**Quarter 1 Daily Poems**

**Day 1: August 28**

First Reader   
By Billy Collins   
  
I can see them standing politely on the wide pages   
that I was still learning to turn,   
Jane in a blue jumper, Dick with his crayon-brown hair,   
playing with a ball or exploring the cosmos   
of the backyard, unaware they are the first characters,   
the boy and girl who begin fiction.   
  
Beyond the simple illustration of their neighborhood   
the other protagonists were waiting in a huddle:   
frightening Heathcliff, frightened Pip, Nick Adams   
carrying a fishing rod, Emma Bovary riding into Rouen.   
  
But I would read about the perfect boy and his sister   
even before I would read about Adam and Eve, garden and gate,   
and before I heard the name Gutenberg, the type   
of their simple talk was moving into my focusing eyes.   
  
It was always Saturday and he and she   
were always pointing at something and shouting "Look!"   
pointing at the dog, the bicycle, or at their father   
as he pushed a hand mower over the lawn,   
waving at aproned mother framed in the kitchen doorway,   
pointing toward the sky, pointing at each other.   
  
They wanted us to look but we had looked already   
and seen the shaded lawn, the wagon, the postman.   
We had seen the dog, walked, watered and fed the animal,   
and now it was time to discover the infinite, clicking   
permutations of the alphabet's small and capital letters.   
Alphabetical ourselves in the rows of classroom desks,   
we were forgetting how to look, learning how to read.

**Day 2, August 29th**

# Introduction to Poetry

## Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

**Day 3: August 30th**

The Voice You Hear When You Read Silently

Thomas Lux

is not silent, it is a speaking

out-loud voice in your head: it is *spoken*,

a voice is *saying* it

as you read. It's the writer's words,

of course, in a literary sense

his or her *voice,* but the sound

of that voice is the sound of *your* voice.

Not the sound your friends know

or the sound of a tape played back

but your voice

caught in the dark cathedral

of your skull, your voice heard

by an internal ear informed by internal abstracts

and what you know by feeling,

having felt. It is your voice

saying, for example, the word *barn*

that the writer wrote

but the *barn* you say

is a barn you know or knew. The voice

in your head, speaking as you read,

never says anything neutrally – some people

hated the barn they knew,

some people love the barn they know

so you hear the word loaded

and a sensory constellation

is lit: horse-gnawed stalls,

hayloft, black heat tape wrapping

a water pipe, a slippery

spilled *chirr* of oats from a split sack,

the bony, filthy haunches of cows . . . .

And *barn* is only a noun – no verb

or subject has entered into the sentence yet!

The voice you hear when you read to yourself

is the clearest voice: you speak it

speaking to you

.

**Day 4: August 31**

Dream Teaching

--- Edwin Romond

I am first in line for coffee

and the copier is not broken yet.

This is how dreams begin in teaching high school.

First period the boy who usually carves skulls   
into his desk raises his hand instead

to ask about *Macbeth* and, for the first time,   
I see his eyes are blue as melting ice.

Then, those girls in the back

stop passing notes and start taking them   
and I want to marvel at tiny miracles   
but still another hand goes up

and Butch the drag racer says he found the meaning   
in that Act III soliloquy. Then more hands join the air   
that is now rich with wondering and they moan

at the bell that ends our class and I ask myself,

"How could I have thought about calling in sick today?"

I open my eyes for the next class and no one's late   
not even Ernie who owns his own time zone

and they've all done their homework

that they wave in the air

because everyone wants to go to the board

to underline nouns and each time I turn around   
they're looking at me as if I know something

they want, and steady as sunrise, they do everything right.

At lunch the grouchy food lady discovers smiling

and sneaks me an extra meatball. In the teachers' room   
we eat like family and for twenty-two minutes,

not one of us bitches about anything.

Then the afternoon continues the happiness of hands   
wiggling with answers, and I feel such a spark

when spike haired Cindy in the satanic tee shirt   
picks the right pronoun and glows like a saint.

And me, I'm up and down the room now, cheering,   
cajoling, heating them up like a revival crowd.

I'm living only in exclamatory sentences. They want it all   
and I'm thinking, "What drug are we on here?"

Just as Crusher Granorski screams, "Predicate nominatives   
are awesome!" the principal walks in

with my check and I say, "That's okay,

you can keep it." When the bell sounds

they stand, raise lighted matches

And chant, "Adverbs, Adverbs."

I drive home petting my plan book.

