American Literature Poetry

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Name

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Poetic Devices

Directions: For each of the following poetic devices, write the definition you remember from your previous study of poetry. Also, if you can, include an example of the poetic device.

Term:	Definition:	Example:
Alliteration	using multiple words with the same starting letter	angry alligators
Allusion	making a reference to another literary work	... when we understand that we live in "quiet desperation" our lives ...
Assonance	repetition of vowel sounds to create internal rhyming	The cold mold was sold when it got old.
Apostrophe	Directing ideas to an abstract member of the audience	So I took the job. What do you think of that? Anyway ...
Connotation	The implied meaning of a word.	The word defer has taken on the meaning of deny, but rather means 'ignore'.
Denotation	The literal meaning of a word.	The word talk means to express words via vocal chords.
Hyperbole	An exagerration.	I could eat a horse
Imagery	Very picturesque descriptions.	The gnarly, rough bark on the bespectacled tree.
Internal Rhyme	The rhyme that occurs in a line	The heavy wood was not good
Irony	A situation that is opposite to what the expected outcome is.	The animal handler was in a cage.
Metaphor	Comparing two things without using like or as.	My life is an open book.

Meter	The rhythm of the poem.	But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
Mood/Tone	The way the author intended the poem to make the reader feel	The somber chorus of the voices of the downed angels sang out in pain.
Onomatopoeia	A word phonetically identical to the sound that it represents.	Boom, whizz, crash!
Oxymoron	A juxtaposition of words.	Same difference.
Personification	An inanimate object is given human personality traits.	The book wept.
Refrain	A repeated line.	I win, you do not I win, no one else does.
Rhyme Scheme	The pattern of rhyming lines in a poem.	I like to eat pie A It tastes really good B I hope it is understood. B
Rhythm	The meter of the poem.	Tis three o'clock, and, Romans, yet ere night.
Simile	Comparing two items using like or as.	Tall as a building.
Stanza	A paragraph of a poem.	This stanza is short and sweet, Like a mini KitKat to eat.
Symbol	Something that represents another thing in literature.	The blue curtains waved with the mood of the audience (they are sad).

"I contradict myself, very well then I contradict myself; I am large I contain multitudes." ~Whitman *Song of Myself*

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

Why is Whitman important?

Reviled by many of his contemporaries as a radical, a madman, and a pornographer, revered by others as the fearless prophet of a new stage of human development, Walt Whitman is today considered one of the greatest of American poets in the canon. Today he is named after a bridge over the Delaware River, a shopping center on Long Island, and a rest stop on the New Jersey turnpike, and he is at the very top of the list in the American poetry canon, primarily due to his tackling of a *massive* collection (400 pages) of poetry entitled *Leaves of Grass* (Song of Myself), challenging many of the socio-political mores of his time.

Brief Biography

Walter Whitman was born on May 31, 1819, in West Hills, Huntington Township, on Long Island, New York. He was the second of nine children of Walter Whitman, a farmer and carpenter and Louisa, his mother, a homemaker. From 1825 to about 1830, Whitman attended public schools in Brooklyn, which constituted his entire formal education. He spent most of his life as a journalist, contributing a number of articles, short stories, and poems to newspapers and magazines. His poetry of this period, which he never subsequently collected, was quite conventional in form and sentiment, giving no hint of the radical experiments that were to come. Steadily, Whitman becomes more involved in women's rights, worker's rights, the poor, etc., partly due to "investigative journalism" and these views come to head in *Leaves of Grass* which emerged later.

What's being explored in "Song of Myself?"

By July 4, 1855 the first edition of *Leaves of Grass,* is published in which Walt Whitman catalogues, for the day, some of his most radical socio-political views. The text first consisted of a preface and only twelve untitled poems in **long-lined free verse**. The first and by far the longest of these, which would be titled "Song of Myself" was an inclusive and often incantatory text in which the author offered himself as a representative of *all* humanity ("I am large..I contain multitudes"), especially the humanity that inhabited

the America whose cities and people he lovingly catalogued, identifying not only with the lowly and the downcast, the impoverished and the enslaved, but with criminals and prostitutes as well. The poet declared himself for the equality of women, and his descriptions of swimmers and workingmen in what he termed "the manly love of comrades" revealed to sophisticated readers a strong homoerotic impulse shocking for the time. He also posited the oneness of humanity with all natural creation, hence the title of the volume, affirming a sort of immortality and spirituality of the *individual* personality, and the fusion of the individual into the experience of all of humanity into the general oversoul (an Emersonian concept). The second edition of *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1856, ran to more than four hundred pages, demonstrating the great burst of activity triggered by the publication of his work and its favorable, if limited response. Despite the success of the collection, Whitman's personal life, shocking at the time, stood in the way of his continued success.

A Controversial Personal Life….

In 1865, Whitman met Peter Doyle, an eighteen-year-old conductor on Washington's street railway, with whom over the next several years he would enjoy one of the closest personal/loving relationships of his life. Whitman wrote with what was for the times remarkable openness about sex, seeking to reclaim it in its naturalness from both the puritans (mind) and the pornographers (blood) and was as frank as it was then possible to be in his treatment of homosexuality. But the loss of his job in the Department of the Interior and the condemnation of his work in 1881 by the Society for the Suppression of Vice were not lost on a man who valued his reputation.

The Legacy

Whitman is without question one of *the* most important writers in the history of American literature, and perhaps the single most important poet. His affirmation of the democratic ideal, his spiritual dimension, his technical experimentation, his sexual frankness, his attempts to capture the sights and the soul of his nation between the covers of a single book--all of these qualities have been defined by various commentators as quintessentially American characteristics, and he has inspired members of every generation of poets since his own time, including writers as different from one another, and from Whitman himself, as Carl Sandburg and Allen Ginsberg. In poem after poem, he has given us a rich portrait of his times and his places and above all, as the title of his central text proclaims, himself, fully justifying his famous assertion, "Who touches this book touches a man."

On the Beach at Night

On the beach at night,
Stands a child with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

These two people are appreciating the night sky together.

Up through the darkness,
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses spreading,
Lower sullen and fast athwarth and down the sky,
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

They are trying to interpret the celestial bodies.

These are allusions to Greek mythology.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,
Watching, silently weeps.

This is the foreshadowing of everyone's eventual death.

Weep not, child,
Weep not, my darling,

With these kisses let me remove your tears,
The ravening clouds shall not be long victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars only in apparition,
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night, the Pleiades shall emerge,
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden shall shine out again,
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again they endure,
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons shall again shine.

