bethel, Maine.

Date Published

01/01/2019

Source URL: <https://poets.org/poem/mother-country>

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

3 Questions

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In Richard Blanco’s poem “Shaving,” published in 1998, the speaker writes about the act of shaving. Read the poem carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how Blanco uses literary elements and techniques to develop the speaker’s complex associations with the ritual of shaving.

In your response you should do the following:

- Respond to the prompt with a thesis that presents a defensible interpretation.
- Select and use evidence to support your line of reasoning.
- Explain how the evidence supports your line of reasoning.
- Use appropriate grammar and punctuation in communicating your argument.

Shaving

I am not shaving, I’m writing about it.
 And I conjure the most elaborate idea—
 how my beard is a creation of silent labor
 like ocean steam rising to form clouds,
 5 or the bloom of spiderwebs each morning;
 the discrete mystery of how whiskers grow,
 like the drink roses take from the vase,
 or the fall of fresh rain, becoming
 a river, and then rain again, so silently.
 10 I think of all these slow and silent forces
 and how quietly my father’s life passed us by.

I think of those mornings, when I *am* shaving,
 and remember him in a masquerade of foam, then,
 as if it was his beard I took the blade to,
 15 the memory of him in tiny snips of black whiskers
 swirling in the drain—dead pieces of the self
 from the face that never taught me how to shave.

His legacy of whiskers that grow like black seeds
 sown over my cheek and chin, my own flesh.

20 I am not shaving, but I will tell you about the
 mornings
 with a full beard and the blade in my hand,
 when my eyes don’t recognize themselves
 in a mirror echoed with a hundred faces
 I have washed and shaved—it is in that split second,
 25 when perhaps the roses drink and the clouds form,
 when perhaps the spider spins and rain transforms,
 that I most understand the invisibility of life
 and the intensity of vanishing, like steam
 at the slick edges of the mirror, without a trace.

“Shaving” from *City of a Hundred Fires* by Richard Blanco, © 1998. All rights are controlled by the University of Pittsburgh Press, Pittsburgh, PA 15260. Used by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

Begin your response to this question at the top of a new page in the separate Free Response booklet and fill in the appropriate circle at the top of each page to indicate the question number.

Quarantine

In the worst hour of the worst season
of the worst year of a whole people
a man set out from the workhouse with his wife.
He was walking—they were both walking—north.

She was sick with famine fever and could not keep up.
He lifted her and put her on his back.
He walked like that west and west and north.
Until at nightfall under freezing stars they arrived.

In the morning they were both found dead.
Of cold. Of hunger. Of the toxins of a whole history.
But her feet were held against his breastbone.
The last heat of his flesh was his last gift to her.

Let no love poem ever come to this threshold.
There is no place here for the inexact
praise of the easy graces and sensuality of the body.
There is only time for this merciless inventory:

Their death together in the winter of 1847.
Also what they suffered. How they lived.
And what there is between a man and woman.
And in which darkness it can best be proved.

Credit

From *New Collected Poems* by Eavan Boland. Copyright © 2008 by Eavan Boland. Reprinted by permission of W.W. Norton. All rights reserved.

Author

Eavan Boland





Autumn

BY ALICE CARY

Shorter and shorter now the twilight clips
The days, as though the sunset gates they crowd,
And Summer from her golden collar slips
And strays through stubble-fields, and moans aloud,

Save when by fits the warmer air deceives,
And, stealing hopeful to some sheltered bower,
She lies on pillows of the yellow leaves,
And tries the old tunes over for an hour.

The wind, whose tender whisper in the May
Set all the young blooms listening through th' grove,
Sits rustling in the faded boughs to-day
And makes his cold and unsuccessful love.

The rose has taken off her tire of red—
The mullein-stalk its yellow stars have lost,
And the proud meadow-pink hangs down her head
Against earth's chilly bosom, witched with frost.

The robin, that was busy all the June,
Before the sun had kissed the topmost bough,
Catching our hearts up in his golden tune,
Has given place to the brown cricket now.

The very cock crows lonesomely at morn—
Each flag and fern the shrinking stream divides—
Uneasy cattle low, and lambs forlorn
Creep to their strawy sheds with nettled sides.