At night I check the weather without wishing for a blizzard,   
then sleep in the sweet maze of dreams

where I see every student from 32 years of school days:   
boys and girls, sons and daughters who're almost mine,   
thousands of them stretching like dominoes into the night

and I call the roll and they sing, "We're all here, Mr. Romond!"   
When I pick up my chalk, they open their books

look up and with eager eyes, ask me to teach them.

**Day 5: September 1**

Sarah Kay, “Ms. Ribiero”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GqMgLnluKY&index=7&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9>

**Day 6: September 5**

Her Kind

Anne Sexton, 1928 – 1974

I have gone out, a possessed witch,

haunting the black air, braver at night;

dreaming evil, I have done my hitch

over the plain houses, light by light:

lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.

A woman like that is not a woman, quite.

I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,

filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,

closets, silks, innumerable goods;

fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:

whining, rearranging the disaligned.

A woman like that is misunderstood.

I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,

waved my nude arms at villages going by,

learning the last bright routes, survivor

where your flames still bite my thigh

and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.

A woman like that is not ashamed to die.

I have been her kind.

**Day 7, September 6**

# My Last Duchess

BY [ROBERT BROWNING](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/robert-browning)

*FERRARA*

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said

“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not

Her husband’s presence only, called that spot

Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek; perhaps

Fra Pandolf chanced to say, “Her mantle laps

Over my lady’s wrist too much,” or “Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint

Half-flush that dies along her throat.” Such stuff

Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

For calling up that spot of joy. She had

A heart—how shall I say?— too soon made glad,

Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,

The dropping of the daylight in the West,

The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

She rode with round the terrace—all and each

Would draw from her alike the approving speech,

Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked

Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name

With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame

This sort of trifling? Even had you skill

In speech—which I have not—to make your will

Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this

Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,

Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let

Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set

Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—

E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose

Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,

Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands

As if alive. Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet

The company below, then. I repeat,

The Count your master’s known munificence

Is ample warrant that no just pretense

Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;

Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed

At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go

Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,

Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,

Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

**Day 8, Sept 7**

Consider Oedipus’s Father

BY [DAVID TOMAS MARTINEZ](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/david-tomas-martinez)

It could have been a car door

                leaving that bruise,

as any mom knows,

almost anything could take an eye out,

and almost anybody could get their tongue

                frozen to a pole,

which is kind of funny

                to the point of tears

                plus a knee slap or two

that an eye can be made blue, pink

by a baby’s fist, it fits

perfectly in the socket. It’s happened to me.

                Get it?

Any scenario is better,

beats sitting in a car and hearing

                someone you love

                sob,

which I have done

with a black eye.

For me, a woman’s tears

are IKEA instructions

on the European side.

I’m sure for Laius, Oedipus’s father, it was the same.

                Think of him sleeping

after having held a crying Jocasta

because they had fought for hours

because she was stronger.

                Who knew better the anger of young Jocasta?

Knew that when the oracle, or the police,

                come, they are taking someone with them.

I’m sure Laius looked at the crib

                and thought *better you*

*than me, kid.*

Now consider your own

father, or the guy your mother

                dated until he took

the three-sided road,

crouched in front of a paper

                plate with a catcher’s

                mitt, teaching

                a curveball grip —

                but did he ever teach

the essential lesson

of how to block a punch

                from a finely manicured hand,

or to walk away when

records are being candled and books disemboweled,

teach the wonderment of

                a jar of peanut butter jammed

in a TV screen

below a snail trail of ice cream

                near broken pictures on the wall?

Not while he’s king, I bet, and not while

                there are mothers and their jobs,

like breastfeeding or serving a warm plate

                on a table

next

to cold beers

                from the hand

of a mother he made from a virgin

                with his own hands, his own hands.

**Day 9, Sept 8**

Shane Koyczan, “The Crickets have Arthritis”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VrZE8MCnIA&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9&index=15>

**Day 10, Sept 11**

# Full Flight

BY [BOB HICOK](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/bob-hicok)

I'm in a plane that will not be flown into a building.

It's a SAAB 340, seats 40, has two engines with propellers

is why I think of beanies, those hats that would spin

a young head into the clouds. The plane is red and loud

inside like it must be loud in the heart, red like fire

and fire engines and the woman two seats up and to the right

resembles one of the widows I saw on TV after the Towers

came down. It's her hair that I recognize, the fecundity of it

and the color and its obedience to an ideal, the shape

it was asked several hours ago to hold and has held, a kind

of wave that begins at the forehead and repeats with slight

variations all the way to the tips, as if she were water

and a pebble had been continuously dropped into the mouth

of her existence. We are eighteen thousand feet over America.

