

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

Week 4. 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!

RED BROCADE

Naomi Shihab Nye

The Arabs used to say, When a stranger appears at your door,
feed him for three days before asking who he is, where he's come from, where he's
headed. That way, he'll have strength enough to answer. Or, by then you'll be such good
friends you don't care.

Let's go back to that. Rice? Pine nuts? Here, take the red brocade pillow.

My child will serve water to your horse.

No, I was not busy when you came!

I was not preparing to be busy.

That's the armor everyone put on

to pretend they had a purpose

in the world.

I refuse to be claimed.

Your plate is waiting.

We will snip fresh mint

into your tea.

LET THE BEAUTY WE LOVE BE WHAT WE DO

Rumi

Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.

Let the beauty we love be what we do.

There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground.

EATING POETRY

Mark Strand

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.

There is no happiness like mine.

I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.

Her eyes are sad

and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.

The light is dim.

The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyeballs roll,

their blond legs burn like brush.

The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.

She does not understand.

When I get on my knees and lick her hand,

she screams.

I am a new man.

I snarl at her and bark.

I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

LITANY

Billy Collins

*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.

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.

I WANT THAT GOOSE TO BE A TREE

Brooke McNamara

Yesterday I picked up my two-year-old son
from his first day of preschool
drenched in some post-play euphoria
I'd never yet seen,
his tiny eyes opened
to the joyride of finger-paint,
lunch boxes, and songs —

but halfway home his bliss

crested and plunged
into a huge new grief,
which he wailed and howled out
from his carseat behind me.

Look at that huge goose right there!

I offered for distraction
as we drove past the waddling flock.

I want that goose to be a tree!

he cried.

What did you just say?

I want that goose to be a tree!

as sorrowful and stricken
as you can imagine. I felt for him,
of course — his world overwhelmed,
breaking and opening
with the onset of school —

but also, I thought: How creative,
how wonderfully, deeply creative:

I want that goose to be a tree!

Yes, I'd never thought of it,
but that desire is fully available.

And what else? *I want this poem
to pour me a glass of red wine!*

And,
I want this poem to become a glass of red wine!
I want this to be your wine, or whatever beverage
you long for most right now,
and I want this sentence to hand it to you
and watch soulfully while you stop everything
to simply drink,
to drink and know

that your hands can be birds
and your eyes were once telescopes
and the one you dream about
lives locked inside you
in a gesture
you just haven't performed yet.

But that tree could teach it to you,
if you sat and listened long enough,
if you let your heart
suddenly touch and sound
its held wail for the truth
that everything is always changing,
and breaking and opening —

that our drinks together here
are almost done.