WSC 2018
An Entangled World
Literature STUDY GUIDE
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Look out for the following symbols, which will provide more info:

- Expands on points discussed in the bubbles.
- You can find more on our website.
- Provides key facts about the text
- Links between different subjects and 2018 theme.
Introductory Questions

Does literature bring us together, or is reading a fundamentally solo act?

Consider different types of literature: does enjoying poetry separate a person from broader culture, or does reading popular novels connect us? Are there forms of literature that can travel between high and low culture?

Many of this year’s selection were written by authors who “belong” to two cultures. How do these selections, and perhaps literature in general, bridge (or reinforce) separations between people?

To what extent is a writer entangled in his or her culture, and can he or she get outside of it? Can any works of literature truly be considered universal?

Why do so many people turn to poetry to express the pain and pleasure of love? Is there a reason poetry is particularly associated with intimate feelings?

How does literature help us remember the past (or speak to the future)? Can we trust fictional accounts of the past, or are written accounts inevitably biased?

What causes a work of literature to last? How does the presence of a literary canon—that is, a body of work agreed to be “important”—connect us to the past?

Does the “Western canon” still serve a purpose in our contemporary, entangled word? Did it ever?
Poems | **Love and Friendship**

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I Gave Myself to Him | Emily Dickinson

I gave myself to him,
And took himself for pay.
The solemn contract of a life
Was ratified this way.
The wealth might disappoint,
Myself a poorer prove
Than this great purchaser suspect,
The daily own of Love
Depreciate the vision;
But, till the merchant buy,
Still fable, in the isles of spice,
The subtle cargoes lie. At least, 't is mutual risk, —
Some found it mutual gain;
Sweet debt of Life, — each night to owe,
Insolvent, every noon.

Dickinson compares relationships to financial transactions, but not necessarily in a cynical way. "Insolvent every noon", could be interpreted either as "the relationship is ruined or "They are forever in debt to each other for their SO's love". She also frequently opened her poems with words that have shock value. In this case, "I gave myself to him" implies sex, which definitely shocked people in her era.

Imposter Syndrome Type R (Relationship). Symptoms: Emily feeling she's worthless and it's a matter of time before her lover finds out.
i carry your heart with me (i carry it in my heart)i am never without it(anywhere i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done by only me is your doing,my darling) i fear no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true) and it’s you are whatever a moon has always meant and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows (here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;which grows higher than soul can hope or mind can hide) and this is the wonder that’s keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)

Towards the end of the poem, one notices how this love is unlike any other. It can keep stars apart and transcend the soul and mind with its power. This poem also has an interesting style, as Cummings puts some of the text within brackets.

E. E. Cummings was an American poet, painter, essayist, author, and playwright. Many of his poems are sonnets, often dealing with themes of love and nature. Cummings’ work universally shows a particular idiosyncrasy of syntax - many of his most striking poems do not involve any typographical or punctuation innovations at all, but purely syntactic ones.
Supple Cord | Naomi Shihab Nye

My brother, in his small white bed, held one end.
I tugged the other
to signal I was still awake.
We could have spoken, could have sung
to one another,
we were in the same room
for five years, but the soft cord
with its little frayed ends
connected us
in the dark, gave comfort
even if we had been bickering all day.
When he fell asleep first
and his end of the cord dropped to the floor,
I missed him terribly, though I could hear his even breath
and we had such long and separate lives ahead.

“Supple cord” possibly references the cord used in toy telephones, which is symbolic of blood relations.

The white bed is symbolic of the brother’s innocence or he could be on his deathbed. The brother letting go of cord could possibly symbolise estrangement or even death.

Naomi Shihab Nye is a poet, songwriter, and novelist. She was born to a Palestinian father and an American mother. Her first collection of poems, Different Ways to Pray, explored the theme of similarities and differences between cultures, which would become one of her lifelong areas of focus.
I taste of salt. My fingers cannot sit still. I smuggled tears from smile to smile. When I became too tired to run, I swam. What love does not reach beyond borders? I swam. I rose. I flew. I dreamed. I fell in love with little to no food. I belonged to no where, no one, no thing. I fell in love with everywhere, every one, everything. I was hungry and cold. I hated hunger and cold. I hated everywhere with no food. I hated everyone with everything. It was different. I was a woman. I was stupid. I was waiting to become more than what happened, more than a bird fleeing it’s country, to bathe in being afar, more than a landscape or an image to cast a shadow on, the flip of a tricky coin, seductress of men, visions aching for a new story to tell you. My children, riding on the dragonflies of sacrifice, I left them. I turned back many times, I almost became the devil they wanted but I left. A devil, nonetheless. I was a woman ahead of her time. I shimmered in the scars. I live in the bloodline. I imagine more than broken families. I come from the laughter of aspiring lovers, the lure of trembling in another’s arms. What about what I wanted? What of the loss—of culture, of dreams, of home? There were many secrets. We fled from the revolution. I could not protect my children from everywhere. I made offerings. I cleansed. I repented. I am their mother. I am not God. I was a Candela. I glowed. I was luminous. I lit up the room. I was the light gleaming in the Sierra Maestra at night. I was the mountains. I swayed the sunrise, yearning. I danced. I was a witch they could not burn. I was la Fuego. I am their mother. I am not God. I made choices. I made peace with them. I was a woman ahead of her time. I was the road you took here. I am la Camina. I was the way.
A Dog Has Died | Pablo Neruda

My dog has died.
I buried him in the garden
next to a rusted old machine.