People are typing at their laps, blowing across the fog of coffee,

sleeping with their heads on the windows, on the pattern

of green fields and brown fields, streams and gas stations

and swimming pools, blue dots of aquamarine that suggest

we've domesticated the mirage. We had to kill someone,

I believe, when the metal bones burned and the top

fell through the bottom and a cloud made of dust and memos

and skin muscled across Manhattan. I remember feeling

I could finally touch a rifle, that some murders

are an illumination of ethics, that they act as a word,

a motion the brain requires for which there is

no syllable, no breath. The moment the planes had stopped,

when we were afraid of the sky, there was a pause

when we could have been perfectly American,

could have spent infinity dollars and thrown a million

bodies at finding the few, lasering our revenge

into a kind of love, the blood-hunger kept exact

and more convincing for its precision, an expression

of our belief that proximity is never the measure of guilt.

We've lived in the sky again for some years and today

on my lap these pictures from Iraq, naked bodies

stacked into a pyramid of ha-ha and the articles

about broomsticks up the ass and the limbs of children

turned into stubble, we are punch-drunk and getting even

with the sand, with the map, with oil, with ourselves

I think listening to the guys behind me. There's a problem

in Alpena with an inventory control system, some switches

are being counted twice, switches for what I don't know—

switches of humor, of faith—but the men are musical

in their jargon, both likely born in New Delhi

and probably Americans now, which is what the flesh

of this country has been, a grafted pulse, an inventory

of the world, and just as the idea of embrace

moves chemically into my blood, and I'm warmed

as if I've just taken a drink, a voice announces

we've begun our descent, and then I sense the falling.

**Day 11, Sept 12**

September 1, 1939

[W. H. Auden](https://www.poets.org/node/45593), 1907 – 1973

I sit in one of the dives

On Fifty-second Street

Uncertain and afraid

As the clever hopes expire

Of a low dishonest decade:

Waves of anger and fear

Circulate over the bright

And darkened lands of the earth,

Obsessing our private lives;

The unmentionable odour of death

Offends the September night.

Accurate scholarship can

Unearth the whole offence

From Luther until now

That has driven a culture mad,

Find what occurred at Linz,

What huge imago made

A psychopathic god:

I and the public know

What all schoolchildren learn,

Those to whom evil is done

Do evil in return.

Exiled Thucydides knew

All that a speech can say

About Democracy,

And what dictators do,

The elderly rubbish they talk

To an apathetic grave;

Analysed all in his book,

The enlightenment driven away,

The habit-forming pain,

Mismanagement and grief:

We must suffer them all again.

Into this neutral air

Where blind skyscrapers use

Their full height to proclaim

The strength of Collective Man,

Each language pours its vain

Competitive excuse:

But who can live for long

In an euphoric dream;

Out of the mirror they stare,

Imperialism’s face

And the international wrong.

Faces along the bar

Cling to their average day:

The lights must never go out,

The music must always play,

All the conventions conspire

To make this fort assume

The furniture of home;

Lest we should see where we are,

Lost in a haunted wood,

Children afraid of the night

Who have never been happy or good.

The windiest militant trash

Important Persons shout

Is not so crude as our wish:

What mad Nijinsky wrote

About Diaghilev

Is true of the normal heart;

For the error bred in the bone

Of each woman and each man

Craves what it cannot have,

Not universal love

But to be loved alone.

From the conservative dark

Into the ethical life

The dense commuters come,

Repeating their morning vow;

“I will be true to the wife,

I’ll concentrate more on my work,"

And helpless governors wake

To resume their compulsory game:

Who can release them now,

Who can reach the deaf,

Who can speak for the dumb?

All I have is a voice

To undo the folded lie,

The romantic lie in the brain

Of the sensual man-in-the-street

And the lie of Authority

Whose buildings grope the sky:

There is no such thing as the State

And no one exists alone;

Hunger allows no choice

To the citizen or the police;

We must love one another or die.

Defenceless under the night

Our world in stupor lies;

Yet, dotted everywhere,

Ironic points of light

Flash out wherever the Just

Exchange their messages:

May I, composed like them

Of Eros and of dust,

Beleaguered by the same

Negation and despair,

Show an affirming flame.

**Day 12, Sept 13**

**At the Un-National Monument Along the Canadian Border**

This is the field where the battle did not happen,

where the unknown soldier did not die.

This is the field where grass joined hands,

where no monument stands,

and the only heroic thing is the sky.

Birds fly here without any sound,

unfolding their wings across the open.

