**Poetry research project**

Students will find three poems by the poet that cover the thematic idea of *identity*. You will choose one of these poems from this booklet, and two on your own.

Students will also write three paragraphs for this assignment.
- 1 paragraph is about the **poet**
- 1 paragraph is about the **theme** connection in one of the poems
- 1 paragraph is about your experience completing this project (in-class writing, date TBA)

You will also do an individual presentation to the class (approximately 8 minutes).

With one of the poems (**not the one chosen for the written analysis**), students will do a presentation to the class. **Students who are doing the same poet as another student will not be able to write about the same poem or present the same poem as each other.** In other words, everyone should have different poems from each other.

The purpose of the presentation is to introduce, encourage, and provoke class discussion on the poet, the poem, and the poet’s collection of poetry in general.

Suggestions for the individual presentations (include some, not just one, or all):
- Brief biography of the poet
- Share your responses and connections to some of the poet’s poetry
- Read 1-2 poems aloud (or memorize if you’d like!)
- Share the poem’s significance to the class
- Explore the words/phrases/lines you particularly enjoyed and why (with quotes)
- How does the poem or poetry in general connect to the theme of identity?
- Ask your 5 open-ended questions based on your poem or poet

During the presentation, students will be taking brief notes on the poets being presented. **All students are expected to actively participate during presentations by answering and asking questions.**

**Due to time limitations, no PowerPoints, Prezis, Haiku Decks, or any other types of visual presentations will be permitted.** You may have some brief notes or flashcards when you present your project, but you should not be reading off your notes.
Assessment

Writing
- 3 formal paragraphs
- Poems by the poet (1 from the booklet, 2 others that have been found) on separate pages
- 5 open-ended, engaging questions you will ask the class during your presentation
- This entire project is to be completed in MLA (Modern Language Association) 8th edition. This includes in-text citations, Works Cited page, and any other aspects of MLA as required/instructed.
- Stapled and typed (Times New Roman, size 12 font, double spaced; as part of MLA)
- Include all drafts and notes
- Double sided printing is permitted for this project only (if this is something you choose to do).

Presentation
- Speaking skills
- Knowledge and familiarity of poet, poem, material (comprehension)
- Connection to theme
- Questions (to class’ questions asked of you and in terms of discussion generated by class)
- Overall presentation as an engaging, creative whole
Alden Nowlan

Warren Pryor

When every pencil meant a sacrifice
his parents boarded him at school in town,
slaving to free him from the stony fields,
the meager acreage that bore them down.

They blushed with pride when, at his graduation,
they watched him picking up the slender scroll,
his passport from the years of brutal toil
and lonely patience in a barren hole.

When he went in the Bank their cups ran over.
They marveled how he wore a milk-white shirt
work days and jeans on Sundays. He was saved
from their thistle-strewn farm and its red dirt.

And he said nothing. Hard and serious
like a young bear inside his teller’s cage,
his axe-hewn hands upon the paper bills
aching with empty strength and throttled rage.

The Masks of Love

I come in from a walk
With you
And they ask me
If it is raining.

I didn’t notice
But I’ll have to give them
The right answer
Or they’ll think I’m crazy

Billy Collins

Embrace

You know the parlor trick.
wrap your arms around your own body
and from the back it looks like
someone is embracing you
her hands grasping your shirt
her fingernails teasing your neck
from the front it is another story
you never looked so alone
your crossed elbows and screwy grin
you could be waiting for a tailor
to fit you with a straight jacket
one that would hold you really tight.

Litany

You are the bread and the knife,
The crystal goblet and the wine...
-Jacques Crickillon

You are the bread and the knife,
the crystal goblet and the wine.
You are the dew on the morning grass
and the burning wheel of the sun.
You are the white apron of the baker,
and the marsh birds suddenly in flight.

On Turning Ten

The whole idea of it makes me feel
like I’m coming down with something,
something worse than any stomach ache
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light--
a kind of measles of the spirit,
a mumps of the psyche,
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,
but that is because you have forgotten
the perfect simplicity of being one
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.
At four I was an Arabian wizard.
I could make myself invisible
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window
watching the late afternoon light.
Back then it never fell so solemnly
against the side of my tree house,
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage
as it does today,
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.
However, you are not the wind in the orchard,
the plums on the counter,
or the house of cards.
And you are certainly not the pine-scented air.
There is just no way that you are the pine-scented air.

