



Teaching Poetry

Advanced Placement Summer Institute

Skip Nicholson
skip@nicholson.net

PETER VIERECK:

VALE¹ FROM CARTHAGE (SPRING, 1944)



I, now at Carthage.² He, shot dead at Rome.
 Shipmates last May. “And what if one of us,”
 I asked last May, in fun, in gentleness,
 “Wears doom, like dungarees, and doesn’t know?”
 5 He laughed, “*Not see Times Square³ again?*” The foam,
 Feathering across that deck a year ago,
 Swept those five words—like seeds—beyond the seas
 Into his future. There they grew like trees;
 And as he passed them there next spring, they laid
 10 Upon his road of fire their sudden shade.
 Though he had always scraped his mess-kit pure
 And scrubbed redeemingly his barracks floor,
 Though all his buttons glowed their ritual-hymn
 Like cloudless moons to intercede for him,
 15 No furlough fluttered from the sky. He will
 Not see Times Square—he will not see—he will
 of Not see Times
 change; at Carthage (while my friend,
 Living those words at Rome, screamed in the end)
 20 I saw an ancient Roman’s tomb and read
 “*Vale*” in stone. Here two wars mix their dead:
 Roman, my shipmate’s dream walks hand in hand
 With yours tonight (“New York again” and “Rome”),
 Like widowed sisters bearing water home
 25 On tired heads through hot Tunisian sand
 In good cool urns, and says, “I understand.”
 Roman, you’ll see your Forum Square no more;
 What’s left but this to say of any war?

Directions: Read the poem carefully. Then answer fully and explicitly the following questions:

1. Is the structure of the three opening sentences justifiable in this particular poem? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why do the three place names — Carthage, Rome, and Times Square — create the particular emotional effects present in this poem?
3. Interpret each of the following portions of the poem so as to show how it contributes to the effectiveness of the poem as a whole:
 - a. *Wears doom, like dungarees* (line 4);
 - b. *they laid*
Upon his road of fire their sudden shade (lines 9-10);
 - c. *No furlough fluttered from the sky* (line 15);
 - d. *Living these words* (line 19);
 - e. *Like widowed sisters* (line 24).
4. To whom does *I* refer in line 26? What is it that is understood?
5. To how much may *this* refer in the final line of the poem?

¹ *Vale* is the Latin word for farewell.

² Carthage is the site of the famous ancient city in Tunisia, North Africa. In ancient times the rivalry between Rome and Carthage culminated in the Punic Wars. In World War II, Tunisia again figured prominently.

³ Times Square is the bustling center of New York City—the theater district.

TP-COASTT: A MNEMONIC FOR POETRY

Title	The title is part of the poem; consider any multiple meanings.
Paraphrase	Rephrase the poem using your words.
Connotation	Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal.
Organization	Identify organizational patterns, visual, temporal, spatial, abstract
Attitude	Identify the tone—both the speaker's and the poet's attitude
Shifts*	Locate shifts in speaker, tone, setting, syntax, diction...
Title	Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level
Theme	Determine what the poem says

*Shifts

Signals Key words (*still, but, yet, although, however...*)
 Punctuation (consider every punctuation mark)
 Stanza or paragraph divisions
 Changes in line length or stanza length or both

Types Structure (how the work is organized)
 Changes in syntax (sentence length and construction)
 Changes in sound (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance...)
 Changes in diction (slang to formal language, for example)

Patterns Are the shifts sudden? progressive? recursive? Why?

ELIZABETH BISHOP
ONE ART

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
 so many things seem filled with the intent
 to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

5 Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
 of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
 The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:
 places, and names, and where it was you meant
 10 to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or
 next-to-last, of three loved houses went.
 The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,
 15 some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.
 I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture
 I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident
 the art of losing's not too hard to master
 20 though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

From *The Complete Poems 1927-1979* by Elizabeth Bishop, published by
 Farrar, Straus & Giroux, Inc. Copyright © 1979, 1983 by Alice Helen
 Methfessel. Used with permission.

PROSODY

THE FOOT

THE FOOT is measured according to the number of its stressed and unstressed syllables. The stressed syllables are marked with an acute accent (') or a prime mark (') and the unstressed syllables with a small superscript line (-), a small "x," a superscript degree symbol (°) or a short accent mark, or "breve" (~). A virgule (/) can be used to separate feet in a line.

