

Write to the Heart of Motherhood  
*Connecting to our true voice in the middle of our messy lives*

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Week 2. POEMS



~ TO LIVE WITH AND/ OR LEARN BY HEART ~

Greetings, lovely!

Here five more poems to add to your collection, for you to peruse and enjoy, and – if any of them speak to you, to live with and/or learn by heart.

I will keep adding five poems each week to this bank, so you'll have 30 total by the end of the course. I've tried to choose a range of topics, but all with lengths that are workable to learn by heart. Of course, choose any poems you like outside this list too! And feel free to post those you love in our Facebook group. Enjoy!

**TEA WITH A LADY OF ZEN**

*Alfred K. LaMotte*

"Sometimes I'm too lazy  
to meditate," she said.  
I said, "Maybe diving deep  
into laziness

is your meditation."  
She sipped her green tea,  
not silently, but with a slurp  
of gratitude.  
"As for me," I said,  
"I'm a poetry bum.  
I can't bring myself  
to do anything useful at all."  
"Maybe diving deep  
into uselessness  
is your meditation," she said.  
Her tea was brewed  
so subtle and clear,  
I could hardly taste it,  
and I didn't know how  
to make that wabi slurp  
of suchness.  
My failure emitted a laugh,  
then a tear of thanksgiving.  
And suddenly, without trying,  
we were savoring a breathless quiet  
which somehow polished the moon,  
immersing the planet in tenderness,  
dissolving the sorrows of  
ten thousand creatures,  
and guiding all the stars home  
to their perfect repose.  
We danced in the stillness  
of each other's eyes.

## KINDNESS

*Naomi Shihab Nye*

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.  
What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness  
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.  
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,  
only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
It is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you everywhere  
like a shadow or a friend.

### **I AM THE CHILD OF MY LIFE**

*Richard Cronshey*

Inside, in the very center, it is this nakedness forever,  
this fragrance; a stillness existing by itself.  
It is a wish without a beginning shining.  
Sometimes for years I wear this life, like a sad hat  
pulled down over my eyes  
then, when I look at you, I see sunlight on water  
and I remember what I am.  
You are so clear I can see all the way to the bottom  
of your life, into the flowering night,  
that deepening brightness that can never leave us.  
There is such abundance haunting us.  
Look how precisely the sunflowers climb their own becoming,

like time rising in time.  
You, your body and your life are the dreaming of that same light.

### **FIRST THANKSGIVING**

*Sharon Olds*

When she comes back, from college, I will see  
the skin of her upper arms, cool,  
matte, glossy. She will hug me, my old  
soupy chest against her breasts,  
I will smell her hair! She will sleep in this apartment,  
her sleep like an untamed, good object,  
like a soul in a body. She came into my life the  
second great arrival, after him, fresh  
from the other world—which lay, from within him,  
within me. Those nights, I fed her to sleep,  
week after week, the moon rising,  
and setting, and waxing—whirling, over the months,  
in a slow blur, around our planet.  
Now she doesn't need love like that, she has  
had it. She will walk in glowing, we will talk,  
and then, when she's fast asleep, I'll exult  
to have her in that room again,  
behind that door! As a child, I caught  
bees, by the wings, and held them, some seconds,  
looked into their wild faces,  
listened to them sing, then tossed them back  
into the air—I remember the moment the

arc of my toss swerved, and they entered  
the corrected curve of their departure.

**VESSEL**

*Brooke McNamara*

This breath together  
in and out  
right now  
creates a vessel  
for our travels  
through rising, wilding waters,

this breath  
a remembrance  
that if we look between toes,  
eyebrows, ideas, or organs,

between vertebrae,  
words, and selves,

what we're looking for  
finds us:

forgiven,  
in this  
breath together  
in and out

right now,

already forgiven  
in each other's eyes,

we're now able to taste  
our own innate goodness

through spontaneous sighs  
and riotous thighs,  
smiling bellies  
and unlocked jaws,

to receive  
unsung abundance  
from our sentient,  
wombing worlds  
rushing in  
to remember us  
connected.

I've discovered  
under the tongue  
an innocent wanting  
to just be together

to just be together  
breathing  
in and out

right now,  
already forgiven.

This vessel  
of shared and undulating awareness,  
tangled intentions  
rising and dying,  
will carry us  
as  
home

especially when  
there is no escape  
from this terrible, miraculous mess  
we so intimately are.

This breath together  
in and out  
right now,  
our vessel.

This breath together  
  
in  
and  
out.