No people killed — or were killed — on this ground

hallowed by neglect and an air so tame

that people celebrate it by forgetting its name.

—William E. Stafford

**Day 13, Sept 14**

Parsley

BY [RITA DOVE](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/rita-dove)

*1. The Cane Fields*

There is a parrot imitating spring

in the palace, its feathers parsley green.

Out of the swamp the cane appears

to haunt us, and we cut it down. El General

searches for a word; he is all the world

there is. Like a parrot imitating spring,

we lie down screaming as rain punches through

and we come up green. We cannot speak an R—

out of the swamp, the cane appears

and then the mountain we call in whispers *Katalina.*

The children gnaw their teeth to arrowheads.

There is a parrot imitating spring.

El General has found his word: *perejil.*

Who says it, lives. He laughs, teeth shining

out of the swamp. The cane appears

in our dreams, lashed by wind and streaming.

And we lie down. For every drop of blood

there is a parrot imitating spring.

Out of the swamp the cane appears.

*2. The Palace*

The word the general’s chosen is parsley.

It is fall, when thoughts turn

to love and death; the general thinks

of his mother, how she died in the fall

and he planted her walking cane at the grave

and it flowered, each spring stolidly forming

four-star blossoms. The general

pulls on his boots, he stomps to

her room in the palace, the one without

curtains, the one with a parrot

in a brass ring. As he paces he wonders

Who can I kill today. And for a moment

the little knot of screams

is still. The parrot, who has traveled

all the way from Australia in an ivory

cage, is, coy as a widow, practicing

spring. Ever since the morning

his mother collapsed in the kitchen

while baking skull-shaped candies

for the Day of the Dead, the general

has hated sweets. He orders pastries

brought up for the bird; they arrive

dusted with sugar on a bed of lace.

The knot in his throat starts to twitch;

he sees his boots the first day in battle

splashed with mud and urine

as a soldier falls at his feet amazed—

how stupid he looked!— at the sound

of artillery. *I never thought it would sing*

the soldier said, and died. Now

the general sees the fields of sugar

cane, lashed by rain and streaming.

He sees his mother’s smile, the teeth

gnawed to arrowheads. He hears

the Haitians sing without R’s

as they swing the great machetes:

*Katalina,* they sing, *Katalina,*

*mi madle, mi amol en muelte.* God knows

his mother was no stupid woman; she

could roll an R like a queen. Even

a parrot can roll an R! In the bare room

the bright feathers arch in a parody

of greenery, as the last pale crumbs

disappear under the blackened tongue. Someone

calls out his name in a voice

so like his mother’s, a startled tear

splashes the tip of his right boot.

*My mother, my love in death.*

The general remembers the tiny green sprigs

men of his village wore in their capes

to honor the birth of a son. He will

order many, this time, to be killed

for a single, beautiful word.

**Day 14, Sept 15**

Michael Lee, “Pass On” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JAq6VpmgB0&index=55&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9>

**Day 15, Sept 18**

**On Being Fired Again**

—Erin Belieu

I've known the pleasures of being

fired at least eleven times-

most notably by Larry who found my snood

unsuitable, another time by Jack,

whom I was sleeping with. Poor attitude,

tardiness, a contagious lack

of team spirit; I have been unmotivated

squirting perfume onto little cards,

while stocking salad bars, when stripping

covers from romance novels, their heroines

slaving on the chain gang of obsessive love-

and always the same hard candy

of shame dissolving in my throat;

handing in my apron, returning the cash-

register key. And yet, how fine it feels,

the perversity of freedom which never signs

a rent check or explains anything to one's family.

I've arrived again, taking one more last

walk through another door, thinking “I am

what is wrong with America,” while outside

in the emptied, post-rushhour street,

the sun slouches in a tulip tree and the sound

of a neighborhood pool floats up on the heat.

**Day 16, Sept 19**

## **Fight**

—Laurel Blossom

That is the difference between me and you.

You pack an umbrella, #30 sun goo

And a red flannel shirt. That's not what I do.

I put the top down as soon as we arrive.

The temperature's trying to pass fifty-five.

I'm freezing but at least I'm alive.

Nothing on earth can diminish my glee.

This is Florida, Florida, land of euphoria,

Florida in the highest degree.

You dig in the garden. I swim in the pool.

I like to wear cotton. You like to wear wool.

You're always hot. I'm usually cool.

You want to get married. I want to be free.

You don't seem to mind that we disagree.

And that is the difference between you and me.

