

mark up your texts as you read!

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DAY ONE: THE COST OF ART

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "A Musical Instrument" (1860; 1860)

	Rhyme	Syllables
What was he doing, the great god Pan,	A	9
Down in the reeds by the river?	B	8
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,	A	8 or 9
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,	C	10
And breaking the golden lilies afloat	5 C	10
With the dragon-fly on the river.	B	9
He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,	A	9
From the deep cool bed of the river:	B	9
The limpid water turbidly ran,	A	9
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,	10 D	10
And the dragon-fly had fled away,	D	9
Ere he brought it out of the river.	B	9
High on the shore sat the great god Pan,	A	9
While turbidly flow'd the river:	B	8
And hack'd and hew'd as a great god can,	15 A	9
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,	E	10
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed	E	11
To prove it fresh from the river.	B	8
He cut it short, did the great god Pan,	A	9
(How tall it stood in the river!)	20 B	8
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,	A	10
Steadily from the outside ring,	F	8
And notch'd the poor dry empty thing	F	8
In holes, as he sat by the river.	B	9
"This is the way," laugh'd the great god Pan,	25 A	9
(Laugh'd while he sat by the river,)	B	8
"The only way, since gods began	A	8
To make sweet music, they could succeed."	E	9
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,	E	11
He blew in power by the river.	30 B	8 or 9
Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!	A	5
Piercing sweet by the river!	B	7
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!	A	7
The sun on the hill forgot to die,	F	9
And the lilies reviv'd, and the dragon-fly	35 F	11
Came back to dream on the river.	B	8

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,		A	9
To laugh as he sits by the river,		B	9
Making a poet out of a man:		A	9
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain, --	40	G	9
For the reed which grows nevermore again		G	10
As a reed with the reeds in the river.		B	10

Points for Reflection

1. of all the Greek gods, why choose Pan when setting up this poem about the artistic process?
2. why employ a recurring sestet so reliant on repetition of "Pan" and "river"?
3. why might lines 1-4 open, not w/ pleasant iambic feet (unaccented, accented), but with more aggressive dactyls (accented, unaccented, unaccented) and trochees (accented, unaccented)? Isn't this, after all, a poem about sweet music?
4. is the Greek god depicted here malevolent or altruistic? Does Pan's arrival alter the environment permanently?
5. why might EBB describe the water from which Pan pulls the reed as "limpid" (l.9)?
6. in what way is this deity "great"?
7. does the reed retain any of its native qualities after it has been fashioned into an instrument (ll.13-24)?
8. why might Pan laugh (ll.25-26) while justifying his actions (ll.25-27)?
9. does Pan's music compensate for the destruction involved in creating his instrument (ll.31-36)?
10. what does this poem suggest about the cost of Art?
11. how does Pan's reaction to humankind's suffering differ from that of "the true gods" (ll.37-40)?

Christina Rossetti's "In an Artist's Studio" (1856; 1896)

One face looks out from all his canvases,	A	
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:	B	
We found her hidden just behind those screens,	B	
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.	A	
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,	C	5
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,	B	
A saint, an angel -- every canvas means	B	
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.	C	
He feeds upon her face by day and night,	D	
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,	E	10
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:	D	
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;	E	
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;	D	
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.	F	

Points for Reflection

1. what type of sonnet is Rossetti's poem?
2. why might Christina Rossetti have waited so long to publish this poem?
3. how does the poem's tone shift as one moves from opening octave to closing sestet?
4. what characteristics of his beloved has the painter memorialized in his portraits of her?

Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Sympathy" (1899)

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes, 5
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals —
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling 10
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting —
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me, 15
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings — 20
I know why the caged bird sings!

Points for Reflection

1. why does a bird serve Dunbar's purposes better in "Sympathy" than would any other imprisoned animal?
2. why does the bird not learn its lesson and cease to beat its wing on the bars--why does the old pain throb "again with a keener sting" (l.13, emphasis added)?
3. how and why does the listener habitually misinterpret the bird's song?
4. which of Dunbar's poems more closely approximates the form of a song?
5. do Dunbar's poems cast the "two-ness" of which Du Bois speaks as an empowering or constraining duality?