Some day I'll join him right there,
but now he's gone with his shaggy coat,
his bad manners and his cold nose,
and I, the materialist, who never believed
in any promised heaven in the sky
for any human being,
I believe in a heaven I'll never enter.
Yes, I believe in a heaven for all dogdom
where my dog waits for my arrival
waving his fan-like tail in friendship.

Ai, I'll not speak of sadness here on earth,
of having lost a companion
who was never servile.
His friendship for me, like that of a porcupine
withholding its authority,
was the friendship of a star, aloof,
with no more intimacy than was called for,
with no exaggerations:
he never climbed all over my clothes
filling me full of his hair or his mange,
he never rubbed up against my knee
like other dogs obsessed with sex.

No, my dog used to gaze at me,
paying me the attention I need,
the attention required
to make a vain person like me understand
that, being a dog, he was wasting time,
but, with those eyes so much purer than mine,

he'd keep on gazing at me
with a look that reserved for me alone
all his sweet and shaggy life,
always near me, never troubling me, 
and asking nothing.

Ai, how many times have I envied his tail 
as we walked together on the shores of the sea 
in the lonely winter of Isla Negra 
where the wintering birds filled the sky 
and my hairy dog was jumping about 
full of the voltage of the sea’s movement: 
my wandering dog, sniffing away 
with his golden tail held high, 
face to face with the ocean’s spray.

Joyful, joyful, joyful, 
as only dogs know how to be happy 
with only the autonomy 
of their shameless spirit.

There are no good-byes for my dog who has died, 
and we don’t now and never did lie to each other.

So now he’s gone and I buried him, 
and that’s all there is to it.

Lives between men and dogs can be entangled in ways deeper than 
humans. We also strongly connect to the deceased, even without their 
physical presence.

Special Area: Humans, and their interactions with dogs 
Science: Memories of the dog are still so vivid for the speaker, and “live in 
his memories”

Pablo Neruda was a Chilean poet-diplomat and politician. Neruda wrote in 
a variety of styles, including surrealist poems, historical epics, overtly 
political manifestos, a prose autobiography, and passionate love poems. 
He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971.
I have 422 friends, yet I am lonely.  
I speak to all of them everyday, yet none of them really know me.

The problem I have sits in the spaces between,  
looking into their eyes, or at a name on a screen.

I took a step back, and opened my eyes,  
I looked around, and then realised  
that this media we call social, is anything but  
when we open our computers, and it’s our doors we shut.

All this technology we have, it’s just an illusion,  
of community, companionship, a sense of inclusion  
yet when you step away from this device of delusion,  
you awaken to see, a world of confusion.

A world where we’re slaves to the technology we mastered,  
where our information gets sold by some rich greedy bastard.  
A world of self-interest, self-image, self-promotion,  
where we share all our best bits, but leave out the emotion.

We are at our most happy with an experience we share,  
but is it the same if no one is there.  
Be there for your friends, and they’ll be there too,  
but no one will be, if a group message will do.

We edit and exaggerate, we crave adulation,  
we pretend we don’t notice the social isolation.  
We put our words into order, until our lives are glistening,  
we don’t even know if anyone is listening.

Being alone isn’t the problem, let me just emphasize,  
that if you read a book, paint a picture, or do some exercise,  
you are being productive, and present, not reserved or recluse,  
you’re being awake and attentive, and putting your time to good use.

So when you’re in public, and you start to feel alone,  
put your hands behind your head, and step away from the phone.  
You don’t need to stare at your menu, or at your contact list,  
just talk to one another, and learn to co-exist.
I can’t stand to hear the silence, of a busy commuter train, when no one wants to talk through the fear of looking insane. We’re becoming unsocial, it no longer satisfies to engage with one another, and look into someone’s eyes.

We’re surrounded by children, who since they were born, watch us living like robots, and think it’s the norm. It’s not very likely you will make world’s greatest dad, if you cant entertain a child without a using an iPad.

When I was a child, I would never be home, I’d be out with my friends, on our bikes we would roam. We’d ware holes in our trainers, and graze up our knees; we’d build our own clubhouse, high up in the trees.

Now the parks are so quiet, it gives me a chill to see no children outside and the swings hanging still. There’s no skipping or hopscotch, no church and no steeple, we’re a generation of idiots, smart phones and dumb people.

