The Lake Isle of Innisfree
William Butler Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles\(^1\) made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

5 And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.\(^2\)

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

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1. wattles n.: Stakes interwoven with twigs or branches.
2. Linnet's wings: The wings of a European singing bird.

The Wild Swans at Coole
William Butler Yeats

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
5 Upon the brimming water among
the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great broken rings
Upon their clamorous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
15 All's changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trod with a lighter tread.

Unwearyed still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

20 But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
The Achill Woman
Eavan Boland

She came up the hill carrying water.
She wore a half-buttoned, wool cardigan, a tea-towel round her waist.

She pushed the hair out of her eyes with her free hand and put the bucket down.

The zinc-music of the handle on the rim tuned the evening. An Easter moon rose. In the next-door field a stream was a fluid sunset; and then, stars.

I remember the cold rosiness of her hands.
She bent down and blew on them like broth.
And round her waist, on a white background, in coarse, woven letters, the words "glass cloth."

And she was nearly finished for the day.
And I was all talk, raw from college—weekending at a friend's cottage with one suitcase and the set text of the Court poets of the Silver Age.

We stayed putting down time until the evening turned cold without warning.
She said goodnight and started down the hill.

The grass changed from lavender to black. The trees turned back to cold outlines. You could taste frost.

but nothing now can change the way I went indoors, chilled by the wind and made a fire and took down my book and opened it and failed to comprehend

the harmonies of servitude, the grace music gives to flattery and language borrows from ambition—

and how I fell asleep oblivious to

the planets clouding over in the skies, the slant line of the spring moon, the sound going out their innings.

Thoughts on My Mother
James Berry

Bare trees turn the mind to palm leaves a-rattle round an open house with shadows wild about a boy stretching sinews in the stings and wash of your voice your hands your eyes

Your old hand makes a cross on my belly, and all pain goes

Caretaker of my beginnings your echoes pull me in and out from where many bare feet slap earth floor, secure, under the thatch cured in smoke old as granpuppa, your domain waltled in, with smells mixed with ginger, nutmeg and pimento berries and old sweat of donkey padding

And your pestle a-crush woodfired coffeebeans and cocobean with cinnamon, and corn and cassava, and no food is ever the same after your salted pepper spice-up from a sapling table

December is stuck in gardens and bed blankets here but red hibiscus opens up the playmates' wood-and-straw place, and the song in your hair like your patience I could never have, with your luxury iced water in a calabash

Woman you hang no accomplishments: it's one late gold ring a-flash your only jewel, yet eight people's habits and clothes-fabric were like a map in your palm

Frost winds in England try to skin me white: you are warm, your face wet in sweat, black in sunlight as you dig, chop or stitch, with feet bare like the scorpions and centipedes, that I may let go my tasseled roots the sun pulls upward.

1. Achill [a' ktl]: Mountainous island off the west coast of Ireland.
2. Caretaker . . . Court . . . Ages Poets who are considered inferior to their predecessor, Chaucer, and their progeny.
3. pimento berries: The fruit of a West Indian tree that when dried is called allspice.
4. calabash [kal a' bash]: A receptacle made from a dried, hollowed-out gourd.
Our way of life
has hardly changed
since a wheel first
whetted a knife.

Line
(5)    Well, maybe flame
bears more greedily
and wheels are steadier
but we’re the same
who milestone

(10)    our lives
with oversights—
living by the lights
of the loaf left
by the cash register,
the washing powder
paid for and wrapped,
the wash left wet.
Like most historic peoples
we are defined

(20)    by what we forget,
by what we never will be:
star-gazers,
fire-eaters.
It’s our alibi

(25) for all time
that as far as history goes
we were never
on the scene of the crime.

So when the king’s head
gored its basket—
grim harvest—
we were gristing bread
or getting the recipe
for a good soup
(35) to appetize
our gossip.
And it’s still the same:
By night our windows
moth our children
to the flame
of hearth not history.
And still no page
scores the low music
of our outrage.

(40)  But appearances
still reassure:
That woman there,
craned to the starry mystery
is merely getting a breath

(50) of evening air,
while this one here—
her mouth
a burning plume—
she’s no fire-eater,

(55) just my frosty neighbor
coming home.

(1982)
In this poem, the speaker, one of the three wise men who traveled to Bethlehem to pay homage to the baby Jesus, reflects upon the meaning of his journey.

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp.
The very dead of winter."!

And the camels galloped, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces.
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night.
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down

This: were we led all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

1. "A . . . winter." : Adapted from a part of a sermon delivered by 17th-century Bishop Lancelot Andrews: "A cold coming they had of it this time of year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the day short, the sun farthest off . . . the very dead of winter."
The Hollow Men

T. S. Eliot

Mistah Kurtz¹—he dead.
A penny for the Old Guy²

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 color,
Paralyzed force, gesture without motion:

Those who have crossed
With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom³
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 field⁴
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.

¹ Mistah Kurtz: A character in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness who travels to Africa hoping to improve the lives of the natives, but finds that, instead, he is corrupted by the worst elements of native life. Horrified by what he had become, Kurtz dies in the jungle.
² A ... Guy: A traditional cry used by children on Guy Fawkes Day. Guy Fawkes (1570–1606) was executed for participating in a plot to blow up the king and both Houses of Parliament in 1605. Each year on November 5, children beg for pennies to buy firecrackers which they use to destroy stuffed dummies representing Fawkes.
³ Those ... Kingdom: An allusion to Dante's Paradiso, in which those "with direct eyes" are blessed by God in Heaven.
⁴ crossed ... field: Scarecrows.
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.

Here we go round the prickly pear
Prickly pear prickly pear

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

For Thine is the Kingdom
Days
Philip Larkin

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in;
Where can we live but days?

Ah, solving that question
Brings the priest and the doctor
In their long coats
Running over the fields.

One Hard Look
Robert Graves

Small gnats that fly
In hot July
And lodge in sleeping ears,
Can rouse therein
A trumpet's din
With Day of Judgment fears.

Small mice at night
Can wake more fright
Than lions at midday;
A straw will crack
The camel's back—
There is no easier way.

One smile relieves
A heart that grieves
Though deadly sad it be,
And one hard look
Can close the book
That lovers love to see.
The Sunlight on the Garden
Louis MacNeice

The sunlight on the garden
Hardens and grows cold,
We cannot cage the minute
Within its nets of gold,
5
When all is told
We cannot beg for pardon.

Our freedom as free lances
Advances towards its end;
The earth compels, upon it
10
Sonnets and birds descend;
And soon, my friend,
We shall have no time for dances.

The sky was good for flying
Defying the church bells
And every evil iron
Siren and what it tells:
The earth compels,
15
We are dying, Egypt, dying!

And not expecting pardon,
Hardened in heart anew,
But glad to have sat under
Thunder and rain with you,
And grateful too
For sunlight on the garden.

Sunday Morning
Louis MacNeice

Down the road someone is practicing scales,
The notes like little fishes vanish with a wink of tails,
Man's heart expands to tinker with his car
For this is Sunday morning, Fate's great bazaar;
5
Regard these means as ends, concentrate on this Now,
And you may grow to music or drive beyond Hindhead1
anyhow.
Take corners on two wheels until you go so fast
That you can clutch a fringe or two of the windy past,
That you can abstract this day and make it to the week of
time
10 A small eternity, a sonnet self-contained in rhyme.

But listen, up the road, something gulps, the church spire
Opens its eight bells out, skulls' mouths which will not tire
To tell how there is no music or movement which secures
Escape from the weekday time. Which deadens and
endures.