A reassuring tone helps to make sure the child is okay.

The child is being assured that everything will be fine in the end.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter,
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

All of the elements in the various bits of the poem are being brought together for a final conclusion.

When I heard the Learn'd Astronomer

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer;
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me;
When I was shown the charts and the diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them;
When I, sitting, heard the astronomer, where he lectured
with much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon, unaccountable, I became tired and sick;
Till rising and gliding out, I wander'd off by myself,
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

The man is appreciating the intellect of another man who is teaching him about space and the world.

Beat! Beat! Drums!

1

BEAT! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows -- through doors -- burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is studying;

The drums and sounds of war are shattering the peace everywhere.

Leave not the bridegroom quiet -- no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drums -- so shrill you bugles blow.

2

Beat! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!

Although intended to raise morale, war drums have the opposite effect.

Over the traffic of cities -- over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers' bargains by day -- no brokers or speculators -- would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums -- you bugles wilder blow.

3

Beat! beat! drums! -- blow! bugles! blow!

Make no parley -- stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid -- mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

The soldiers are being encouraged to go on fighting with the relentless beating of drums to keep them going and motivated.

Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums -- so loud you bugles blow.

Song of Myself

1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

Whitman is trying to establish the platform for this poem.

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.

He is talking about things he did that he recalls as particularly interesting.

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,

He begins to talk about himself and his own origin.

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.

Whitman talks about how he as always spoken out in life.

6

A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green
stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see
and remark, and say Whose?
Whitman is talking of the various ways to represent grass.
Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,
Growing among black folks as among white,
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I
receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out
of their mothers' laps,
And here you are the mothers' laps.
Whitman is making more allusions and references to the real world while he continues to talk about the grass.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,

Darker than the colorless beards of old men,
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.
There are more symbols behind the grass now.
O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken
soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the
end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

The grass is given a depressing meaning, but then it begins to take on a more positive meaning and in the end it just represents the common motif of the cycle of nature and life.

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab
and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

Whitman is expressing himself everywhere.

The last scud of day holds back for me,
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

“And I chose the road less traveled by and that has made all the difference.” ~Robert Frost

Robert Frost (1874-1963)

Robert Frost was one of the finest of rural New England's 20th century pastoral poets. Frost published his first books in Great Britain in the 1910s, but he soon became in his own country the most read and constantly anthologized poet. Frost was awarded the Pulitzer Prize four times.

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco, California on March 26, 1874. His father, a journalist and local politician, died when Frost was eleven years old. His Scottish mother resumed her career as a schoolteacher to support her family. The family lived in Lawrence, Massachusetts, with Frost's paternal grandfather. In 1892 Frost graduated from a high school and attended Dartmouth College for a few months. Over the next ten years he held a number of jobs.

In 1894 the *New York Independent* published Frost's poem "My Butterfly" and he had five poems privately printed. In 1895 he married a former schoolmate, Eleanor White; they had six children. Frost worked as a teacher and continued to write and publish his poems in magazines. From 1897 to 1899 Frost studied at Harvard, but left without receiving a degree. He moved to Derry, New Hampshire, working there as a cobbler, farmer, and teacher at Pinkerton Academy and at the state normal school in Plymouth.

In 1912 Frost sold his farm and took his wife and four young children to England. There he published his first collection of poems, *A Boy's Will*(1913) followed by *North Boston* (1914), which gained international reputation. The collection contains some of Frost's best-known poems: "Mending Wall," "The Death of the Hired Man," "Home Burial," "After Apple-Picking," and "The Wood-Pile."

After returning to the US in 1915 with his family, Frost bought a farm near Franconia, New Hampshire. He taught later at Amherst College (1916-38) and Michigan universities. In 1916 Frost was made a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. In the same year appeared his third collection of verse, *Mountain Interval,* which contained such poems as "The Road Not Taken," "Birches," and "The Hill Wife." Frost's images - woods, stars, houses, brooks, - are usually taken from everyday life. With his down-to-earth approach to his subjects, readers found it easy to follow the poet into deeper truths, without being burdened with pedantry.

In 1920 Frost purchased a farm in South Shaftsbury, Vermont, near Middlebury College. His wife died in 1938 and he lost four of his children. Frost also suffered from depression and continual self-doubt. After the death of his wife, Frost became strongly attracted to Kay Morrison, whom he employed as his secretary and adviser. Frost composed for her one of his finest love poems, "A Witness Tree."

Frost participated in the inauguration of President John Kennedy in 1961 by reciting two of his poems. He traveled in 1962 in the Soviet Union as a member of a goodwill group. Over the years he received a remarkable number of literary and academic honors.

At the time of his death on January 29, 1963, Frost was regarded as a kind of unofficial poet laureate of the United States.

Fire and Ice

Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.

Fire is more commonly thought of as destructive.

Ice is also equally as destructive, and both could destroy the world.

The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,
And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The two roads represent the two paths of life - the good and the evil, with the rewards and merits of each one.

From the beginning, both the paths look identical, but there is still a difference that cannot quite be placed just yet.

The road that was less popular was what made such a big difference in life.

Acquainted with the Night

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain --and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.
I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.
I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,
But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height
One luminary clock against the sky
Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

The man has a lot of experience with being turned down from various places in various forms and ways.

There is never a right time or place for the narrator because he is always the odd one out.

Design

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth --
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth --
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?--
If design govern in a thing so small

The spider has been amazingly and perfectly designed by nature.

If the design of nature is so random, how is it also so perfect?

Birches

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground,
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm,
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows--
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,

Childhood memories are drifting up.

The narrator is remembering all of what happened as he evolved from a young child into a mature adult.

And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate wilfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree~
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

All the memories are filling him up with a cloud of emotion and he is becoming very nostalgic and reminiscent.

Many people are given trouble for doing things like this, but there are far worse things to do that are fortunately not being done.

Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it

There is a wall that needs to be repaired, and this is being done slowly over time. This is a possible reference to the Berlin Wall and its associated saga.

The wall is a divider that splits friendships, relationships, and kinships - it is the knife of reality.

Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me~
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

Society is becoming increasingly less social - people want their time to themselves rather than trying to enjoy their lives with others.

Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

Crane was an American novelist, poet, & Journalist—who by the age of 16, was already writing articles about the New Jersey shore for local papers and the New York Tribune. Crane studied at Lafayette College and Syracuse University. After his mother's death in 1890 - his father had died earlier - Crane moved to New York City, where he lived a bohemian life working as a free-lance writer and journalist. While supporting himself through his writing, he observed the poor in the Bowery slums to research his first novel, Maggie: A Girl Of The Streets (1893), which was a milestone in the development of literary naturalism. Crane had to print the book at his own expense with money derived from the sale his mother's house and of inherited mine stock to his brother William. Crane released the book under the pseudonym "Johnston Smith." It was not a commercial success and was ignored by critics of the time, with the exception of Hamlin Garland. It was in this novel that readers were first introduced to Crane's writing style, noted for his use of a method that has come to be known as "naturalism," in which characters face very realistic and often bleak circumstances. This style of writing would be a defining trait of his later work, especially The Red Badge of Courage. "Maggie" was followed by The Red Badge of Courage (1895), a powerful tale of the American Civil War. The book won international acclaim for its realism and psychological depth in telling the story of a young soldier facing the horrors and triumphs of war for the first time. Crane had never experienced battle personally, but conducted interviews with a number of veterans, some of whom may have suffered from what is now called post-traumatic stress disorder. Because his depiction of the psychological as well as military aspects of war was so accurate, he was hired by the New York Journal as a correspondent during the Greco-Turkish War. In early January, 1897, a boat in which Crane accompanied a filibustering expedition to Cuba was wrecked, leaving Crane adrift for 30 hours in a ten-foot dinghy. He recounted these experiences in The Open Boat and Other Tales (1898). The background for this story, the wreck of the Cuban-exile Commodore expedition, can be found in his newspaper account (see [1].) The Commodore was attempting to land arms and men to supply the Cuban Mambi forces in the Cuban War of Independence (1895-1898) [2] which would conclude with the Spanish-American War (1898). "The Open Boat" is the best known number of Crane's stories dealing with Cuba and its wars. In 1897, Crane settled in England, where he befriended writers Joseph Conrad and Henry James. Shortly before his death, he released Whilomville Stories (1900), the most commercially successful of the twelve books he wrote. Crane died of tuberculosis (consumption) at age 28, in Badenweiler, Germany. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in what is now Hillside, New Jersey.

So, in English, **naturalism is:**

- Man the animal (the beast with the brain)—engaged in an endless, often brutal, struggle for survival, subject to natural forces in the world, economic forces within society, and biological and psychological forces within himself.
- Man the victim—life is a vicious trap, a cruel game, in which we are driven by certain basic urges such as survival, fear, hunger, desire, greed, and sex.
- A world in which chance governs much of life; a world in which life is not fair, in which our actions are often irrelevant. We may try, but we can't necessarily shape our reality or our fate; it is, to a great extent, dealt to us by an indifferent universe without purpose or plan.
- A world in which life is absurd. We live out our lives, struggling through, for an eventual reward of nothingness (death) that can come at any moment. We are each of us Sisyphus, pushing the stone up the mountain, only to have it roll down again.
- Basically, according to the naturalist way of thought: "Oh, God is dead; the universe is without purpose or plan. We're born and we die; that's it; nothing more. So it goes."

Some Common Themes in Naturalism

- Survival, determinism, violence, and taboo
- The "brute within" each individual, comprised of strong and often warring emotions: passions (lust, greed, desire for dominance or pleasure); and the fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe. The conflict is often "man vs. nature" or "man vs. self" as characters struggle to retain "civilization" despite external pressures that threaten to release "the brute within."
- Nature as an indifferent force acting on the lives of human beings
- The forces of heredity and environment as they affect—and afflict—individual lives.
- An indifferent, deterministic universe. Naturalistic texts often describe the futile attempts of human beings to exercise free will, often ironically presented, in the universe that reveals free will as an illusion.

"When it occurs to man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temples." –Stephen Crane

Death of a Naturalist

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

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

Seamus Heaney

The world is a place of wonder to a naturalist because they are constantly learning more and more about it and appreciating it more and more over time.

The person grows in their appreciation for nature over time, and they learn about what is really going on behind this facade.

The naturalist comes to a real world experience of what they thought would be wonderful, but it is not at all - rather, it is a very negative place that is nothing like the dreamland that he or she has been living in for so long.

This is a Photograph of Me

This is a Photograph of Me
It was taken some time ago
At first it seems to be
a smeared
print: blurred lines and grey flecks
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan
it, you can see something in the left-hand corner
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree
(balsam or spruce) emerging
and, to the right, halfway up
what ought to be a gentle
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,
and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where
precisely, or to say
how large or how small I am:

the effect of water
on light is a distortion.

but if you look long enough,
eventually
you will be able to see me.)

Margaret Atwood

The memory of the person has faded over time.

The narrator is fading into the background because other things are more important to people than she is.

A continuation of the fading.

She has drowned in the waters of the apathy that society so easily assigns to any topic - but if you look closely, the waters of society can be parted to find the woman inside who really wants to come out and be heard by everyone.

War Is Kind

Stephen Crane

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because the lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the Battle-God, great, and his Kingdom -
A field where a thousand corpses lie.

War is a necessary evil that is ultimately kind to the world because it reduces a conflict of some kind.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Although war takes lives from people, it can be appreciated for being so blunt and open ended - there is no sugarcoating; people will die, and each knows that he or she may be the next casualty.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Although the child is dead, he died with honor and for a good cause - so war has in its worst still given him something.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

Emily Dickinson was an American lyrical poet, and an obsessively private writer-only seven of her some 1800 poems were published during her lifetime. Dickinson withdrew from society at the age of 23 and devoted herself secretly to writing.

Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, to a family well known for educational and political activity. Her father, an orthodox Calvinist, was a lawyer and treasurer of Amherst College, and also served in Congress. She was educated at Amherst Academy (1834-47) and Mount Holyoke Female Seminary (1847-48). Around 1850 Dickinson started to write poems, first in fairly conventional style, but after ten years of practice she began to give room for experiments. From c. 1858 she assembled many of her poems in packets of 'fascicles', which she bound herself with needle and thread.

After the Civil War Dickinson restricted her contacts outside Amherst to exchange of letters, dressed only in white and saw few of the visitors who came to meet her. In fact, most of her time she spent in her room. Although she lived a secluded life, her letters reveal knowledge of the writings of John Keats, John Ruskin, and Sir Thomas Browne. Dickinson's emotional life remains mysterious, despite much speculation about a possible disappointed love affair. Two candidates have been presented: Reverend Charles Wadsworth, with whom she corresponded, and Samuel Bowles, editor of the *Springfield Republican*, to whom she addressed many poems.