So look up from your phone, shut down that display, take in your surroundings, and make the most of today. Just one real connection is all it can take, to show you the difference that being there can make.

Be there in the moment, when she gives you the look, that you remember forever, as when love overtook. The time you first hold her hand, or first kiss her lips, the time you first disagree, but still love her to bits.

The time you don’t need to tell hundreds, about what you’ve just done, because you want to share the moment, with just this one. The time you sell your computer, so you can buy a ring, for the girl of your dreams, who is now the real thing.

The time you want to start a family, and the moment when, you first hold your baby girl, and get to fall in love again. The time she keeps you up at night, and all you want is rest, and the time you wipe away the tears, as your baby flees the nest.

The time your little girl returns, with a boy for you to hold, and the day he calls you granddad, and makes you feel real old. The time you take in all you’ve made, just by giving life attention, and how your glad you didn’t waste it, by looking down at some invention.
The time you hold your wife’s hand, and sit down beside her bed you tell her that you love her, and lay a kiss upon her head. She then whispers to you quietly, as her heart gives a final beat, that she’s lucky she got stopped, by that lost boy in the street.

But none of these times ever happened, you never had any of this, When you’re too busy looking down, you don’t see the chances you miss.

So look up from your phone, shut down those displays, we have a finite existence, a set number of days. Why waste all our time getting caught in the net, as when the end comes, nothing’s worse than regret.

I am guilty too, of being part of this machine, this digital world, where we are heard but not seen. Where we type and don’t talk, where we read as we chat, where we spend hours together, without making eye contact.

Don’t give in to a life where you follow the hype, give people your love, don’t give them your like. Disconnect from the need to be heard and defined Go out into the world, leave distractions behind.

Look up from your phone, shut down that display, stop watching this video, live life the real way.

*Look Up* is a viral YouTube video about the prevalence of social media in our lives. Turk encourages everyone to look up from their phones, and socialize in person rather than in the virtual world.

While we believe social media entangles us, and reinforces the bonds that we have made, these technologies may, in fact, be breaking us apart.

Special Area: How technology shapes human relationships.
Two sets of family stories, one long and detailed, about many centuries of island ancestors, all living on the same tropical farm...

The other side of the family tells stories that are brief and vague, about violence in the Ukraine, which Dad's parents had to flee forever, leaving all their loved ones behind.

They don't even know if anyone survived.

When Mami tells her flowery tales of Cuba, she fills the twining words with relatives. But when I ask my Ukrainian-Jewish-American grandma about her childhood in a village near snowy Kiev, all she reveals is a single memory of ice-skating on a frozen pond.

Apparently, the length of a grown-up's growing-up story is determined by the difference between immigration and escape.

Those who have entangled themselves in their own ancestors’ history must accept who they are to continue their own story

Special Area: How families’ pasts can affect human relationships.
Wild Geese | Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting –
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

Oliver believes that we should be true to nature rather than be burdened by our
worries – we don’t always have to be “good”. She also compares the world to wild
geese. The world is harsh, and exciting yet welcomes you into its family.

Mary Oliver is an American poet. She has won the National Book Award and the
Pulitzer Prize. Oliver is known for her clear and poignant observances of the
natural world. Her creativity is stirred by nature, and Oliver, an avid walker, often
pursues inspiration on foot. Her poems are filled with imagery from her daily
walks near her home.
Valentine | Carol Ann Duffy

Valentine is about the duality of a long-term relationship. Love can have its ups and downs. It can confine you, and be possessive. Most importantly, it can hurt.

To find out more about why an onion is used, visit our website for our deep dive on Valentine by Carol Ann Duffy (onepwaawebly.com/valentine)
Learning to love differently is hard, love with the hands wide open, love with the doors banging on their hinges, the cupboard unlocked, the wind roaring and whimpering in the rooms rustling the sheets and snapping the blinds that thwack like rubber bands in an open palm.

It hurts to love wide open stretching the muscles that feel as if they are made of wet plaster, then of blunt knives, then of sharp knives.

It hurts to thwart the reflexes of grab, of clutch; to love and let go again and again. It pesters to remember the lover who is not in the bed, to hold back what is owed to the work that gutters like a candle in a cave without air, to love consciously, conscientiously, concretely, constructively.

I can’t do it, you say it’s killing me, but you thrive, you glow on the street like a neon raspberry. You float and sail, a helium balloon bright bachelor’s button blue and bobbing on the cold and hot winds of our breath, as we make and unmake in passionate diastole and systole the rhythm of our unbound bonding, to have and not to hold, to love with minimized malice, hunger and anger moment by moment balanced.

