

Introductory Presentation (October)

The Daffodils, William Wordsworth
The Walrus and the Carpenter, Lewis Carroll
The Song of Wandering Aengus, W.B. Yeats
Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend, Jules Styne
Hope, Emily Dickinson
Last Night As I was Sleeping, Antonio Machado
At the Time of the Night Prayer, Rumi
Anything Goes, Cole Porter
If God Invited You to a Party, Hafez
Psalm 23, King David

Let's listen to some poems. I have a picture or two here for each poem.

You don't have to do anything but sit back and listen.

I've chosen poems that I think you will enjoy.

These poems are not puzzles that need to be solved -- which is what some people think about poetry.

I think you will enjoy these poems without the need for any effort by you.

Some of these poems you will recognize. Maybe you will remember when you first heard one of them read -- perhaps in grade school. Other of these poems you have not heard before. They may become new friends.

Even if you just listen to the reading, without thinking about the words, you may enjoy the rhymes and the rhythms. Or you may remember good times -- when you first heard a poem or when someone read a poem to you.

So in the spirit of recalling affectionate memory, maybe finding new meaning, and just plain fun, let's listen to 10 poems today. Our poets are:

William Wordsworth
Lewis Carroll
W.B. Yeats
Jules Styne
Emily Dickinson
Antonio Machado (translation)
Rumi (translation)
Cole Porter
Hafez (translation)
King David (translation)

I'm going to read each poem twice, so you don't have to strain to catch every word the first time. Except for two longer poems. I'll read those only once.

Our first poet is William Wordsworth - He lived in England and was one of a group of English poets referred to as the Romantic poets. This poem was written about 200 years ago. The poem is The Daffodils. Picture 1. One word in the poem is now archaic - "jocund" - means "merry."

The Daffodils

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

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

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

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

The poet is saying here: we can experience beauty and joy whenever we bring to mind a memory of beauty or joy.

Again, "The Daffodils"

Our second poem is The Walrus and The Carpenter by Lewis Carroll. Picture 2. Another poet from England. This poem was written in 1871. This poem is part of Alice in Wonderland. It is recited by Tweedledum and Tweedledee to Alice. It's about the walrus, the carpenter and the oysters. Picture 3. This could be called a nonsense poem. But nonsense can be enjoyable, even helpful, if approached in a spirit of play. And listen to the rhyme.

The Walrus and the Carpenter - I'll read this only once, because it is long.

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might:
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright --
And this was odd because it was
The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done --
"It's very rude of him," she said,
"To come and spoil the fun."

The sea was wet as wet could be,
The sands were dry as dry.
You could not see a cloud because,
No cloud was in the sky.
No birds were flying overhead --
There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
"If this were only cleared away,"
They said, "it would be grand!"

"If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year.
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
"That they could get it clear?"

“I doubt it,” said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

“O Oysters, come and walk with us!”
The Walrus did beseech.
“A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
Along the briny beach:
We cannot do with more than four,
To give a hand to each.”

The eldest Oyster looked at him,
But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
And shook his heavy head --
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed

But four young Oysters hurried up,
All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,
Their shoes were clean and neat --
And this was odd, because, you know,
They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four;
And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more--
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

“The time has come,” the Walrus said,
“To talk of many things:
Of shoes -- and ships -- and sealing-wax --
Of cabbages -- and kings --
And why the sea is boiling hot --
And whether pigs have wings.”

“But wait a bit,” the Oysters cried,
“Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out of breath,
And all of us are fat!”
“No hurry!” said the Carpenter.
They thanked him much for that.

“A loaf of bread,” the Walrus said,
“Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed --
Now if you’re ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed.”

“But not on us!” the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
“After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!”
“The night is fine,” the Walrus said.
“Do you admire the view?”

“It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!”
The Carpenter said nothing but
“Cut us another slice:
I wish you were not quite so deaf--
I’ve had to ask you twice!”

“It seems a shame,” the Walrus said,
“To play them such a trick,
After we’ve brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!”
The Carpenter said nothing but,
“The butter’s spread too thick!”

“I weep for you,” the Walrus said:
“I deeply sympathize.”
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

“O Oysters,” said the Carpenter,
“You’ve had a pleasant run!

Shall we be trotting home again?
But answer came there none --
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one.

Our next poem is The Song of Wandering Aengus by William Butler Yeats - This is Bill Yeats, here. Picture 4, on the left. Irish; he wrote this poem around 1899.