**Day 17, Sept 20**

**How to Listen**

I am going to cock my head tonight like a dog

in front of McGlinchy's Tavern on Locust;

I am going to stand beside the man who works all day combing

his thatch of gray hair corkscrewed in every direction.

I am going to pay attention to our lives

unraveling between the forks of his fine-tooth comb.

For once, we won't talk about the end of the world

or Vietnam or his exquisite paper shoes.

For once, I am going to ignore the profanity and

the dancing and the jukebox so I can hear his head crackle

beneath the sky's stretch of faint stars.

—Major Jackson

**Day 18, Sept 22**

Hieu Minh Nguyen, “Traffic Jam”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7RHM1xQMiw&index=25&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9>

**Day 19, Sep 26**

# The Colonel

BY [CAROLYN FORCHÉ](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/carolyn-forche)

WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD is true. I was in his house. His wife carried   
a tray of coffee and sugar. His daughter filed her nails, his son went     
out for the night. There were daily papers, pet dogs, a pistol on the   
cushion beside him. The moon swung bare on its black cord over   
the house. On the television was a cop show. It was in English.   
Broken bottles were embedded in the walls around the house to   
scoop the kneecaps from a man's legs or cut his hands to lace. On   
the windows there were gratings like those in liquor stores. We had   
dinner, rack of lamb, good wine, a gold bell was on the table for   
calling the maid. The maid brought green mangoes, salt, a type of   
bread. I was asked how I enjoyed the country. There was a brief   
commercial in Spanish. His wife took everything away. There was   
some talk then of how difficult it had become to govern. The parrot   
said hello on the terrace. The colonel told it to shut up, and pushed   
himself from the table. My friend said to me with his eyes: say   
nothing. The colonel returned with a sack used to bring groceries   
home. He spilled many human ears on the table. They were like   
dried peach halves. There is no other way to say this. He took one   
of them in his hands, shook it in our faces, dropped it into a water   
glass. It came alive there. I am tired of fooling around he said. As   
for the rights of anyone, tell your people they can go fuck them-   
selves. He swept the ears to the floor with his arm and held the last   
of his wine in the air. Something for your poetry, no? he said. Some   
of the ears on the floor caught this scrap of his voice. Some of the   
ears on the floor were pressed to the ground.   
                                                                                     May 1978

**Day 20, Sept 27**

# [The Hollow Men](https://allpoetry.com/The-Hollow-Men)

--T.S. Eliot

Mistah Kurtz-he dead

            A penny for the Old Guy

**I**

We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

Leaning together

Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!

Our dried voices, when

We whisper together

Are quiet and meaningless

As wind in dry grass

Or rats' feet over broken glass

In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,

Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed

With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom

Remember us-if at all-not as lost

Violent souls, but only

As the hollow men

The stuffed men.

**II**

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams

In death's dream kingdom

These do not appear:

There, the eyes are

Sunlight on a broken column

There, is a tree swinging

And voices are

In the wind's singing

More distant and more solemn

Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer

In death's dream kingdom

Let me also wear

Such deliberate disguises

Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves

In a field

Behaving as the wind behaves

No nearer-

Not that final meeting

In the twilight kingdom

**III**

This is the dead land

This is cactus land

Here the stone images

Are raised, here they receive

The supplication of a dead man's hand

Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this

In death's other kingdom

Waking alone

At the hour when we are

Trembling with tenderness

Lips that would kiss

Form prayers to broken stone.

**IV**

The eyes are not here

There are no eyes here

In this valley of dying stars

In this hollow valley

This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places

We grope together

And avoid speech

Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless

The eyes reappear

As the perpetual star

Multifoliate rose

Of death's twilight kingdom

The hope only

Of empty men

**V**

Here we go round the prickly pear

Prickly pear prickly pear

Here we go round the prickly pear

At five o'clock in the morning.

Between the idea

And the reality

Between the motion

And the act

Falls the Shadow

           For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception

And the creation

Between the emotion

And the response

Falls the Shadow

                 Life is very long

Between the desire

And the spasm

Between the potency

And the existence

Between the essence

And the descent

Falls the Shadow

           For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is

Life is

For Thine is the

    This is the way the world ends

    This is the way the world ends

    This is the way the world ends

    Not with a bang but a whimper.

**Day 21, Sep 28**

**Love Poem With Toast**

Some of what we do, we do

to make things happen,

the alarm to wake us up, the coffee to perk,

the car to start.

The rest of what we do, we do

trying to keep something from doing something,

the skin from aging, the hoe from rusting,

the truth from getting out.

