



# Teaching Poetry

*Advanced Placement Summer Institute*

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PETER VIERECK:

VALE<sup>1</sup> FROM CARTHAGE (SPRING, 1944)



I, now at Carthage.<sup>2</sup> He, shot dead at Rome.  
 Shipmates last May. “And what if one of us,”  
 I asked last May, in fun, in gentleness,  
 “Wears doom, like dungarees, and doesn’t know?”  
 5 He laughed, “*Not see Times Square<sup>3</sup> again?*” The foam,  
 Feathering across that deck a year ago,  
 Swept those five words—like seeds—beyond the seas  
     Into his future. There they grew like trees;  
     And as he passed them there next spring, they laid  
 10      Upon his road of fire their sudden shade.  
 Though he had always scraped his mess-kit pure  
 And scrubbed redeemingly his barracks floor,  
 Though all his buttons glowed their ritual-hymn  
 Like cloudless moons to intercede for him,  
 15 No furlough fluttered from the sky. He will  
 Not see Times Square—he will not see—he will  
 of Not see Times  
     change; at Carthage (while my friend,  
 Living those words at Rome, screamed in the end)  
 20 I saw an ancient Roman’s tomb and read  
 “*Vale*” in stone. Here two wars mix their dead:  
     Roman, my shipmate’s dream walks hand in hand  
     With yours tonight (“New York again” and “Rome”),  
     Like widowed sisters bearing water home  
 25      On tired heads through hot Tunisian sand  
     In good cool urns, and says, “I understand.”  
 Roman, you’ll see your Forum Square no more;  
 What’s left but this to say of any war?

Directions: Read the poem carefully. Then answer fully and explicitly the following questions:

1. Is the structure of the three opening sentences justifiable in this particular poem? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Why do the three place names — Carthage, Rome, and Times Square — create the particular emotional effects present in this poem?
3. Interpret each of the following portions of the poem so as to show how it contributes to the effectiveness of the poem as a whole:
  - a. *Wears doom, like dungarees* (line 4);
  - b. .... *they laid*  
*Upon his road of fire their sudden shade* (lines 9-10);
  - c. *No furlough fluttered from the sky* (line 15);
  - d. *Living these words* (line 19);
  - e. *Like widowed sisters* (line 24).
4. To whom does *I* refer in line 26? What is it that is understood?
5. To how much may *this* refer in the final line of the poem?

<sup>1</sup> *Vale* is the Latin word for farewell.

<sup>2</sup> Carthage is the site of the famous ancient city in Tunisia, North Africa. In ancient times the rivalry between Rome and Carthage culminated in the Punic Wars. In World War II, Tunisia again figured prominently.

<sup>3</sup> Times Square is the bustling center of New York City—the theater district.

# TP-COASTT: A MNEMONIC FOR POETRY

<b>Title</b>	The title is part of the poem; consider any multiple meanings.
<b>Paraphrase</b>	Rephrase the poem using your words.
<b>Connotation</b>	Contemplate the poem for meaning beyond the literal.
<b>Organization</b>	Identify organizational patterns, visual, temporal, spatial, abstract
<b>Attitude</b>	Identify the tone—both the speaker's and the poet's attitude
<b>Shifts*</b>	Locate shifts in speaker, tone, setting, syntax, diction...
<b>Title</b>	Examine the title again, this time on an interpretive level
<b>Theme</b>	Determine what the poem says

## \*Shifts

**Signals** Key words (*still, but, yet, although, however...*)  
 Punctuation (consider every punctuation mark)  
 Stanza or paragraph divisions  
 Changes in line length or stanza length or both

**Types** Structure (how the work is organized)  
 Changes in syntax (sentence length and construction)  
 Changes in sound (rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, assonance...)  
 Changes in diction (slang to formal language, for example)

**Patterns** Are the shifts sudden? progressive? recursive? Why?

ELIZABETH BISHOP  
**ONE ART**

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
 so many things seem filled with the intent  
 to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

5       Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
 of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
 The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
 places, and names, and where it was you meant  
 10       to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
 next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
 The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
 15       some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
 I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
 I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
 the art of losing's not too hard to master  
 20       though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

From *The Complete Poems 1927-1979* by Elizabeth Bishop, published by  
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# P R O S O D Y

## THE FOOT

THE FOOT is measured according to the number of its stressed and unstressed syllables. The stressed syllables are marked with an acute accent ( ' ) or a prime mark ( ' ) and the unstressed syllables with a small superscript line ( - ), a small "x," a superscript degree symbol ( ° ) or a short accent mark, or "breve" ( ˘ ). A virgule ( / ) can be used to separate feet in a line.

