

What's in it for Me? Poems *about* Poetry

A writer can choose any topic to write a poem about. We like and dislike certain poems primarily *because* of their topic. It's interesting to see what poets say about their craft and how/what they communicate. Let's look at the following poems about poetry and consider what they're saying.

"Kidnap Poem" – Nikki Giovanni

ever been kidnapped
by a poet
if i were a poet
i'd kidnap you
put you in my phrases and meter
you to jones beach
or maybe coney island
or maybe just to my house
lyric you in lilacs
dash you in the rain
blend into the beach
to complement my see
play the lyre for you
ode you with my love song
anything to win you
wrap you in the red Black green
show you off to mama
yeah if i were a poet i'd kid
nap you

1. What interesting things does Giovanni do with nouns? Does this make the reading of the poem harder in any way?

2. What does the line "blend into the beach/to complement my see" mean?

3. Giovanni says she'd do "anything to win you". What kinds of things do people do to win you over or make you do things?

“Poetry” – Marianne Moore

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because they are

useful. When they become so derivative as to become unintelligible,

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we do not admire what

we cannot understand: the bat

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf under

a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that feels a

flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician--

nor is it valid

to discriminate against 'business documents and

school-books'; all these phenomena are important. One must make a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half [poets](#), the result is not poetry,

nor till the poets among us can be

'literalists of

the imagination'--above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them', shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,

the raw material of poetry in
all its rawness and
that which is on the other hand
genuine, you are interested in poetry.

1. In the beginning of “Poetry” Marianne Moore admits what? How does she counteract this admission?
2. What does Moore say happens when things are too hard to understand? What do you do when something is too hard to understand on your own?
3. What does Moore mean by “till the poets among us can be/ ‘literalists of the imagination’”??
4. At the end of the poem, poetry is said to be comprised of what two elements that make it interesting?

“Poetry is a Trestle” –Nikki Giovanni

poetry is a trestle
spanning the distance between
what i feel
and what i say

like a locomotive
i rush full speed ahead
trusting your strength
to carry me over

sometimes we share a poem
because people are near
and they would notice me
noticing you
so i write X and your write O
and we both win

sometimes we share a poem
because i'm washing the dishes
and you're looking at your news

or sometimes we make a poem
because is Sunday and you want
ice cream while i want cookies

but always we share a poem
because belief predates action
and i believe
the most beautiful poem
ever heard is your heart
racing

1. Using contextual clues if you don't already know the meaning of "trestle", explain what it is.
2. What is the powerful imagery in the first stanza?
3. What everyday interactions does Giovanni use to create poetry? Are these scenarios relatable?
4. What does Giovanni mean by "belief predates action"? Do you agree?

5. According to Giovanni, what is the most beautiful kind of poetry fueled by?

“I Leave Bits of Me Everywhere” – Karen Swank-Fitch

poem-words are my clothing, stripped late at night
a trail from the threshold to the foot of bed
along the stairs lay verbs
the actions i need to climb twelve steps at 2 am
a vowel left adjacent to toothbrush
i get sloppy with tartar and allusions
over the cornice of mirror, hangs a strand of pearly metaphors
a simile in my sink
a limerick needing to be laundered
the clothes hamper is full of rimes & meters in want of mending
kick off the shoes,
make a pile of cacophony
wrap myself in the plum flannel of sonnet
hair up-tied with haiku
find the resting place for naked poet...
in ambiance i light a candle
a sestina goes up in flames.

1. What happens to literary terms in this poem?
2. What poetic tool does she use to create imagery?
3. What is the tone of this poem?
4. For Moore, words perform what function or purpose?
5. What do reading and writing do you for you? Even if it doesn't do much, explain why.