Iamb	iambic	(- ')	to-DÁY
Trochee	trochaic	(' -)	BRÓ-ther
Anapest	anapestic	(- - ')	in-ter-CÉDE
Dactyl	dactylic	(' - -)	YÉS-ter-day
Spondee	spondaic	(' ')	ÓH, NÓ
Pyrric	pyrric	(- -)	...Of a...
(Amphibrach)	(amphibrachic)	(- ' -)	chi-CÁ-go
(Bacchus)	(bacchic)	(- ' ')	a BRÁND NÉW car
(Amphímacer)	(amphímacritic ?)	(' - ')	LÓVE IS BÉST

METRICAL FEET

- 1 **Monómeter** "Thus I"
- 2 **Dímeter** "Rich the treasure"
- 3 **Trímeter** "A sword, a horse, a shield"
- 4 **Tetrámeter** "And in his anger now he rides"
- 5 **Pentámeter** "Draw forth thy sword, thou mighty man-at-arms"
- 6 **Hexámeter** "His foes have slain themselves, with whom he should contend."
- 7 **Heptámeter** "There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away."
- 8 **Octámeter** "When I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,"
- 9 **Nonámeter** "Roman Virgil, thou that sing'st Ilion's lofty temples robed with fire,"

SPECIAL NAMES

Heroic meter	Iambic pentameter
Long meter	Iambic tetrameter
Alexandrine	One line of iambic hexameter

SCANSION

To SCAN a line is to divide it into its several feet, then to tell *what kind of feet* make up the line and *how many* of them there are, as in the descriptive names of Chaucer and Shakespeare's 'iambic pentameter.'

STANZAIC FORMS

<i>Name</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Special rhymes / forms</i>
Couplet	2	rhymes: aa (2 heroic lines = <i>heroic couplet</i>)
Tercet	3	rhymes: aaa, aab, abb (<i>Terza rima</i> = aba bcb cdc, etc.)
Quatrain	4	(<i>In Memoriam Stanza</i> = abba in iambic tetrameter)
Quintain	5	(<i>Limerick</i> rhymes: aabba)
Sestet	6	—
Seven-line	7	(<i>Rime Royale</i> = ababbcc in iambic pentameter)
Octet	8	(<i>Ottava Rima</i> = abababcc in iambic pentameter)
Nine-line	9	(<i>Spencerian Stanza</i> = ababbcbcc in iambic pentameter; the final line is an Alexandrine)

Some fixed poetic forms**THE SONNET**

The sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter (in Romance languages, iambic hexameter)

The English (Shakespearean) Sonnet is made up of three quatrains and a heroic couplet and rhymes abab cdcd efef gg

The Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet is made up of an octet and a sestet. It rhymes: abbaabba cdecde; in sonnets written in English, the last six rhymes may come in any order.

THE SESTINA

The sestina dates from the 12th century. Its 39 lines divide into six sestets and a three-line envoy. The same words that end the lines in the first sestet will end the lines in all the others in a different but prescribed order. Each stanza uses these ending words from the previous stanza in the order 6-1-5-2-4-3. All six words appear in the envoy, three of them at the end of a line.

THE VILLANELLE

The villanelle, a complex and rare form, is made up of 19 lines arranged in five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Line 1 must be repeated as lines 6, 12, and 18; line 3 must be repeated as lines 9, 15, and 19.

THE BALLAD

The ballad is made up of quatrains in which the second and fourth lines must rhyme and are generally trimetric; the first and third lines are normally tetrametric.

TWO JAPANESE FORMS

Syllables instead of feet are counted. The haiku is a three-line poem in which the first and third lines have five, the second, seven. The tanka is a five line poem in which the first and third lines have five, the other three, seven each. The haiku must contain a reference to a season.

PROSODY PRACTICE

Putting them together:

Give the kind of foot, then the number of feet, using the conventional terminology.
For numbers 13-15, create (or recall) an example of the meter given.

<i>line</i>	<i>name</i>
1. The night is chill; the forest bare	
2. Sent them spinning down the gutter	
3. I will not eat them with a goat, I will not eat them on a boat I do not like green eggs and ham I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.	
4. In the glare of a scoreboard's last light	
5. You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?	
6. Romeo Montague, Juliet Capulet	
7. With torn and bleeding hearts we smile	
8. We wear the mask.	
9. Where lasting friendship seeds are sewn	
10. And those Power Puff Girls are in trouble again	
11. Because I could not stop for Death He kindly stopped for me The carriage held but just ourselves And Immortality. <i>(Emily Dickinson)</i>	
12. If we shadows have offended Think but this, and all is mended... <i>(Shakespeare)</i>	
13.	iambic pentameter
14.	trochaic tetrameter
15.	iambic trimeter



Poetry Response Assignment

Students sometimes cringe when they learn that a major focus of this course is poetry. As children most of you loved poetry, reciting nursery rhymes and chanting limericks. What happened? We don't have the answer, but one of our goals this year will be to rekindle your enthusiasm for and appreciation of poetry.