As a young man, Yeats found himself in a room in Dublin one fine Spring day.

He saw across the room, standing in sunlight coming in from a window, next to a bouquet of apple blossom, this woman, here. Picture 4, on the right.

Her name is Maude Gonne. Bill had never seen her before. He fell in love with her that moment. He remained in love with her for the rest of his life. He proposed to her 5 times, the first time in 1891 and last time in 1916. Five times over 25 years. She turned him down each time.

This poem is about the day in that room in Dublin when Bill Yeats here fell in love with Maude Gonne, here.

But the poem is also about the mystery of being drawn into beauty; the mystery of being drawn into something deeply meaningful and beyond time; and how that can happen, magically, at any time, in any place, and how that can stay with you all your life.

The Song of Wandering Aengus

I went out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And someone called me by my name:
It had become a glimmering girl

With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

So the poet has a fire in his head -- he's aching. He goes out to the hazelwood. Hazel had magical wisdom qualities in ancient Irish mythology. He uses the hazel to make a fishing rod. He catches a trout. He puts it on a fire. It transforms into a beautiful woman, who calls his name; she disappears, but not before she creates love that is timeless.

Once more, The Song of Wandering Aengus

Let's turn to our first American poet. Many people think that poetry is not a significant part of American culture. But that ignores American song. Song is a form of poetry. Poetry has been sung from the beginning of time. Here's a fun modern example of a song poem, written by Jules Styne. Picture 5. Here's Jules at the piano with Barbara Streisand. The song-poem is called Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend. Marilyn, here [Picture 6] sang this in the movie, Gentlemen Prefer Blondes. OK. Here we go:

[You should get the text from another source]

Let's listen to that great first stanza again. Feel free to join in.

Let's turn to our first female poet, Emily Dickinson. Picture 7. She lived in Massachusetts. The poem is Hope. About one year into the Civil War, Emily writes about hope. The poem is short, but beautiful. The poet compares hope to a bird. Picture 8.

Hope

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

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

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

The poet says Hope perches in the soul.

Hope "sings" -- but without words. Hope never fails us. Hope is always possible -- even when things look very grim.

Hope keeps us warm. It asks nothing in return.

Let's listen to that again:

Our next two poems are about sleeping and dreaming. [Picture 9](#)

We know that sleep restores the body. These poems say: Dreams can restore the heart and the mind.

The first poem was written in Spanish, by Antonio Machado, [Picture 10](#), a much-loved figure in Spain - born in 1875, died 1939.

The poem is called [Last Night as I was Sleeping](#). [Picture 11](#). In Spanish - Anoche Cuando Dormia. Translated into English by Robert Bly, who himself is a poet.

Last Night As I was Sleeping
by Antonio Machado

Last night as I was sleeping,
I dreamt - marvelous illusion --
that there was a spring breaking
out in my heart.

I said: Along which secret aqueduct
are you coming to me, o water,
water of a new life
that I have never drunk?

Last night as I was sleeping,
I dreamt -- marvelous illusion! --
that there was a beehive
here in my heart.

And the golden bees
were making white combs
and sweet honey,
from my old failures.

Last night as I was sleeping,
I dreamt -- marvelous error! --
that there was a fiery sun
here in my heart.
It was fiery because it gave
warmth as if from a hearth,
and it was sun because it gave light

and brought tears to my eyes.

Last night as I slept,
I dreamt -- marvelous error!
That there was God
here in my heart.

A spring of water, giving new life, previously unknown. Golden bees making honey from old failures! The heart finds the way. Sometimes in dreams. Once more, Last Night As I was Sleeping: [Repeat]

In translation, the rhyme is lost. Let me try to give you a flavor of the original Spanish, reading . . . [only the first and last stanza?] even through my Spanish is not so good.

Antonio Machado

Anoche Cuando Dormía

Anoche cuando dormía
soñé !bendita ilusión!
Que una fontana fluía
dentro de mi corazón.
Dí: por qué acequia escondiada,
agua, vienes hasta mí,
manatíal de nueva vida
en donde nunca bebí?

Anoche cuando dormía
soñé !bendita ilusión!
Que una colmena tenía
dentro de mi corazón;
y las doradas abejas
iban fabricando en él,
con las amarguras viejas
blanca cera y dulce miel.

Anoche cuando dormía
soñé !bendita ilusión!
Que un ardiente sol lucía
dentro de mi corazón.