Shut up the door: who loves me must not look
Upon the withered world, but haste to bring
His lighted candle, and his story-book,
And live with me the poetry of Spring.

The Bee

to the football coaches of
Clemson College, 1942

One dot
Grainily shifting we at roadside and
The smallest wings coming along the rail fence out
Of the woods one dot of all that green. It now
Becomes flesh-crawling then the quite still
Of stinging. I must live faster for my terrified
Small son it is on him. Has come. Clings.

Old wingback, come
To life. If your knee action is high
Enough, the fat may fall in time God damn
You, Dickey, *dig* this is your last time to cut
And run but you must give it everything you have
Left, for screaming near your screaming child is the sheer
Murder of California traffic: some bee hangs driving

Your child
Blindly onto the highway. Get there however
Is still possible. Long live what I badly did
At Clemson and all of my clumsiest drives
For the ball all of my trying to turn
The corner downfield and my spindling explosions
Through the five-hole over tackle. O backfield

Coach Shag Norton,
Tell me as you never yet have told me
To get the lead out scream whatever will get
The slow-motion of middle age off me I cannot
Make it this way I will have to leave
My feet they are gone I have him where
He lives and down we go singing with screams into

The dirt,
Son-screams of fathers screams of dead coaches turning
To approval and from between us the bee rises screaming
With flight grainily shifting riding the rail fence
Back into the woods traffic blasting past us
Unchanged, nothing heard through the air-
conditioning glass we lying at roadside full

Of the forearm prints
Of roadrocks strawberries on our elbows as from
Scrimmage with the varsity now we can get
Up stand turn away from the highway look straight

Into trees. See, there is nothing coming out no
Smallest wing no shift of a flight-grain nothing
Nothing. Let us go in, son, and listen

For some tobacco-
mumbling voice in the branches to say "That's
a little better," to our lives still hanging
By a hair. There is nothing to stop us we can go
Deep deeper into elms, and listen to traffic die
Roaring, like a football crowd from which we have
Vanished. Dead coaches live in the air, son live

In the ear
Like fathers, and *urge* and *urge*. They want you better
Than you are. When needed, they rise and curse you they scream
When something must be saved. Here, under this tree,
We can sit down. You can sleep, and I can try
To give back what I have earned by keeping us
Alive, and safe from bees: the smile of some kind

Of savior—
Of touchdowns, of fumbles, battles,
Lives. Let me sit here with you, son
As on the bench, while the first string takes back
Over, far away and say with my silentest tongue, with the man-
creating bruises of my arms with a live leaf a quick
Dead hand on my shoulder, "Coach Norton, I am your boy."

Credit

From *Poems 1957-1967* (Wesleyan University Press) by James Dickey. Copyright © 1967 by James Dickey. Used with permission of Wesleyan University Press.

Author

James Dickey



Photo credit: Christopher Dickey



Holy Sonnets: Batter my heart, three-person'd God

BY JOHN DONNE

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

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Holy Sonnets: Death, be not proud

BY JOHN DONNE

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

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The Flea

BY JOHN DONNE

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,
How little that which thou deniest me is;
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,
And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;
Thou know'st that this cannot be said
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,
Yet this enjoys before it woo,
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,
And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,
Where we almost, nay more than married are.
This flea is you and I, and this
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;
Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.
Though use make you apt to kill me,
Let not to that, self-murder added be,
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?
Wherein could this flea guilty be,
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou
Find'st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;
'Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:
Just so much honor, when thou yield'st to me,
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.

Source: *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (1996)



The Good-Morrow

BY JOHN DONNE

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved? Were we not weaned till then?
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of thee.

And now good-morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,
Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp north, without declining west?
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

Source: *The Norton Anthology of Poetry Third Edition* (1983)

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The Sun Rising

BY JOHN DONNE

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

She's all states, and all princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.



Song: Sweetest love, I do not go

BY JOHN DONNE

Sweetest love, I do not go,
 For weariness of thee,
Nor in hope the world can show
 A fitter love for me;
 But since that I
Must die at last, 'tis best
To use myself in jest
 Thus by feign'd deaths to die.

Yesternight the sun went hence,
 And yet is here today;
He hath no desire nor sense,
 Nor half so short a way:
 Then fear not me,
But believe that I shall make
Speedier journeys, since I take
 More wings and spurs than he.