DAY TWO: DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" (1834; 1836, 1842)

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listen'd with heart fit to break. 5
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneel'd and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form 10
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soil'd gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And call'd me. When no voice replied, 15
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair, 20
Murmuring how she loved me—she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever. 25
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain. 30
Be sure I look'd up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipp'd me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do. 35
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around, 40
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laugh'd the blue eyes without a stain. 45
And I untighten'd next the tress

About her neck; her cheek once more
 Blush'd bright beneath my burning kiss:
 I propp'd her head up as before,
 Only, this time my shoulder bore 50
 Her head, which droops upon it still:
 The smiling rosy little head,
 So glad it has its utmost will,
 That all it scorn'd at once is fled,
 And I, its love, am gain'd instead! 55
 Porphyria's love: she guess'd not how
 Her darling one wish would be heard.
 And thus we sit together now,
 And all night long we have not stirr'd,
 And yet God has not said a word! 60

Points for Reflection

1. should the reader attribute the personification of lines 1-4 to the narrator or the author?
2. what rhyme scheme does Browning follow in this poem? Why might Browning hide the poem's structure by eliminating the traditional lines of space between each stanza?
3. consider the significance of Browning's interrupting the enjambment of lines 5-6.
4. what array of things does Porphyria do that warm the cottage (ll.6-9)?
5. which character appears to be in control in lines ll.15-20?
6. what struggle does Porphyria relay to the narrator (ll.21-30)?
7. is the narrator correct to interpret Porphyria's "passion" (l.26) as "worship" (l.33)?
8. do you consider the narrator's assessment of Porphyria as "perfectly pure and good" to be a function of her actual character or his current emotional state?
9. what does the narrator's perspective on his shocking actions reveal about the workings of his mind (l.41-55)? Do you consider his actions those of a criminal or a madman?
10. does it change your understanding of the poem to learn that Browning first published it as "Porphyria" (1836), then paired it with "Johannes Agricola in Meditation" under the title "Madhouse Cells" (1842), and finally separated it out again under its current title (1863)?

Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842; 1842)
published originally in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842)

Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now; Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands. 5
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà Pandolf" by design, *for never read*
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I) 10
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps 15
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough 20
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast, 25
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech, 30
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With *anybody's* gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill 35
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set 40
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse
--E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands; 45

Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
 As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet
 The company below, then. I repeat,
 The Count your master's known munificence
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense 50
 Of *mine* for dowry will be disallowed;
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
 Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity, 55
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Points for Reflection

1. as imagined by the narrator, why might the painting of the Duchess indicate a "spot of joy" on her cheek? Also, what exactly does "spot of joy" (ll.14-15, 21) denote?
2. of what does the narrator accuse the wife pictured in this painting, and how convincing is his argument?
3. did the narrator express his grievances to his wife in no uncertain terms?
4. where is the narrator's wife now?
5. who is the narrator's audience (auditor), and what is the narrator's current endgame? Does it make sense that the narrator would tell his auditor the story behind the painting, given what the narrator is presently attempting to achieve?
6. Browning could have placed any piece of art in the same vicinity as the Duchess's painting. Why might he have chosen the statue of Neptune taming a sea-horse (ll.54-56)?
7. literary critic Robert Langbaum suggests, in *The Poetry of Experience* (1957), that the attentive reader is led to "identify" with Italian duke of the poem, and that his "conviction of matchless superiority, his intelligence and bland amorality, his poise, his taste for art, his manners" overwhelm the reader, causing us to suspend moral judgment because we prefer to participate in the duke's power and freedom, in his hard core of character fiercely loyal to itself" (83). Do you agree with Langbaum's position?

Alfred Tennyson’s “The Lady of Shalott” (1831-32; 1832 & 1842)

PART I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
 To many-tower'd Camelot; 5
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
 The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver, 10
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
 Flowing down to Camelot.

Four gray walls, and four gray towers, 15
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
 The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd 20
By slow horses; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
 Skimming down to Camelot:
But who hath seen her wave her hand?
Or at the casement seen her stand? 25
Or is she known in all the land,
 The Lady of Shalott?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly 30
From the river winding clearly,
 Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy 35
 Lady of Shalott.'

PART II

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot. 40

She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott. 45

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot: 50
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad, 55
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;
And sometimes thro' the mirror blue 60
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights, 65
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights,
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed; 70
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A bow-shot from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves, 75
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.

A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field, 80
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily 85
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott. 90

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together, 95
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd; 100
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river 105
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room, 110
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side; 115
'The curse is come upon me!' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,

The broad stream in his banks complaining, 120
Heavily the low sky raining
 Over tower'd Camelot;
Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote 125
 The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance 130
 Did she look to Camelot.

And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;
The broad stream bore her far away,
 The Lady of Shalott. 135

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
 She floated down to Camelot: 140
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy, 145
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
 Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;
For ere she reach'd upon the tide 150
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
 The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery, 155
A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
 Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame, 160
And round the prow they read her name,
 The Lady of Shalott.

