

## 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) 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

## 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.

### 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

### 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!

### **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 –

### **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

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

### 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 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

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

#### 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 doctor jew  
and search  
in all the garbage cans for foreskins  
to sew back again

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 unawakened 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?  
Suspensions shall remain unhindered  
As long as the earth remains bewildered,

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

### 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 steeped  
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?

### 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

## 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.

Rupi Kaur

---

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.

## 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.

### 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



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.

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time  
 a shaft of light descended and an angel  
 or other heavenly being appeared  
 and revealed to us what each woman or man must  
 do  
 to attain divine wisdom in this life and  
 the hereafter  
 This is the last time the class will meet  
 before we disperse to bring this good news to all  
 people  
 on earth

Nothing. When you are not present  
 how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom  
 is a microcosm of human existence  
 assembled for you to query and examine and  
 ponder  
 This is not the only place such an opportunity has  
 been  
 gathered  
 but it was one place  
 And you weren't here

"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 loafe and invite my soul,  
 I lean and loafe 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.