It is possible that you are the fish under the bridge,
maybe even the pigeon on the general’s head,
but you are not even close
to being the field of cornflowers at dusk.

And a quick look in the mirror will show
that you are neither the boots in the corner
nor the boat asleep in its boathouse.

It might interest you to know,
speaking of the plentiful imagery of the world,
that I am the sound of rain on the roof.

I also happen to be the shooting star,
the evening paper blowing down an alley
and the basket of chestnuts on the kitchen table.

I am also the moon in the trees
and the blind woman’s tea cup.
But don’t worry, I’m not the bread and the knife.
You are still the bread and the knife.
You will always be the bread and the knife,
not to mention the crystal goblet and--somehow--the wine.

Denise Levertov

The Secret

Two girls discover
the secret of life
in a sudden line of poetry.

I who don’t know the secret wrote
the line. They told me

(through a third person)
they had found it
but not what it was
not even

what line it was. No doubt
by now, more than a week
later, they have forgotten

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,
time to turn the first big number.

It seems only yesterday I used to believe
there was nothing under my skin but light.
If you cut me I could shine.
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,
I skin my knees. I bleed.

Looking-Glass

I slide my face along to the mirror sideways, to see
that side-smile,
a pale look, tired
and sly. Hey,

who is glancing there?
Shadow-me, not with malice but mercurially
shot with foreknowledge of dread and sweat.
the secret,
the line, the name of
the poem. I love them
for finding what
I can’t find,

and for loving me
for the line I wrote,
and for forgetting it
so that

a thousand times, till death
finds them, they may
discover it again, in other
lines

in other
happenings. And for
wanting to know it,
for

assuming there is
such a secret, yes,
for that
most of all.

Emily Dickinson

I’m Nobody! Who are you?

I’m Nobody! Who are you?
Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there’s a pair of us!
Don’t tell! they’d advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one’s name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

Fame is a fickle food

Fame is a fickle food
Upon a shifting plate
Whose table once a
Guest but not
The second time is set.

Whose crumbs the crows inspect
And with ironic caw
Flap past it to the Farmer’s Corn –
Men eat of it and die.

The Soul has Bandaged moments

The Soul has Bandaged moments –
When too appalled to stir –
She feels some ghastly Fright come up
And stop to look at her –

Salute her, with long fingers –
Caress her freezing hair –
Sip, Goblin, from the very lips
The Lover – hovered – o’er –
Unworthy, that a thought so mean

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading – treading – till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,
A Service, like a Drum –
Kept beating – beating – till I thought
My Mind was going numb –
And then I heard them lift a Box
And creak across my Soul
With those same Boots of Lead, again,
Then Space – began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,
And Being, but an Ear,
And I, and Silence, some strange Race
Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,
And I dropped down, and down –
And hit a World, at every plunge,
And Finished knowing – then –

Accost a Theme – so – fair –
The soul has moments of escape –
When bursting all the doors –
She dances like a Bomb, abroad,
And swings upon the Hours,

As do the Bee – delirious borne –
Long Dungeoned from his Rose –
Touch Liberty – then know no more,
But Noon, and Paradise –

The Soul’s retaken moments –
When, Felon led along,
With shackles on the plumed feet,
And staples, in the song,

The Horror welcomes her, again,
These, are not brayed of Tongue –

Gord Downie

Canada Geese

Us middle-aged men just completing
The finishing touches on a dope deal
It’s agreed we get a small piece
In the middle of the cornfield
When these Canada geese fly south
We’ll harvest in the dark
We can talk just to ourselves
Or we can talk just to the stars

Us Canada geese held a meeting
In the middle of a cornfield

It’s agreed we leave in small vees
And meet up again in the real world
Like middle-aged men smoke dope
And talk just to their cars
We can talk just to ourselves
Or we can talk just to the stars
We can talk just to ourselves
Or we can talk just to the stars

Nothing but Heartache in Your Social Life

When are you thinking of disappearing?
When are you falling off the map?
When the unknown that you’re fearing’s in the clearing?
When your world’s gone flat?

When you’re waiting for your life to be depicted
And feeling estrangement from escape?
When you’re packaged up, beautifully scripted
Insulated with electrical tape?