To Have Without Holding is about moving on from an ex. Directly referencing marriage vows “to have and to hold”, this poem suggests that love does not necessarily require emotional burden.
Elegy for a Mother, Still Living | Elana Bell

The Lord gives everything and charges by taking it back. — Jack Gilbert

I was formed inside the body of a woman who wanted me as she wanted her own life, allowed to drink the milk made only for me. I was given mother-love, its bounty and its cocoon of those first years without language. It is right to mourn the rocky hills of Crete where we walked, my small hand in hers for hours. The hidden beach where we swam naked then baked on the fine sand. Lazy afternoons in her lap, thick hand stroking my curls. Her fingers have stiffened. In her eyes, the eyes of an animal in pain. I hold the memory of my mother against the woman she is.

Elana Bell is the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor. Eyes, Stones, her collection of poetry in 2012, was selected as the winner of the 2011 Walt Whitman Award from the Academy of American Poets.

An elegy is defined as “a poem of serious reflection, typically for the dead.” An enjambment is the continuation of a sentence without a pause beyond the end of a line, couplet, or stanza.

In the last two lines, Bell remembers her mother as the nurturing, loving person she used to be, rather than the person she is now. Her mother is not the same person anymore; we can assume that her mother has perhaps grown old.

Science: Bell is nostalgic of her childhood
Heart weeps.
Head tries to help heart.
Head tells heart how it is, again:
You will lose the ones you love. They will all go. But even the earth will go, someday.
Heart feels better, then.
But the words of head do not remain long in the ears of heart.
Heart is so new to this.
I want them back, says heart.
Head is all heart has.
Help, head. Help heart.

Head, Heart illustrates the relationship between head and heart; the head is rational, but provides comfort and reassurance for the heart. However, the heart continues to be in pain.

Lydia Davis is an American writer noted for literary works of extreme brevity (commonly called “flash fiction”). Davis is also a short story writer, novelist, essayist, and translator from French and other languages.

Links to an entangled world include:
- Loss and grief;
- Conflict between emotion and reason;
- Connections with those we have lost.
Poems | **Communities Large and Small**

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Mending Wall | Robert Frost

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

The crumbling wall could represent an increasing understanding between two people or two groups of people, or the prejudices present between the two breaking down.

**Robert Lee Frost** was an American poet. Known for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech, Frost frequently wrote about settings from rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes.

In *Mending Wall*, Frost creates two distinct characters who have contrasting views on what makes a “good neighbour”. Every year, the speaker and his neighbour meet in the springtime to mend the stone wall between their houses. However the speaker does not see a need for this; there are no cows that need to be kept, just a pine tree and an apple tree in their respective yards. The neighbour repeats that “good fences make good neighbours”. The speaker envisions his neighbor as a holdover from a justifiably outmoded era, a living example of a dark-age mentality.
No Man is an Island | John Donne

No man is an island,  
Entire of itself;  
Every man is a piece of the continent, 
A part of the main.

If a clod be washed away by the sea,  
Europe is the less,  
As well as if a promontory were:  
As well as if a manor of thy friend's  
Or of thine own were.

Any man's death diminishes me, 
Because I am involved in mankind. 
And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;  
It tolls for thee.

This poem can be interpreted as saying that each one of us are not individuals, but part of a larger collective. If a piece of that “continent” is washed away, the collective is affected. Any person’s death is something worth mourning over, because losing one person affects all of humanity.

John Donne was an English poet and cleric in the Church of England. His works are noted for their strong, sensual style and include sonnets, love poems, and religious poems. Donne’s poetry is noted for its vibrancy of language and inventiveness of metaphor, especially compared to that of his contemporaries.

Donne compares man to land- like all continents, we are all connected to one another and we are part of something bigger. Each person is only a small piece of the land, but we are each a piece nonetheless - we are all part of a greater whole.
The Map of the World Confused with Its Territory | Susan Stewart

In a drawer I found a map of the world, folded into eighths and then once again and each country bore the wrong name because the map of the world is an orphanage.

The edges of the earth had a margin as frayed as the hem of the falling night and a crease moved down toward the center of the earth, halving the identical stars.

Every river ran with its thin blue brother out from the heart of a country: there cedars twisted toward the southern sky and reeds plumed eastward like an augur’s pens.

No dates on the wrinkles of that broad face, no slow grinding of mountains and sand, for—all at once, like a knife on a whetstone—the map of the world spoke in snakes and tongues.

The hard-topped roads of the western suburbs and the distant lights of the capitol each pull away from the yellowed beaches and step into the lost sea of daybreak.

The map of the world is a canvas turning away from the painter’s ink-stained hands while the pigments cake in their little glass jars and the brushes grow stiff with forgetting.

There is no model, shy and half-undressed, no open window and flickering lamp, yet someone has left this sealed blue letter, this gypsy’s bandana on the darkening Table, each corner held down by a conch shell. What does the body remember at dusk? That the palms of the hands are a map of the world, erased and drawn again and again, then covered with rivers and earth.

Think whether the political perception of the world is only generated by humanity’s brain. Would our world still look the same, and have the same volcanoes and valley rifts, if all political borders were eliminated?
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

Maps | Yesenia Montilla
In Maps, the author deplores the concept of maps, through emphasizing the fact that the borders that separates us are merely a “delusion of safety”, and borders are only “black spaces” on a “useless prison” we call a map.