Era ardiente porque daba
calores de rojo hogar,
y era sol porque alumbraba
y porque hacia llorar.

Anoche cuando dormía
soñé, bendita ilusión!
Que era Dios lo que tenía
dentro de mi corazón

Our second poem about sleep and dreams was written in what is now Turkey in the 13th Century -- about 750 years ago.

The poet's name is Rumi. [Picture 12](#). Rumi wrote his poems in the Persian language.

Amazingly, Rumi is the best-selling poet in America. He has been for over a decade now.

There's a lot to be said about Rumi. But for now let's just listen to his poem. [Picture 13](#).

At The Time of The Night Prayer, by Rumi.

At the time of the night prayer,
As the sun slides down,
The route the senses walk on closes;
The route to the invisible opens.

The angel of sleep then gathers and drives along the spirit,
Just as the mountain-keeper gathers his sheep on the slope.

And what, amazing sights he offers to the descending sheep --
Cities with sparking streets.
Hyacinth gardens.
Emerald pastures.

The spirits see astounding beings --
Turtles turn to men,
Men turn to angels,
When sleep erases the banal.

I think one could say that the spirit goes back to its own home.
It no longer remembers where it lives.
And it loses its fatigue.
It carries around in life so many griefs and loads, and trembles under their weight.
They are gone.
It's all well.

It's all well, says the poet -- no matter what. Sleep allows us to put down the burdens we think we have and return to our spirit selves, to our souls, which we do every night. And the poem suggests that we can learn from our dreams who we really are.

Let's listen to that again:

Let's listen now to another American song poem, written in about 1934 by a great song writer -- Cole Porter. Picture 14. The musical, *Anything Goes*, Picture 15, has just returned to Broadway. Tonight, on Broadway, they will be singing this:

Anything Goes, by Cole Porter

[You should get the text from another source]

The world has gone mad today - so true.

Again, - Feel free to join in.

Picture 16 - This could be a place for a wedding celebration. Some kind of big party.

This is the dance floor. The dance floor relates to this next poem, which was written in Persia in the 14th Century.

The poet is Hafez. Picture 17.

Hafez's name appears in the poem. It was a convention in Persian poetry for the poet, or a friend of the poet, to appear in the poem.

The name of the poem is: If God Invited You to a Party.^{*} Translated by Daniel Ladinsky.

Picture 18.

If God
Invited you to a party
And said,

“Everyone
In the ballroom tonight
Will be my special Guest,”

How would you then treat them
When you
Arrived?

Indeed, indeed!

And Hafiz knows
There is no one in this world

Who
Is not upon
His Jeweled Dance
Floor.

The poet is saying that we are all God's guests on the jeweled dance floor that is the Earth. So we should treat ourselves, and everyone else, as an honored guest.

* From the Penguin publication *The Gift: Poems by Hafiz*. Copyright © 1999 Daniel Ladinsky and used with his permission.

We conclude today with a poem by King David. Picture 19.

King David of ancient Israel.

This is a poem that has comforted people for many centuries.

The poem is part of what is called in English - The Book of Psalms. In the original Hebrew, the book is called Tehillim - Songs of Praise.

Individual psalms are called, in Hebrew, Mizmorim

We will read Mizmor Kaf Gimmel - Psalm 23. Picture 20.

Its starts

The Lord is my Shepard
I shall not want

In the original Hebrew, those first two lines go like this: _____.

Let's listen first to the English translation from the King James Bible:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Now let's listen to Psalm 23 as it appears in The Massachusetts Bay Psalm Book of 1640.

This translation was made in 1640 by a group of ministers chosen by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to try to improve upon the older King James translation. Their attempt at improvement

included making all of King David's Psalms rhyme in English. Listen:

Psalm 23

from The Bay Psalm Book

The Lord to me a shepherd is,
want therefore shall not I
He in the folds of tender grass,
doth cause me down to lie
To waters calm me gently leads
restore my soul doth he
He doth in paths of righteousness
for his name's sake lead me.

Yea, though in valley of death's shade
I walk, none ill I'll fear:
Because thou art with me, thy rod,
and staff my comfort are.
For me a table thou hast spread,
in presence of my foes:
Thou dost anoint my head with oil;
my cup it overflows.
Goodness and mercy surely shall
all my days follow me:
And in the Lord's house I shall dwell
so long as days shall be.

Once more:

It has been a pleasure to share these poems with you.

I look forward to sharing more poems with you next month.

Until then, may we all be strong.

And give strength to one another.