O how feeble is man's power,
 That if good fortune fall,
Cannot add another hour,
 Nor a lost hour recall!
 But come bad chance,
And we join to't our strength,
And we teach it art and length,
 Itself o'er us to'advance.

When thou sigh'st, thou sigh'st not wind,
 But sigh'st my soul away;
When thou weep'st, unkindly kind,
 My life's blood doth decay.
 It cannot be

That thou lov'st me, as thou say'st,
If in thine my life thou waste,
That art the best of me.

Let not thy divining heart
Forethink me any ill;
Destiny may take thy part,
And may thy fears fulfil;
But think that we
Are but turn'd aside to sleep;
They who one another keep
Alive, ne'er parted be.

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Nothing Gold Can Stay

BY ROBERT FROST

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Robert Frost, "Nothing Gold Can Stay" from *New Hampshire: A Poem with Notes and Grace Notes*. New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1923. Public Domain.

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God's Grandeur

BY GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell: the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod.

And for all this, nature is never spent;

There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs —

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

n/a

Source: *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985)

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Pied Beauty

BY GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him.

Source: *Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose* (Penguin Classics, 1985)

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“Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art”

BY JOHN KEATS

Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art—
 Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
 Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
 Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
 Of snow upon the mountains and the moors—
No—yet still stedfast, still unchangeable,
 Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
 Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

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To Sleep

BY JOHN KEATS

O soft embalmer of the still midnight,
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine:
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close
In midst of this thine hymn my willing eyes,
Or wait the "Amen," ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities.
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes,—
Save me from curious Conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed Casket of my Soul.

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Instructions on Not Giving Up

More than the fuchsia funnels breaking out
of the crabapple tree, more than the neighbor's
almost obscene display of cherry limbs shoving
their cotton candy-colored blossoms to the slate
sky of Spring rains, it's the greening of the trees
that really gets to me. When all the shock of white
and taffy, the world's baubles and trinkets, leave
the pavement strewn with the confetti of aftermath,
the leaves come. Patient, plodding, a green skin
growing over whatever winter did to us, a return
to the strange idea of continuous living despite
the mess of us, the hurt, the empty. Fine then,
I'll take it, the tree seems to say, a new slick leaf
unfurling like a fist to an open palm, I'll take it all.

Credit

Copyright © 2017 by Ada Limón. Originally published in Poem-a-Day on May 15, 2017, by the Academy of American Poets.

About this Poem

"It was a hard winter. My whole body raged against it. But right as the world feels uninhabitable, something miraculous happens: the trees come back. I wanted to praise that ordinary thing as a way of bringing myself back too."

—Ada Limón

Author

Ada Limón



Ada Limón is the author of *The Carrying* (Milkweed Editions, 2018) and *Bright Dead Things* (Milkweed Editions, 2015), which was a finalist for the National Book Award.



A Dialogue between the Soul and the Body

BY ANDREW MARVELL

SOUL

O who shall, from this dungeon, raise
A soul enslav'd so many ways?
With bolts of bones, that fetter'd stands
In feet, and manacled in hands;
Here blinded with an eye, and there
Deaf with the drumming of an ear;
A soul hung up, as 'twere, in chains
Of nerves, and arteries, and veins;
Tortur'd, besides each other part,
In a vain head, and double heart.

BODY

O who shall me deliver whole
From bonds of this tyrannic soul?
Which, stretch'd upright, impales me so
That mine own precipice I go;
And warms and moves this needless frame,
(A fever could but do the same)
And, wanting where its spite to try,
Has made me live to let me die.
A body that could never rest,
Since this ill spirit it possest.

SOUL

What magic could me thus confine
Within another's grief to pine?
Where whatsoever it complain,
I feel, that cannot feel, the pain;
And all my care itself employs;
That to preserve which me destroys;
Constrain'd not only to endure
Diseases, but, what's worse, the cure;

And ready oft the port to gain,
Am shipwreck'd into health again.

BODY

But physic yet could never reach
The maladies thou me dost teach;
Whom first the cramp of hope does tear,
And then the palsy shakes of fear;
The pestilence of love does heat,
Or hatred's hidden ulcer eat;
Joy's cheerful madness does perplex,
Or sorrow's other madness vex;
Which knowledge forces me to know,
And memory will not forego.
What but a soul could have the wit
To build me up for sin so fit?
So architects do square and hew
Green trees that in the forest grew.

