

Forsythia

Billy Collins

It caught my eye a while ago, lit up
against the gloom of the woods
in the corner of a wild field,
the pulsing color of caution.

And now that I have spent a little time
on this stone wall watching its fire
flare out of the earth
I begin to think about the long chronicle of forsythia

how these same flowers have blazed
through the centuries,
roused from the ground by the churning of spring.
I would rather not look around the next

corner of the year to see how this will die,
its lights going out,
its bare, arcing branches
waving like whips in the bitter wind.

So I sit facing the past,
letting my feet dangle over the wall,
beating time against stone with my heels
as the long gray clouds roll over me.

Remember how Arnold by the Channel
thought of Sophocles who must have heard
the same shore-sounds long ago,
walking by the edge of the Aegean?

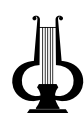
Well, I am holding in the palm of my thoughts
all the others who once were stopped,
like me, by this brightness,
this sulfuric cry for help:

women in tunics, women gathered by a well,
men in feathers, men swimming by a river,
all speaking languages I will never know,
saying the different words for its color

as I feel the syllables of yellow form in my mouth
and hear the sound of yellow fill the morning air.

Developed in partnership with

POETRY FOR
EVERY SEASON



POETRY
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA

© Billy Collins, Reprinted by permission of
Chris Calhoun Agency.

Snowdrops

Paula Meehan

So long trying to paint them, failing
to paint their shadows on the concrete path.

They are less a white than a bleaching out of green.
If you go down on your knees

and tilt their petals towards you
you'll look up under their petticoats

into a hoard of gold
like secret sunlight and their

three tiny striped green awnings that lend a
kind of frantic small-scale festive air.

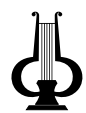
It is the first day of February
and I nearly picked a bunch for you,

my dying friend, but remembered in time
how you prefer to leave them

to wither back into the earth;
how you tell me it strengthens the stock.

POETRY FOR
EVERY SEASON

Developed in partnership with



POETRY
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA

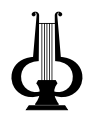
To a Snowdrop

William Wordsworth

Lone Flower, hemmed in with snows and white as they
But hardier far, once more I see thee bend
Thy forehead, as if fearful to offend,
Like an unbidden guest. Though day by day,
Storms, sallying from the mountain-tops, waylay
The rising sun, and on the plains descend;
Yet art thou welcome, welcome as a friend
Whose zeal outruns his promise! Blue-eyed May
Shall soon behold this border thickly set
With bright jonquils, their odours lavishing
On the soft west-wind and his frolic peers;
Nor will I then thy modest grace forget,
Chaste Snowdrop, venturous harbinger of Spring,
And pensive monitor of fleeting years!

POETRY FOR
EVERY SEASON

Developed in partnership with



POETRY
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA

Reluctance

Robert Frost

Out through the fields and the woods
And over the walls I have wended;
I have climbed the hills of view
And looked at the world, and descended;
I have come by the highway home,
And lo, it is ended.

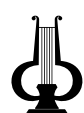
The leaves are all dead on the ground,
Save those that the oak is keeping
To ravel them one by one
And let them go scraping and creeping
Out over the crusted snow,
When others are sleeping.

And the dead leaves lie huddled and still,
No longer blown hither and thither;
The last lone aster is gone;
The flowers of the witch hazel wither;
The heart is still aching to seek,
But the feet question 'Whither?'

Ah, when to the heart of man
Was it ever less than a treason
To go with the drift of things,
To yield with a grace to reason,
And bow and accept the end
Of a love or a season?

POETRY FOR
EVERY SEASON

Developed in partnership with



POETRY
SOCIETY OF
AMERICA