Iamb	iambic	( - ' )	to-DÁY
Trochee	trochaic	( ' - )	BRÓ-ther
Anapest	anapestic	( - - ' )	in-ter-CÉDE
Dactyl	dactylic	( ' - - )	YÉS-ter-day
Spondee	spondaic	( ' ' )	ÓH, NÓ
Pyrric	pyrric	( - - )	...Of a...
(Amphibrach )	(amphibrachic)	( - ' - )	chi-CÁ-go
(Bacchus)	(bacchic)	( - ' ' )	a BRÁND NÉW car
(Amphímacer )	(amphímacritic ?)	( ' - ' )	LÓVE IS BÉST

## METRICAL FEET

- 1 **Monómeter** "Thus I"
- 2 **Dímeter** "Rich the treasure"
- 3 **Trímeter** "A sword, a horse, a shield"
- 4 **Tetrámeter** "And in his anger now he rides"
- 5 **Pentámeter** "Draw forth thy sword, thou mighty man-at-arms"
- 6 **Hexámeter** "His foes have slain themselves, with whom he should contend."
- 7 **Heptámeter** "There's not a joy the world can give like that it takes away."
- 8 **Octámeter** "When I sit down to reason, think to take my stand nor swerve,"
- 9 **Nonámeter** "Roman Virgil, thou that sing'st Ilion's lofty temples robed with fire,"

## SPECIAL NAMES

Heroic meter	Iambic pentameter
Long meter	Iambic tetrameter
Alexandrine	One line of iambic hexameter

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**SCANSION**

To SCAN a line is to divide it into its several feet, then to tell *what kind of feet* make up the line and *how many* of them there are, as in the descriptive names of Chaucer and Shakespeare's 'iambic pentameter.'

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**STANZAIC FORMS**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Special rhymes / forms</i>
Couplet	2	rhymes: aa (2 heroic lines = <i>heroic couplet</i> )
Tercet	3	rhymes: aaa, aab, abb ( <i>Terza rima</i> = aba bcb cdc, etc.)
Quatrain	4	( <i>In Memoriam Stanza</i> = abba in iambic tetrameter)
Quintain	5	( <i>Limerick</i> rhymes: aabba)
Sestet	6	—
Seven-line	7	( <i>Rime Royale</i> = ababbcc in iambic pentameter)
Octet	8	( <i>Ottava Rima</i> = abababcc in iambic pentameter)
Nine-line	9	( <i>Spencerian Stanza</i> = ababbcbcc in iambic pentameter; the final line is an Alexandrine)

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**Some fixed poetic forms**

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**THE SONNET**

The sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter (in Romance languages, iambic hexameter)

The English (Shakespearean) Sonnet is made up of three quatrains and a heroic couplet and rhymes abab cdcd efef gg

The Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet is made up of an octet and a sestet. It rhymes: abbaabba cdecde; in sonnets written in English, the last six rhymes may come in any order.

**THE SESTINA**

The sestina dates from the 12th century. Its 39 lines divide into six sestets and a three-line envoy. The same words that end the lines in the first sestet will end the lines in all the others in a different but prescribed order. Each stanza uses these ending words from the previous stanza in the order 6-1-5-2-4-3. All six words appear in the envoy, three of them at the end of a line.

**THE VILLANELLE**

The villanelle, a complex and rare form, is made up of 19 lines arranged in five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Line 1 must be repeated as lines 6, 12, and 18; line 3 must be repeated as lines 9, 15, and 19.

**THE BALLAD**

The ballad is made up of quatrains in which the second and fourth lines must rhyme and are generally trimetric; the first and third lines are normally tetrametric.

**TWO JAPANESE FORMS**

Syllables instead of feet are counted. The haiku is a three-line poem in which the first and third lines have five, the second, seven. The tanka is a five line poem in which the first and third lines have five, the other three, seven each. The haiku must contain a reference to a season.

# PROSODY PRACTICE

## Putting them together:

Give the kind of foot, then the number of feet, using the conventional terminology.  
For numbers 13-15, create (or recall) an example of the meter given.

<i>line</i>	<i>name</i>
1. The night is chill; the forest bare	
2. Sent them spinning down the gutter	
3. I will not eat them with a goat, I will not eat them on a boat I do not like green eggs and ham I do not like them, Sam-I-Am.	
4. In the glare of a scoreboard's last light	
5. You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?	
6. Romeo Montague, Juliet Capulet	
7. With torn and bleeding hearts we smile	
8. We wear the mask.	
9. Where lasting friendship seeds are sewn	
10. And those Power Puff Girls are in trouble again	
11. Because I could not stop for Death He kindly stopped for me The carriage held but just ourselves And Immortality. <i>(Emily Dickinson)</i>	
12. If we shadows have offended Think but this, and all is mended... <i>(Shakespeare)</i>	
13.	iambic pentameter
14.	trochaic tetrameter
15.	iambic trimeter



## Poetry Response Assignment

Students sometimes cringe when they learn that a major focus of this course is poetry. As children most of you loved poetry, reciting nursery rhymes and chanting limericks. What happened? We don't have the answer, but one of our goals this year will be to rekindle your enthusiasm for and appreciation of poetry.