Yesenia Montilla is a New York City Afro-Latina poet, translator and educator. She is a founding member of Poets for Ayiti (Haiti) a collective of poets from diverse backgrounds committed to the power of poetry to transform and educate.

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—
Yertle the Turtle | Dr Seuss

On the far-away island of Sala-ma-Sond,
Yertle the Turtle was king of the pond.
A nice little pond. It was clean. It was neat.
The water was warm. There was plenty to eat.
The turtles had everything turtles might need.
And they were all happy. Quite happy indeed.

They were... untill Yertle, the king of them all,
Decided the kingdom he ruled was too small.
"I'm ruler", said Yertle, "of all that I see.
But I don't see enough. That's the trouble with me.
With this stone for a throne, I look down on my pond
But I cannot look down on the places beyond.
This throne that I sit on is too, too low down.
It ought to be higher!" he said with a frown.
"If I could sit high, how much greater I'd be!
What a king! I'd be ruler of all that I see!"

So Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand
And Yertle, the Turtle King, gave a command.
He ordered nine turtles to swim to his stone
And, using these turtles, he built a new throne.
He made each turtle stand on another one's back
And he piled them all up in a nine-turtle stack.
And then Yertle climbed up. He sat down on the pile.
What a wonderful view! He could see 'most a mile!

"All mine!" Yertle cried. "Oh, the things I now rule!
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And, what's more, beyond that
I'm the king of a blueberry bush and a cat!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

And all through the morning, he sat up there high
Saying over and over, "A grat king am I!"
Until 'long about noon. Then he heard a faint sigh.
"What's that?" snapped the king
And he looked down the stack.
And he saw, at the bottom, a turtle named Mack.
Just a part of his throne. And this plain little turtle
Looked up and he said, "Beg your pardon, King Yertle.
I've pains in my back and my shoulders and knees.
How long must we stand here, Your Majesty, please?"

"SILENCE!" the King of the Turtles barked back.
"I'm king, and you're only a turtle named Mack."

"You stay in your place while I sit here and rule.
I'm the king of a cow! And I'm the king of a mule!
I'm the king of a house! And a bush! And a cat!
But that isn't all. I'll do better than that!
My throne shall be higher!" his royal voice thundered,
"So pile up more turtles! I want 'bout two hundred!"

"Turtles! More turtles!" he bellowed and brayed.
And the turtles 'way down in the pond were afraid.
They trembled. They shook. But they came. They obeyed.
From all over the pond, they came swimming by dozens.
Whole families of turtles, with uncles and cousins.
And all of them stepped on the head of poor Mack.
One after another, they climbed up the stack.

Then Yertle the Turtle was perched up so high,
He could see forty miles from his throne in the sky!
"Hooray!" shouted Yertle. "I'm the king of the trees!
I'm king of the birds! And I'm king of the bees!
I'm king of the butterflies! King of the air!
Ah, me! What a throne! What a wonderful chair!
I'm Yertle the Turtle! Oh, marvelous me!
For I am the ruler of all that I see!"

Then again, from below, in the great heavy stack,
Came a groan from that plain little turtle named Mack.
"Your Majesty, please... I don't like to complain,
But down here below, we are feeling great pain.
I know, up on top you are seeing great sights,
But down here at the bottom we, too, should have rights.
We turtles can't stand it. Our shells will all crack!
Besides, we need food. We are starving!" groaned Mack.

"You hush up your mouth!" howled the mighty King Yertle.
"You've no right to talk to the world's highest turtle. I rule from the clouds! Over land! Over sea! There's nothing, no, NOTHING, that's higher than me!"

But, while he was shouting, he saw with surprise That the moon of the evening was starting to rise Up over his head in the darkening skies.
"What's THAT?" snorted Yertle. "Say, what IS that thing That dares to be higher than Yertle the King? I shall not allow it! I'll go higher still! I'll build my throne higher! I can and I will! I'll call some more turtles. I'll stack 'em to heaven! I need 'bout five thousand, six hundred and seven!"

But, as Yertle, the Turtle King, lifted his hand And started to order and give the command, That plain little turtle below in the stack, That plain little turtle whose name was just Mack, Decided he'd taken enough. And he had. And that plain little lad got a bit mad. And that plain little Mack did a plain little thing. He burped! And his burp shook the throne of the king!

And Yertle the Turtle, the king of the trees, The king of the air and the birds and the bees, The king of a house and a cow and a mule... Well, that was the end of the Turtle King's rule! For Yertle, the King of all Sala-ma-Sond, Fell off his high throne and fell Plunk! in the pond!

And to say the great Yertle, that Marvelous he, Is King of the Mud. That is all he can see. And the turtles, of course... all the turtles are free As turtles and, maybe, all creatures should be.
Fatimah Asghar is a Pakistani, Kashmiri, Muslim American writer. She is the writer and co-creator of Brown Girls, an Emmy-nominated web series that highlights friendships between women of color. Asghar believes that poetry allowed her to control and share her story, and that’s why she has built her life around the craft.