With yes and no like the poles of a battery

powering our passage through the days,

we move, as we call it, forward,

wanting to be wanted,

wanting not to lose the rain forest,

wanting the water to boil,

wanting not to have cancer,

wanting to be home by dark,

wanting not to run out of gas,

as each of us wants the other

watching at the end,

as both want not to leave the other alone,

as wanting to love beyond this meat and bone,

we gaze across breakfast and pretend.

—Miller Williams

**Day 22, Sep 29**

Kevin Kantor, “A letter from cancer”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HxU58fvgYw&index=59&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9>

**Day 23, Oct 2**

# Is My Team Ploughing

BY [A. E. HOUSMAN](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/a-e-housman)

“Is my team ploughing,

   That I was used to drive

And hear the harness jingle

   When I was man alive?”

Ay, the horses trample,

   The harness jingles now;

No change though you lie under

   The land you used to plough.

“Is football playing

   Along the river shore,

With lads to chase the leather,

   Now I stand up no more?”

Ay the ball is flying,

   The lads play heart and soul;

The goal stands up, the keeper

   Stands up to keep the goal.

“Is my girl happy,

   That I thought hard to leave,

And has she tired of weeping

   As she lies down at eve?”

Ay, she lies down lightly,

   She lies not down to weep:

Your girl is well contented.

   Be still, my lad, and sleep.

“Is my friend hearty,

   Now I am thin and pine,

And has he found to sleep in

   A better bed than mine?”

Yes, lad, I lie easy,

   I lie as lads would choose;

I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart,

   Never ask me whose.

**Day 24, Oct 3**

**Numbers**

—Mary Cornish

I like the generosity of numbers.

The way, for example,

they are willing to count

anything or anyone:

two pickles, one door to the room,

eight dancers dressed as swans.

I like the domesticity of addition--

add two cups of milk and stir--

the sense of plenty: six plums

on the ground, three more

falling from the tree.

And multiplication's school

of fish times fish,

whose silver bodies breed

beneath the shadow

of a boat.

Even subtraction is never loss,

just addition somewhere else:

five sparrows take away two,

the two in someone else's

garden now.

There's an amplitude to long division,

as it opens Chinese take-out

box by paper box,

inside every folded cookie

a new fortune.

And I never fail to be surprised

by the gift of an odd remainder,

footloose at the end:

forty-seven divided by eleven equals four,

with three remaining.

Three boys beyond their mothers' call,

two Italians off to the sea,

one sock that isn't anywhere you look.

**Day 25, Oct 4**

We’re This and We’re That, Aren’t We?

By David Hernandez

Now that the theoretical physicist slash cosmologist

has explained to me, has laid out in clean

even rows of logic

how every atom in my body

arrived from a star, a star

that blasted apart,

and the atoms of my left hand

originated from a different sun

than my right,

I can shine. I can go dark

recalling how my grandfather made

the vertical blinds rattle

when he shoved

my grandmother into them.

Startled in the yard, I turned to that sound,

from the flower bed my eyes were held by

the swaying blinds. It took a while for each

to line up

perfectly straight again, to tell myself

she slipped. Only then could I

return to stalking the butterflies.

My right hand was quick: reach and pinch.

I had so many soft wings that summer

between my thumb and index, so many of them

skewered on cactus needles.

I was a kid. I was cruel slash gentle.

He was cruel slash gentle.

He had witnessed my destroying

and I saw

across his creased face

empathy for them.

After his scolding I placed one dead one

inside the white envelope of a flower.

Under the sun it glowed. Under the moon,

more glowing.

**Day 26, October 5**

# [Mirror](https://allpoetry.com/poem/8498499-Mirror-by-Sylvia-Plath) by Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
Whatever I see I swallow immediately  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful ‚  
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.  
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.  
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long  
I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.  
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.  
  
Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,  
Searching my reaches for what she really is.  
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.  
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.  
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.  
I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

**Day 27, October 6**

Maia Mayor, “Perfect” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0HZZgxrmOU&index=84&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9>

**Day 28, October 9**

**After Us**

—Connie Wanek

*I don't know if we're in the beginning*

*or in the final stage.*

*-- Tomas Tranströmer*

Rain is falling through the roof.

And all that prospered under the sun,

the books that opened in the morning

and closed at night, and all day

turned their pages to the light;

the sketches of boats and strong forearms

and clever faces, and of fields

and barns, and of a bowl of eggs,

and lying across the piano

the silver stick of a flute; everything

invented and imagined,

everything whispered and sung,

all silenced by cold rain.

The sky is the color of gravestones.

The rain tastes like salt, and rises

in the streets like a ruinous tide.

