

Third Six Weeks' Poem Packet

“Reckless Poem” by Mary Oliver

Today again I am hardly myself.
It happens over and over.
It is heaven-sent.

It flows through me
like the blue wave.
Green leaves – you may believe this or not –
have once or twice
emerged from the tips of my fingers

somewhere
deep in the woods,
in the reckless seizure of spring.

Though, of course, I also know that other song,
the sweet passion of one-ness.

Just yesterday I watched an ant crossing a path, through the
tumbled pine needles she toiled.
And I thought: she will never live another life but this one.
And I thought: if she lives her life with all her strength
is she not wonderful and wise?
And I continued this up the miraculous pyramid of everything
until I came to myself.

And still, even in these northern woods, on these hills of sand,
I have flown from the other window of myself
to become white heron, blue whale,
red fox, hedgehog.
Oh, sometimes already my body has felt like the body of a flower!
Sometimes already my heart is a red parrot, perched
among strange, dark trees, flapping and screaming.

“The Tyger” by William Blake

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

"All Along the Watchtower" by Bob Dylan

"There must be some way out of here," said the joker to the thief.
"There's too much confusion, I can't get no relief.
Businessmen, they drink my wine, plowmen dig my earth
None of them along the line know what any of it is worth."

"No reason to get excited," the thief, he kindly spoke,
"There are many here among us who feel that life is but a joke.
But you and I, we've been through that, and this is not our fate,
So let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late."

All along the watchtower, princes kept the view
While all the women came and went, barefoot servants, too.

Outside in the distance, a wildcat did growl.
Two riders were approaching; the wind began to howl.

"Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings:
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away".

"For Once, Then, Something" by Robert Frost

Others taunt me with having knelt at well-curbs
Always wrong to the light, so never seeing
Deeper down in the well than where the water
Gives me back in a shining surface picture
Me myself in the summer heaven godlike
Looking out of a wreath of fern and cloud puffs.
Once, when trying with chin against a well-curb,
I discerned, as I thought, beyond the picture,
Through the picture, a something white, uncertain,
Something more of the depths—and then I lost it.
Water came to rebuke the too clear water.
One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once, then, something.

"Football" by Louis Jenkins

I take the snap from the center, fake to the right, fade back...
I've got protection. I've got a receiver open downfield...
What the hell is this? This isn't a football, it's a shoe, a man's
brown leather oxford. A cousin to a football maybe, the same
skin, but not the same, a thing made for the earth, not the air.
I realize that this is a world where anything is possible and I
understand, also, that one often has to make do with what one
has. I have eaten pancakes, for instance, with that clear corn
syrup on them because there was no maple syrup and they
weren't very good. Well, anyway, this is different. (My man
downfield is waving his arms.) One has certain responsibilities,
one has to make choices. This isn't right and I'm not going
to throw it.

“The Facebook Sonnet” by Sherman Alexi

Welcome to the endless high-school
Reunion. Welcome to past friends
And lovers, however kind or cruel.
Let's undervalue and unmend

The present. Why can't we pretend
Every stage of life is the same?
Let's exhume, resume, and extend
Childhood. Let's play all the games

That occupy the young. Let fame
And shame intertwine. Let one's search
For God become public domain.
Let church.com become our church

Let's sign up, sign in, and confess
Here at the altar of loneliness.

“Selecting a Reader” by Ted Kooser

First, I would have her be beautiful,
and walking carefully up on my poetry
at the loneliest moment of an afternoon,
her hair still damp at the neck
from washing it. She should be wearing
a raincoat, an old one, dirty
from not having money enough for the cleaners.
She will take out her glasses, and there
in the bookstore, she will thumb
over my poems, then put the book back
up on its shelf. She will say to herself,
"For that kind of money, I can get
my raincoat cleaned." And she will.

“How a Bullet Must Feel” by Curtis L. Crisler

To be slapped at the nape of your neck, so hard,
that you steel to instant paralysis from shock, go
beyond how the architect and artisan of bullet-body-
making pushed the shell of your body to obstruction,
like nailing down the feet in crucifixion, then sludge-
hammering the back of the head into supersonic space,
where a body goes supernova, hot to touch, and the shell,
that skin of clothes you once wore, sizzles to the ground,
bouncing element hotfooting on the sun's orange surface;
but the body, the body still fights gravity, so grand to
sooth its red hot skinless frame, to think about restoration,
mid-flight, before entering the mettle of a real bystander—
to be desecrated before becoming author to desecration—
interrupting a fiancée's feral laughter, discombobulating
itself from the rupture of a thought that always explodes
into the black art of blackness, and then stops all sound.

“The Lonely Street” by William Carlos Williams

School is over. It is too hot
to walk at ease. At ease
in light frocks they walk the streets
to while the time away.
They have grown tall. They hold
pink flames in their right hands.
In white from head to foot,
with sidelong, idle look—
in yellow, floating stuff,
black sash and stockings—
touching their avid mouths
with pink sugar on a stick—
like a carnation each holds in her hand—
they mount the lonely street.

“Sonnet 20” by William Shakespeare

A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women's fashion:
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till Nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure.

“An Iraqi Evening” by Yousif al-Sa'igh

Clips from the battlefield
in an Iraqi evening:
a peaceable home
two boys
preparing their homework
a little girl
absentmindedly drawing on scrap paper
funny pictures.
– breaking news coming shortly.
The entire house becomes ears
ten Iraqi eyes glued to the screen in frightened silence.
Smells mingle:
the smell of war
and the smell of just baked bread.
The mother raises her eyes to a photo on the wall
whispering
– May God protect you
and she begins preparing supper
quietly
and in her mind
clips float past of the battlefield
carefully selected for hope.