Laurence Perrine suggests, "People have read poetry or listened to it or recited it because they liked it, because it gave them enjoyment. But this is not the whole answer. Poetry in all ages has been regarded as important, not simply as one of several alternative forms of amusement, as one person might choose bowling, another, chess, and another, poetry. Rather, it has been regarded as something central to existence, something having unique value to the fully realized life, something that we are better off for having and without which we are spiritually impoverished."

John Ciardi writes, "Everyone who has an emotion and a language knows something about poetry. What he knows may not be much on an absolute scale, and it may not be organized within him in a useful way, but once he discovers the pleasure of poetry, he is likely to be surprised to discover how much he always knew without knowing he knew it. He may discover, somewhat as the character in the French play discovered to his amazement that he had been talking prose all his life, that he had been living poetry. Poetry, after all, is about life. Anyone who is alive and conscious must have some information about it."

This year we are approaching poetry two ways. We are studying some poems in class, learning about the tools and devices poets use in their craft, talking about what a poem means or how it made you feel, or seeking answers to questions we raised while reading or studying. We might call this our structured or formal study of poetry. But we are also studying poetry informally through poetry responses.

You will be writing responses about every two weeks. Please look closely at the list of dates to know when these responses are due. You will have a different list of poems each quarter. Your first job is to get to know them. To that end, you will read all the poems from the list at least once every week. Read them at different times, in different places, and in different moods. You will notice how the poems will reveal themselves to you over the weeks. Although you will respond on paper to only one poem for each assignment, you want to become acquainted with all the poems on the list.

For each assignment date, you will choose one poem from the list and write a response to that poem. These responses are to be a minimum of about 200 words, or the equal of one typed page. Place the response in "the box" at the beginning of class on the day it is due. Late poetry reactions do not receive credit.

You may approach this assignment several ways. Sometimes students write an analysis of the poem. They explain what is going on in the poem and relate what they think the theme is. Others begin with the theme and elaborate on that, while some apply the poem to themselves by relating a personal experience. Occasionally a student will write a response on one line from the poem. What you do with the response is up to you as long as you say something. Students who explain that they "could not understand the poem no matter how" they tried do not get credit. You will not like all the poems, but if you choose to write that you dislike a poem because of its content or style, support that with concrete detail.

*Adapted from Danny Lawrence;  
Career Center, Winston-Salem, North Carolina*



## Poems for Response: Second Quarter

Choose one of the following poems for each of the poetry responses. All are found in Meyer, *The Bedford Introduction to Literature, 8<sup>th</sup> ed.* on the indicated pages. Use a poem once only during the quarter. Write on one poem only for a poetry response.