Laurence Perrine suggests, "People have read poetry or listened to it or recited it because they liked it, because it gave them enjoyment. But this is not the whole answer. Poetry in all ages has been regarded as important, not simply as one of several alternative forms of amusement, as one person might choose bowling, another, chess, and another, poetry. Rather, it has been regarded as something central to existence, something having unique value to the fully realized life, something that we are better off for having and without which we are spiritually impoverished."

John Ciardi writes, "Everyone who has an emotion and a language knows something about poetry. What he knows may not be much on an absolute scale, and it may not be organized within him in a useful way, but once he discovers the pleasure of poetry, he is likely to be surprised to discover how much he always knew without knowing he knew it. He may discover, somewhat as the character in the French play discovered to his amazement that he had been talking prose all his life, that he had been living poetry. Poetry, after all, is about life. Anyone who is alive and conscious must have some information about it."

This year we are approaching poetry two ways. We are studying some poems in class, learning about the tools and devices poets use in their craft, talking about what a poem means or how it made you feel, or seeking answers to questions we raised while reading or studying. We might call this our structured or formal study of poetry. But we are also studying poetry informally through poetry responses.

You will be writing responses about every two weeks. Please look closely at the list of dates to know when these responses are due. You will have a different list of poems each quarter. Your first job is to get to know them. To that end, you will read all the poems from the list at least once every week. Read them at different times, in different places, and in different moods. You will notice how the poems will reveal themselves to you over the weeks. Although you will respond on paper to only one poem for each assignment, you want to become acquainted with all the poems on the list.

For each assignment date, you will choose one poem from the list and write a response to that poem. These responses are to be a minimum of about 200 words, or the equal of one typed page. Place the response in "the box" at the beginning of class on the day it is due. Late poetry reactions do not receive credit.

You may approach this assignment several ways. Sometimes students write an analysis of the poem. They explain what is going on in the poem and relate what they think the theme is. Others begin with the theme and elaborate on that, while some apply the poem to themselves by relating a personal experience. Occasionally a student will write a response on one line from the poem. What you do with the response is up to you as long as you say something. Students who explain that they "could not understand the poem no matter how" they tried do not get credit. You will not like all the poems, but if you choose to write that you dislike a poem because of its content or style, support that with concrete detail.

*Adapted from Danny Lawrence;
Career Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina*

Poems for Response: Second Quarter

Choose one of the following poems for each of the poetry responses. All are found in Meyer, *The Bedford Introduction to Literature, 8th ed.* on the indicated pages. Use a poem once only during the quarter. Write on one poem only for a poetry response.

Yousif al-Sa'igh, "An Iraqi Evening,"
p. 1309

Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving
Husband," p. 1241

Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool," p. 860

Randall Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball
Turret Gunner," p. 832

E. E. Cummings, "In Just—," p. 1034

John Donne, "Death, be not proud,"
p. 1058

Linda Pastan, "Pass/Fail," p. 1252

Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays,"
p. 771

Seamus Heaney, "The Forge," p. 1013

Robert Herrick, "To the Virgins, to Make
Much of Time," p. 842

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of
Rivers," p. 1162

Sharon Olds, "Rites of Passage," p. 1047

Henry Reed, "Naming of Parts," 943

Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz,"
p. 999

Shakespeare, "When, in disgrace with
Fortune and men's eyes," p. 1344

Shelley, "Ozymandias," p. 1344

Cathy Song, "The Youngest Daughter,"
p. 857

Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from
Africa to America," p. BC-C

Walt Whitman, "When I Heard the
Learn'd Astronomer," p. 1352

William Carlos Williams, "This Is Just to
Say," p. 1353

William Wordsworth, "The world is too
much with us," p. 1009

William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to
Byzantium," p. 1359