After Dickinson's death in 1886, her sister Lavinia brought out her poems. She co-edited three volumes from 1891 to 1896. Despite its editorial imperfections, the first volume became popular. In the early decades of the twentieth century, Martha Dickinson Bianchi, the poet's niece, transcribed and published more poems, and in 1945 *Bolts Of Melody* essentially completed the task of bringing Dickinson's poems to the public. The publication of Thomas H. Johnson's 1955 edition of Emily Dickinson's poems finally gave readers a complete and accurate text.

Dickinson's works have had considerable influence on modern poetry. Her frequent use of dashes, sporadic capitalization of nouns, off-rhymes, broken metre, unconventional metaphors have contributed her reputation as one of the most innovative poets of 19th-century American literature. Later feminist critics have challenged the popular conception of the poet as a reclusive, eccentric figure, and underlined her intellectual and artistic sophistication.

435

Much Madness is divinest Sense --
To a discerning Eye --
Much Sense -- the starkest Madness --
'Tis the Majority
In this, as All, prevail --
Assent -- and you are sane --
Demur -- you're straightway dangerous --
And handled with a Chain

Insanity is not what it seems. People who have mental illnesses do not need to be instantly locked up in a room to think about what they need to do - they need to be able to express themselves, for they are deeper than it seems to the untrained eye.

185

"Faith" is a fine invention
When Gentlemen can see --
But Microscopes are prudent
In an Emergency.

When the future is a known and good thing, faith is a very convenient trait to be given credit; however, when the crap hits the fan, science ultimately proves to be more useful.

249

Wild Nights -- Wild Nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile -- the Winds --
To a Heart in port --
Done with the Compass --
Done with the Chart!

The narrator wishes there was someone else who appreciates them and would understand her desire for wild and uncontrolled love that could be interpreted as madness - her heart is a ship that has sailed, without knowing where it is going - she wants something, and someone, but does not know who or what.

Rowing in Eden --
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor -- Tonight --
In Thee!

254

"Hope" is the thing with feathers --
That perches in the soul --
And sings the tune without the words --
And never stops -- at all --

Hope is what drives humanity when it is at its worst. It provides support when people need it, and it gives people a reason to live. When insuperable problems are faced, hope gives people the strength to solve them. In exchange, it asks for nothing out of the human.

And sweetest -- in the Gale -- is heard --
And sore must be the storm --
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm --

I've heard it in the chillest land --
And on the strangest Sea --
Yet, never, in Extremity,
It asked a crumb -- of Me.

303

The Soul selects her own Society --
Then -- shuts the Door --
To her divine Majority --
Present no more --

The most important power comes from oneself - the ability to create a world entirely from their own soul and society.

Unmoved -- she notes the Chariots -- pausing --
At her low Gate --
Unmoved -- an Emperor be kneeling
Upon her Mat --

I've known her -- from an ample nation --
Choose One --
Then -- close the Valves of her attention --
Like Stone –

465

I heard a Fly buzz -- when I died --
The Stillness in the Room
Was like the Stillness in the Air --
Between the Heaves of Storm --

The Eyes around -- had wrung them dry --
And Breaths were gathering firm
For that last Onset -- when the King
Be witnessed -- in the Room --

I willed my Keepsakes -- Signed away
What portion of me be
Assignable -- and then it was
There interposed a Fly --

With Blue -- uncertain stumbling Buzz --
Between the light -- and me --
And then the Windows failed -- and then
I could not see to see –

Death becomes a chore and an everyday task when you spend so much time doing it that it becomes boring in itself. When it is done for the first time, it is a fresh and exciting experience, but it quickly becomes stale and boring. Preparing for it is long and arduous and yet there is little payoff.

613

They shut me up in Prose --
As when a little Girl
They put me in the Closet --
Because they liked me "still" --

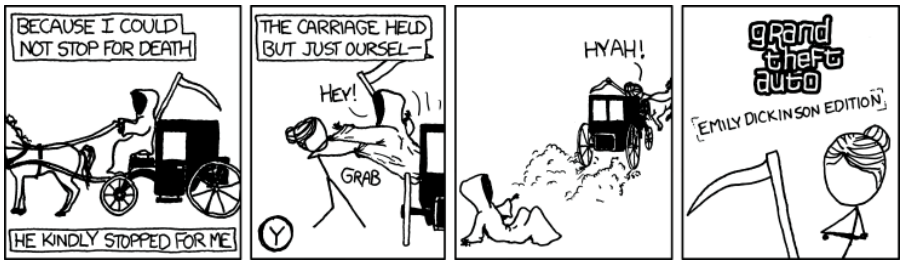
Still! Could themself have peeped --
And seen my Brain -- go round --
They might as wise have lodged a Bird
For Treason -- in the Pound --

Himself has but to will
And easy as a Star
Abolish his Captivity --
And laugh -- No more have I –

The narrator was examined and studied as a child - she was poked and prodded and mentally dissected and given medication to stop here from doing whatever it was that society did not approve of at the time. She is unhappy and bitter about it because it stifled her creative expression.

712

Because I could not stop for Death --
He kindly stopped for me --
The Carriage held but just Ourselves --
And Immortality.



We slowly drove -- He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility --

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess -- in the Ring --
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain --
We passed the Setting Sun --

Or rather -- He passed Us --
The Dews drew quivering and chill --
For only Gossamer, my Gown --
My Tippet -- only Tulle --

She is too busy to die, so death slows down and becomes a meandering ride. It flashes through her entire life and becomes a slow ride of her experiences.

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground --
The Roof was scarcely visible --
The Cornice -- in the Ground --

Since then -- 'tis Centuries -- and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity --

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.
(from 'Lady Lazarus', in *Ariel*, 1965)

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

Sylvia Plath spent most of her childhood in Wellesley, Massachusetts, where she lived close to her maternal grandparents. Her father, Otto Plath, was an entomology professor at Boston University, where he was known for his pioneering work on bumblebees. In 1940, when Plath was eight years old, her father died, which forced her mother, Aurelia, to enter the workforce. Despite her efforts, however, money was tight in the Plath household. Even in light of these hardships, Plath was a precocious child who enjoyed writing, reading, and the outdoors.