1. We . . . dying: An allusion to a line spoken by Antony to Cleopatra after he has been mortally wounded in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra: "I am dying, Egypt, dying."
SONNET EXERCISES

Scan each sonnet and from the rhyme scheme, determine what type of sonnet each is.

(1) BRIGHT STAR! WOULD I WERE
STEADFAST AS THOU ART

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

(2) WHEN OUR TWO SOULS STAND UP
ERECT AND STRONG

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Till lengthening wings break into fire
Either curved point,--what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think! In mountings higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth. Beloved,--where the unfit,
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

(3) BATTER MY HEART,
THREE-PERSONED GOD

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

(4) IF THOU MUST LOVE ME,
LET IT BE FOR NAUGHT

If thou must love me, let it be for naught
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
"I love her for her smile--her look--her way
Of speaking gently--for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes is brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day"--
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee--and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose they love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

(5) DEATH, BE NOT PROUD

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death; nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy picture be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow;
And soonest our best men with thee do go--
Rest of their bones and souls' delivery!
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And Death shall be no more: Death, thou shalt die!
Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometimes declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part;
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me,
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;
Shake hands forever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath.
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes;
Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou mightst him yet recover.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways,
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace,
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use,
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints--I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!--and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.
American Sonnet

We do not speak like Petrarch or wear a hat like Spenser
and it is not fourteen lines
like furrows in a small, carefully plowed field

but the picture postcard, a poem on vacation,
that forces us to sing our songs in little rooms
or pour our sentiments into measuring cups.

We write on the back of a waterfall or lake,
adding to the view a caption as conventional
as an Elizabethan woman’s heliocentric eyes.

We locate an adjective for the weather.
We announce that we are having a wonderful time.
We express the wish that you were here

and hide the wish that we were where you are,
walking back from the mailbox, your head lowered
as you read and turn the thin message in your hands.

A slice of this place, a length of white beach,
a piazza or carved spires of a cathedral
will pierce the familiar place where you remain,

and you will toss on the table this reversible display:
a few square inches of where we have strayed
and a compression of what we feel.

Sonnet

All we need is fourteen lines, well, thirteen now,
and after this one just a dozen
to launch a little ship on love’s storm-tossed seas,
then only ten more left like rows of beans.
How easily it goes unless you get Elizabethan
and insist the iambic bongos must be played
and rhymes positioned at the ends of lines,
one for every station of the cross.
But hang on here while we make the turn
into the final six where all will be resolved,
where longing and heartache will find an end,
where Laura will tell Petrarch to put down his pen,
take off those crazy medieval tights,
blow out the lights, and come at last to bed.
Anthem for Doomed Youth
Wilfred Owen

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons. 1

No mockeries for them from prayers or bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs—
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires. 2

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of good-eyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
The flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

1. orisons (ô rëz ônz) n: Prayers.
2. shires (shirz) n: Any of the counties of England.

Sonnet 73
William Shakespeare

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals up all in rest.

In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed wherein it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.1

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

1. Consumed ... by: Choked by the ashes of that which fueled its flame.

Sonnet 130
William Shakespeare

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked,1 red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.3
I love to hear her speak. Yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound.
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

1. damasked Variegated.
2. rosen Emaciated.
3. go: Walk.
from An Essay on Man

Alexander Pope

An Essay on Man is an examination of human nature, society, and morals. In describing the work, Pope comments that it is "a general map of man, marking out... the greater parts, their extent, their limits, and their connection." The following excerpt is from the second epistle, in which Pope attempts to show how it is possible for humanity to achieve a psychological harmony through self-understanding and self-love.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.
Placed on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:

With too much knowledge for the skeptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;

Born but to die, and reasoning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of thought and passion, all confused;
Still by himself abused, or disabused;

Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurled:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night.
Old age should burn and rave at close of day:
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
5 Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

10 Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieving it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

15 And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
Follower

Seamus Heaney

My father worked with a horse plow,
His shoulders globed like a full sail strung
Between the shafts and the furrow.
The horses strained at his clicking tongue.

An expert. He would set the wing
And fit the bright steel-pointed sock.
The sod rolled over without breaking,
At the headrig, with a single pluck

Of reins, the sweating team turned round
And back into the land. His eye
Narrowed and angled at the ground,
Mapping the furrow exactly.

I stumbled in his hobnalled wake,
Fell sometimes on the polished sod;
Sometimes he rode me on his back
Dipping and rising to his plod.

I wanted to grow up and plow,
To close one eye, stiffen my arm.
All I ever did was follow
In his broad shadow round the farm.

I was a nuisance, tripping, falling,
Yapping always. But today
It is my father who keeps stumbling
Behind me, and will not go away.

Dover Beach

Matthew Arnold

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon, she fair...
Upon the straits: on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray

Where the sea meets the moon-blancched land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease; and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago
Heard it on the Aegaean, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,

Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breach
Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true

To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;

And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

1. straits: Straits of Dover, between England and France.
2. straits: Shore.
4. Aegaean (adj.): The arm of the Mediterranean Sea between Greece and Turkey.
5. shingles n.: Beaches covered with large, coarse, waterworn gravel.
6. darkling: dark, gloomy.
I
The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks' in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grisy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
And then the lighting of the lamps.

II
The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes,
One thinks of all the hands
That are raising dingy shades
In a thousand furnished rooms.

III
You tossed a blanket from the bed,
You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted;
They flickered against the ceiling.

And when all the world came back
And the light crept up between the shutters
And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
You had such a vision of the street
As the street hardly understands;
Sitting along the bed's edge, where
You curled the papers from your hair,
Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV
His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block,
Or trampled by insistent feet
At four and five and six o'clock;
And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
And evening newspapers, and eyes
Assured of certain certainties,
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and clinging;
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.
Wipe your hands across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

---

Hawk Roosting
Ted Hughes

I sit in the top of the wood, my eyes closed.
Inaction, no falsifying dream
Between my hooked head and hooked feet:
Or in sleep rehearse perfect kills and eat.

The convenience of the high trees!
The air's buoyancy and the sun's ray
Are of advantage to me:
And the earth's face upward for my inspection.

My feet are locked upon the rough bark.
It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

Or fly up, and revolve it all slowly—
I kill where I please because it is all mine.

There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads—
The allotment of death.
For the one path of my flight is direct
Through the bones of the living.

No arguments assert my right:
The sun is behind me.
Nothing has changed since I began.
My eye has permitted no change.
I am going to keep things like this.
Outside History
Eavan Boland

There are outsiders, always. These stars—
these iron inklings of an Irish January,
whose light happened

thousands of years before

5 our pain did: they are, they have always
been
outside history.

They keep their distance. Under them
remains
a place where you found
you were human, and

10 a landscape in which you know you are
mortal.
And a time to choose between them.
I have chosen:

Out of myth into history I move to be
part of that ordeal
whose darkness is

only now reaching me from those fields,
those rivers, those roads clotted as
firmaments1 with the dead.

How slowly they die
as we kneel beside them, whisper in
their ear.
And we are too late. We are always too
late.

The Second Coming
William Butler Yeats

"The Second Coming" was inspired by Yeats's belief
that history occurs in two-thousand-year cycles, with one
civilization passing through stages of development, growth,
and decay, before crumbling and giving way to a new
civilization that stands in direct opposition to the preceding
civilization. The birth of Christ had brought about the end of
one civilization and the birth of another, and Yeats believed
that the society of the early twentieth century was in a state
of decay that would lead to a similar sort of rebirth.

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Merc anarchy is loosed upon the world.