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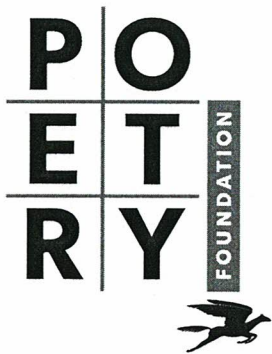
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To His Coy Mistress

BY ANDREW MARVELL

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.

My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

 But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

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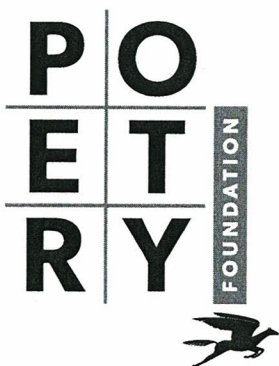
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America

BY CLAUDE MCKAY

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,
And sinks into my throat her tiger's tooth,
Stealing my breath of life, I will confess
I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.
Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,
Giving me strength erect against her hate,
Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.
Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,
I stand within her walls with not a shred
Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.
Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,
And see her might and granite wonders there,
Beneath the touch of Time's unerring hand,
Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

Claude McKay, "America" from *Liberator* (December 1921).

Source: *Liberator* (The Library of America, 1921)

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Baked Goods

BY AIMEE NEZHUKUMATATHIL

Flour on the floor makes my sandals
slip and I tumble into your arms.

Too hot to bake this morning but
blueberries begged me to fold them

into moist muffins. Sticks of rhubarb
plotted a whole pie. The windows

are blown open and a thickfruit tang
sneaks through the wire screen

and into the home of the scowly lady
who lives next door. Yesterday, a man

in the city was rescued from his apartment
which was filled with a thousand rats.

Something about being angry because
his pet python refused to eat. He let the bloom

of fur rise, rise over the little gnarly blue rug,
over the coffee table, the kitchen countertops

and pip through each cabinet, snip
at the stumpy bags of sugar,

the cylinders of salt. Our kitchen is a riot
of pots, wooden spoons, melted butter.

So be it. Maybe all this baking will quiet
the angry voices next door, if only

for a brief whiff. I want our summers

to always be like this—a kitchen wrecked
with love, a table overflowing with baked goods
warming the already warm air. After all the pots

are stacked, the goodies cooled, and all the counters
wiped clean—let us never be rescued from this mess.

Aimee Nezhukumatathil, "Baked Goods" from *Lucky Fish*. Copyright © 2011 by Aimee Nezhukumatathil.
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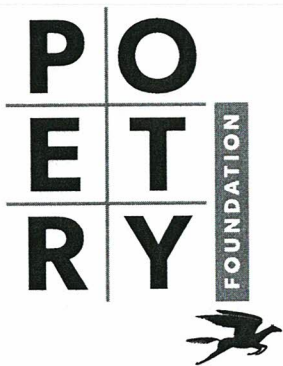
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The Black Walnut Tree

My mother and I debate:
we could sell
the black walnut tree
to the lumberman,
and pay off the mortgage.
Likely some storm anyway
will churn down its dark boughs,
smashing the house. We talk
slowly, two women trying
in a difficult time to be wise.
Roots in the cellar drains,
I say, and she replies
that the leaves are getting heavier
every year, and the fruit
harder to gather away.
But something brighter than money
moves in our blood—an edge
sharp and quick as a trowel
that wants us to dig and sow.
So we talk, but we don't do
anything. That night I dream
of my fathers out of Bohemia
filling the blue fields
of fresh and generous Ohio
with leaves and vines and orchards.
What my mother and I both know
is that we'd crawl with shame
in the emptiness we'd made
in our own and our fathers' backyard.
So the black walnut tree
swings through another year
of sun and leaping winds,
of leaves and bounding fruit,
and, month after month, the whip-
crack of the mortgage.

Mary Oliver, *New and Selected Poems*,
Volume 1, Beacon Press, 2005.

Whole Wide World
An Anthology of Poems

Long As You're Living:
Collected Poems (pdf).