Eve Ewing is an American scholar, visual artist, poet and sociologist of race & education in Chicago. Her research focuses on racism, social inequality, urban policy, and the impact of these forces on American public schools and the lives of young people.

The second row, first column is in Urdu (Pakistani). The third row, first column is in Hindu and the fourth row, first column is in Punjabi.
For Want of a Nail | proverb

For want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For want of a horse the rider was lost,
For want of a rider the battle was lost,
For want of a battle the Kingdom was lost,
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

For want of a nail is a proverb that first appeared in 1640. The lack of a single nail leads to the downfall of an entire kingdom, simply because the blacksmith was reluctant to add one more nail to the horseshoe.

A proverb is a simple and concrete saying, popularly known and repeated, that expresses a truth based on common sense or experience, often metaphorical.

Readers are reminded of how seemingly unimportant acts can have grave consequences.
Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star’s stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is.
Remember the sun’s birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother’s, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.
Remember you are all people and all people
are you.
Remember you are this universe and this
universe is you.
Remember all is in motion, is growing, is you.
Remember language comes from this.
Remember the dance language is, that life is.
Remember.

*Remember* underscores the point how inextricably we are linked to one
another and the natural environment. To achieve peace and harmony, it is
important that we do “remember” how we owe our existence to all that
constitute the environment.

*Joy Harjo* is a poet, teacher, saxophonist, vocalist, performer, and author.
Born in Oklahoma, she took her paternal grandmother’s surname when she
enrolled in the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Harsh childhood relationships took
a negative toll on Harjo, at one point being afraid to speak, which caused her
to have difficulties with teachers at school. Her works often include themes
such as defining self, the arts, and social justice.
The Answer | Robinson Jeffers

Then what is the answer?—Not to be deluded by dreams. To know that great civilizations have broken down into violence, and their tyrants come, many times before. When open violence appears, to avoid it with honor or choose the least ugly faction; these evils are essential. To keep one’s own integrity, be merciful and uncorrupted and not wish for evil; and not be duped by dreams of universal justice or happiness. These dreams will not be fulfilled.

To know this, and know that however ugly the parts appear the whole remains beautiful. A severed hand is an ugly thing and man dismembered from the earth and stars and his history... for contemplation or in fact...

Often appears atrociously ugly. Integrity is wholeness, the greatest beauty is organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine beauty of the universe. Love that, not man.

Apart from that, or else you will share man’s pitiful confusions, or drown in despair when his days darken.

In The Answer, the author describes ideologies, which try to diagnose what is wrong with our society and offer a solution. The solution sounds wonderful—universal justice, happiness, and a better world. However, it does not work, and when it doesn’t work, the Nazis’ Aryan ideologies find “villains” to blame for making this “perfect society” unattainable.

Robinson Jeffers was an American poet known for his work about the central California coast. His poetry often presented monist perspectives (an ultimate Unity of all things), transcending personal and particular concerns of human beings, which he eventually labelled as stances of a naturalistic “inhumanism” that he believed was necessary to transcend and diminish many forms of social strife and corruption.
We were riding through frozen fields in a wagon at dawn. A red wing rose in the darkness.

And suddenly a hare ran across the road. One of us pointed to it with his hand.

That was long ago. Today neither of them is alive, Not the hare, nor the man who made the gesture.

O my love, where are they, where are they going
The flash of a hand, streak of movement, rustle of pebbles. I ask not out of sorrow, but in wonder.

In *Encounter*, Milosz deals with memory and events separated by a great gap in time – or perhaps more correctly, the one event looked at twice from different times. Just as the hare’s sudden presence interrupts the travellers’ awareness, the poem interrupts the awareness of the reader by its sudden shift in time.

Having lived under national socialism and communism, **Czeslaw Milosz** wrote of the past in a tragic, ironic style that nonetheless affirmed the value of human life. Many of Milosz’s poems concern loss, destruction, and despair. Milosz believed that one of the major problems of contemporary society is its lack of a moral foundation.
Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles | Sally Wen Mao

In Lijiang, the sign outside your hostel glares: Ride alone, ride alone, ride alone – it taunts you for the mileage of your solitude, must be past thousands, for you rode this plane alone, this train alone, you’ll ride this bus alone well into the summer night, well into the next hamlet, town, city, the next century, as the trees twitch and the clouds wane and the tides quiver and the galaxies tilt and the sun spins us another lonely cycle, you’ll wonder if this compass will ever change.

The sun doesn’t need more heat, so why should you? The trees don’t need to be close, so why should you?

Sally Wen Mao was born in Wuhan, China and grew up in Boston and the Bay Area.

Riding Alone for Thousands of Miles is about the beauty and loneliness in travelling alone across long distances. The speaker in the poem was and will be alone, talking about their own resourcefulness and strength in holding on to their solitude.