5 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.1

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundii2
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,3

15 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries4 of stony sleep

20 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle.5
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

1. More... Intensity (lines 4-8): Refers to the Russian Revolution of
1917.
2. Spiritus Mundii (spir' i t a m oon'dē): The Universal Spirit or soul,
the Universal Subconscious in which the memories of the entire
human race are forever preserved.
4. twenty centuries: The historical cycle preceding the birth of
Christ.
5. rocking cradle: The cradle of Jesus Christ.

1. firmaments n.: Skies perceived as solid arches or
vaults.
Seamus Heaney  
(Born 1939)

Born in County Derry in Ireland, Seamus Heaney (pronounced sha-mus hee-nee, not haya-nee) was educated at St. Columb's College there and at Queen's University in Belfast, where he has taught since 1966. More recently he has been a visiting professor at Harvard and the University of California at Berkeley.

Death of a Naturalist

All year the flax-dam festered in the heart
Of the townland; green and heavy headed
Flax had rotted there, weighted down by huge sods.
Daily it sweltered in the punishing sun.
Bubbles gargled delicately, bluebottles
Wove a strong gauze of sound around the smell.
There were dragon-flies, spotted butterflies,
But best of all was the warm thick slobber
Of frogspawn that grew like clotted water
In the shade of the banks. Here, every spring
I would fill jampotfuls of the jellied
Specks to range on window-sills at home,
On shelves at school, and wait and watch until
The fattening dots burst into nimble-
Swimming tadpoles. Miss Walls would tell us how
The daddy frog was called a bullfrog
And how he croaked and how the mammy frog
Laid hundreds of little eggs and this was
Frogspawn. You could tell the weather by frogs too
For they were yellow in the sun and brown
In rain.

Then one hot day when fields were rank
With cowdung in the grass the angry frogs
Invaded the flax-dam; I ducked through hedges
To a coarse croaking that I had not heard
Before. The air was thick with a bass chorus.
Right down the dam gross-bellied frogs were cocked
On sods; their loose necks pulsed like sails. Some hopped:
The slap and plop were obscene threats. Some sat
Poised like mud grenades, their blunt heads farting.
I sickened, turned, and ran. The great slime kings
Were gathered there for vengeance and I knew
That if I dipped my hand the spawn would clutch it.

Death of a Naturalist, 1966.

1 flax-dam: In the process of making linen from the long stems of the flax plant, the stalks are “retted,” partially rotted by soaking in water to loosen the fibers. The flax-dams retain the water in the kind of pond Heaney describes.  5 bluebottles: flies with iridescent blue bodies  9 frogspawn: gelatinous masses of fertilized frog eggs that float in the water or cluster around the stems of water plants. The tadpoles or pollywogs hatch from the eggs in a week or so.
First Reader

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.

Dancing Toward Bethlehem

If there is only enough time in the final minutes of the twentieth century for one last dance I would like to be dancing it slowly with you, say, in the ballroom of a seaside hotel. My palm would press into the small of your back as the past hundred years collapsed into a pile of mirrors or buttons or frivolous shoes, just as the floor of the nineteenth century gave way and disappeared in a red cloud of brick dust. There will be no time to order another drink or worry about what was never said, not with the orchestra sliding into the sea and all our attention devoted to humming whatever it was they were playing.

Billy Collins
SLOUCHING TOWARDS BETHELHEM
(Based on a poem by W.B. Yeats)

Turning and turning 1
Within the widening gyre 2
The falcon cannot hear the falconer 3
Things fall apart 4
The center cannot hold 5
And a blood dimmed tide 6
Is loosed upon the world 7

Nothing is sacred 8
The ceremony sinks 9
Innocence is drowned 10
In anarchy 11
The best lack conviction 12
Given some time to think 13
And the worst are full of passion 14
Without mercy 15

Surely some revelation is at hand 16
Surely it's the second coming 17
And the wrath has finally taken form 18
For what is this rough beast 19
Its hour come at last 20
Slouching towards Bethlehem to be born 21
Slouching towards Bethlehem to be born 22

Hoping and hoping 23
As if with my weak faith 24
The spirit of this world 25
Would heal and rise 26
Vast are the shadows 27
That straddle and strafe 28
And struggle in the darkness 29
Troubling my eyes 30

Shaped like a lion 31
It has the head of a man 32
With a gaze as blank 33
And pitiless as the sun 34
As it's moving its slow thighs 35
Across the desert sands 36
Through dark indignant 37
Reeling falcons 38

Surely some revelation is at hand 39
Surely it's the second coming 40
And the wrath has finally taken form 41
For what is this rough beast 42
Its hour come at last 43
Slouching towards Bethlehem to be born 44
Slouching towards Bethlehem to be born 45
(Head of a man, shape of a lion) 46

Raging and raging 47
It rises from the deep 48
Opening its eyes 49
After twenty centuries 50
Vexed to a nightmare 51
Out of a stony sleep 52
By a rocking cradle 53
By the Sea of Galilee 54

Surely some revelation is at hand 55
Surely it's the second coming 56
And the wrath has finally taken form 57
For what is this rough beast 58
Its hour come at last 59
Slouching towards Bethlehem to be born 60
Slouching towards Bethlehem to be born 61
(Head of a man, shape of a lion) 62
The world is too much with us; late and soon,

2 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;

Little we see in Nature that is ours;

4 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,

6 The winds that will be howling at all hours,

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,

8 For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not.—Great God! I'd rather be

10 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn:

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

12 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

14 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.
GOD'S GRANDEUR
by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

The word is charged with the grandeur of God.

2 It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

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

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

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

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

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

And for all this, nature is never spent;

10 There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;

And though the last lights off the black West went

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

Because the Holy Ghost over the bent

14 World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.
ANY HUMAN TO ANOTHER

The ills I sorrow at
Not me alone
Like an arrow,
Pierce to the marrow,
Through the fat
And past the bone.
Your grief and mine
Must intertwine
Like sea and river,
Be fused and mingle,
Diverse yet single,
Forever and forever.
Let no man be so proud
And confident,
To think he is allowed
A little tent
Pitched in a meadow
Of sun and shadow
All his little own.
Joy may be shy, unique,
Friendly to a few,
Sorrow never scorned to speak
To any who
Were false or true.
Your every grief
Like a blade
Shining and unsheathed
Must strike me down.
Of bitter aloes wreathed,
My sorrow must be laid
On your head like a crown.
The Death of a Toad

A toad the power mower caught,

Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got

To the garden verge, and sanctuaried him

Under the cineraria\(^1\) leaves, in the shade

Of the ashen heartshaped leaves, in a dim,

Low, and a final glade.

The rare original heartsblood goes,

Spends on the earthen hide, in the folds and wizenings, flows

In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes. He lies

As still as if he would return to stone,

And soundlessly attending, dies

Toward some deep monotone,

Toward misted and ebullient seas

And cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia's emperies\(^2\).

Day dwindles, drowning, and at length is gone

In the wide and antique eyes, which still appear

To watch, across the castrate lawn,

The haggard daylight steer.

---Richard Wilbur

\(^{1}\)Ornamental plants with silvery foliage; from "cinerarium," a place for keeping the ashes of a cremated body

\(^{2}\)Emperies
Loveliest of Trees
A. E. Housman

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Easter tide.