We spoke of millions, of billions of years.

We talked and talked.

Then a drop of rain fell

into the sound hole of the guitar, another

onto the unmade bed. And after us,

the rain will cease or it will go on falling,

even upon itself.

**Day 29, October 10**

The Panther by Rainer Maria Rilke

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,  
has grown so weary that it cannot hold  
anything else. It seems to him there are  
a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world.  
  
As he paces in cramped circles, over and over,  
the movement of his powerful soft strides  
is like a ritual dance around a center  
in which a mighty will stands paralyzed.  
  
Only at times, the curtain of the pupils  
lifts, quietly--. An image enters in,  
rushes down through the tensed, arrested muscles,  
plunges into the heart and is gone.

**Day 30, October 11**

NIGHT ***by: William Blake***

THE sun descending in the west,

The evening star does shine;

The birds are silent in their nest.

And I must seek for mine.

The moon, like a flower

In heaven's high bower,

With silent delight

Sits and smiles on the night.

Farewell, green fields and happy grove,

Where flocks have took delight:

Where lambs have nibbled, silent move

The feet of angels bright;

Unseen they pour blessing

And joy without ceasing

On each bud and blossom,

On each sleeping bosom.

They look in every thoughtless nest

Where birds are cover'd warm;

They visit caves of every beast,

to keep them all from harm:

If they see any weeping

That should have been sleeping,

They pour sleep on their head,

And sit down by their bed.

When wolves and tigers howl for prey,

They pitying stand and weep,

Seeking to drive their thirst away

And keep them from the sheep.

But, if they rush dreadful,

The angels, most heedful,

Receive each mild spirit,

New worlds to inherit.

And there the lion's ruddy eyes

Shall flow with tears of gold:

And pitying the tender cries,

And walking round the fold:

Saying, 'Wrath by His meekness,

And, by His health, sickness,

Are driven away

From our immortal day.

'And now beside thee, bleating lamb,

I can lie down and sleep,

Or think on Him who bore thy name,

Graze after thee, and weep.

For, wash'd in life's river,

My bright mane for ever

Shall shine like the gold

As I guard o'er the fold.'

**Day 31, October 12**

# The Apparition

BY [JOHN DONNE](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-donne)

When by thy scorn, O murd'ress, I am dead

         And that thou think'st thee free

From all solicitation from me,

Then shall my ghost come to thy bed,

And thee, feign'd vestal, in worse arms shall see;

Then thy sick taper will begin to wink,

And he, whose thou art then, being tir'd before,

Will, if thou stir, or pinch to wake him, think

         Thou call'st for more,

And in false sleep will from thee shrink;

And then, poor aspen wretch, neglected thou

Bath'd in a cold quicksilver sweat wilt lie

         A verier ghost than I.

What I will say, I will not tell thee now,

Lest that preserve thee; and since my love is spent,

I'had rather thou shouldst painfully repent,

Than by my threat'nings rest still innocent.

**Day 32, October 13**

Brenna Twohy, “Anxiety, a Ghost Story” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Rj3mxA_wZA>

**Day 33, October 16**

# The Darkling Thrush

BY [THOMAS HARDY](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/thomas-hardy)

I leant upon a coppice gate

      When Frost was spectre-grey,

And Winter's dregs made desolate

      The weakening eye of day.

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky

      Like strings of broken lyres,

And all mankind that haunted nigh

      Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be

      The Century's corpse outleant,

His crypt the cloudy canopy,

      The wind his death-lament.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth

      Was shrunken hard and dry,

And every spirit upon earth

      Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among

      The bleak twigs overhead

In a full-hearted evensong

      Of joy illimited;

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,

      In blast-beruffled plume,

Had chosen thus to fling his soul

      Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings

      Of such ecstatic sound

Was written on terrestrial things

      Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through

      His happy good-night air

Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew

      And I was unaware.