Due Dates

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Poetry Response Student Log

	Date	Poem	Response
1	Wed 3 Oct	<i>Ozy</i>	<i>Personal, political</i>
2	Fri 12 Oct	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Political</i>
3	Wed 17 Oct	<i>Naming Parts</i>	<i>Political *</i>
4	Fri 26 Oct	<i>We Cool</i>	<i>Personal, structure</i>
5	Wed 31 Oct	L A T E	L A T E
85			
6	Wed 14 Nov	<i>Wild Swans</i>	<i>Analysis, personal</i>
7	Fri 23 Nov	<i>Belle Dame</i>	<i>Structure, analysis</i>
8	Wed 28 Nov	<i>In Just---</i>	<i>Mythology, fig. lang.</i>
9	Fri 7 Dec	<i>Golden Retrievals</i>	<i>Form, personal</i>
10	Wed 12 Dec	<i>Death not proud</i>	<i>Rhyme, meter</i>
11	Fri 21 Dec	<i>To the Virgins</i>	<i>Personal, humor, structure</i>
12	Wed 9 Jan	<i>That the Night Come</i>	<i>Scansion</i>
13	Fri 18 Jan	<i>the Forge</i>	<i>Comparison (theme)</i>
100			
14	Wed 6 Feb	<i>Out, Out</i>	<i>Theme, relates to AILDying</i>
15	Fri 15 Feb	<i>When I consider</i>	<i>Personal, thematic</i>
16	Wed 20 Feb	<i>When in disgrace</i>	<i>Political, personal</i>
17	Fri 29 Feb	<i>Birches</i>	<i>Comparison (Out out)</i>
18	Wed 5 Mar	<i>Fern Hill</i>	<i>Cultural, structure</i>
19	Fri 14 Mar	<i>Leda and the Swan</i>	<i>Compare (Wild swans), personal</i>
20	Wed 19 Mar	<i>Late Aubade</i>	<i>Diction, patterns</i>
21	Fri 28 Mar	<i>Mother 2 Son</i>	<i>Political, Theme, Personal</i>
22	Wed 2 Apr	<i>Song</i>	<i>'spacey' personal</i>
100			
23	Wed 16 Apr		
24	Fri 25 Apr		
25	Wed 30 Apr		

Team Poetry Lessons Some Guidelines

Topics:

Three teams will be assigned a poet: either Dickinson, Frost, or Hughes.

Four teams will be assigned a theme: either love and longing, teaching and learning, humor and satire, or 'Border Crossings.'

Poems:

Use the poems in *The Bedford Introduction to Literature, 8th ed.*

You may add one additional poem if you feel it necessary.

Secondary Sources:

Print:

- Use the critical material in the literature anthology.

Electronic:

- Begin with the widest group of Internet sites you can locate but at least ten, exclusive of encyclopedias and other general sites.
- From that group, select the three most helpful.

Presentation:

- Your team will give a short lesson on your poet. You will probably want to focus on two of the poems. You want the point of the lesson to be something more valuable than, say, Dickinson is swell. Find a focus. You will have 20-30 minutes, inclusive of any class discussion or questions you choose to include. Your grade will be penalized for every minute you go beyond 30.
- You are to include some sort of a visual aid along the way. It could be projected, drawn on the board, held up. posted.... you decide what will be most effective.

Written work:

- You will submit a lesson summary of about one side of one page.
- You will turn in as well a tidy list of the web sites your team found. Include the title and the URL for each.
- You will write an "AP-type" essay question that prompts writers to identify one or more techniques or devices your poet uses and to explain how the poet uses them to convey an element such as theme, character, tone, point of view, idea, setting, mood, or the like.
- The written work may be handwritten, printed, or submitted electronically.

Questions 14-23. Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

Sestina

September rain falls on the house.
 In the failing light, the old grandmother
 sits in the kitchen with the child
 beside the Little Marvel Stove*,
 5 reading the jokes from the almanac,
 laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears
 and the rain that beats on the roof of the
 house
 were both foretold by the almanac,
 10 but only known to a grandmother.
 The iron kettle sings on the stove.
 She cuts some bread and says to the
 child,

It's time for tea now; but the child
 is watching the teakettle's small hard
 tears
 15 dance like mad on the hot black stove,
 the way the rain must dance on the
 house.
 Tidying up, the old grandmother
 hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac
 20 hovers half open above the child,
 hovers above the old grandmother
 and her teacup full of dark brown tears.
 She shivers and says she thinks the house
 feels chilly, and puts more wood in the
 stove.