“The sun doesn’t need more heat, so why should you?” questions comparing a human to non-sentient entities and thus is the link to our theme: this shows that humans need relationships.
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Abiku | Wole Soyinka

In vain your bangles cast
Charmed circles at my feet
I am Abiku, calling for the first
And repeated time.

Must I weep for goats and cowries
For palm oil and sprinkled ask?
Yams do not sprout amulets
To earth Abiku’s limbs.

So when the snail is burnt in his shell,
Whet the heated fragment, brand me
Deeply on the breast – you must know him
When Abiku calls again.

I am the squirrel teeth, cracked
The riddle of the palm; remember
This, and dig me deeper still into
The god’s swollen foot.

Once and the repeated time, ageless
Though I puke, and when you pour
Libations, each finger points me near
The way I came, where

The ground is wet with mourning
White dew suckles flesh-birds
Evening befriends the spider, trapping
Flies in wine-froth;

Night, and Abiku sucks the oil
From lamps. Mothers! I’ll be the
Suppliant snake coiled on the doorstep
Yours the killing cry.

The ripest fruit was saddest
Where I crept, the warmth was cloying.
In silence of webs, Abiku moans, shaping
Mounds from the yolk.

Based on the myths of the (Nigerian) Yoruba tribe, the Abiku refers both to the spirit of a child who dies before puberty (or twelve, as told); also the spirit itself that causes their death. It is believed to be commentary on civil war in Africa, comparing the Abiku to war, as the poem was written when Soyinka was incarcerated.

Link to theme: connection between ‘us’ and children; fragility of life; loss of humanity in battle; and disconnection due to conflict.
‘Dark House”, from In Memorium | Tennyson

DARK house, by which once more I stand
   Here in the long unlovely street,
   Doors, where my heart was used to beat
So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasp’d no more—
   Behold me, for I cannot sleep,
   And like a guilty thing I creep
At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away
   The noise of life begins again,
   And ghastly thro’ the drizzling rain
On the bald street breaks the blank day.
*   *   *   *   *
O days and hours, your work is this,
   To hold me from my proper place,
   A little while from his embrace,
For fuller gain of after bliss:

That out of distance might ensue
   Desire of nearness doubly sweet;
   And unto meeting when we meet,
Delight a hundredfold accrue,

For every grain of sand that runs,
   And every span of shade that steals,
   And every kiss of toothèd wheels,
And all the courses of the suns.

The speaker hopes that there is a reason for man's existence and a bigger plan for everyone.

Tennyson progresses through various stages of grief, struggling to believe that God is good when his world is filled with human suffering. Tennyson takes comfort in the idea that humans, at least, are good and lets go of some of his doubt. Toward the end, he realizes that it's all about gaining knowledge, and that it is one of the higher purposes of humans.
Sleeping With Ghosts | Stephen Dunn

The ghosts who’ve resided for years in those perfectly made beds in houses you visit overnight were once just guests like you or true inhabitants who died quietly, almost happy, with the lights out.

They are the ghosts who let you sleep, who speak, if they speak at all, into the ear closest to the pillow offer you assurances of dawn while their vaguely palpable bodies touch you like a strange wind looking for a place to rest beneath the covers. Those other ghosts, wronged And forever in league with wrong, so much has been said about them. But the ghosts who sleep with you and let you sleep are the ones you might have invited to your bed had you known them proper in time. They might have believed in the future even then, and would have let you leave them easily, knowing somehow it would come to this, you one day drifting toward them, without fear, in a world wholly theirs.

The ghosts who once slept in the same bed are there reassuring you of dawn’s approach with their bodies rustling you like a strange wind. The other ghosts who were wronged or did wrong are still looking for a place to rest under the covers. In the end however, they would let you go knowing that someday you will return to them, as a ghost yourself.
Try to praise the mutilated world.
Remember June's long days,
and wild strawberries, drops of rosé wine.
The nettles that methodically overgrow
the abandoned homesteads of exiles.
You must praise the mutilated world.
You watched the stylish yachts and ships;
one of them had a long trip ahead of it,
while salty oblivion awaited others.
You've seen the refugees going nowhere,
you've heard the executioners sing joyfully.
You should praise the mutilated world.
Remember the moments when we were together
in a white room and the curtain fluttered.
Return in thought to the concert where music flared.
You gathered acorns in the park in autumn
and leaves eddied over the earth's scars.
Praise the mutilated world
and the gray feather a thrush lost,
and the gentle light that strays and vanishes
and returns.

Adam Zagajewski is a Polish poet, novelist, translator and essayist. The recurring themes in Zagajewski's poetry include "the night, dreams, history and time, infinity and eternity, silence and death. Try to Praise the Mutilated World was printed in The New Yorker, and became famous after the 11 September attacks.
Ghosts | Kiki Petrosino

Some ghosts are my mothers
neither angry nor kind
their hair blooming from silk kerchiefs.
Not queens, but ghosts
who hum down the hall on their curved fins
sad as seahorses.