Yousif al-Sa'igh, "An Iraqi Evening,"  
p. 1309

Anne Bradstreet, "To My Dear and Loving  
Husband," p. 1241

Gwendolyn Brooks, "We Real Cool," p. 860

Randall Jarrell, "The Death of the Ball  
Turret Gunner," p. 832

E. E. Cummings, "In Just—," p. 1034

John Donne, "Death, be not proud,"  
p. 1058

Linda Pastan, "Pass/Fail," p. 1252

Robert Hayden, "Those Winter Sundays,"  
p. 771

Seamus Heaney, "The Forge," p. 1013

Robert Herrick, "To the Virgins, to Make  
Much of Time," p. 842

Langston Hughes, "The Negro Speaks of  
Rivers," p. 1162

Sharon Olds, "Rites of Passage," p. 1047

Henry Reed, "Naming of Parts," 943

Theodore Roethke, "My Papa's Waltz,"  
p. 999

Shakespeare, "When, in disgrace with  
Fortune and men's eyes," p. 1344

Shelley, "Ozymandias," p. 1344

Cathy Song, "The Youngest Daughter,"  
p. 857

Phillis Wheatley, "On Being Brought from  
Africa to America," p. BC-C

Walt Whitman, "When I Heard the  
Learn'd Astronomer," p. 1352

William Carlos Williams, "This Is Just to  
Say," p. 1353

William Wordsworth, "The world is too  
much with us," p. 1009

William Butler Yeats, "Sailing to  
Byzantium," p. 1359

### Due Dates

<b>1</b>	
<b>2</b>	
<b>3</b>	
<b>4</b>	
<b>5</b>	

<b>6</b>	
<b>7</b>	
<b>8</b>	
<b>9</b>	
<b>10</b>	

Poetry Response Student Log

	Date	Poem	Response
1	Wed 3 Oct	<i>Ozy</i>	<i>Personal, political</i>
2	Fri 12 Oct	<i>Africa</i>	<i>Political</i>
3	Wed 17 Oct	<i>Naming Parts</i>	<i>Political *</i>
4	Fri 26 Oct	<i>We Cool</i>	<i>Personal, structure</i>
5	Wed 31 Oct	<b>L A T E</b>	<b>L A T E</b>
<b>85</b>			
6	Wed 14 Nov	<i>Wild Swans</i>	<i>Analysis, personal</i>
7	Fri 23 Nov	<i>Belle Dame</i>	<i>Structure, analysis</i>
8	Wed 28 Nov	<i>In Just---</i>	<i>Mythology, fig. lang.</i>
9	Fri 7 Dec	<i>Golden Retrievals</i>	<i>Form, personal</i>
10	Wed 12 Dec	<i>Death not proud</i>	<i>Rhyme, meter</i>
11	Fri 21 Dec	<i>To the Virgins</i>	<i>Personal, humor, structure</i>
12	Wed 9 Jan	<i>That the Night Come</i>	<i>Scansion</i>
13	Fri 18 Jan	<i>the Forge</i>	<i>Comparison (theme)</i>
<b>100</b>			
14	Wed 6 Feb	<i>Out, Out</i>	<i>Theme, relates to AILDying</i>
15	Fri 15 Feb	<i>When I consider</i>	<i>Personal, thematic</i>
16	Wed 20 Feb	<i>When in disgrace</i>	<i>Political, personal</i>
17	Fri 29 Feb	<i>Birches</i>	<i>Comparison (Out out)</i>
18	Wed 5 Mar	<i>Fern Hill</i>	<i>Cultural, structure</i>
19	Fri 14 Mar	<i>Leda and the Swan</i>	<i>Compare (Wild swans), personal</i>
20	Wed 19 Mar	<i>Late Aubade</i>	<i>Diction, patterns</i>
21	Fri 28 Mar	<i>Mother 2 Son</i>	<i>Political, Theme, Personal</i>
22	Wed 2 Apr	<i>Song</i>	<i>'spacey' personal</i>
<b>100</b>			
23	Wed 16 Apr		
24	Fri 25 Apr		
25	Wed 30 Apr		

## Team Poetry Lessons Some Guidelines

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### Topics:

Three teams will be assigned a poet: either Dickinson, Frost, or Hughes.

Four teams will be assigned a theme: either love and longing, teaching and learning, humor and satire, or 'Border Crossings.'

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### Poems:

Use the poems in *The Bedford Introduction to Literature, 8th ed.*

You may add one additional poem if you feel it necessary.

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### Secondary Sources:

#### Print:

- Use the critical material in the literature anthology.

#### Electronic:

- Begin with the widest group of Internet sites you can locate but at least ten, exclusive of encyclopedias and other general sites.
- From that group, select the three most helpful.

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### Presentation:

- Your team will give a short lesson on your poet. You will probably want to focus on two of the poems. You want the point of the lesson to be something more valuable than, say, Dickinson is swell. Find a focus. You will have 20-30 minutes, inclusive of any class discussion or questions you choose to include. Your grade will be penalized for every minute you go beyond 30.
- You are to include some sort of a visual aid along the way. It could be projected, drawn on the board, held up. posted.... you decide what will be most effective.

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### Written work:

- You will submit a lesson summary of about one side of one page.
- You will turn in as well a tidy list of the web sites your team found. Include the title and the URL for each.
- You will write an "AP-type" essay question that prompts writers to identify one or more techniques or devices your poet uses and to explain how the poet uses them to convey an element such as theme, character, tone, point of view, idea, setting, mood, or the like.
- The written work may be handwritten, printed, or submitted electronically.

Questions 14-23. Read the following poem carefully before you choose your answers.

## Sestina

September rain falls on the house.  
 In the failing light, the old grandmother  
 sits in the kitchen with the child  
 beside the Little Marvel Stove\*,  
 5 reading the jokes from the almanac,  
 laughing and talking to hide her tears.

She thinks that her equinoctial tears  
 and the rain that beats on the roof of the  
           house  
 were both foretold by the almanac,  
 10 but only known to a grandmother.  
 The iron kettle sings on the stove.  
 She cuts some bread and says to the  
           child,

*It's time for tea now;* but the child  
 is watching the teakettle's small hard  
           tears  
 15 dance like mad on the hot black stove,  
 the way the rain must dance on the  
           house.  
 Tidying up, the old grandmother  
 hangs up the clever almanac

on its string. Birdlike, the almanac  
 20 hovers half open above the child,  
 hovers above the old grandmother  
 and her teacup full of dark brown tears.  
 She shivers and says she thinks the house  
 feels chilly, and puts more wood in the  
           stove.

25 *It was to be,* says the Marvel Stove.  
*I know what I know,* says the almanac.  
 With crayons the child draws a rigid  
           house  
 and a winding pathway. Then the child  
 puts in a man with buttons like tears  
 30 and shows it proudly to the  
           grandmother.