5 Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again,
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

When I Was One-and-Twenty
A. E. Housman

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas'"
But not your heart away;

8 Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;

11 'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

LEARNING OPTION
Writing. Find a blade of grass, a leaf, a flower,
or some other living plant. Bring it indoors and
observe the changes it goes through. What
thoughts and feelings does the process evoke in
you? Write a brief poem that expresses your point
of view. You might wish to indicate your age, as
the speaker does in "Loveliest of Trees." Recite
your poem to the class.
To an Athlete Dying Young

A. E. Housman

The time you won your town the race
We chaired you through the marketplace;
Man and boy stood cheering by,
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,
Shoulder-high we bring you home,
And set you at your threshold down,
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away
From fields where glory does not stay
And early though the laurel grows
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut
Cannot see the record cut.
And silence sounds no worse than cheers
After earth has stopped the ears:

Now you will not swell the rout
Of lads that were their honors out,
Runners whom renown outran
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,
The fleet foot on the still of shade.
And hold to the low lintel up
The still-defended challenge cup.

And round that early-laureled head
Will flock to gaze the strengthening Dead,
And find unwithered on its curls
The garland briefer than a girl's.

1. laurels A symbol of victory.
On His Having Arrived at the Age of Twenty-Three
John Milton

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three and twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career,¹
But my late spring no bud or blossom showeth.

Perhaps my semblance might deceive² the truth,
That to manhood am arrived so near,
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits³ endueth.⁴

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still⁵ in strictest measure even,
To that same lot,⁶ however mean or high,
Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Taskmaster's eye.

When I Consider How My Light Is Spent
John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent¹ which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
"Doth God exact day labor, light denied?"
I fondly² ask: but Patience to prevent

That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly. Thousands³ at his bidding speed
And post⁴ o'er land and ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait."

1. career: Speed.
2. deceive: Prove false.
3. timely-happy spirits: Other people who seem to be more accomplished poets at the age of twenty-three.
4. endueth: Endoweth.
5. still: Always.
6. lot: Fate.

1. talent: An allusion to the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30).
2. fondly: Foolishly.
3. thousands: Thousands of angels.
4. post: Travel.
Ode on a Grecian Urn
John Keats

I
Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster child of silence and slow time,
Sylvan! historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
Of deities or mortals, or of both,
In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
What men or gods are these? What maidens loath?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

II
Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve;
She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

III
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearyed,
Forever piping songs forever new;

25 More happy lovel more happy, happy love!
Forever warm and still to be enjoyed,
Forever panting, and forever young;
All breathing human passion far above,
That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloyed,
30 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

IV
Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
And all her silken flanks with garlands dressed?
What little town by river or seashore,
Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets forevermore
Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
40 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

1. sylvan: Rustic, representing the woods or forest.
2. Tempe (tem' pé): A beautiful valley in Greece that has become a symbol of supreme rural beauty.
3. Arcady (ár' ka dé): A region in Greece that has come to represent supreme pastoral contentment.
4. loath: Unwilling.
5. timbrels: Tambourines.
6. sensual: Involving the physical sense of hearing.

Ode on a Grecian Urn 663
Ozymandias
Percy Bysshe Shelley

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

---

1. **Ozymandias** (ˌoz ɪˈmændəs): The Greek name for Ramses. Ramses II, the king referred to in the poem, was a pharaoh who ruled Egypt during the thirteenth century B.C. and built many great palaces and statues. One statue was inscribed with the words: "I am Ozymandias, king of kings, if anyone wishes to know what I am and where I lie, let him surpass me in some of my exploits."

---

**RESPONDING TO THE SELECTION**

**Your Response**
1. Do you think that the message of this poem is pertinent to today's world? Explain.

**Recalling**
2. (a) Whom has the speaker met? (b) What sight does this person describe?

**Interpreting**
3. Think of the words on the pedestal. (a) Why is it ironic that the statue has crumbled? (b) Why is it ironic that it is surrounded by desert?
4. What is the theme of this poem?

---

**Applying**
5. (a) What is your definition of power? (b) What is your definition of pride? (c) In what way do the two complement each other?

**ANALYZING LITERATURE**

**Understanding Poetic Structure**
The poetic structure of a poem is the plan on which it is built. Poetic structure includes such elements as rhyme, rhythm, and number of stanzas. Analyze the poetic structure of "Ozymandias." State whether or not you feel this structure enhances the poem's message. When you revise, make sure you have provided adequate support for your main idea.
SECTION FOUR: EXERCISES
### Tone Vocabulary

**Positive tone/attitude words**
- light-hearted
- hopeful
- confident
- cheerful
- elated
- exuberant
- optimistic
- loving
- sympathetic
- compassionate
- proud
- enthusiastic
- complimentary
- passionate

**Negative tones/attitude words**

**Anger:**
- angry
- furious
- indignant
- disgusted
- wrathful
- threatening
- outraged
- bitter
- accusing
- inflammatory
- condemnatory
- irritated

**Humor/Irony/Sarcasm:**
- scornful
- critical
- sardonic
- taunting
- whimsical
- disdainful
- facetious
- mock-heroic
- insolent
- amused
- contemptuous
- patronizing
- bantering
- pompous
- sarcastic
- satiric
- irreverent
- ironic
- cynical
- mock-serious
- condescending
- flippant

**Sorrow/Fear/Worry:**
- somber
- mournful
- fearful
- hopeless
- elegiac
- solemn
- despairing
- staid
- melancholic
- serious
- gloomy
- resigned
- sad
- apprehensive
- sober
- concerned
- foreboding
- disturbed

**Neutral tone/attitude words**
- formal
- candid
- baffled
- questioning
- learned
- objective
- shocked
- sentimental
- urgent
- factual
- incredulous
- reminiscent
- detached
- instructive
- didactic
- nostalgic
- restrained
- matter-of-fact
- informative
- ceremonial
- clinical
- disbelieving
- admonitory
- authoritative
"COME ON, LOU"

Say the three words (adjusting your tone) under the following conditions:

1. Lou is a puppy.
2. Lou is a 7 year old child in your care.
3. Lou is your husband of 40 years dying of cancer.
4. You are to be married to Lou, and he has just called the engagement off.
5. Lou is your co-conspirator in crime.
6. Lou is an older sibling who can drive and you can't, and you need a ride.
7. Lou is your boss.
8. Lou is your employee.
9. Lou is a horse on which you've bet your last dollar at a race track.
10. Lou is a person who has put you on hold on the telephone.
11. Your own idea? Lou is ____________________________
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*Note: Images are not provided in the text. They are placeholders for visual representation.*
## TONE, FEELING, VOCABULARY

### POSITIVE FEELINGS

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| elation   | delighted       | pleased        | turned-on       |
| enthusiastic | eager         | excited        | warm            |
| zealous    |                 |                | amused          |

| courage  | valiant         | venturesome    | daring          |
|          | brave           | peaceful       | comfortable     |
|          | brilliant       | intelligent    | smart           |

### NEGATIVE FEELINGS

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<td></td>
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| listless   | dejected        | frustrated     | angry          |
| moody      | unhappy         | sad            | hurt           |
| lethargic  | bored           | depressed      | miserable      |
| gloomy     | bad             | sick           | pain           |
| dismal     | forlorn         | disconsolate   | lonely         |
| discontented | disappointed  | dissatisfied   | cynical        |
| tired      | wearied         | fatigued       | exhausted      |

| indifferent | torn-up         | worn-out       | worthless      |
| unsure     | inadequate      | useless        | impotent       |
| impatient  | ineffectual     | weak           | futile         |
| dependent  | helpless        | hopeless       | abandoned      |
| unimportant | resigned       | forlorn        | estrangement   |
|           | apathetic       | rejected       |               |
| regretful  | shamed          | guilty         | degraded       |

| bashful    | shy             | embarrassed   | humiliate      |
| self-conscious | uncomfortable |               | inhibited      |
|           |                |               | alienated      |

| puzzled    | baffled         | bewildered     | shocked        |
| edgy       | confused        | frightened     | panicky        |
| upset      | nervous         | anxious        | trapped        |
| reluctant  | tempted         | dismayed       | horrified      |
| timid      | tense           | apprehensive   | afraid         |
| mixed-up   | worried         | dreadful       | scared         |
|           | perplexed       | apprehensive   | terrified      |
|           | troubled        | disturbed      | threatened      |

| sullen    | disdainful      | antagonistic   | infuriated     |
| provoked  | contemptuous    | vengeful       |                |
Perrine's Questions about any poem:

- Following is a list of questions that you may apply to any poem or that your instructor may wish to use, in whole or in part, to supplement the questions to any particular poem.

a. Who is the speaker? What kind of person is he?
b. To whom is he speaking? What kind of person is he?
c. What is the occasion?
d. What is the setting in time (time of day, season, century, etc.)?
e. What is the setting in place (indoors or out, city or country, nation, etc.)?
f. What is the central purpose of the poem?
g. State the central idea or theme of the poem in a sentence.
h. Discuss the tone of the poem. How is it achieved?
i. a. Outline the poem so as to show its structure and development, or
   b. Summarize the events of the poem.
j. Paraphrase the poem.
k. Discuss the diction of the poem. Point out words that are particularly well chosen and explain why.
l. Discuss the imagery of the poem. What kinds of imagery are used?
m. Point out examples of metaphor, simile, personification, and metonymy and explain their appropriateness.
n. Point out and explain any symbols. If the poem is allegorical, explain the allegory.
o. Point out and explain examples of paradox, overstatement, understatement, and irony. What is their function?
p. Point out and explain any allusions. What is their function?
q. Point out significant examples of sound repetition and explain their function.
r. a. What is the meter of the poem?
   b. Copy the poem and mark its scansion.
s. Discuss the adaptation of sound to sense.
t. Describe the form or pattern of the poem.
u. Criticize and evaluate the poem.

It occurred to me that all I had to do was turn around and
that would be the end of it. But the whole beach, throbbing in
the sun, was pressing on my back. I took a few steps toward
the spring. The Arab didn’t move. Beside, he was still pretty
far away. Maybe it was the shadows on his face, but it looked
like he was laughing. I waited. The sun was starting to burn
my cheeks, and I could feel drops of sweat gathering in my
eyebrows. The sun was the same as it had been the day I’d
buried Maman, and like then, my forehead especially was
hurting me, all the veins in it throbbing under the skin. It was
this burning, which I couldn’t stand anymore, that made me
move forward. I knew that it was stupid, that I wouldn’t get
the sun off me by stepping forward. But I took a step, one step,
forward. And this time, without getting up, the Arab drew his
knife and held it up to me in the sun. The light shot off the
steel and it was like a long flashing blade cutting at my forehead.
At the same instant the sweat in my eyebrows dripped down
over my eyelids all at once and covered them with a warm,
thick film. My eyes were blinded behind the curtain of tears
and salt. All I could feel were the cymbals of sunlight crashing
on my forehead and, indistinctly, the dazzling spear flying up
from the knife in front of me. The scorching blade slashed at
my eyelashes and stabbed at my stinging eyes. That’s when
everything began to reel. The sea carried up a thick, fiery
breath. It seemed to me as if the sky split open from one end to
the other to rain down fire. My whole being tensed and I
squeezed my hand around the revolver. The trigger gave; I felt
the smooth underside of the butt; and there, in that noise, sharp
and deafening at the same time, is where it all started. I shook
off the sweat and sun. I knew that I had shattered the harmony
of the day, the exceptional silence of a beach where I'd been
happy. Then I fired four more times at the motionless body
where the bullets lodged without leaving a trace. And it was
like knocking four quick times on the door of unhappiness.
IMAGERY and TONE PRACTICE
-excerpt from The Great Gatsby (chapter 3)

1. By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived—no thin five
2. piece affair but a whole pit full of oboes and trombones and
3. saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos and low and
4. high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the
5. beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New
6. York are parked five deep in the drive; and already the halls
7. and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors and
8. hair shorn in strange new ways and shawls beyond the
9. dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing and floating
10. rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside until the air
11. is alive with chatter and laughter and casual innuendo and
12. introductions forgotten on the spot and enthusiastic meet-
13. ings between women who never knew each other's names.
14. The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from
15. the sun and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail
16. music and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter
17. is easier, minute by minute, spilled with prodigality, tipped
18. out at a cheerful word. The groups change more swiftly,
19. swell with new arrivals, dissolve and form in the same
20. breath—already there are wanderers, confident girls who
21. weave here and there among the stouter and more stable,
22. become for a sharp, joyous moment the center of a group
23. and then excited with triumph glide on through the sea-
24. change of faces and voices and color under the constantly
25. changing light.
26. Suddenly one of these gypsies in trembling opal seizes a
27. cocktail out of the air, dumps it down for courage and
28. moving her hands like Frisco dances out alone on the canvas
29. platform. A momentary hush; the orchestra leader varies his
30. rhythm obligingly for her and there is a burst of chatter as
31. the erroneous news goes around that she is Gilda Gray's
32. understudy from the "Follies." The party has begun.
33. I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house
34. I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited.
35. People were not invited—they went there. They got into
36. automobiles which bore them out to Long Island and some-
37. how they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were
38. introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby and after that
39. they conducted themselves according to the rules of behav-
40. ior associated with amusement parks. Sometimes they came
41. and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the
42. party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of
43. admission.
It's a Woman's World
by Eavan Boland

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION
SECTION II

Total time—2 hours
Question 1

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

1. The following poem was written by a contemporary Irish woman, Eavan Boland. Read the poem carefully and then write an essay in which you analyze how the poem reveals the speaker's complex conception of a "woman's world."

Our way of life
has hardly changed
since a wheel first
whetted a knife.

Line
(5) Well, maybe flame
burns more greedily
and wheels are steadier
but we're the same
who milestone
our lives
with oversights--
living by the lights
of the loaf left
by the cash register,
the washing powder
paid for and wrapped,
the wash left wet.
Like most historic peoples
we are defined
by what we forget,
by what we never will be:
star-gazers,
fire-eaters.
It's our alibi

(20) for all time
that as far as history goes
we were never
on the scene of the crime.

So when the king's head
gored its basket--
grim harvest--
we were gristing bread
or getting the recipe
for a good soup
(35) to appetize
our gossip.
And it's still the same:
By night our windows
moth our children
to the flame
(40) of hearth not history.
And still no page
scores the low music
of our outrage.

(45) But appearances
still reassure:
That woman there,
craned to the starry mystery
is merely getting a breath
of evening air,
while this one here--
der mouth
(50) a burning plume--
she's no fire-eater,
just my frosty neighbor
coming home.

(1982)
a. Actively read Eavan Boland's "It's a Woman's World"

After reading it at least twice, carefully read the AP test question that was used along with this poem on the 1997 AP English Literature Exam. Try to break the question down in parts.

Jot down in this box what you think this question is asking you to do:

Now, go back to the poem. Look specifically for evidence of **imagery** and **tone** and what lines inform the reader of Boland's **complex conception** of a "woman's world."

**Note:** Be sure to circle/cite some actual lines from the poem that support your response!

Discuss some of the powerful images in this poem and what their purpose might be in this poem. Look especially for any repetitive imagery.

Comment here whether you think Eavan Boland's poem's tone is positive, negative, or both.