Oxygen by Mary Oliver

*Everything needs it: bone, muscles, and even,
while it calls the earth its home, the soul.
So the merciful, noisy machine*

*stands in our house working away in its
lung-like voice. I hear it as I kneel
before the fire, stirring with a*

*stick of iron, letting the logs
lie more loosely. You, in the upstairs room,
are in your usual position, leaning on your*

*right shoulder which aches
all day. You are breathing
patiently; it is a*

*beautiful sound. It is
your life, which is so close
to my own that I would not know*

*where to drop the knife of
separation. And what does this have to do
with love, except*

*everything? Now the fire rises
and offers a dozen, singing, deep-red
roses of flame. Then it settles*

*to quietude, or maybe gratitude, as it feeds
as we all do, as we must, upon the invisible gift:
our purest, sweet necessity: the air.*

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

Carefully read P. K. Page’s 1943 poem “The Landlady.” Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the speaker’s complex portrayal of the landlady. You may wish to consider such elements as imagery, selection of detail, and tone.

The Landlady

Through sepia air the boarders* come and go,
 impersonal as trains. Pass silently
 the craving silence swallowing her speech;
 click doors like shutters on her camera eye.

Line

5 Because of her their lives become exact:
 their entrances and exits are designed;
 phone calls are cryptic. Oh, her ticklish ears
 advance and fall back stunned.

Nothing is unprepared. They hold the walls
 10 about them as they weep or laugh. Each face
 is dialled to zero publicly. She peers
 stippled with curious flesh;

pads on the patient landing like a pulse,
 unlocks their keyholes with the wire of sight,
 15 searches their rooms for clues when they are out,
 pricks when they come home late.

Wonders when they are quiet, jumps when they move,
 dreams that they dope or drink, trembles to know
 the traffic of their brains, jaywalks their street
 20 in clumsy shoes.

Yet knows them better than their closest friends:
 their cupboards and the secrets of their drawers,
 their books, their private mail, their photographs
 are theirs and hers.

25 Knows when they wash, how frequently their clothes
 go to the cleaners, what they like to eat,
 their curvature of health, but even so
 is not content.

And like a lover must know all, all, all.
 30 Prays she may catch them unprepared at last
 and palm the dreadful riddle of their skulls—
 hoping the worst.

*boarders: people who rent rooms in a private home

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Green Chile

by

Jimmy Santiago Baca

I prefer red chile over my eggs
and potatoes for breakfast.
Red chile *ristras* decorate my door,
dry on my roof, and hang from eaves.
They lend open-air vegetable stands
historic grandeur, and gently swing
with an air of festive welcome.
I can hear them talking in the wind,
haggard, yellowing, crisp, rasping
tongues of old men, licking the breeze.

But grandmother loves green chile.

When I visit her,
she holds the green chile pepper
in her wrinkled hands.
Ah, voluptuous, masculine,
an air of authority and youth simmers
from its swan-neck stem, tapering to a flowery
collar, fermenting resinous spice.
A well-dressed gentleman at the door
my grandmother takes sensuously in her hand,
rubbing its firm glossed sides,
caressing the oily rubbery serpent,
with mouth-watering fulfillment,
fondling its curves with gentle fingers.
Its bearing magnificent and taut
as flanks of a tiger in mid-leap,
she thrusts her blade into
and cuts it open, with lust
on her hot mouth, sweating over the stove,
bandana round her forehead,
mysterious passion on her face
as she serves me green chile con carne
between soft warm leaves of corn tortillas,
with beans and rice - her sacrifice
to her little prince.
I slurp from my plate
with last bit of tortilla, my mouth burns
and I hiss and drink a tall glass of cold water.

All over New Mexico, sunburned men and women
drive rickety trucks stuffed with gunny-sacks
of green chile, from Belen, Veguita, Willard, Estancia,
San Antonia y Socorro, from fields
to roadside stands, you see them roasting green chile
in screen-sided homemade barrels, and for a dollar a bag,
we relive this old, beautiful ritual again and again.