But secretly, while the grandmother  
 busies herself about the stove,  
 the little moons fall down like tears  
 from between the pages of the almanac  
 35 into the flower bed the child  
 has carefully placed in the front of the  
           house.

*Time to plant tears,* says the almanac.  
 The grandmother sings to the marvelous  
           stove  
 and the child draws another inscrutable  
           house.

\* Brand name of a wood- or coal-burning stove

14. The mood of the poem is best described as  
 (A) satiric  
 (B) suspenseful  
 (C) reproachful  
 (D) elegiac  
 (E) quizzical
15. In line 10, "known to" is best interpreted as  
 (A) imagined by  
 (B) intended for  
 (C) predicted by  
 (D) typified in  
 (E) experienced by
16. In line 19, "Birdlike" describes the  
 (A) markings on the pages of the almanac  
 (B) whimsicality of the almanac's sayings  
 (C) shape and movement of the almanac  
 (D) child's movements toward the almanac  
 (E) grandmother's movements toward the almanac
17. Between lines 24 and 25 and between lines :32 and 33, there is a shift from  
 (A) understatement to hyperbole  
 (B) realism to fantasy  
 (C) optimism to pessimism  
 (D) present events to recalled events  
 (E) formal diction to informal diction
18. The child's attitude is best described as one of  
 (A) anxious dismay  
 (B) feigned sympathy  
 (C) absorbed fascination  
 (D) silent remorse  
 (E) fretful boredom
19. All of the following appear to shed tears or be filled with tears EXCEPT the  
 (A) child  
 (B) teacup  
 (C) almanac  
 (D) teakettle  
 (E) grandmother
20. The grandmother and the child in the poem are portrayed primarily through descriptions of their  
 (A) actions  
 (B) thoughts  
 (C) conversation  
 (D) facial expressions  
 (E) physical characteristics
21. Throughout the poem, the imagery suggests that  
 (A) both nature and human beings are animated by similar forces  
 (B) most human activities have more lasting consequences than is commonly realized  
 (C) past events have little influence on activities of the present  
 (D) both natural and artificial creations are highly perishable  
 (E) the optimism of youth differs only slightly from the realism of age
22. Which of the following literary devices most significantly contributes to the unity of the poem?  
 (A) Use of internal rhyme  
 (B) Use of epigrammatic expressions  
 (C) Use of alliteration  
 (D) Repetition of key words  
 (E) Repetition of syntactic patterns
23. The poet's attitude toward the characters in the poem is best described as a combination of  
 (A) detachment and understanding  
 (B) disdain and curiosity  
 (C) envy and suspicion  
 (D) approval and amusement  
 (E) respect and resentment

- 14 *tone, vocabulary*  
 15 *vocabulary*  
 16 *imagery*  
 17 *figurative language*  
 18 *detail*  
 19 *detail*  
 20 *detail*  
 21 *detail*  
 22 *form, structure*  
 23 *tone, detail*

AP English Lit & Comp: MC Practice Bishop, "Sestina"

	Guess	A	B	C	Questions Type	Vocabulary, Notes....
<b>14</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>15</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>16</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>17</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>18</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>19</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>20</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>21</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>22</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>23</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Read the following poem carefully. Then write an essay in which you explain how the organization of the poem and the use of concrete details reveal both its literal and its metaphorical meanings. In your discussion, show how both of these meanings relate to the title.

(Suggested time—35 minutes)

## Storm Warnings

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Adrienne Rich

The glass has been falling all the afternoon,  
And knowing better than the instrument  
What winds are walking overhead, what zone  
Of gray unrest is moving across the land,  
I leave the book upon a pillowed chair  
And walk from window to closed window, watching  
Boughs strain against the sky

And think again, as often when the air  
Moves inward toward a silent core of waiting,  
How with a single purpose time has traveled  
By secret currents of the undiscerned  
Into this polar realm. Weather abroad  
And weather in the heart alike come on  
Regardless of prediction.

Between foreseeing and averting change  
Lies all the mastery of elements  
Which clocks and weatherglasses cannot alter.  
Time in the hand is not control of time,  
Nor shattered fragments of an instrument  
A proof against the wind; the wind will rise,  
We can only close the shutters.

I draw the curtains as the sky goes black  
And set a match to candles sheathed in glass  
Against the keyhole draught, the insistent whine  
Of weather through the unsealed aperture.  
This is our sole defense against the season;  
These are the things that we have learned to do  
Who live in troubled regions.