25 *It was to be,* says the Marvel Stove.
I know what I know, says the almanac.
 With crayons the child draws a rigid
 house
 and a winding pathway. Then the child
 puts in a man with buttons like tears
 30 and shows it proudly to the
 grandmother.

But secretly, while the grandmother
 busies herself about the stove,
 the little moons fall down like tears
 from between the pages of the almanac
 35 into the flower bed the child
 has carefully placed in the front of the
 house.

Time to plant tears, says the almanac.
 The grandmother sings to the marvelous
 stove
 and the child draws another inscrutable
 house.

* Brand name of a wood- or coal-burning stove

14. The mood of the poem is best described as
 (A) satiric
 (B) suspenseful
 (C) reproachful
 (D) elegiac
 (E) quizzical
15. In line 10, "known to" is best interpreted as
 (A) imagined by
 (B) intended for
 (C) predicted by
 (D) typified in
 (E) experienced by
16. In line 19, "Birdlike" describes the
 (A) markings on the pages of the almanac
 (B) whimsicality of the almanac's sayings
 (C) shape and movement of the almanac
 (D) child's movements toward the almanac
 (E) grandmother's movements toward the almanac
17. Between lines 24 and 25 and between lines :32 and 33, there is a shift from
 (A) understatement to hyperbole
 (B) realism to fantasy
 (C) optimism to pessimism
 (D) present events to recalled events
 (E) formal diction to informal diction
18. The child's attitude is best described as one of
 (A) anxious dismay
 (B) feigned sympathy
 (C) absorbed fascination
 (D) silent remorse
 (E) fretful boredom
19. All of the following appear to shed tears or be filled with tears EXCEPT the
 (A) child
 (B) teacup
 (C) almanac
 (D) teakettle
 (E) grandmother
20. The grandmother and the child in the poem are portrayed primarily through descriptions of their
 (A) actions
 (B) thoughts
 (C) conversation
 (D) facial expressions
 (E) physical characteristics
21. Throughout the poem, the imagery suggests that
 (A) both nature and human beings are animated by similar forces
 (B) most human activities have more lasting consequences than is commonly realized
 (C) past events have little influence on activities of the present
 (D) both natural and artificial creations are highly perishable
 (E) the optimism of youth differs only slightly from the realism of age
22. Which of the following literary devices most significantly contributes to the unity of the poem?
 (A) Use of internal rhyme
 (B) Use of epigrammatic expressions
 (C) Use of alliteration
 (D) Repetition of key words
 (E) Repetition of syntactic patterns
23. The poet's attitude toward the characters in the poem is best described as a combination of
 (A) detachment and understanding
 (B) disdain and curiosity
 (C) envy and suspicion
 (D) approval and amusement
 (E) respect and resentment

- 14 *tone, vocabulary*
 15 *vocabulary*
 16 *imagery*
 17 *figurative language*
 18 *detail*
 19 *detail*
 20 *detail*
 21 *detail*
 22 *form, structure*
 23 *tone, detail*

AP English Lit & Comp: MC Practice Bishop, "Sestina"

	Guess	A	B	C	Questions Type	Vocabulary, Notes....
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Read the following poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you explain how the organization of the poem and the use of concrete details reveal both its literal and its metaphorical meanings. In your discussion, show how both of these meanings relate to the title.

(Suggested time—35 minutes)

Storm Warnings

Adrienne Rich

The glass has been falling all the afternoon,
And knowing better than the instrument
What winds are walking overhead, what zone
Of gray unrest is moving across the land,
I leave the book upon a pillowed chair
And walk from window to closed window, watching
Boughs strain against the sky

And think again, as often when the air
Moves inward toward a silent core of waiting,
How with a single purpose time has traveled
By secret currents of the undiscerned
Into this polar realm. Weather abroad
And weather in the heart alike come on
Regardless of prediction.

Between foreseeing and averting change
Lies all the mastery of elements
Which clocks and weatherglasses cannot alter.
Time in the hand is not control of time,
Nor shattered fragments of an instrument
A proof against the wind; the wind will rise,
We can only close the shutters.

I draw the curtains as the sky goes black
And set a match to candles sheathed in glass
Against the keyhole draught, the insistent whine
Of weather through the unsealed aperture.
This is our sole defense against the season;
These are the things that we have learned to do
Who live in troubled regions.