Astrophil and Stella 72: Desire, though thou my old companion art

BY SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

Desire, though thou my old companion art,
And oft so clings to my pure Love that I
One from the other scarcely can descry,
While each doth blow the fire of my heart,
Now from thy fellowship I needs must part;
Venus is taught with Dian's wings to fly;
I must no more in thy sweet passions lie;
Virtue's gold now must head my Cupid's dart.
Service and honor, wonder with delight,
Fear to offend, will worthy to appear,
Care shining in mine eyes, faith in my sprite:
These things are let me by my only dear;
But thou, Desire, because thou wouldst have all,
Now banished art. But yet alas how shall?

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Sonnet 29: When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone bewep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
(Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;
 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

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The Gladdest Thing

Throw Yourself Like Seed

Shake off this sadness, and recover your spirit;
sluggish you will never see the wheel of fate
that brushes your heel as it turns going by,
the man who wants to live is the man in whom life is abundant.

Now you are only giving food to that final pain
which is slowly winding you in the nets of death,
but to live is to work, and the only thing which lasts
is the work; start then, turn to the work.

Throw yourself like seed as you walk, and into your own field,
don't turn your face for that would be to turn it to death,
and do not let the past weigh down your motion.

Leave what's alive in the furrow, what's dead in yourself,
for life does not move in the same way as a group of clouds;
from your work you will be able one day to gather yourself.

— Miguel de Unamuno

About this poem

Poet(s): Miguel de Unamuno



Advice to a Prophet

BY RICHARD WILBUR

When you come, as you soon must, to the streets of our city,
Mad-eyed from stating the obvious,
Not proclaiming our fall but begging us
In God's name to have self-pity,

Spare us all word of the weapons, their force and range,
The long numbers that rocket the mind;
Our slow, unreckoning hearts will be left behind,
Unable to fear what is too strange.

Nor shall you scare us with talk of the death of the race.
How should we dream of this place without us?—
The sun mere fire, the leaves untroubled about us,
A stone look on the stone's face?

Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive
Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost
How the dreamt cloud crumbles, the vines are blackened by frost,
How the view alters. We could believe,

If you told us so, that the white-tailed deer will slip
Into perfect shade, grown perfectly shy,
The lark avoid the reaches of our eye,
The jack-pine lose its knuckled grip

On the cold ledge, and every torrent burn
As Xanthus once, its gliding trout
Stunned in a twinkling. What should we be without
The dolphin's arc, the dove's return,

These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?
Ask us, prophet, how we shall call

Our natures forth when that live tongue is all
Dispelled, that glass obscured or broken

In which we have said the rose of our love and the clean
Horse of our courage, in which beheld
The singing locust of the soul unshelled,
And all we mean or wish to mean.

Ask us, ask us whether with the worldless rose
Our hearts shall fail us; come demanding
Whether there shall be lofty or long standing
When the bronze annals of the oak-tree close.

Richard Wilbur, "Advice to a Prophet" from *Collected Poems 1943-2004*. Copyright © 2004 by Richard Wilbur.
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RICHARD WILBUR

THE DEATH OF A TOAD

A toad the power mower caught,
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got
To the garden verge, and sanctuaried him
Under the cineraria leaves, in the shade
Of the ashen heartshaped leaves, in a dim,
Low, and a final glade.

The rare original heartsblood goes,
Spends on the earthen hide, in the folds and wizenings, flows
In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes. He lies
As still as if he would return to stone,
And soundlessly attending, dies
Toward some deep monotone,

Toward misted and ebullient seas
And cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia's emperies.
Day dwindles, drowning, and at length is gone
In the wide and antique eyes, which still appear
To watch, across the castrate lawn,
The haggard daylight steer.

"The Juggler"

By Richard Wilbur

A ball will bounce; but less and less. It's not
A light-hearted thing, resents its own resilience.
Falling is what it loves, and the earth falls
So in our hearts from brilliance,
Settles and is forgot.
It takes a sky-blue juggler with five red balls

To shake our gravity up. Whee, in the air
The balls roll around, wheel on his wheeling hands,
Learning the ways of lightness, alter to spheres
Grazing his finger ends,
Cling to their courses there,
Swinging a small heaven about his ears.

But a heaven is easier made of nothing at all
Than the earth regained, and still and sole within
The spin of worlds, with a gesture sure and noble
He reels that heaven in,
Landing it ball by ball,
And trades it all for a broom, a plate, a table.