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# Vincent

*(Starry Starry Night)*

Song lyrics by Don McLean

Starry starry night, paint your palette blue and grey  
Look out on a summer's day with eyes that know the darkness in my soul  
Shadows on the hills, sketch the trees and the daffodils  
Catch the breeze and the winter chills, in colors on the snowy linen land

5 Now I understand what you tried to say to me  
How you suffered for your sanity How you tried to set them free  
They would not listen they did not know how, perhaps they'll listen now

Starry starry night, flaming flowers that brightly blaze  
Swirling clouds in violet haze reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue  
10 Colors changing hue, morning fields of amber grain  
Weathered faces lined in pain are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand

*Refrain:*

For they could not love you, but still your love was true  
And when no hope was left in sight, on that starry starry night  
You took your life as lovers often do,  
15 But I could have told you, Vincent,  
This world was never meant for one as beautiful as you

Starry, starry night, portraits hung in empty halls  
Frameless heads on nameless walls with eyes that watch the world and can't forget.  
Like the stranger that you've met, the ragged man in ragged clothes  
20 The silver thorn of bloody rose, lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow

Now I think I know what you tried to say to me  
How you suffered for your sanity How you tried to set them free  
They would not listen they're not listening still  
Perhaps they never will.

## THE FALL OF ICARUS



— Pieter Bruegel the Elder

### Musee des Beaux Arts W.H. Auden

About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters; how well, they understood  
Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking  
                  dully along;  
5 How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
10 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.  
In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away  
15 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
20 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

### Landscape With The Fall Of Icarus William Carlos Williams

According to Brueghel  
when Icarus fell  
it was spring  
a farmer was ploughing  
5 his field  
the whole pageantry  
of the year was  
awake tingling  
near  
10 the edge of the sea  
concerned  
with itself  
sweating in the sun  
that melted  
15 the wings' wax  
unsignificantly  
off the coast  
there was  
a splash quite unnoticed  
20 this was  
Icarus drowning

**Icarus**  
**Edward Field**

Only the feathers floating around the hat  
Showed that anything more spectacular had occurred  
Than the usual drowning. The police preferred to ignore  
The confusing aspects of the case,  
5 And the witnesses ran off to a gang war.  
So the report filed and forgotten in the archives read simply  
Drowned, but it was wrong: Icarus  
Had swum away, coming at last to the city  
Where he rented a house and tended the garden.  
10 That nice Mr. Hicks the neighbors called him,  
Never dreaming that the gray, respectable suit  
Concealed arms that had controlled huge wings  
Nor that those sad, defeated eyes had once  
Compelled the sun. And had he told them  
15 They would have answered with a shocked, uncomprehending stare.  
No, he could not disturb their neat front yards;  
Yet all his books insisted that this was a horrible mistake:  
What was he doing aging in a suburb?  
Can the genius of the hero fall  
20 To the middling stature of the merely talented?  
And nightly Icarus probes his wound  
And daily in his workshop, curtains carefully drawn,  
Constructs small wings and tries to fly  
To the lighting fixture on the ceiling:  
25 Fails every time and hates himself for trying.  
He had thought himself a hero, had acted heroically,  
And now dreamt of his fall, the tragic fall of the hero;  
But now rides commuter trains,  
Serves on various committees,  
30 And wishes he had drowned.



*The Lament for Icarus*  
Herbert Draper

**To A Friend Whose Work Has Come To Triumph**  
**Anne Sexton**

Consider Icarus, pasting those sticky wings on,  
testing this strange little tug at his shoulder blade,  
and think of that first flawless moment over the lawn  
of the labyrinth. Think of the difference it made!  
5 There below are the trees, as awkward as camels;  
and here are the shocked starlings pumping past  
and think of innocent Icarus who is doing quite well:  
larger than a sail, over the fog and the blast  
of the plushy ocean, he goes. Admire his wings!  
10 Feel the fire at his neck and see how casually  
he glances up and is caught, wondrously tunneling  
into that hot eye. Who cares that he fell back to the sea?  
See him acclaiming the sun and come plunging down  
while his sensible daddy goes straight into town.

Icarus  
By Tony Curtis

Out of an English summer morning's sky  
drops an Indian who failed in flight  
miles short of heaven. This frozen Icarus  
thrown from the wheel-bay of a 747,  
5 splashes into a Surrey reservoir,  
cracking the water like a whip.  
This poor man stowed away  
in the Delhi heat, curled  
himself into an oven of rubber and oil,  
10 and dreamed as he rose in the deafening take-off  
of food and rain and Coca-Cola  
and television where the colour never ends.  
The waitress at the Granada stop  
tapping in two coffees and a Danish  
15 at the till, for no reason at all,  
looked up, saw a bird, or an engine,  
or a man, and then nothing  
but blue sky again.