When the famous are getting airborne?
When the evacuation’s under way
And not for all the pot in Rosedale
Could you possibly get them to stay?

When a blind eye turns to duty?
When I’m standing there holding the door
Saying things like “After you, wit before beauty”
And, “Okay, maybe there’s room for just one more?”

When technology fails, forever changes
And hardcore shadows are gone?
When what the average age rearranges
Is forever certain? Forever wrong?

When new adventures in electronics
And signals are pleasing to the ear?
When tubes cooking up distortion
Mean the end of suffering is near?

When the podium’s sprouting weeds

Boy Bruised by Butterfly Chase

Someone was laughing at me
Without shoes
But the grass felt so good and the Day was so blue

Must have tripped, I don’t know
Do I remember falling away
Nothing that I hold on to  
And not being afraid?  

Down, down, down  
Falling down, down, down  
It’s like I was born never touching the ground  

Someone was crying while I  
Lay in the dirt  
I could hear their hearts breaking but I  
Wasn’t even hurt  

Down, down, down  
Falling, down, down, down  
It was like I was born never touching the ground  
Ground  
Ground  
It was like I was born never touching the ground  

Rendered ridiculous by the times?  
When people have different needs  
And time smiles on disciplined minds?  

When you’re getting king-sized satisfaction  
In the turnstiles of the night  
From the shaky pale transactions  
Of all the heartache in your social life?  

When are you thinking of disappearing?  
When there’s nothing but heartache in your social life?  

When are you thinking of disappearing?  
When are you thinking of disappearing?  

Joni Mitchell

Be Cool

If there’s one rule to this game  
Everybody’s gonna name  
It’s be cool  
If you’re worried or uncertain  
If your feelings are hurtin'  
You’re a fool if you can’t keep cool  
Charm 'em  
Don't alarm 'em  
Keep things light  
Keep your worries out of sight  
And play it cool  
Play it cool  
Fifty-fifty  
Fire and ice  

If your heart is on the floor  
Cause you’ve just seen your lover  
Comin’ through the door with a new fool  
Be cool  
Don't get riled  
Smile-keep it light  
Be your own best friend tonight  
And play it cool  
Play it cool  
Fifty-fifty  
Fire and ice  

Don’t get jealous  
Don't get over-zealous  
Keep your cool  
Don’t whine  
Kiss off that flaky valentine  
You’re nobody’s fool  
Be cool fool  
Be cool  
(Lots of other fish in the sea)  

Play it cool  
Play it cool  
Fifty-fifty  
Fire and ice  

So if there's one rule to this game  
Everybody's gonna name  
It's--be cool  
If you’re worried or uncertain  
If your feelings are hurtin'  
You’re a fool if you can’t keep cool  
They want you to  
Charm 'em  
Don't alarm 'em  
Keep things light  
Keep your worries out of sight  
And play it cool  
Play it cool  
Fifty-fifty  
Fire and ice
The Fish Bowl

The fish bowl is a world diverse
where fishermen with hooks that dangle
from the bottom reel up their catch
on gilded bait without a fight.
Pike, pickerel, bass, the common fish
ogle through distorting glass
see only glitter, glamour, gaiety
and weep for fortune lost.
Envy the goldfish? Why?
His bubbles are breaking ‘round the rim
while silly fishes faint for him.”

Joy Kogawa

Offerings

what you offer us —
a soap bubble
a glass thread —
what you place
in open hands —
one branch
of one snow fleck
a sliver
of smoke

and if and if
the offering bursts
breaks
melts
if the smoke
is swallowed in the night

we lift
the barricades
we take the edges
of our transience
we bury the ashes
of our wording
and sift
the silences

Joy Kogawa

If Your Mirror Breaks

if when you are holding a
hand mirror when you are
sitting in the front seat of a car
and the mirror breaks
you must stop everything quickly
step on the brakes
leap from the car

if when you are holding in
your arms a mirror and you
feel the glass sudden in your veins
if your throat bleeds with
brittle words and
you hear in the distance the
ambulance siren

if your mirror breaks into
a tittering sound of tinkling glass
and you see the highway stretch
into a million staring splinters
you must stop everything gently
wait for seven long years
under a sky of whirling wheels

if your mirror breaks
oh if your mirror breaks

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (for another poem, Google “A Vast Confusion”)

Don’t Let That Horse...
Don’t let that horse
eat that violin

cried Chagall’s mother

But he
kept right on
painting

And became famous
And kept on painting
The Horse With Violin In Mouth

And when he finally finished it
he jumped up upon the horse
and rode away
waving the violin

And then with a low bow gave it
to the first naked nude he ran across

And there were no strings
attached

Leonard Cohen

Poem 50 ("I lost my way, I forgot...")