Oh, on his toe the table is turning, the broom's
Balancing up on his nose, and the plate whirls
On the tip of the broom! Damn, what a show, we cry:
The boys stamp, and the girls
Shriek, and the drum booms
And all come down, and he bows and says good-bye.

If the juggler is tired now, if the broom stands
In the dust again, if the table starts to drop
Through the daily dark again, and though the plate
Lies flat on the table top,
For him we batter our hands
Who has won for once over the world's weight.



Love Calls Us to the Things of This World

BY RICHARD WILBUR

The eyes open to a cry of pulleys,
And spirited from sleep, the astounded soul
Hangs for a moment bodiless and simple
As false dawn.

Outside the open window
The morning air is all awash with angels.

Some are in bed-sheets, some are in blouses,
Some are in smocks: but truly there they are.
Now they are rising together in calm swells
Of halcyon feeling, filling whatever they wear
With the deep joy of their impersonal breathing;

Now they are flying in place, conveying
The terrible speed of their omnipresence, moving
And staying like white water; and now of a sudden
They swoon down into so rapt a quiet
That nobody seems to be there.

The soul shrinks

From all that it is about to remember,
From the punctual rape of every blessed day,
And cries,

“Oh, let there be nothing on earth but laundry,
Nothing but rosy hands in the rising steam
And clear dances done in the sight of heaven.”

Yet, as the sun acknowledges
With a warm look the world's hunks and colors,
The soul descends once more in bitter love
To accept the waking body, saying now
In a changed voice as the man yawns and rises,

“Bring them down from their ruddy gallows;
Let there be clean linen for the backs of thieves;
Let lovers go fresh and sweet to be undone,
And the heaviest nuns walk in a pure floating
Of dark habits,
 keeping their difficult balance.”

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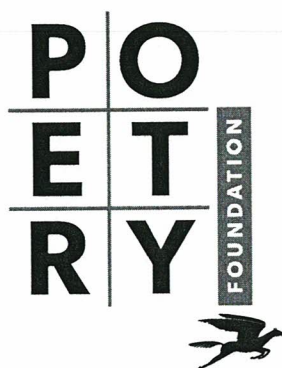
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The Ride

By [Richard Wilbur](#)

Listen

The horse beneath me seemed
To know what course to steer
Through the horror of snow I dreamed,
And so I had no fear,

Nor was I chilled to death
By the wind's white shudders, thanks
To the veils of his patient breath
And the mist of sweat from his flanks.

It seemed that all night through,
Within my hand no rein
And nothing in my view
But the pillar of his mane,

I rode with magic ease
At a quick, un stumbling trot
Through shattering vacancies
On into what was not,

Till the weave of the storm grew thin,
With a threading of cedar-smoke,
And the ice-blind pane of an inn
Shimmered, and I awoke.

How shall I now get back
To the inn-yard where he stands,
Burdened with every lack,
And waken the stable-hands

To give him, before I think
That there was no horse at all,
Some hay, some water to drink,
A blanket and a stall?

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Created and edited by [Paul Jones](#) (paul_jones@unc.edu)

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The Writer

In her room at the prow of the house
Where light breaks, and the windows are tossed with linden,
My daughter is writing a story.

I pause in the stairwell, hearing
From her shut door a commotion of typewriter-keys
Like a chain hauled over a gunwale.

Young as she is, the stuff
Of her life is a great cargo, and some of it heavy:
I wish her a lucky passage.

But now it is she who pauses,
As if to reject my thought and its easy figure.
A stillness greatens, in which

The whole house seems to be thinking,
And then she is at it again with a bunched clamor
Of strokes, and again is silent.

I remember the dazed starling
Which was trapped in that very room, two years ago;
How we stole in, lifted a sash

And retreated, not to affright it;
And how for a helpless hour, through the crack of the door,
We watched the sleek, wild, dark

And iridescent creature
Batter against the brilliance, drop like a glove
To the hard floor, or the desk-top,

And wait then, humped and bloody,
For the wits to try it again; and how our spirits
Rose when, suddenly sure,

It lifted off from a chair-back,
Beating a smooth course for the right window
And clearing the sill of the world.

It is always a matter, my darling,
Of life or death, as I had forgotten. I wish
What I wished you before, but harder.

Credit

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