Describe here exactly what you think Eavan Boland's **complex conception** of a "woman's world" is.
Scoring for “It’s a Woman’s World”

**9-8**
- Well-conceived
- Well-ordered
- Insightful analysis
- Convincing reading
- Effective control of composition elements
- Includes language unique to poetry critique
- Textual references apt and specific
- Perceptive reading
- Writing is clear and sophisticated
- May have some minor flaws

**7-6**
- Sound grasp of the poem
- May be less sensitive to complexity than a 9-8 essay
- Some support from poem may falter
- Perhaps not as thorough/precise in “HOW” speaker reveals a “woman’s world”
- Use of paraphrase does serve analysis
- Writing is clear
- Does not have the same level of mastery, maturity, control as the 9-8 essays
- Perhaps rather brief
- Perhaps less incisive and less well-supported than a 9-8 essay

**4-3**
- Essay reveals an incomplete understanding of poem
- May reveal an incomplete understanding, the prescribed task
- May choose to debate speaker’s views (such as complexity) rather than explain ways a woman’s world is revealed
- Analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant
- May be too much reliance on paraphrase
- Evidence from poem may be meager or misconstrued
- May have uncertain control over elements of composition; markedly inept writing
- May have recurrent stylistic flaws
- May have inadequate development of ideas
- May have significant misreadings

**2-1**
- Weaknesses in 3-4 scored papers are even more compounded
- May have serious misreadings of poem
- May be unacceptably brief
- May be poorly written
- May contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics
- Writer’s assertions may be presented with little clarity
- May be poorly organized
- Writer’s assertions may be poorly supported from the text of the poem

**1-0**
- A response is given but with no more than a reference to the task
- A blank paper is turned in
- A completely off-topic response is given
This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read, but in problematic cases, please consult your Table Leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole. Reward the writers for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised by one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

9-8 These well-conceived and well-ordered essays provide insightful analysis (implicit as well as explicit) of how Boland’s poem reveals the speaker’s complex conception of “a woman’s world.” Although the writers of these essays may provide a range of interpretations, these papers offer a convincing reading of the poem and maintain consistent control over the elements of effective composition, including the language unique to the criticism of verse. Their textual references are apt and specific. Though not without flaws, they demonstrate the writers’ ability to read poetry perceptively and to write with clarity and sophistication.

7-6 These essays reflect a sound grasp of Boland’s poem; but they are less sensitive to the complexities of that “woman’s world” than the best essays, and the interpretations of the poem that they provide may falter in some particulars. Though perhaps not as thorough or precise in their discussion of how the speaker reveals that “woman’s world,” their dependence on paraphrase, if any, should be in the service of analysis. These essays demonstrate the writers’ ability to express ideas clearly, but they do not exhibit the same level of mastery, maturity, and/or control as the very best essays. These essays are likely to be briefer, less incisive, and less well-supported than the 9-8 papers.

5 These essays are, at best, superficial. They respond to the assigned task yet probably say little beyond the most easily-grasped observations. Their analysis of how the world of the poem is revealed may be vague, formulaic, or inadequately supported. They may suffer from the cumulative force of many minor misreadings. They tend to rely on paraphrase but nonetheless paraphrase which contains some implicit analysis. Composition skills are at a level sufficient to convey the writer’s thoughts, and egregious mechanical errors do not constitute a distraction. These essays are nonetheless not as well-conceived, organized, or developed as upper-half papers.

4-3 These lower-half essays reveal an incomplete understanding of the poem and perhaps an insufficient understanding of the prescribed task as well: they may choose to debate the speaker’s views rather than explain ways in which they are revealed. The analysis may be partial, unconvincing, or irrelevant—or it may rely essentially on paraphrase. Evidence from the text may be meager or misconstrued. The writing demonstrates uncertain control over the elements of composition, often exhibiting recurrent stylistic flaws and/or inadequate development of ideas. Essays scored 3 are marred by significant misreadings and/or particularly inept writing.

2-1 These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may seriously misread the poem. Frequently, they are unacceptable brief. They are poorly written on several counts and may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Although some attempt may have been made to respond to the question, the writer’s assertions are presented with little clarity, organization, or support from the text of the poem.

0 A response with no more than a reference to the task.

- A blank paper or completely off-topic response.
"It's A Woman's World" by Eavan Boland
SAMPLE ESSAY C

In "It's a Woman's World" by Eavan Boland, the female poet expresses her concept of a "woman's world." While long has passed since "a wheel first whetted a knife," women are still treated the same. Boland asserts that while the times are changing, women still are given second-class citizenship to men. She paints a picture of a "woman's world" by use of imagery, historic allusions, and repetition.

Throughout the poem, Boland inserts a lot of domestic imagery. She mentions "the loaf," "the cash register," and "the washing powder." The images of a woman's world are only made up of her home and her children. These images contrast with "star-gazers" and "fire eaters," roles which women will never be. "Hearth" replaces the history of women, and while her neighbor has a month of "burning plume," she's "frosty," "no fire-eater."

The invisible women, the absence of their influence, are stressed by Boland's allusions of history she says that women's "milestones" are just "oversights." When a king is murdered, a woman could not be capable because she's meek, weak, only good for baking bread and gossiping. In history, "no page" in the books tell of their oppressed role as women.

The unchanging conception of a "woman's world" while times are changing is represented by Boland's repetitious phrases as she follows through different times: "Hardly changed" since the stone age, "we're the same," "and it's still the same." In the end, the appearance of women still reassures the world that they are the weaker sex. The woman staring at the stars is not a "star-gazer" but just out to get a breath of air.

A "woman's world" appears to be filled with children, shopping, and cooking. However, Boland says this is all a perception. Women are a part of history; they as play a role in the world. What does not change is this illusion of a dainty female while the star-gazers" and "fire-eaters" pass unnoticed.

Your score 9

Rationale:
You must write rationale! See scoring guide for rules!
"It’s a Woman’s World" - by Eavan Boland
SAMPLE ESSAY D

In "It’s a Woman’s World," Eavan Boland proudly states that women have power and own the world, even though they have not been allowed to assert this power over time. Through the use of diction and imagery, Boland shows that women are still alive, strong, and in control of the world.

The poem is written in blank verse and is essentially prose poetry. Boland says in the first stanza that women’s “way of life has hardly changed” (1-2). Although the “flame,” meaning power and war, is stronger, and the “wheels are steadier,” or the technology is more advanced, women are in the same position that they were at the beginning of time (5-8). But women have power, and it is a “woman’s world,” according to Boland, because they see the world from above. Women have “oversights,” and often the person with the most insight and power is the observer—the person who can watch and rule from above without being involved and affected in the actual conflict.

The use of diction in the sixth stanza tells the reader what women never will be—"stargazers" (or philosophers) and "fire-eaters" (or power-hungry tyrants). Women have a legitimate “alibi” while men must face responsibility for their actions; women have never fought in wars, as they were busy cooking and gossiping. Boland then again points out that “it’s still the same” by using the image of the flame of hearth to suggest women’s role and importance in child-rearing responsibilities. Boland believes the women’s contributions to society, although not defined in the annals of history, are more noble than the fire-eating of men. Women are outraged because they receive no recognition, and “still no page scores the low music of [our] outrage” (42-44), but they are still visible and strong.

The imagery in the last few stanzas reinforces the belief that women have power. Boland metaphorically says that a woman’s mouth is “a burning plume” (53). Women have fire; they don’t need to eat it like men.

Your score 9

Rationale:
To Eavan Boland, a woman’s world is a complex and mysterious land. Since the earliest known advances in mankind, the woman’s job and purpose in life has stayed the same. In a woman’s world, there are many jobs and tasks to be done. If a woman happens to forget to do one of the jobs, or doesn’t pick something up at the store, this is no reason for ridicule. Such as in lines 18-23, most great historic people are defined by what they forgot. A woman has so many jobs, that one left undone should be praised. She could have left them all undone.