I lost my way, I forgot to call on your name. The raw heart beat against the world, and the tears were for my lost victory. But you are here. You have always been here. The world is all forgetting, and the heart is a rage of directions, but your name unifies the heart, and the world is lifted into its place. Blessed is the one who waits in the traveller’s heart for his turning

The Genius

For you
I will be a ghetto jew
and dance
and put white stockings
on my twisted limbs
and poison wells
across the town

For you
I will be an apostate jew
and tell the Spanish priest
of the blood vow
in the Talmud
and where the bones
of the child are hid

For you
I will be a banker jew
and bring to ruin
a proud old hunting king
and end his line

For you
I will be a Broadway jew
and cry in theatres
for my mother
and sell bargain goods
beneath the counter

For you
I will be a Dachau jew
and lie down in lime
with twisted limbs
and bloated pain
no mind can understand
Marilyn Dumont

Letter To Sir John A. Macdonald

Dear John: I’m still here and halfbreed, after all these years you’re dead, funny thing, that railway you wanted so badly, there was talk a year ago of shutting it down and part of it was shut down, the dayliner at least, ‘from sea to shining sea,’ and you know, John, after all that shuffling us around to suit the settlers, we’re still here and Metis.

We’re still here after Meech Lake and one no-good-for-nothing-Indian holdin-up-the-train, stalling the ‘Cabin syllables / Nouns of settlement, /...steel syntax [and] / The long sentence of its exploitation’ and John, that goddamned railroad never made this a great nation, cause the railway shut down and this country is still quarreling over unity, and Riel is dead but he just keeps coming back in all the Bill Wilsons yet to speak out of turn or favour because you know as well as I that we were railroaded by some steel tracks that didn’t last and some settlers who wouldn’t settle and it’s funny we’re still here and callin ourselves halfbreed.

Not Just a Platform for My Dance
this land is not just a place to set my house my car my fence

this land is not just a plot to bury my dead my seed

this land is my tongue my eyes my mouth

this headstrong grass and relenting willow these flat-footed fields and applauding leaves these frank winds and electric sky lines

are my prayer they are my medicine and they become my song

this land is not just a platform for my dance
Mark Strand

**Keeping Things Whole**
In a field
I am the absence
of field.
This is
always the case.
Wherever I am
I am what is missing.

When I walk
I part the air
and always
the air moves in
to fill the spaces
where my body’s been.

We all have reasons
for moving.
I move
to keep things whole.

**No Words Can Describe It**
How those fires burned that are no longer, how the weather worsened, how the shadow of the seagull vanished without a trace. Was it the end of a season, the end of a life? Was it so long ago it seems it might never have been? What is it in us that lives in the past and longs for the future, or lives in the future and longs for the past? And what does it matter when light enters the room where a child sleeps and the waking mother, opening her eyes, wishes more than anything to be unwakened by what she cannot name?

**Coming to This**
We have done what we wanted.
We have discarded dreams, preferring the heavy industry of each other, and we have welcomed grief
and called ruin the impossible habit to break.

And now we are here.
The dinner is ready and we cannot eat.
The meat sits in the white lake of its dish.
The wine waits.

Coming to this
has its rewards: nothing is promised, nothing is taken away.
We have no heart or saving grace,
no place to go, no reason to remain.

**Black Maps**
Not the attendance of stones,
nor the applauding wind,
shall let you know
you have arrived,
nor the sea that celebrates
only departures,
nor the mountains,
nor the dying cities.

Nothing will tell you
where you are.
Each moment is a place
you’ve never been.

You can walk
believing you cast
a light around you.
But how will you know?

The present is always dark.
Its maps are black,
rising from nothing,
describing,
in their slow ascent
into themselves,
their own voyage,
its emptiness,

the bleak, temperate necessity of its completion.
As they rise into being
they are like breath.