Advanced Placement Summer Institute

Skip Nicholson

skip@nicholson.net

www.skipnicholson.com

Vincent

(Starry Starry Night)

Song lyrics by Don McLean

Starry starry night, paint your palette blue and grey
Look out on a summer's day with eyes that know the darkness in my soul
Shadows on the hills, sketch the trees and the daffodils
Catch the breeze and the winter chills, in colors on the snowy linen land

5 Now I understand what you tried to say to me
How you suffered for your sanity How you tried to set them free
They would not listen they did not know how, perhaps they'll listen now

Starry starry night, flaming flowers that brightly blaze
Swirling clouds in violet haze reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue
10 Colors changing hue, morning fields of amber grain
Weathered faces lined in pain are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand

Refrain:

For they could not love you, but still your love was true
And when no hope was left in sight, on that starry starry night
You took your life as lovers often do,
15 But I could have told you, Vincent,
This world was never meant for one as beautiful as you

Starry, starry night, portraits hung in empty halls
Frameless heads on nameless walls with eyes that watch the world and can't forget.
Like the stranger that you've met, the ragged man in ragged clothes
20 The silver thorn of bloody rose, lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow

Now I think I know what you tried to say to me
How you suffered for your sanity How you tried to set them free
They would not listen they're not listening still
Perhaps they never will.

Icarus
Edward Field

Only the feathers floating around the hat
Showed that anything more spectacular had occurred
Than the usual drowning. The police preferred to ignore
The confusing aspects of the case,
5 And the witnesses ran off to a gang war.
So the report filed and forgotten in the archives read simply
Drowned, but it was wrong: Icarus
Had swum away, coming at last to the city
Where he rented a house and tended the garden.
10 That nice Mr. Hicks the neighbors called him,
Never dreaming that the gray, respectable suit
Concealed arms that had controlled huge wings
Nor that those sad, defeated eyes had once
Compelled the sun. And had he told them
15 They would have answered with a shocked, uncomprehending stare.
No, he could not disturb their neat front yards;
Yet all his books insisted that this was a horrible mistake:
What was he doing aging in a suburb?
Can the genius of the hero fall
20 To the middling stature of the merely talented?
And nightly Icarus probes his wound
And daily in his workshop, curtains carefully drawn,
Constructs small wings and tries to fly
To the lighting fixture on the ceiling:
25 Fails every time and hates himself for trying.
He had thought himself a hero, had acted heroically,
And now dreamt of his fall, the tragic fall of the hero;
But now rides commuter trains,
Serves on various committees,
30 And wishes he had drowned.



The Lament for Icarus
Herbert Draper

To A Friend Whose Work Has Come To Triumph
Anne Sexton

Consider Icarus, pasting those sticky wings on,
testing this strange little tug at his shoulder blade,
and think of that first flawless moment over the lawn
of the labyrinth. Think of the difference it made!
5 There below are the trees, as awkward as camels;
and here are the shocked starlings pumping past
and think of innocent Icarus who is doing quite well:
larger than a sail, over the fog and the blast
of the plushy ocean, he goes. Admire his wings!
10 Feel the fire at his neck and see how casually
he glances up and is caught, wondrously tunneling
into that hot eye. Who cares that he fell back to the sea?
See him acclaiming the sun and come plunging down
while his sensible daddy goes straight into town.

Icarus
By Tony Curtis

Out of an English summer morning's sky
drops an Indian who failed in flight
miles short of heaven. This frozen Icarus
thrown from the wheel-bay of a 747,
5 splashes into a Surrey reservoir,
cracking the water like a whip.
This poor man stowed away
in the Delhi heat, curled
himself into an oven of rubber and oil,
10 and dreamed as he rose in the deafening take-off
of food and rain and Coca-Cola
and television where the colour never ends.
The waitress at the Granada stop
tapping in two coffees and a Danish
15 at the till, for no reason at all,
looked up, saw a bird, or an engine,
or a man, and then nothing
but blue sky again.

