“Snow Day” by Billy Collins

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| Today we woke up to a revolution of snow,  its white flag waving over everything,  the landscape vanished,  not a single mouse to punctuate the blankness,  and beyond these windows  the government buildings smothered,  schools and libraries buried, the post office lost  under the noiseless drift,  the paths of trains softly blocked,  the world fallen under this falling.  In a while I will put on some boots  and step out like someone walking in water,  and the dog will porpoise through the drifts,  and I will shake a laden branch,  sending a cold shower down on us both.  But for now I am a willing prisoner in this house,  a sympathizer with the anarchic cause of snow.  I will make a pot of tea  and listen to the plastic radio on the counter,  as glad as anyone to hear the news  that the Kiddie Corner School is closed,  the Ding-Dong School, closed,  the All Aboard Children's School, closed,  the Hi-Ho Nursery School, closed,  along with -- some will be delighted to hear --  the Toadstool School, the Little School,  Little Sparrows Nursery School,  Little Stars Pre-School, Peas-and-Carrots Day School,  the Tom Thumb Child Center, all closed,  and -- clap your hands -- the Peanuts Play School.  So this is where the children hide all day,  These are the nests where they letter and draw,  where they put on their bright miniature jackets,  all darting and climbing and sliding,  all but the few girls whispering by the fence.  And now I am listening hard  in the grandiose silence of the snow,  trying to hear what those three girls are plotting,  what riot is afoot,  which small queen is about to be brought down. |
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| “Still I Rise” by Maya Angelou  You may write me down in history  With your bitter, twisted lies,  You may trod me in the very dirt  But still, like dust, I'll rise.  Does my sassiness upset you?  Why are you beset with gloom?  'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  Pumping in my living room.  Just like moons and like suns,  With the certainty of tides,  Just like hopes springing high,  Still I'll rise.  Did you want to see me broken?  Bowed head and lowered eyes?  Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  Weakened by my soulful cries?  Does my haughtiness offend you?  Don't you take it awful hard  'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  Diggin' in my own backyard.  You may shoot me with your words,  You may cut me with your eyes,  You may kill me with your hatefulness,  But still, like air, I'll rise.  Does my sexiness upset you?  Does it come as a surprise  That I dance like I've got diamonds  At the meeting of my thighs?  Out of the huts of history's shame  I rise  Up from a past that's rooted in pain  I rise  I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.  Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  I rise  Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  I rise  Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  I rise  I rise  I rise. | | |  |

### “Baseball” by Greg Hall

Baseball is grass, chalk, and dirt displayed the same yet differently

In every park that has ever heard the words play ball.

Baseball is a passion that bonds and divides all those who know it.

Baseball is a pair of hands stained with newsprint,

A set of eyes squinting to read a boxscore,

A brow creased in an attempt to recreate a three-hour game

From an inch square block of type.

Baseball is the hat I wear to mow the lawn.

Baseball is a simple game of catch

and the never-ending search for the perfect knuckleball.

Baseball is Willie vs Mickey, Gibson vs Koufax, and Buddy Biancalana vs the odds.

Baseball links Kansan and Missourian, American and Japanese,

But most of all father and son.

Baseball is the scent of spring,

The unmistakable sound of a double down the line,

And the face of a 10-year-old emerging from a pile of bodies

With a worthless yet priceless foul ball.

Baseball is a language of very simple words that tell unbelievably magic tales.

Baseball is three brothers in the same uniform on the same team for one brief summer

Captured forever in a black and white photo on a table by the couch.

Baseball is a glove on a shelf, oiled and tightly wrapped,

Slumbering through the stark winter months.

Baseball is a breast pocket bulging with a transistor radio.

Baseball is the reason there are transistor radios.

Baseball is a voice in a box describing men you've never met,

In a place you've never been,

Doing things you'll never have the chance to do.

Baseball is a dream that you never really give up on.

Baseball is precious.

Baseball is timeless.

Baseball is forever.

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“To My Mother” by Wendell Berry

I was your rebellious son,  
do you remember? Sometimes  
I wonder if you do remember,  
so complete has your forgiveness been.  
  
So complete has your forgiveness been  
I wonder sometimes if it did not  
precede my wrong, and I erred,  
safe found, within your love,  
  
prepared ahead of me, the way home,  
or my bed at night, so that almost  
I should forgive you, who perhaps  
foresaw the worst that I might do,  
  
and forgave before I could act,  
causing me to smile now, looking back,  
to see how paltry was my worst,  
compared to your forgiveness of it  
  
already given. And this, then,  
is the vision of that Heaven of which  
we have heard, where those who love  
each other have forgiven each other,  
  
where, for that, the leaves are green,  
the light a music in the air,  
and all is unentangled,  
and all is undismayed.

### “It's Raining In Love” by Richard Brautigan

### I don’t know what it is, but I distrust myself when I start to like a girl a lot. It makes me nervous. I don’t say the right things or perhaps I start to examine, evaluate compute what I am saying. If I say, “Do you think it’s going to rain?” and she says, “I don’t know,” I start thinking: Does she really like me? In other words I get a little creepy. A friend of mine once said, “It’s twenty times better to be friends with someone than it is to be in love with them.” I think he’s right and besides, it’s raining somewhere, programming flowers and keeping snails happy. That’s all taken care of. BUT

if a girl likes me a lot  
and starts getting real nervous  
and suddenly begins asking me funny questions  
and looks sad if I give the wrong answers  
and she says things like,  
“Do you think it’s going to rain?”  
and I say, “It beats me,”  
and she says, “Oh,”  
and looks a little sad  
at the clear blue California sky,  
I think: Thank God, it’s you, baby, this time  
instead of me.

**The Journey by Mary Oliver**

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice–  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
‘Mend my life!’  
each voice cried.  
But you didn’t stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with its stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.  
It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly  
recognised as your own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do–  
determined to save  
the only life you could save.

"In Celebration of Surviving," by Chuck Miller  
  
when senselessness has pounded you around on the ropes  
and you're getting too old to hold out for the future  
no work and running out of money,  
and then you make a try after something that you know you   
won't get  
and this long shot comes through on the stretch  
in a photo finish of your heart's trepidation  
then for a while  
even when the chill factor of these prairie winters puts it at   
fifty below  
you're warm and have that old feeling  
of being a comer, though belated  
in the crazy game of life

standing in the winter night  
emptying the garbage and looking at the stars  
you realize that although the odds are fantastically against you  
when that single January shooting star  
flung its wad in the maw of night  
it was yours  
and though the years are edged with crime and squalor  
that second wind, or twenty-third  
is coming strong  
and for a time  
perhaps a very short time  
one lives as though in a golden envelope of light