And if they are studied at all it is only to find,
too late, what you thought were concerns of yours
do not exist.
Your house is not marked
on any of them,
nor are your friends,
waiting for you to appear,
nor are your enemies,
listing your faults.
Only you are there,
saying hello
to what you will be,
and the black grass
is holding up the black stars.
Maya Angelou

Still I Rise

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I’ll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
‘Cause I walk like I’ve got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I’ll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don’t you take it awful hard
‘Cause I laugh like I’ve got gold mines
Diggin’ in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I’ve got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history’s shame
I rise
Up from a past that’s rooted in pain
I rise
I’m a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.

Alone

Lying, thinking
Last night
How to find my soul a home
Where water is not thirsty
And bread loaf is not stone
I came up with one thing
And I don’t believe I’m wrong
That nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.

There are some millionaires
With money they can’t use
Their wives run round like banshees
Their children sing the blues
They’ve got expensive doctors
To cure their hearts of stone.
But nobody
No, nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Now if you listen closely
I’ll tell you what I know
Storm clouds are gathering
The wind is gonna blow
The race of man is suffering
And I can hear the moan,
‘Cause nobody,
But nobody
Can make it out here alone.

Alone, all alone
Nobody, but nobody
Can make it out here alone.
Neil Young

Rigor Mortis

The earth, played out, seems forged with fear,
It bristles, stiffens, slowly fades
With introspection. Through the blear,
In our unease we move, bowed heads;
Eyes dare not catch the eyes in crowds.

Our long-filled faces, burrowed in
This stolid world of silence, ache.
A momentary smile may break,
So awkward, brief, merely polite,
When failing to avert our sight.

Mouths mime their cold songs. Drawing breath,
Lips scarcely move, then freeze to death
Again, as days assimilate
Our disbelief in any hope;
The obvolute, irresolute.

Born from inherent ignorance,
Preoccupied and paranoid,
Who eavesdrops far beyond the void?
Suspicions shall remain unhindered
As long the earth remains bewildered,

Listening for nothing...
Withdrawing to nothing...

Only Love Can Break Your Heart

When you were young and on your own
How did it feel to be alone?
I was always thinking of games that I was playing.
Trying to make the best of my time.

But only love can break your heart
Try to be sure right from the start
Yes only love can break your heart
What if your world should fall apart?

I have a friend I’ve never seen
He hides his head inside a dream
Someone should call him and see if he can come out.
Try to lose the down that he’s found.

But only love can break your heart
Try to be sure right from the start
Yes only love can break your heart
What if your world should fall apart?

I have a friend I’ve never seen
He hides his head inside a dream
Yes, only love can break your heart
Yes, only love can break your heart

A Box of Photographs

Sifting through these photographs,
Faint years fall into disarray.
Shuffling half-remembered faces,
Glued to half-forgotten places,
I learn too late; their many griefs,
Like water, find their levelled way
To me through silent cracks in Time.
Reconstituting feelings trapped
Within, they charm or curse; those whom
I look for, those I don’t; each steepled
With irresolvable conclusion.
My simple task, one of collation
Reads like an epitaph to lives
Estranged, or spent. Now in these archives
I have found false starts, lost friends,
Ex-lovers, relatives deceased.
What I’ve begun, recalls their ends...
What have I carelessly released?
Raymond Carver

**Fear**

Fear of seeing a police car pull into the drive.
Fear of falling asleep at night.
Fear of not falling asleep.
Fear of the past rising up.
Fear of the present taking flight.
Fear of the telephone that rings in the dead of night.
Fear of electrical storms.
Fear of the cleaning woman who has a spot on her cheek!
Fear of dogs I’ve been told won’t bite.
Fear of anxiety!
Fear of having to identify the body of a dead friend.
Fear of running out of money.
Fear of having too much, though people will not believe this.
Fear of psychological profiles.
Fear of being late and fear of arriving before anyone else.
Fear of my children’s handwriting on envelopes.
Fear they’ll die before I do, and I’ll feel guilty.
Fear of having to live with my mother in her old age, and mine.
Fear of confusion.
Fear this day will end on an unhappy note.
Fear of waking up to find you gone.
Fear of not loving and fear of not loving enough.
Fear that what I love will prove lethal to those I love.
Fear of death.
Fear of living too long.
Fear of death.

I’ve said that.

**Late Fragment**

And did you get what you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself beloved on the earth.