Icarus' Diatribe  
By Aaron Pastula

How we have wasted the years here, Father;  
Grounded in the shadow of Talus, whom you envied  
Too much, and murdered. We might be free  
If  
5 Ariadne had not received a precious ball of thread  
With which to save her lover, yet you would rescue  
Another even though we are trapped, and only  
Two left.  
I've watched your shadows sleep against stone walls  
10 While I ran our labyrinth, the sun above  
Driving me as if I should call for my final repose  
Alone.  
Do you remember the torrid wind maneuvering  
Around the angles of our usless garrison,  
15 Filling empty mouths with surrogate conversation?  
We  
Seldom spoke, you and I, roaming like languid souls  
When the Minotaur's threat was dead.  
And yet I felt the lyre singing in my breast,  
20 Always  
Crying out background noise for the construction  
Of my cunningly wrought wings; my only means to rise  
Above these steadfast fortress walls, lest I  
Surrender  
25 To your silence. I know the gulls were wailing  
When I robbed them, but they had flown too close:  
I am not to blame for the necessity of my purpose.  
To you  
I am as your own divided heart - double-sexed  
30 And beating as a thief's in the falling hours of twilight,  
Awaiting my time to retire. Instead I take flight,  
The sun  
Drawing me as an opiate away from our  
Etherized utopia, leaving you puzzled; compelling  
35 You to follow me out above the open,  
Beguiling sea

Icarus  
By Christine Hemp

It was his idea, this flying thing.  
We collected feathers at night, stuffing  
our pockets with mourning dove down. By day,  
we'd weave and glue them with the wax  
5 I stole after we'd shooed the bees away.  
Oh, how it felt, finally, to blow off Crete  
leaving a labyrinth of dead-ends:  
my clumsiness with figures, father's calm  
impatience, cool logic, interminable devising.  
10 The sea wind touched my face like balm.  
He thought I'd tag along as usual,  
in the wake of his careful scheme  
bound by the string connecting father and son,  
invisible thread I tried for years to untie.  
15 I ached to be a good-for-something on my own.  
I didn't know I'd get drunk with the heat,  
flying high, too much a son to return.  
Poor Daedelus, his mouth an O below,  
his hands outstretched to catch the rain  
20 of wax. He still doesn't know.  
My wings fell, yes - I saw him hover  
over the tiny splash - but by then I'd been  
swallowed into love's eye, the light I've come to see  
as home, drowning in the yes, this swirling  
25 white-hot where night will never find me.  
And now when my father wakes  
each morning, his bones still sore  
from his one-time flight, his confidence undone  
because the master plan fell through,  
30 he rises to a light he never knew, his son.

The Fall of Icarus (Metamorphosis, VIII: 183-235)  
By Ovid, Translated by Sir Samuel Garth

These, as the angler at the silent brook,  
Or mountain-shepherd leaning on his crook,  
Or gaping plowman, from the vale describes,  
They stare, and view 'em with religious eyes,  
5 And strait conclude 'em Gods; since none, but they,  
Thro' their own azure skies cou'd find a way.  
When now the boy, whose childish thoughts aspire  
To loftier aims, and make him ramble high'r,  
Grown wild, and wanton, more embolden'd flies  
10 Far from his guide, and soars among the skies.  
The soft'ning wax, that felt a nearer sun,  
Dissolv'd apace, and soon began to run.  
The youth in vain his melting pinions shakes,  
His feathers gone, no longer air he takes:  
15 Oh! Father, father, as he strove to cry,  
Down to the sea he tumbled from on high,  
And found his Fate; yet still subsists by fame,  
Among those waters that retain his name.



## Courtyards in Delft

Derek Mahon  
*(for Gordon Woods)*

Oblique light on the trite, on brick and tile—  
Immaculate masonry, and everywhere that  
Water tap, that broom and wooden pail  
To keep it so. House-proud, the wives  
5 Of artisans pursue their thrifty lives  
Among scrubbed yards, modest but adequate.  
Foliage is sparse, and clings. No breeze  
Ruffles the trim composure of those trees.

No spinet-playing emblematic of  
10 The harmonies and disharmonies of love;  
No lewd fish, no fruit, no wide-eyed bird  
About to fly its cage while a virgin  
Listens to her seducer, mars the chaste  
15 Perfection of the thing and the thing made.  
Nothing is random, nothing goes to waste.  
We miss the dirty dog, the fiery gin.

That girl with her back to us who waits  
For her man to come home for his tea  
Will wait till the paint disintegrates  
20 And ruined dikes admit the esurient sea;  
Yet this is life too, and the cracked  
Out-house door a verifiable fact  
As vividly mnemonic as the sunlit  
Railings that front the houses opposite.

25 I lived there as a boy and know the coal  
Glittering in its shed, late-afternoon  
Lambency informing the deal table,  
The ceiling cradled in a radiant spoon.  
I must be lying low in a room there,  
30 A strange child with a taste for verse,  
While my hard-nosed companions dream of fire  
And sword upon parched veldt and fields of rain-swept gorse.