To the outside world, Sylvia Plath seemed to represent the 1950s ideal. Tall, slim, and outgoing, Plath made friends easily and excelled in extracurricular activities. Always a talented student, Plath attended prestigious Smith College on a scholarship, and she quickly became known on campus as a gifted writer. Behind the social exterior, however, Plath was a perfectionist, whose drive for success proved intense. She enjoyed many accolades, placing fiction in national magazines and winning first prize in the Mademoiselle Fiction Contest in 1952. Despite her success, Plath suffered from depression, and after her junior year at Smith, she attempted suicide, an experience that appears metaphorically in her later poems. After graduating summa cum laude from Smith, she won a Fulbright to study at Cambridge University in England, where she met and married poet Ted Hughes. Plath was instrumental in helping Hughes begin his successful writing career, and their influence on one another is notable. As Plath's poems about domesticity and motherhood suggest, becoming a wife and parent brought many difficult issues to the forefront of her life. Raised with 1950s middle-class values, Plath struggled with the tensions between those domestic ideals and her own feminism, and her poetry bears the mark of the conflict between her role as artist and her role as wife/mother. Plath's struggle to represent women's issues has earned her an important place in feminism. Hughes and Plath separated in the fall of 1962, and Plath was left to raise their two children alone. During what turned out to be one of the coldest British winters on record, Plath again suffered from depression, and she committed suicide at the age of thirty.

As a student in Robert Lowell's writing workshop in the late 1950s, Plath met Anne Sexton, who was to become an important influence on her poetry. Plath admired both Lowell's and Sexton's liberating verse, in which they tackled taboo subjects like mental illness, suicide, and family relationships with candor and intensity. Known as confessional poetry, the verse pioneered by Sexton, Lowell, John Berryman, and Theodore Roethke exposed the raw emotion and intimacy of personal experience.

Although Plath's poetry is often described as confessional, her poetry proves less autobiographical than that of her friends. While she often begins her poems with what

seems like autobiographical material, her genius lies in her ability to turn that autobiography into myth and metaphor. One of the great metaphor-makers of the century, Plath uses brilliant imagery to move her poetry far beyond the personal. In addition, much of what reads like autobiographical detail in poems like "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" is actually a dramatized performance based only loosely on her own life.

Plath is best known for her last book of poems, Ariel, which was published posthumously in 1965. Most of the poems in the volume were written in the fall and winter of 1962-63 in what appears to have been an amazingly creative period. Writing during the "blue hours" of the morning, or between 4 a.m. and 7 a.m. before her children awoke, Plath penned her finest work, characterized by a distinctive poetic voice, daring subject matter, colloquial diction, and brilliant metaphor. Plath told friend and critic A. Alvarez that these poems were meant to be heard rather than read, and the cooing rhymes of "Daddy" and repetition in "The Applicant" capture this sentiment. Although Plath had carefully arranged the sequence of Ariel before her death, Ted Hughes, the executor of her estate, rearranged the material, leaving out some of the more "aggressive" poems. He has been widely criticized for what many readers and critics consider the mismanagement of her work. Plath's journals and letters were later published, and her Collected Poems won the Pulitzer Prize in 1981. She also wrote dozens of short stories, a semi-autobiographical novel, The Bell Jar, and two children's books.

Lady Lazarus

I have done it again

One year in every ten
I manage it----

A sort of walking miracle, my skin
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,
My right foot

A paperweight,
My face a featureless, fine
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin
0 my enemy.
Do I terrify?----

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?
The sour breath
Will vanish in a day.
Soon, soon the flesh
The grave cave ate will be
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.
I am only thirty.
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.
What a trash
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.
The peanut-crunching crowd
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot
The big strip tease.
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands
My knees.
I may be skin and bone,

She is talking of how she starts off as nothing, and becomes something.

She is haggard and gaunt at first, but becomes a whole person slowly over time.

Society really does not care about her unless she is being dissected.

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.
The first time it happened I was ten.
It was an accident.

The second time I meant
To last it out and not come back at all.
I rocked shut

As a seashell.
They had to call and call
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying
Is an art, like everything else,
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.
I do it so it feels real.
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day
To the same place, the same face, the same brute
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'
That knocks me out.
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge
For the hearing of my heart----
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge
For a word or a touch
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.
So, so, Herr Doktor.
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,
I am your valuable,

She has tried to kill herself since she was a young child because she was so unhappy about what was going on.

She is not valued or accepted by society even though she feels that she should be. She is saying that she is the most important asset that society has, but it is not trying to accept her or monitor her.

The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.
I turn and burn.
Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash ---
You poke and stir.
Flesh, bone, there is nothing there----

A cake of soap,
A wedding ring,
A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer
Beware
Beware.

Out of the ash
I rise with my red hair
And I eat men like air.

Daddy

You do not do, you do not do
Any more, black shoe
In which I have lived like a foot
For thirty years, poor and white,
Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.
You died before I had time---
Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,
Ghastly statue with one grey toe
Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic
Where it pours bean green over blue
In the waters off beautiful Nauset.
I used to pray to recover you.
Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town
Scraped flat by the roller
Of wars, wars, wars.
But the name of the town is common.
My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.
So I never could tell where you
Put your foot, your root,
I never could talk to you.
The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.
Ich, ich, ich, ich,
I could hardly speak.
I thought every German was you.
And the language obscene

An engine, an engine
Chuffing me off like a Jew.
A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.
I began to talk like a Jew.
I think I may well be a Jew.

She has been abused and attacked her whole life by her father, and she is getting all of her anger and frustration out now because she could never express herself properly in real life.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna
Are not very pure or true.
With my gypsy ancestress and my weird luck
And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack
I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of you,
With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.
And your neat mustache
And your Aryan eye, bright blue.
Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You---

Not God but a swastika
So black no sky could squeak through.
Every woman adores a Fascist,
The boot in the face, the brute
Brute heart of a brute like you.

Her father was not a good person; in fact, he was a Nazi and did not treat the Jews well - the narrator is saying that she was so badly treated that she might as well have been a Jew to him for how he was treated or appreciated.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,
In the picture I have of you,
A cleft in your chin instead of your foot
But no less a devil for that, no not
Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.
I was ten when they buried you.
At twenty I tried to die
And get back, back, back to you.
I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,
And they stuck me together with glue.
And then I knew what to do.
I made a model of you,
A man in black with a Meinkampf look

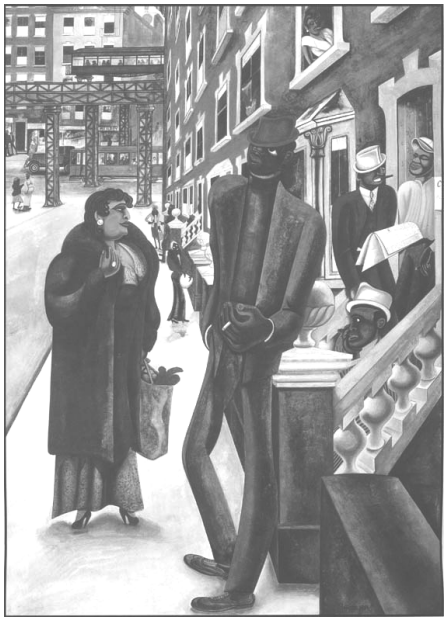
And a love of the rack and the screw.
And I said I do, I do.
So daddy, I'm finally through.
The black telephone's off at the root,
The voices just can't worm through.