‘When it comes to the many misfortunes of life, none are traced back to a woman. Women do nothing wrong, for they are never at the scene of a crime. At least that is what they use as their alibi. When feasting and parties end, get-togethers come around, everybody will eat have fun. People don’t realize what a woman puts into these occasions. More often than not a woman is the one who does all the planning and cooks all the food, and yet seldomly is gratitude shown towards a woman for this task other than a non-chalant thank you. And yet after a party is over and everybody leaves, there is one other worry a woman has to face. Her kids leave home without her by their side. Her kids are drawn out to friends and other parties like moths to a flower. The mother has to worry about her children while they’re gone, wondering if they’re okay, if they’ll call, and even if they’ll come home. But after everybody is home, and everybody is safe, a woman finally has time to catch her breath before a new day arises. For this isn’t a job you can take leave from but a way of life that requires twenty-four hour attention. The women who go through this day in and day out are not some super heroes or advanced race; they are just your next door neighbors.'
Sample Essay Q (continued)

within the world. Finally, Boland uses sarcasm to reveal the irony of women within society. She reassures the reader that there are still women who are just “getting a breath” (49) while “this one here--her mouth a burning plume--is just my frosty neighbor coming home” (51-55). Boland shows the universality and banality of women—that women make society and that they are also strong and seemingly “radical.”

Boland effectively uses imagery and sarcasm/irony within her poem to reveal her complex conception of “a woman’s world” throughout history. She reveals this by using imagery to demonstrate the overlooked presence of women in the world and their critical roles. She also uses irony and sarcasm to demonstrate the true power and strength of the common woman. It is through these tools that Boland effectively reveals her conception of both a woman’s world and the true power hidden within each woman.

Score 9

Rationale:

The poet similarly uses sarcasm and irony to convey her complex conception of a “woman’s world.” For example, Boland sarcastically explains that while the “king’s head gored its basket ... we were gristing bread” (29-32). Although the statement seems to criticize women and show typical stereotypes, it actually makes the reader realize how women were too busy being the backbone of society—doing the remedial chores—to witness crimes. Women are always “missing” the action because they were too busy keeping society “running.” In addition, Boland uses irony within her poem to demonstrate the power women have within society. She explains how there is still “no page” (42) showing the “low music of our outrage” (43-44). Boland ironically reveals how women have “outrage” but they keep it “low.” Society has yet to recognize...
Eavan Boland's somewhat cryptic and complex poem, "It's a Woman's World," deals primarily with her interpretation of the woman's central importance to society. Although a cursory reading of this piece might suggest that it is only a complaint about the status women are given in society, this poem actually serves as a celebration of women and their dynamic qualities—all of which make up a "woman's world." Boland's complex conception of this world is revealed throughout the poem through her deliberate contrast between history and the folklore-like status that women have achieved in this world behind the facade of an oppressive society.

Indeed, this poem immediately presents the reader with a strong sense of history detailing women's struggle throughout the ages. This historical perspective is utilized chiefly to demonstrate most people's conception of the world. For example, Boland starts the poem stating, "Our way of life has hardly changed since a wheel first whetted a knife" (1-4). This statement points to the general static course that history has taken in terms of its treatment of women. With descriptions such as these, this world of Boland's hardly seems to resemble a "woman's world." However, this description, along with others like "and still no page scores the low music of our outrage," (42-44) all serve to belie the true status that women have achieved in this "woman's world." Historically, Boland contests that women are unable to achieve the folklore status of star-gazers and fire-eaters that are in fact the true essence of this world. Instead, others view women having a historical stance as being almost separate from the action of historical events which in actuality would make them historically obscure. The reader must remember, however, that this perception of the world is one tainted by history and not by the true conception of the "woman's world." So, after establishing this historical view of women's position, Boland then describes the true occurrences happening behind these historical events, the sum of which reveal her complex view of this "world."

The true "woman's world" is conceived apart from the historical events which have come to define our society. Instead, this conception is rooted in legends and myths of the past seen in the sixth stanza. Though Boland states, "we are defined ... by what we will never be: star-gazers, fire-eaters" (19-23), she is actually using this blind view as an alibi for all of the things that have happened in this world in which women have in fact been at the center of. The way that this poem is worded, it may seem that these positions of star-gazers and fire-eaters never existed; yet when fully reading the poem, it is finally obvious that it is these things which are at the center of events. She contrasts the historical view of the world by stating, "as far as history goes, we were never on the scene of the crime" (26-28) After distinguishing between the historical and the actual course of events, however, it is apparent that women have been grossly involved with things all along. In the last three stanzas, Boland adapts the view of the society who looks at the historical aspects of things. She is reassuring them "that woman there craned to the starry mystery is merely getting a breath of evening air." (47-50) Similarly, she assures them that the lady breathing fire is simply her neighbor returning home. The end of this poem thus relates back to the sixth stanza as she is putting her talks of alibi into practice. It is through this that she reveals her conception of a woman's world.

This poem, written by Eavan Boland, is successful in getting across the speaker's conception of this "world" of hers because it is able to distinguish between the historical side and actual sides of events which have come to define this "world." The central image of this poem occurs in the sixth stanza with the use of the "star-gazers" and "fire-eaters," images which are thus repeated throughout the piece. Through these repeating and easily identifiable images, the poem indeed reveals Boland's somewhat complex conception of a "woman's world."

Score 9

Rationale:
The Death of a Toad

A toad the power mower caught,
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got
To the garden verge, and sanctuaried him
Under the cineraria\(^1\) leaves, in the shade
Of the ashen heartshaped leaves, in a dim,
Low, and a final glade.

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

Toward misted and ebullient seas
And cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia's emperies\(^2\).

Day dwindles, drowning, and at length is gone
In the wide and antique eyes, which still appear
To watch, across the castrate lawn,
The haggard daylight steer.

— Richard Wilbur


\(^1\)Ornamental plants with silvery foliage; from "cinerarium," a place for keeping the ashes of a cremated body

\(^2\)Empires
GENERAL DIRECTIONS: This scoring guide will be useful for most of the essays that you read; but for cases in which it seems problematic or inapplicable, please consult your Table Leader. The score you assign should reflect your judgment of the quality of the essay as a whole—its content, its style, its mechanics. Reward the writers for what they do well. The score for an exceptionally well-written essay may be raised one point from the score otherwise appropriate. In no case may a very poorly written essay be scored higher than 3.

9-8 These well-organized and well-written essays integrate an analysis of the poem’s formal elements with an insightful discussion of the speaker’s response to the death of the toad. Though not without flaws, they demonstrate the writers’ ability to read perceptively and to write with clarity and sophistication.

7-6 These essays also demonstrate how formal elements of the poem convey the speaker’s reaction to the toad’s death. But in describing Wilbur’s poetic strategies, they are less thorough or less precise than essays in the topmost range. In addition to minor flaws in interpretation, their discussion is likely to be less well-supported and less incisive. Although these essays demonstrate the writer’s ability to articulate ideas clearly, they lack the mastery and control of composition possessed by papers in the 9-8 range.

5 These essays are superficial. Although they struggle to describe the speaker’s attitude, their discussion tends to be vague, mechanical, or inadequately supported. They manage the assigned task without important errors of interpretation, but they have little to say beyond what is most obvious and easy to grasp. As exegesis, they deal with the poem in a cursory manner; they are not as well conceived, organized, or developed as upper-half papers. Often they manifest simplistic thinking and/or immature writing.

4-3 These lower-half papers reflect an incomplete or oversimplified understanding of the poem. Their discussion of the speaker’s response is limited or skewed, and/or they do not convincingly explain how the formal elements of the poem create and convey that response. Although not without sensible observations, they misread portions of the poem or offer assertions that may be unsupported or even irrelevant. The writing typically reveals uncertain control over the elements of college-level composition. Essays scored 3 exhibit more than one of the above infelicities; they are marred by significant misinterpretation, poor development, or serious omissions.