**The Current**

These fish have no eyes
these silver fish that come to me in dreams,
scattering their roe and milt in the pockets of my brain.

But there’s one that comes--
heavy, scarred, silent like the rest,
that simply holds against the current,
closing its dark mouth against the current, closing and opening as it holds to the current.
you were so afraid
of my voice
i decided to be
afraid of it too

trying to convince myself
i am allowed
to take up space
is like writing
with my left hand
when i was born
to use my right
- the idea of shrinking is hereditary

perhaps
i don’t deserve
nice things
cause i am paying
for sins i don’t
remember
Sylvia Plath

Mirror

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions. Whatever I see I swallow immediately. Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike. I am not cruel, only truthful. The eye of a little god, four-cornered. Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall. It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers. Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me, Searching my reaches for what she really is. Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon. I see her back, and reflect it faithfully. She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands. I am important to her. She comes and goes. Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness. In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman. Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

Morning Song

Love set you going like a fat gold watch. The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue. In a drafty museum, your nakedness Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen: A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral In my Victorian nightgown. Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window square Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try Your handful of notes; The clear vowels rise like balloons.

Did I Miss Anything?

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here we sat with our hands folded on our desks in silence, for the full two hours

Everything. I gave an exam worth 40 per cent of the grade for this term and assigned some reading due today on which I'm about to hand out a quiz worth 50 per cent

Nothing. None of the content of this course has value or meaning
Take as many days off as you like: any activities we undertake as a class I assure you will not matter either to you or me and are without purpose

Tom Wayman

Routines

After a while the body doesn't want to work. When the alarm clock rings in the morning the body refuses to get up. "You go to work if you're so keen," it says. "Me, I'm going back to sleep." I have to nudge it in the ribs to get it out of bed. If I had my way I'd just leave you here, I tell it as it stands blinking. But I need you to carry your end of the load.

I take the body into the bathroom intending to start the day as usual with a healthy dump. But the body refuses to perform. Come on, come on, I say between my teeth. Produce, damn you. It's getting late.

"Listen, this is all your idea," the body says. "If you want some turds so badly you provide 'em.
I’d just as soon be back in bed.”
I give up, flush, wash and go make breakfast.
Pretty soon I’m at work. All goes smoothly enough
until the first break. I open my lunchpail
and start to munch on some cookies and milk.
"Cut that out," the body says, burping loudly.
"It’s only a couple of hours since breakfast.
And two hours from this will be lunch, and two hours
after
that
will be the afternoon break. I’m not a machine
you can force-feed every two hours.
And it was the same yesterday, too...."
I hurriedly stuff an apple in its mouth to shut it up.

By four o’clock the body is tired
and even more surly. It will hardly speak to me
as I drive home. I bathe it, let it lounge around.
After supper it regains some of its good spirits.
But as soon as I get ready for bed it starts to make
trouble.
Look, I tell it, I’ve explained this over and over.
I know it’s only ten o’clock but we have to be up in eight
hours.
If you don’t get enough rest, you’ll be dragging around
all
day
tomorrow again, cranky and irritable.
"I don’t care," the body says. "It’s too early.
When do I get to have any fun? If you want to sleep
go right ahead. I’m going to lie here wide awake
until I feel good and ready to pass out."

It is hours before I manage to convince it to fall asleep.
And only a few hours after that the alarm clock sounds
again.
"Must be for you," the body murmurs. "You answer it."
The body rolls over. Furious, and without saying a
word,
I grab one of its feet and begin to yank it toward the
edge
of
the bed.

Walt Whitman

O Me! O Life!

Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these recurring,
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill’d with the foolish,
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of the struggle ever renew’d,
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me,
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest me intertwined,
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.
That you are here—that life exists and identity,
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.
"Are you the new person drawn toward me?"

Are you the new person drawn toward me?
To begin with, take warning, I am surely far different from what you suppose;
Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?
Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?
Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy’d satisfaction?
Do you think I am trusty and faithful?
Do you see no further than this façade, this smooth and tolerant manner of me?
Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man?
Have you no thought, O dreamer, that it may be all maya, illusion?

Song of Myself (Epic, 52 poems total, you may choose any of the 52)

1
I celebrate myself, and sing myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loaf and invite my soul,
I lean and loaf at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form’d from this soil, this air,
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.