*Courtyards in Delft*  
Pieter de Hooch, 1659

National Gallery, London  
approx. 29 x 23.5 inches

# The Great Wave: Hokusai

Donald Finkel

## The Great Wave: Hokusai

But we will take the problem in its most obscure manifestation, and suppose that our spectator is an average Englishman. A trained observer, carefully hidden behind a screen, might notice a dilation in his eyes, even an intake of his breath, perhaps a grunt. (Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art*)

It is because the sea is blue,  
Because Fuji is blue, because the bent blue  
Men have white faces, like the snow  
On Fuji, like the crest of the wave in the sky the color of their  
5 Boats. It is because the air  
Is full of writing, because the wave is still: that nothing  
Will harm these frail strangers,  
That high over Fuji in an earthcolored sky the fingers  
Will not fall; and the blue men  
10 Lean on the sea like snow, and the wave like a mountain leans  
Against the sky.

In the painter's sea  
All fishermen are safe. All anger bends under his unity.  
But the innocent bystander, he merely  
15 'Walks round a corner, thinking of nothing': hidden  
Behind a screen we hear his cry.  
He stands half in and half out of the world; he is the men,  
But he cannot see below Fuji  
The shore the color of sky; he is the wave, he stretches  
20 His claws against strangers. He is  
Not safe, not even from himself. His world is flat.  
He fishes a sea full of serpents, he rides his boat  
Blindly from wave to wave toward Ararat.



*The Great Wave at Kamagawa*  
Katsushika Hokusai, 1831  
woodblock print

# Not my Best Side

U. A. Fanthorpe

## I

Not my best side, I'm afraid.  
 The artist didn't give me a chance to  
 Pose properly, and as you can see,  
 Poor chap, he had this obsession with  
 5 Triangles, so he left off two of my  
 Feet. I didn't comment at the time  
 (What, after all, are two feet  
 To a monster?) but afterwards  
 I was sorry for the bad publicity.  
 10 Why, I said to myself, should my conqueror  
 Be so ostentatiously beardless, and ride  
 A horse with a deformed neck and square hoofs?  
 Why should my victim be so  
 Unattractive as to be inedible,  
 15 And why should she have me literally  
 On a string? I don't mind dying  
 Ritually, since I always rise again,  
 But I should have liked a little more blood  
 To show they were taking me seriously.

## II

20 It's hard for a girl to be sure if  
 She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite  
 Took to the dragon. It's nice to be  
 Liked, if you know what I mean. He was  
 So nicely physical, with his claws  
 25 And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail,  
 And the way he looked at me,  
 He made me feel he was all ready to  
 Eat me. And any girl enjoys that.  
 So when this boy turned up, wearing machinery,  
 30 On a really dangerous horse, to be honest  
 I didn't much fancy him. I mean,

What was he like underneath the hardware?  
 He might have acne, blackheads or even  
 Bad breath for all I could tell, but the dragon--  
 35 Well, you could see all his equipment  
 At a glance. Still, what could I do?  
 The dragon got himself beaten by the boy,  
 And a girl's got to think of her future.

## III

I have diplomas in Dragon  
 40 Management and Virgin Reclamation.  
 My horse is the latest model, with  
 Automatic transmission and built-in  
 Obsolescence. My spear is custom-built,  
 And my prototype armour  
 45 Still on the secret list. You can't  
 Do better than me at the moment.  
 I'm qualified and equipped to the  
 Eyebrow. So why be difficult?  
 Don't you want to be killed and/or rescued  
 50 In the most contemporary way? Don't  
 You want to carry out the roles  
 That sociology and myth have designed for you?  
 Don't you realize that, by being choosy,  
 You are endangering job prospects  
 55 In the spear- and horse-building industries?  
 What, in any case, does it matter what  
 You want? You're in my way.





## St George and the Dragon

Uccello (1397-1435)  
National Gallery, London

### Looking at Point-of-View: Three Perspectives for One Poem

1. Look at the painting closely. Based on your knowledge of myth and legend, what are some initial inferences you can draw concerning the figures depicted in the painting? In other words, what are some of the characteristics you assume each character embodies?  
The Maiden / The Dragon / The Knight?
4. Once you have heard the responses from the other groups, please answer the following question: Why is the knight interested most in maintaining the paradigm represented in the painting?

Homework: Taking all of "Not My Best Side" into consideration, along with the comments of your classmates, write a short response (1 page or so) in which you discuss one of the main ideas in this poem. Specifically discuss how the different points of view are significant in expressing this idea. For this assignment, your first sentence needs to be your thesis statement.

*Now read your stanza and then answer the following questions:*

2. In what ways does your speaker reinforce or affirm the assumptions you made about him/her/it?
3. In what ways does your speaker reject or go against the assumptions you made about him/her/it?

*Lance Bala,  
Bellevue, Washington*