If I've killed one man, I've killed two---
The vampire who said he was you
and drank my blood for a year,
Seven years, if you want to know.

Daddy, you can lie back now.

There's a stake in your fat, black heart
And the villagers never liked you.
They are dancing and stamping on you.
They always knew it was you.
Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I'm through.

Secretly, everyone disliked her father, but he was too powerful in life. Now in death, he is no one and so the truth comes out.



The Harlem Renaissance (1920-1930)

From 1920 until about 1930 an unprecedented outburst of creative activity among African-Americans occurred in all fields of art. Beginning as a series of literary discussions in the lower Manhattan (Greenwich Village) and upper Manhattan (Harlem) sections of New York City, this African-American cultural movement became known as "The New Negro Movement" and later as the Harlem Renaissance. More than a literary movement and more than a social revolt against racism, the Harlem Renaissance exalted the unique culture of African-Americans and redefined African-American expression. African-Americans were encouraged to celebrate their heritage and to become "The New Negro," a term coined in 1925 by sociologist and critic Alain LeRoy Locke.

The Harlem Renaissance was contributed to by the great migration of African-Americans to northern cities (such as New York City, Chicago, and Washington, D.C.) following the 19th century—and the Civil War. In his influential book *The New Negro* (1925), Locke described the northward migration of blacks as "something like a spiritual emancipation." Black urban migration, combined with trends in American society as a whole toward experimentation during the 1920s, and the rise of radical black intellectuals — including Locke, Marcus Garvey, founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of *The Crisis* magazine — all contributed to the particular styles and unprecedented success of black artists during the Harlem Renaissance period. The Harlem Renaissance is often associated with the great literature and poetry that emanated from the period (Wright's *Black Boy,* Langston Hughes' poetry, etc.) as well as the great jazz, music, and culture that emanated from the period (Billie Holiday, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker, etc.).

"What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun? . . . Or does it explode?"
~**Langston Hughes**

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

Langston Hughes stands as one of the most prolific writers in American history: he wrote poetry, two novels, two autobiographies, three volumes of short stories, several plays and musicals, over twenty years of newspaper columns, twelve children's books, and countless essays. Born in Joplin, Missouri, James Langston Hughes spent most of his childhood in the Midwest. Hughes moved to Harlem in 1921, where the famous Harlem Renaissance was taking shape under the leadership of intellectuals like Alain Locke and benefactors like Carl Van Vechten. It didn't take long for Hughes's literary talent to be recognized. Before the year's end, Jessie Fauset, perhaps the most prolific novelist of the Harlem Renaissance, published Hughes's first short story, "Mexican Games," in The Brownie's Book. Also, Hughes's widely anthologized poem dedicated to W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," appeared in Crisis. Despite his success, Hughes left the electrifying Harlem atmosphere for a two-year trip to Africa and Europe. His travels inspired in him a sense of awe for ancient and non-Western civilizations, an awe that reveals itself in the imagery of his later poetry.

Upon returning to America, Hughes worked as a busboy in a Washington, D.C. hotel until he was "discovered" once again, this time by poet Vachel Lindsay, and his poems were published in Opportunity and Alain Locke's The New Negro. Hughes's first collection of poetry, The Weary Blues, was published in 1926 with the help of his benefactor Van Vechten. In the same year, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," Hughes's groundbreaking essay on the obstacles facing black artists, appeared in response to George Schuyler's essay "Negro Art Hokum," which argued that there was no such thing as a quintessentially Negro art. Both essays were published in The Nation, and they sparked a dialogue that resonated throughout the Harlem community. Hughes's essay was important because it defended the possibility of an American art uniquely expressive of the black experience and because it challenged the elitism that often surfaced in the influential writings of Du Bois. For the last few years of the decade, patron Charlotte Mason, who also offered Zora Neale Hurston assistance, supported Hughes. By the end of the decade, Hughes had become synonymous with the Harlem Renaissance.

When the Great Depression struck the United States, Hughes, like many of his contemporaries, including Genevieve Taggard, turned to social and political activism. He embraced communism with its emphasis on working-class issues and racial equality. After his visit to the Soviet Union in 1932, Hughes wrote radical essays and articles and reported on the Spanish Civil War for the Baltimore Afro-American. While he continued to publish poetry throughout his life, he also began writing plays and books for children. In 1953 his radical activities brought him before
Senator McCarthy's committee, and the FBI considered him a security threat until 1959. During those six years, Hughes was unable to leave the United States.

Often called the poet laureate of Harlem, Hughes became famous for his innovative poetry, which appropriates the language, rhythm, and form of jazz and the blues. "The Weary Blues," for example, mimics the traditional form of twelve-bar blues. With its syncopated rhythm, southern dialect, and crooning diction, it is no surprise that much of Hughes's poetry has been set to music. While many intellectuals looked down on jazz and the blues as unrefined forms created by seedy characters, Hughes respected the artistry and originality of this new brand of African American music and recognized the unique contribution that it was making to American culture. Hughes wished to write about the black experience honestly. To Du Bois' dismay, he insisted on using dialect and portraying a range of characters, not just the educated upper class, and he wrote with compassion and dignity about working-class African Americans in poems like "Brass Spittoons" and "Elevator Boy." Hughes also wrote passionately about the American-ness of blacks at a time when political leaders like Marcus Garvey were encouraging scores of blacks to migrate back to Africa. Influenced by the work of Walt Whitman and Carl Sandburg, Hughes's poetry unites racial self-awareness with a larger American identity.

A Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore-- And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-- like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Many dreams of the people never come to fruition (ha ha).

Dream Variations

To fling my arms wide
In some place of the sun,
To whirl and to dance
Till the white day is done.
Then rest at cool evening
Beneath a tall tree
While night comes on gently,
Dark like me--
That is my dream!
To fling my arms wide
In the face of the sun,
Dance! Whirl! Whirl!
Till the quick day is done.
Rest at pale evening...
A tall, slim tree...
Night coming tenderly
Black like me.