2-1 These essays compound the weaknesses of the papers in the 4-3 range. They may seriously misread the poem. Often, they are unacceptably brief. They may be poorly written on several counts, and may contain many distracting errors in grammar and mechanics. Although some attempt may have been made to discuss how the formal elements of the poem project the attitude of the speaker, the writers’ observations are presented with little clarity, organization, or supporting evidence. Essays that are especially inexact, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound should be scored 1.

0: This is a response with no more than a reference to the task.

--- Indicates a blank response or an essay that is completely off-topic.
The prompt: Write a well-organized essay in which you explain how the formal elements such as structure, syntax, diction, and imagery reveal the speaker’s response to the death of a toad.

Few people would expound upon “The Death of a Toad” with such a vengeance as did Richard Wilbur in his poem of the same name. Apparently, there is more meaning to be found in such an event than most people realize. Wilbur asks his reader to follow him for a moment in exploring that meaning. His response to the death of a toad is amply represented through his use of various literary techniques.

Before addressing those techniques, it is necessary to define the response and its meaning. The poem’s title seems to proceed from the unspoken beginning: “My response to . . .” The reader must realize this if he is to gain any useful interpretation of the poem, since he also must realize that this is a subjective point of view which may differ from the way he would see it. The entire flow of the poem hovers on mournful but is also full of the knowledge that there are so many millions upon millions of other small creatures whose lives are cut short by such of man’s devices as “the power mower”; Mr. Toad is just one more. However, the fact that Wilbur chooses to address this individual toad’s tragic story shows that he still feels sorrow for even the death of a toad. It is important to consider these points when showing how they are made.

The diction that Wilbur chooses, as well as the order in which he chose to place them, added to the conveyance of his meaning. He chooses a delicate and striking poetic word order through most of the poem. For instance, in the first two lines, Wilbur writes, “A toad the power mower caught; / chewed and clipped off a leg” (1-2) when he could just as easily write, “The lawn mower ran over a toad and cut its leg off.” But he does not. He chooses to spice things up a bit, substituting “power” for just “the.” This also add to the points made in the poem about the careless power of humans. He also used the eloquent phrase, “chewed and clipped” (2), rather than simply saying “cut off.” Again, this adds to his points about the raw and reckless power of man.

Nothing was more important to the solemnity of this poem, though, than the clearly poetic word order. Even a toad, perhaps, deserves a dignified elegy, however graphic.
Another example of structure, syntax and diction completing Wilbur’s effect can be found in lines 11-14: “[He] dies / toward some deep monotone, / toward misted and ebullient seas / and cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia’s Emperies.” “Wow,” says the reader, “this must be some toad to get such a send-off.” This toad didn’t just pass away; his spirit merged with the essence of the universe as a creation held its breath for a moment, and he entered the eternal kingdom. But wait, this is just some toad, a nobody, even in his own element. How is it that he gets such an “Ode to Toad,” whereas most of us will be forgotten before we’re cold in the ground? These impressions are meant to remind the reader that every creature is special for his own reasons, and every creature will die someday. Without the use of phrasings such as, “... toward misted and ebullient seas” (13), or the use of specialized and archaic forms such as, “Amphibia’s Emperies” (14), none of these points would have half the impact they do. It is all in the words here.

Even so, the imagery is just as important, as it goes hand in hand with the wording of the poem. The image in lines 6-9 of the toad bleeding to death are particularly striking: “The rare original heartsblood goes / spends on the earthen hide in the folds and wizenings, flows / In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes.” The occasion is given more momentum, as it were, through these stark but profound scenes. The image of the blood, as it “flows / In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes” (8-9) is very powerful. The reader can at most se the total silence and feel the gravity and sorrow of this event. This toad was some toad; he was just as meaningful as a grandparent with “folds and wizenings” (8) on his face, just as a person of venerable standing would. The images create the scene.

The title, at first glance, might draw the potential reader in if he thinks it might be almost funny but that is not what is in the poem. Instead, such a reader encounters all the poetic feeling, all the imagery, all the big words and stilted English usually reserved for dead heroes. And this is just some toad. That is what we are meant to realize, that yes, this is just some toad. But where does it become meaningful? When ten creatures have died at the hands of an unfeeling humanity? Fifty? A thousand? A billion? We all live here and must do what we must do to survive. But Wilbur recognizes and tells us that we must be careful and stay in control of our technology and our recklessness. It could be us on the bad end of an accident someday.
Dear Penny,

I don't get letters like yours every day, and I wish I did. It makes me pleasantly dizzy to think of being read by 170,000 teachers for a week. In the long history of exposure, it beats even Gypsy Rose Lee.

Let me see what I can remember about the poem's inception. The poem was first published in Poetry (Chicago) in February of 1948, and that means that it was written during the lawn-mowing months of 1947. We (Charlee and I and our daughter Ellen) were then living in Cambridge, and I, having earned an M.A. at Harvard, was about to begin a three-year Junior Fellowship there. At some time during the summer, Charlee's cousins, the Tapleys, who lived in Wellesley Hills, invited us to look after their house and grounds while they went off on a vacation jaunt. We were happy to get out of the city, and the house was far bigger and airier than our Plympton Street apartment, and so the sojourn in Wellesley Hills was agreeable to us, even though we felt somewhat oppressed by what we perceived as the tepid gentility of the town.

Most of my poems are made out of accumulated thoughts and feelings and perceptions, and almost never does it happen that I have an experience and then go straight to a chair and write about it. But that's how it happened with "The Death of a Toad." Mowing the Tapley's suburban lawn one day, I mortally injured a toad, and before the day was out I had made that into a poem. Why did that occur? I think it was because I was young, and just out of military service, and spoiling to live, and felt, as I said before, oppressed by the safe, somnolent retirement-village atmosphere of Wellesley Hills; part of me identified, therefore, with the toad, and made me see the toad as representing the primal energies of the Earth, afflicted by the sprawl of our human dominion.

The first two lines of the third stanza are out to associate [the] toad with those "primal energies"—and of course there is biological ground for doing so. The words are out to magnify the toad and at the same time to be disarming about that—to acknowledge by an undertone of humor that I am making a great deal of a very small creature. My tonal ambiguity has worked for some readers but did not work, as I recall, for Randall Jarrell.

The poem has an ad hoc stanza form, created by the way the phrasing wanted to happen. It's scannable as a "loose iambic" poem in the metrical pattern 465543. I think that in '47 I was beginning to enjoy incorporating the six-foot line in some of my made-up stanzas; later I did so in a poem called "Beasts." The six-footer being very often a slow and awkward measure, it's a challenge to use it effectively, and in support of one's meaning.

Whether my toad actually took refuge under a cineraria or not, I can't say; but it had the right shape and shade of leaf for my poem. I recall, for some reason, that the first stanza originally ended "in a dim, low, and ultimate glade." That sounded too good to me, and I knew why when I remembered Poe's description of Dream-Land as "an ultimate dim Thule." In the first lines of the poem I imagined the declining sun as moving—so setting suns may appear to do—along the horizon, and that's what led me to use the verb "steer," which has given trouble to a number of my readers. Quite reasonably, some have seen in that word not a verb meaning "to pursue a course" but a noun meaning "a castrated animal." It's led me to consider, more than once, replacing "steer" with "veer."

Does that give you what you were after? Thank you for the news of Barbara and of the tearing-up of our lane in Key West, and our very best wishes to you,

Dick