Not all ghosts are mothers.
I've counted them as I walk the beach.
Some are herons wearing the moonrise like lace.
Not lonely, but ghostly.
They stalk the low tide pools, flexing
their brassy beaks, their eyes.

But that isn’t all.
Some of my ghosts are planets.
Not bright. Not young.
Spiraling deep in the dusk of my body
as saucers or moons
pleased with their belts of colored dust
& hailing no others.

Petrosino discusses the different types of ghosts that haunt her: namely, mothers, herons and planets.

The author personifies the kind of ghosts that haunt her on a daily basis.

Link to curriculum: talks about the different relationships that layer within a person's world.

The poem does not seem to conclude as there is no link to tie the speaker's three types of ghosts together, leaving a sense of mystery and ambiguity. This may reflect how some aspects of a person's life an identity is completely separate from others.
What the Living Do | Marie Howe

Johnny, the kitchen sink has been clogged for days, some utensil probably fell down there. And the Drano won’t work but smells dangerous, and the crusty dishes have piled up waiting for the plumber I still haven’t called. This is the everyday we spoke of. It’s winter again: the sky’s a deep, headstrong blue, and the sunlight pours through the open living-room windows because the heat’s on too high in here and I can’t turn it off. For weeks now, driving, or dropping a bag of groceries in the street, the bag breaking.

I’ve been thinking: This is what the living do. And yesterday, hurrying along those wobbly bricks in the Cambridge sidewalk, spilling my coffee down my wrist and sleeve.

I thought it again, and again later, when buying a hairbrush: This is it.
Parking. Slamming the car door shut in the cold. What you called that yearning.

What you finally gave up. We want the spring to come and the winter to pass. We want whoever to call or not call, a letter, a kiss—we want more and more and then more of it.

But there are moments, walking, when I catch a glimpse of myself in the window glass, say, the window of the corner video store, and I’m gripped by a cherishing so deep for my own blowing hair, chapped face, and unbuttoned coat that I’m speechless: I am living. I remember you.

What The Living Do explores the moral that the living are too wrapped around the mundane aspects of life; to appreciate how miraculous being alive truly is. The author employs a near mocking tone to highlight the irrelevance of our errands and concerns. Howe asserts that readers should stop relying on other things to be happy.

Marie Howe is an American poet from Rochester, New York. Many of her poems hold the message of appreciating life, influenced from the death of her brother. In 1995, Howe co-edited, with Michael Klein, a collection of essays, letters, and stories revolving around AIDS (the illness her brother died from).
self-portrait in case of disappearance | Safia Elhillo

i am afraid that everyone died & it did not fix
the world   this was meant to be the afterlife
to the burning countries our mothers left behind
girls with fathers gone or gone missing
sistered to dark boys marked to die & our own
bodies scarved & arranged in rows on prayer mats
we go missing too  & who mourns us  who
falls into the gap we leave in the world

Safia Elhillo is a Sudanese-American poet famous for her written and spoken poetry. Elhillo has been praised for her work and has been the recipient of several prestigious poetry awards. She explores themes of belonging and identity, particularly in the context of migration and nationality. In her other works, Elhillo also explores themes of love, or that be of its absence.
This Hour and What is Dead | Li-Young Lee

Tonight my brother, in heavy boots, is walking through bare rooms over my head, opening and closing doors. What could he be looking for in an empty house? What could he possibly need there in heaven? Does he remember his earth, his birthplace set to torches? His love for me feels like spilled water running back to its vessel.

At this hour, what is dead is restless and what is living is burning.

Someone tell him he should sleep now.

My father keeps a light on by our bed and readies for our journey. He mends ten holes in the knees of five pairs of boy’s pants. His love for me is like his sewing: various colors and too much thread, the stitching uneven. But the needle pierces clean through with each stroke of his hand.

At this hour, what is dead is worried and what is living is fugitive.

Someone tell him he should sleep now.

God, that old furnace, keeps talking with his mouth of teeth, a beard stained at feasts, and his breath of gasoline, airplane, human ash. His love for me feels like fire, feels like doves, feels like river-water.

At this hour, what is dead is helpless, kind and helpless. While the Lord lives.

Someone tell the Lord to leave me alone. I’ve had enough of his love that feels like burning and flight and running away.
What I have given to sorrow, though I have poured out all I am again and again, does not amount to much.

One winter’s snows. Two loves I could not welcome. A year of mostly silence. Another man I might have been.

Richard Hoffman is an American poet and teacher.

Significance of title: “inventory” means a complete list of goods and stock. This is because the speaker is ruminating about past, present and chances, as if he is taking stock of his own life.

Themes of chance- as in this Entangled World full of cause and effect, “what might have been” is impossible to predict.

The speaker is overcoming sorrow and mourning what “might have been”