Icarus' Diatribe
By Aaron Pastula

How we have wasted the years here, Father;
Grounded in the shadow of Talus, whom you envied
Too much, and murdered. We might be free
If
5 Ariadne had not received a precious ball of thread
With which to save her lover, yet you would rescue
Another even though we are trapped, and only
Two left.
I've watched your shadows sleep against stone walls
10 While I ran our labyrinth, the sun above
Driving me as if I should call for my final repose
Alone.
Do you remember the torrid wind maneuvering
Around the angles of our usless garrison,
15 Filling empty mouths with surrogate conversation?
We
Seldom spoke, you and I, roaming like languid souls
When the Minotaur's threat was dead.
And yet I felt the lyre singing in my breast,
20 Always
Crying out background noise for the construction
Of my cunningly wrought wings; my only means to rise
Above these steadfast fortress walls, lest I
Surrender
25 To your silence. I know the gulls were wailing
When I robbed them, but they had flown too close:
I am not to blame for the necessity of my purpose.
To you
I am as your own divided heart - double-sexed
30 And beating as a thief's in the falling hours of twilight,
Awaiting my time to retire. Instead I take flight,
The sun
Drawing me as an opiate away from our
Etherized utopia, leaving you puzzled; compelling
35 You to follow me out above the open,
Beguiling sea

Icarus
By Christine Hemp

It was his idea, this flying thing.
We collected feathers at night, stuffing
our pockets with mourning dove down. By day,
we'd weave and glue them with the wax
5 I stole after we'd shooed the bees away.
Oh, how it felt, finally, to blow off Crete
leaving a labyrinth of dead-ends:
my clumsiness with figures, father's calm
impatience, cool logic, interminable devising.
10 The sea wind touched my face like balm.
He thought I'd tag along as usual,
in the wake of his careful scheme
bound by the string connecting father and son,
invisible thread I tried for years to untie.
15 I ached to be a good-for-something on my own.
I didn't know I'd get drunk with the heat,
flying high, too much a son to return.
Poor Daedelus, his mouth an O below,
his hands outstretched to catch the rain
20 of wax. He still doesn't know.
My wings fell, yes - I saw him hover
over the tiny splash - but by then I'd been
swallowed into love's eye, the light I've come to see
as home, drowning in the yes, this swirling
25 white-hot where night will never find me.
And now when my father wakes
each morning, his bones still sore
from his one-time flight, his confidence undone
because the master plan fell through,
30 he rises to a light he never knew, his son.

The Fall of Icarus (Metamorphosis, VIII: 183-235)
By Ovid, Translated by Sir Samuel Garth

These, as the angler at the silent brook,
Or mountain-shepherd leaning on his crook,
Or gaping plowman, from the vale describes,
They stare, and view 'em with religious eyes,
5 And strait conclude 'em Gods; since none, but they,
Thro' their own azure skies cou'd find a way.
When now the boy, whose childish thoughts aspire
To loftier aims, and make him ramble high'r,
Grown wild, and wanton, more embolden'd flies
10 Far from his guide, and soars among the skies.
The soft'ning wax, that felt a nearer sun,
Dissolv'd apace, and soon began to run.
The youth in vain his melting pinions shakes,
His feathers gone, no longer air he takes:
15 Oh! Father, father, as he strove to cry,
Down to the sea he tumbled from on high,
And found his Fate; yet still subsists by fame,
Among those waters that retain his name.

Courtyards in Delft

Derek Mahon
(for Gordon Woods)

5 Oblique light on the trite, on brick and tile—
Immaculate masonry, and everywhere that
Water tap, that broom and wooden pail
To keep it so. House-proud, the wives
Of artisans pursue their thrifty lives
Among scrubbed yards, modest but adequate.
Foliage is sparse, and clings. No breeze
Ruffles the trim composure of those trees.

10 No spinet-playing emblematic of
The harmonies and disharmonies of love;
No lewd fish, no fruit, no wide-eyed bird
About to fly its cage while a virgin
Listens to her seducer, mars the chaste
Perfection of the thing and the thing made.
15 Nothing is random, nothing goes to waste.
We miss the dirty dog, the fiery gin.

20 That girl with her back to us who waits
For her man to come home for his tea
Will wait till the paint disintegrates
And ruined dikes admit the esurient sea;
Yet this is life too, and the cracked
Out-house door a verifiable fact
As vividly mnemonic as the sunlit
Railings that front the houses opposite.

25 I lived there as a boy and know the coal
Glittering in its shed, late-afternoon
Lambency informing the deal table,
The ceiling cradled in a radiant spoon.
I must be lying low in a room there,
30 A strange child with a taste for verse,
While my hard-nosed companions dream of fire
And sword upon parched veldt and fields of rain-swept gorse.