He wants to be able to live and think freely without any threat or harm of racism, which unfortunately does not happen because of the prejudice that exists in society.

He is appreciating the night and the utter apathy of nature toward the social structure and hierarchy of humans.

As I Grew Older

It was a long time ago.
I have almost forgotten my dream.
But it was there then,
In front of me,
Bright like a sun--
My dream.
And then the wall rose,
Rose slowly,
Slowly,
Between me and my dream.
Rose until it touched the sky--
The wall.
Shadow.
I am black.
I lie down in the shadow.
No longer the light of my dream before me,
Above me.
Only the thick wall.
Only the shadow.
My hands!
My dark hands!
Break through the wall!
Find my dream!
Help me to shatter this darkness,
To smash this night,
To break this shadow
Into a thousand lights of sun,
Into a thousand whirling dreams
Of sun!

The wall is the wall of color that is holding back the African American people in society. They can go far until the wall suddenly appears and forces them to grind to a halting stop.

The dark wall of prejudice and hate must be smashed to give way to the wall of good and light and equality.

Other Harlem Renaissance Poets

If We Must Die by Claude McKay

If we must die--let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die--oh, let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
Oh, Kinsmen! We must meet the common foe;
Though far outnumbered, let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

If the black pride must die to the harm of racism, it must put up a valiant fight first, that requires everyone to be brave and take a part.

For a Lady I Know by Countee Cullen

She even thinks that up in heaven
Her class lies late and snores
While poor black cherubs rise at seven
To do celestial chores

The blacks are so disrespected that whites believe that even in heaven, the blacks will be second class citizens.

The Imagist Movement (circa 1910)

Imagist Poetry Defined: Name given to a poetry movement, originating in 1912, represented by Ezra Pound, and others, aiming at clarity of expression through the use of precise visual images. In essence, imagist poetry allowed common, everyday visual images to make up total poetic statements.

Pound's short "one-image poem" 'In a Station of the Metro' is among the most celebrated Imagist works: "The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough." Pound had seen a succession of beautiful faces one day on the Paris Metro, and in the evening he found suddenly the expression for his sudden emotion. Despite his contributions to founding the movement, Pound later abandoned the ideals of the movement to explore other aims in his poetry. However, the spark that ignited the movement didn't die. One of the most popular and recognized American poets to take up the torch of imagist poetry and perpetuate its ideals and popularity was William Carlos Williams.

Imagists Style & Language Defined

- Focused on describing **one image:**
- **Sparse language**: Sharp imagery and precise diction describe an object in limited space.
- **Fragmented images**—You only get a snapshot description, not a story, not a narrative (like a picture).
- **Like painting**. You get the framed image, but you have to make the story up around it.
- **Takes the mundane (everyday objects)** and makes them come alive as a brief moment of reality.
- **Many modernists/imagists were "linked"—**for example, Ezra Pound/William Carlos Williams—attend the same college and both get into writing in this style.

"No ideas but in things." ~William Carlos Williams

William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)

Williams is best known for his poem "The Red Wheellbarrow" which is considered the model example of the Imagist movement's style and principles (see also "This is Just to Say"). He also coined the Imagist motto "no ideas but in things." However, Williams did not personally subscribe to Imagist ideas. Williams is more strongly associated with the American Modernist movement in literature, which rejected European influences in poetry in favor of regional dialogues and influences. Williams simplified the mystery of what makes good poetry when he said: "If it's not a pleasure, it's not a poem."
Williams tried to invent an entirely fresh form, an American form of poetry whose subject matter was centered on everyday circumstances of common people.

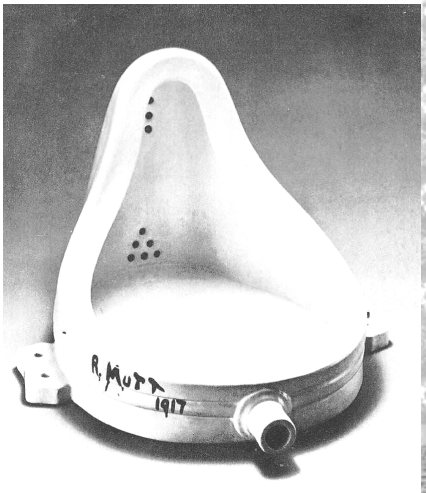
"No ideas but in things"
While he disliked Ezra Pound's *and especially* T.S. Eliot's (see "The Waste Land") frequent use of allusions to foreign languages, religion, history or art, Williams drew his themes from what he called "the local." In this context he also coined the expression "No ideas but in things", his famous summation of his poetic method. What he meant is that poets should leave traditional poetic forms and unnecessary literary allusions aside and try to see the world through the eyes of an ordinary person. According to Williams, a poet must write about "things with which he is familiar, simple things - at the same time to detach them from ordinary experience to the imagination" (Williams, The Autobiography, 197), to put it in other words: "Write about what you know." His work as a physician in a rural town helped him in many ways: He could draw from his patients' conversations when they came to see him; he had access to many different households when he visited patients on house-calls; and his environment contained many scenes of nature, ranging from the beginning life of a plant to decaying pieces of metal.

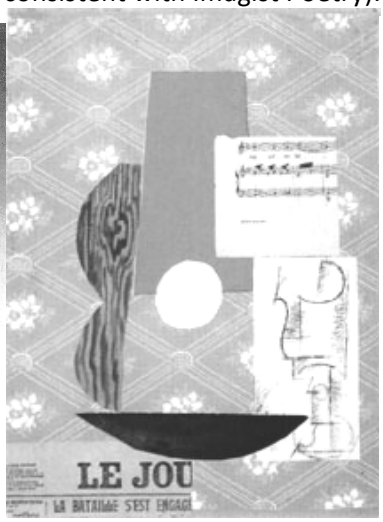
William Carlos Williams and Robert Frost: **Robert Frost** also uses everyday language. His poems are true to the speech of New England country people, his environment. However, the settings and contents of Frost's poetry are usually of rural origin, like his recurring theme of the cruelty of nature. Additionally, Robert Frost usually uses traditional poetic forms, i.e. blank verse, rhyme, narrative or the sonnet form. Williams, in contrast, abandoned many of these forms and wrote in "plain American which cats and dogs can read."

