

Bite-Sized Book Club

Week 1: Poetry

Saturday, July 12

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Poetry Selections:

The three poems for this week are from very different authors and periods but loosely share a common mood of bittersweet reflection on the state of the world and the changes brought by time. Whether you enjoy these poems or not, please come to our book club meeting to share your thoughts!

Suggested Reflection Questions:

- Which of these poems speaks most to you?
- Are there ideas that resonate with you?
- Is there a use of words or writing style that appeals to you?
- What stands out to you as memorable or interesting as you read these poems?
- These poems are from three very different eras: 1842, 1923, and 2016. Does this affect how you read or engage with these poems?
- Do you have a favorite poem that connects with these poems in some way?

Further Reading:

Available at Town Hall Library:

- *The Poems of Robert Frost* by Robert Frost (Call Number: 811.52 FRO)
- *You Could Make This Place Beautiful* by Maggie Smith (Call Number: 921 SMI)
- *Selected Poems of Alfred, Lord Tennyson* by Alfred, Lord Tennyson (Call Number 821 TEN)

Available through Bridges Library System (Place Hold):

- *Robert Frost: A Biography* by Jeffrey Meyers
- *New England in Autumn: The Poetry of Robert Frost* (DVD)
- *Good Bones* by Maggie Smith
- *Keep Moving: Notes on Loss, Creativity, and Change* by Maggie Smith
- *Tennyson: To Strive, To Seek, To Find* by John Batchelor
- *Lives of the Poets* by Michael Schmidt
- And More!

Poem 1: “Nothing Gold Can Stay” (Robert Frost, 1923)

Copied from: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/148652/nothing-gold-can-stay-5c095cc5ab679>

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.

Poem 2: “Good Bones” (Maggie Smith, 2016)

Copied from: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/89897/good-bones>

Life is short, though I keep this from my children.
Life is short, and I’ve shortened mine
in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,
a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways
I’ll keep from my children. The world is at least
fifty percent terrible, and that’s a conservative
estimate, though I keep this from my children.
For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.
For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,
sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world
is at least half terrible, and for every kind
stranger, there is one who would break you,
though I keep this from my children. I am trying
to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,
walking you through a real shithole, chirps on
about good bones: This place could be beautiful,
right? You could make this place beautiful.

Poem 3: “Ulysses” (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1842)

Copied from: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45392/ulysses>

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

 This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

 There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.