Courtyards in Delft
Pieter de Hoock, 1659

National Gallery, London
approx. 29 x 23.5 inches

The Great Wave: Hokusai

Donald Finkel

The Great Wave: Hokusai

But we will take the problem in its most obscure manifestation, and suppose that our spectator is an average Englishman. A trained observer, carefully hidden behind a screen, might notice a dilation in his eyes, even an intake of his breath, perhaps a grunt. (Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art*)

It is because the sea is blue,
Because Fuji is blue, because the bent blue
Men have white faces, like the snow
On Fuji, like the crest of the wave in the sky the color of their
5 Boats. It is because the air
Is full of writing, because the wave is still: that nothing
Will harm these frail strangers,
That high over Fuji in an earthcolored sky the fingers
Will not fall; and the blue men
10 Lean on the sea like snow, and the wave like a mountain leans
Against the sky.

In the painter's sea
All fishermen are safe. All anger bends under his unity.
But the innocent bystander, he merely
15 'Walks round a corner, thinking of nothing': hidden
Behind a screen we hear his cry.
He stands half in and half out of the world; he is the men,
But he cannot see below Fuji
The shore the color of sky; he is the wave, he stretches
20 His claws against strangers. He is
Not safe, not even from himself. His world is flat.
He fishes a sea full of serpents, he rides his boat
Blindly from wave to wave toward Ararat.



The Great Wave at Kamagawa
Katsushika Hokusai, 1831
woodblock print

Not my Best Side

U. A. Fanthorpe

I

Not my best side, I'm afraid.
 The artist didn't give me a chance to
 Pose properly, and as you can see,
 Poor chap, he had this obsession with
 5 Triangles, so he left off two of my
 Feet. I didn't comment at the time
 (What, after all, are two feet
 To a monster?) but afterwards
 I was sorry for the bad publicity.
 10 Why, I said to myself, should my conqueror
 Be so ostentatiously beardless, and ride
 A horse with a deformed neck and square hoofs?
 Why should my victim be so
 Unattractive as to be inedible,
 15 And why should she have me literally
 On a string? I don't mind dying
 Ritually, since I always rise again,
 But I should have liked a little more blood
 To show they were taking me seriously.

II

20 It's hard for a girl to be sure if
 She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite
 Took to the dragon. It's nice to be
 Liked, if you know what I mean. He was
 So nicely physical, with his claws
 25 And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail,
 And the way he looked at me,
 He made me feel he was all ready to
 Eat me. And any girl enjoys that.
 So when this boy turned up, wearing machinery,
 30 On a really dangerous horse, to be honest
 I didn't much fancy him. I mean,

What was he like underneath the hardware?
 He might have acne, blackheads or even
 Bad breath for all I could tell, but the dragon--
 35 Well, you could see all his equipment
 At a glance. Still, what could I do?
 The dragon got himself beaten by the boy,
 And a girl's got to think of her future.

III

I have diplomas in Dragon
 40 Management and Virgin Reclamation.
 My horse is the latest model, with
 Automatic transmission and built-in
 Obsolescence. My spear is custom-built,
 And my prototype armour
 45 Still on the secret list. You can't
 Do better than me at the moment.
 I'm qualified and equipped to the
 Eyebrow. So why be difficult?
 Don't you want to be killed and/or rescued
 50 In the most contemporary way? Don't
 You want to carry out the roles
 That sociology and myth have designed for you?
 Don't you realize that, by being choosy,
 You are endangering job prospects
 55 In the spear- and horse-building industries?
 What, in any case, does it matter what
 You want? You're in my way.



St George and the Dragon

Uccello (1397-1435)
National Gallery, London

Looking at Point-of-View: Three Perspectives for One Poem

1. Look at the painting closely. Based on your knowledge of myth and legend, what are some initial inferences you can draw concerning the figures depicted in the painting? In other words, what are some of the characteristics you assume each character embodies?
The Maiden / The Dragon / The Knight?
4. Once you have heard the responses from the other groups, please answer the following question: Why is the knight interested most in maintaining the paradigm represented in the painting?

Homework: Taking all of "Not My Best Side" into consideration, along with the comments of your classmates, write a short response (1 page or so) in which you discuss one of the main ideas in this poem. Specifically discuss how the different points of view are significant in expressing this idea. For this assignment, your first sentence needs to be your thesis statement.

Now read your stanza and then answer the following questions:

2. In what ways does your speaker reinforce or affirm the assumptions you made about him/her/it?
3. In what ways does your speaker reject or go against the assumptions you made about him/her/it?

*Lance Bala,
Bellevue, Washington*