Williams and Modern Art:
During his time in New York City (about 1906-1910), Williams became friends with the avante-garde modern artist Marcel Duchamp, among others. One of the aims of modern art during this time, in line with imagist poetry, was to model objects of everyday life in new and interesting ways. Duchamp, for example, showed the formal properties of a urinal (see below) by displacing their denotative meaning and by renaming them (He called the urinal "Fountain"). Many other modern artists of the same period, like Picasso, extended their influence deep into the twentieth century, creating the groundwork for much of the "everyday material" used in modern art today. Williams, likewise, displaced everyday language, showing that all language, even the everyday, can be poetic. He took unchanged fragments of everyday language out of their original context and reassembled them into a poem. He made these

fragments poetic and in the same moment he took away their original use. WCW did not choose his phrases "trouvés" randomly or by accident. He wanted to emphasize that art which before had been seen as not poetic by traditionalists do have certain poetic qualities.

Modern Art Samples (ideologically consistent with Imagist Poetry):





Michel Duchamp's "Fountain" Picasso's "Guitar & Sheet Music" Warhol's "Campbell's Soup"

Station at the Metro by Ezra Pound (early pioneer of Imagist Poetry)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough

The ghostly faces are like petals of the main branch of society.

The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

The wheelbarrow represents the carrier of nature that uses all the other elements to carry out the cycle of life.

This Is Just To Say

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold

This represents nothing more than just the contents mentioned. It is a simple note of apology left by someone who did what they should not have done.

The Great Figure

Among the rain
and lights
I saw the figure in gold
on a red
firetruck
moving
tense
unheeded
to gong clangs
siren howls
and wheels rumbling
through the dark city.

This poem talks of a fire truck that represents a truck to put out the fire of hate in society to make dark city light.

"I Saw the Figure 5 in Gold"
Charles Demuth

Modern Poetry: e.e. cummings (1894-1962)

Edward Estlin Cummings (or e.e. cummings, as he preferred to sign his name) made poetic history by experimenting with typographical arrangements. But what seemed unorthodox in his first poetry of the 1920s (lower-case letters, strange punctuation, coined words) is less shocking today. As we have grown used to the unusual spacing of words on the printed page, we have become more aware of his old-fashioned lyricism. Repeatedly, he celebrates old themes – love and death, springtime and childhood – and often he satirizes the hypocrisy and self-deception in our materialistic culture.

Cummings was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where his father was a Congregational minister and a professor at Harvard. At Harvard himself, e.e. cummings studied Greek, Latin, and French, and from these languages drew some observations which he applied to his own writing. Classical texts, he pointed out, never begin a sentence with a capital; only in English is the pronoun *I* capitalized; and Old French texts have no spaces around the commas since commas make their own space. After college, cummings enlisted as an ambulance driver in France during World War I. He wrote a novel, The Enormous Room, describing his life in a French prison camp, where he was detained because of a series of misunderstandings. Cummings studied painting in Paris before returning to the United States.

After settling in Greenwich Village in New York City, cummings gradually established a reputation as an avant-garde poet, painter, lecturer, and playwright. His poetry appeared in volumes with such intriguing titles as Tulips and Chimneys, ViVa, and 1 X 1 (love poems dedicated to his wife, the title suggesting two people). A collection of his artwork containing charcoal, ink, oil, pencil, and watercolor is called CIOPW. A group of lectures about poetry and his own life is titled i. Six Nonlectures. With such a substantial body of work, cummings is no longer considered an upstart innovator but an authentic voice of our times.

e.e. cummings' beliefs

- Primarily a romantic – believed firmly in the power of love to change the world – believed love could unite two incomplete persons and weld them into a perfect whole
- That is only answer to – only retreat from terrors of loneliness and isolation.
- If ever he paints a grim world, it is only to serve as a contrasting background for the transforming powers of love
- Not a sentimentalist
- The world he presents is also a place of potential danger and ugliness – a place where humans can be terrified because they are alone
- Love is a buffer against that world and serves as the predominant subject of his poetry

e.e. cummings' satiric poems

- Much social satire – humorous, accurate, pitiless
- View of vicious, destructive inhabitants of this world (i.e., "The Cambridge Ladies")
- Against conformists and shallow people
- World = sterility where conformity is a virtue
- If there is a failure of love, people do not realize their own identities – do not see each other as valuable – therefore, world of automatons
- Helps – awareness of present moment/consciousness of what we learn from our own senses

e.e. cummings and the world of nature

- Not contaminated by that of humankind
- The more you understand nature, the less apt you will be to become an automaton
- Nature puts humans in touch with their essential identity

e.e. cummings and the world of children

- Implicated that it is only the rare adult who can stay in touch with nature
- Children are close to the world of nature and more genuinely appreciative of each other's individuality
- Children = hope
- Growing up may result in a loss of joy and individuality

e.e. cummings' style

- Many moods but usually only one per poem
- Never enslaved by rules of grammar and syntax
- Adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, verbs – all used as nouns
- Clue to understanding cummings is to figure out how he uses a particular part of speech, i.e., whereling and whenlings
- Adverbs used to describe people
- Greatest influences on cummings → Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Dante, and Shakespeare

One of cummings' aims was to force the reader to experience a poem as a poetic performance, not as a prose statement. The first time you read this poem, enjoy the lilting rhythm and melodious sounds created by the words. Then think about the statement the poem makes.

"maggie and milly and molly and may"
by e.e. cummings

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach(to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles,and

milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and

may came home with a smooth and round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

for whatever we lose(like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea.

The two girls go to the beach and experience the simple wonders of nature that they will learn so much from. No matter what your background is, you will be lost in the beauty of nature.

Thought Questions for "maggie and milly and molly and may"

1. Notice how carefully the poem has been constructed. The first couplet introduces the actors and sets the scene while the final couplet makes a comment. What do the middle four couplets deal with? How does a shell sing? What is a "stranded star"?

2. What is each girl like? In what sense do the girls find themselves in the sea?

3. In less capable hands, the lyric might easily have slipped into a singsong beat. It escapes such a pitfall because of the variety in the meter. How do the lines differ in length and in beat? Where has the poet alternated placement of the conjunction "and"? The rhyme is also varied. Which stanzas have exact rhymes? What end rhymes do you find elsewhere? What alliteration do you find?

“anyone lived in a pretty how town”
by e.e. cummings

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn’t he danced his did

Women and men (both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn’t they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone’s any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake home and then)they
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died I guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep
noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes

Women and men(both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain

The town is the most generic town possible - it represents anyone, everyone, and no one all at once.

People are growing up over time and losing their naive innocence - it is the unending cycle that repeats forever and ever - unique to no generation or race.

People die and then life will continue - it is not a big deal, and it should not be treated as such.