**Day 34, October 17**

**Maps**

*For Marcelo*

Some maps have blue borders  
like the blue of your name  
or the tributary lacing of  
veins running through your  
father’s hands. & how the last  
time I saw you, you held  
me for so long I saw whole  
lifetimes flooding by me  
small tentacles reaching  
for both our faces. I wish  
maps would be without  
borders & that we belonged  
to no one & to everyone  
at once, what a world that  
would be. Or not a world  
maybe we would call it  
something more intrinsic  
like forgiving or something  
simplistic like river or dirt.  
& if I were to see you  
tomorrow & everyone you  
came from had disappeared  
I would weep with you & drown  
out any black lines that this  
earth allowed us to give it—  
because what is a map but  
a useless prison? We are all  
so lost & no naming of blank  
spaces can save us. & what  
is a map but the delusion of  
safety? The line drawn is always  
in the sand & folds on itself  
before we’re done making it.  
& that line, there, south of  
el rio, how it dares to cover  
up the bodies, as though we  
would forget who died there  
& for what? As if we could  
forget that if you spin a globe  
& stop it with your finger  
you’ll land it on top of someone  
living, someone who was not  
expecting to be crushed by thirst—

**Day 35, October 18**

**Neglect**

—R. T. Smith

Is the scent of apple boughs smoking

in the woodstove what I will remember

of the Red Delicious I brought down, ashamed

that I could not convince its limbs to render fruit?

Too much neglect will do that, skew the sap's

passage, blacken leaves, dry the bark and heart.

I should have lopped the dead limbs early

and watched each branch with a goshawk's eye,

patching with medicinal pitch, offering water,

compost and mulch, but I was too enchanted

by pear saplings, flowers and the pasture,

too callow to believe that death's inevitable

for any living being unloved, untended.

What remains is this armload of applewood

now feeding the stove's smolder. Splendor

ripens a final time in the firebox, a scarlet

harvest headed, by dawn, to embers.

Two decades of shade and blossoms - tarts

and cider, bees dazzled by the pollen,

spare elegance in ice - but what goes is gone.

Smoke is all, through this lesson in winter

regret, I've been given to remember.

Smoke, and Red Delicious apples redder

than a passing cardinal's crest or cinders.

**Day 36, October 19**

**The Unknown Citizen**

[W. H. Auden](https://www.poets.org/node/45593), 1907 - 1973

(To JS/07 M 378 This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports on his conduct agree

That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

Except for the War till the day he retired

He worked in a factory and never got fired,

But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.

Yet he wasn’t a scab or odd in his views,

For his Union reports that he paid his dues,

(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)

And our Social Psychology workers found

That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day

And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.

Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,

And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.

Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan

And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,

A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;

When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.

He was married and added five children to the population,

Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.

And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard

**Day 37, October 20**

Guante, “10 Responses to the phrase ‘man up’” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFoBaTkPgco&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9&index=51>

**Day 38, October 24**

In those Years, by Adrienne Rich

In those years, people will say, we lost track

Of the meaning of *we*, of *you*

We found ourselves

Reduced to *I*

And the whole thing became

Silly, ironic, terrible:

We were trying to live a personal life

And, yes, that was the only life

We could bear witness to

But the great dark birds of history screamed and plunged

into our personal weather

they were headed somewhere else but their beaks and pinons drove

along the shore, through the rags of fog

where we stood, saying *I*

**Day 39, October 25**

“1973” by Marilyn Hacker

“I’m pregnant,” I wrote to her in delight

from London, thirty, married, in print. A fools-

cap sheet scrawled slantwise with one miniscule

sentence came back. “I hope your child is white”

I couldn’t tear the pieces small enough

I hoped she’d be black as the ace of spades,

though hybrid beige heredity had made

that as unlikely as the spun-gold stuff

wprouted after her neonatal fur.

I grudgingly acknowledged her “good hair,”

which wasn’t, very, from my point of view.

“No tar brush left,” her father’s mother said.

“She’s Jewish and she’s white,” from her ccranked bed

mine smugly snapped.

She’s Black. She is a Jew.

**Day 40, October 26**

A Blessing, by [James Wright](https://www.poets.org/node/44332),

Just off the highway to Rochester, Minnesota,

Twilight bounds softly forth on the grass.

And the eyes of those two Indian ponies

Darken with kindness.

They have come gladly out of the willows

To welcome my friend and me.

We step over the barbed wire into the pasture

Where they have been grazing all day, alone.

They ripple tensely, they can hardly contain their happiness

That we have come.

They bow shyly as wet swans. They love each other.

There is no loneliness like theirs.

At home once more,

They begin munching the young tufts of spring in the darkness.

I would like to hold the slenderer one in my arms,

For she has walked over to me

And nuzzled my left hand.

She is black and white,

Her mane falls wild on her forehead,

And the light breeze moves me to caress her long ear

That is delicate as the skin over a girl’s wrist.

Suddenly I realize

That if I stepped out of my body I would break

Into blossom.

**Day 41, October 27**

Marshall Davis Jones, “Touchscreen” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAx845QaOck&list=PLYJDMCz0UyGi71WJNPw8JllY9USHO_hF9&index=19>