DAY THREE: FAITH AND THE INEFFABLE

E. B. Browning's "The Soul's Expression" (1844)

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round 5
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole, 10
And utter all myself into the air:
But if I did it, -- was the thunder roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

Points for Reflection

1. which sonnet form has EBB employed here? The Shakespearean/English sonnet (three quatrains & concluding couplet), Petrarchan/Italian sonnet (octave & sestet), or the Spenserian sonnet (ababbcbccdcdee)?
2. what is that "music" of the narrator's "nature" which she struggles to express?
3. what would happen to this narrator, were s/he successful in expressing his/her innermost soul?

**Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" (c.1851; 1867)
published in *New Poems* (1867)**

The sea is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. 5
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling, 10
At their return, up the high strand.
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago 15
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 20

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, 25
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems 30
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain 35
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Points for Reflection

1. who is the poem's auditor/audience?
2. what tone dominates this poem?
3. does the sound of pebbles rolling across the sand spark the same thoughts in the narrator that they apparently sparked in Sophocles?
4. does romantic affection appear to be a powerful substitute for religious faith?

E. Dickinson's #207 [214] (1861)

I taste a liquor never brewed -
From Tankards scooped in Pearl -
Not all the Frankfort Berries
Yield such an Alcohol!

Inebriate of air - am I - 5
And debauchee of dew -
Reeling - through endless summer days -
From inns of molten blue -

When "Landlords" turn the drunken Bee
Out of the Foxglove's door - 10
When Butterflies - renounce their "drams" -
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy Hats -
And Saints - to windows run -
To see the little Tippler 15
Leaning against the - Sun!

Points for Reflection

1. what extended conceit does Dickinson deploy to transform enjoyment of Nature into something scandalous?
2. does the tone one identifies in stanza four of this poem depend on the seriousness with which one takes religion? Do you read this poem as playful or satiric, gently indecorous or blatantly defiant?

E. Dickinson's #236 [324] (1861)

Some keep the Sabbath going to Church -
I keep it, staying at Home -
With a Bobolink for a Chorister -
And an Orchard, for a Dome -

Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice
I, just wear my Wings -
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church
Our little Sexton - sings. 5

God preaches, a noted Clergyman -
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last -
I'm going, all along. 10

Points for Reflection

1. does this poem constitute an act of apostasy? Is Dickinson rejecting institutionalized religion, and/or celebrating God's presence in Nature?
2. does this poem reify or destabilize the Christian concept of an afterlife?

E. Dickinson's #598 [632]

The Brain - is wider than the sky -
For - put them side by side -
The one the other will contain
With ease - and You - beside -

The Brain is deeper than the sea - 5
For - hold them - Blue to Blue -
The one the other will absorb -
As Sponges - Buckets - do -

The Brain is just the weight of God -
For - Heft them - Pound for Pound - 10
And they will differ - if they do -
As Syllable from Sound -

Points for Reflection

1. does ED's celebration of the human intellect constitute mere metaphor and hyperbole, or is her audacious claim accurate?
2. the first two stanzas of this poem celebrate the human mind's imaginative capacity. The third stanza goes a (large) step further and suggests that the Divine too can be encompassed by an individual's cognitive muscles. How might Dickinson's religious contemporaries have reacted to this poem, had they read it?
3. does ED's concluding simile deepen or ameliorate the poem's apparent apostasy?.
4. how might metaphysical poets George Herbert and John Donne have reacted to the topical content of this poem?

E. Dickinson's #1773 [1732]

My life closed twice before it's close;
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

5

Points for Reflection

1. how might the narrator's life have already "closed twice" prior to death (l.1)?
2. is the dominant tone of this poem playful, meditative, or something else?
3. does Dickinson's attention to the limits of human knowledge bind her firmly to human experience, pain, and loss? Because she refuses to conceive something she cannot immediately experience (the afterlife), is she bound to despair?

G. M. Hopkins's "Pied Beauty" (1877; 1918)

Glory be to God for dappled things—
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls, finches' wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough; 5
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change: 10
Praise him.

Points for Reflection

1. does Hopkins limit his praise of spots to those found in Nature?
2. how does stanza two constitute an elaboration of the simple principle proposed in stanza one?
3. applying the concept of sprung rhythm to this poem, how many metrical feet can you identify in each line? Remember that the length of each foot may vary: you're looking for the number of stressed syllables.
4. does Hopkins' use of alliteration draw attention to itself, or does it add subtle, aural effects to the images he describes?
5. why might lines 6-7 lack the alliteration and assonance that characterize the other lines of the poem?
6. to what end does Hopkins generate this celebration of Nature's beauty? What is his goal?

Solitary Worship. The Savage Philosopher. The Dual Mind. Spiritual Gifts versus Material Progress. The Paradox of "Christian Civilization."

The original attitude of the American Indian toward the Eternal, the "Great Mystery" that surrounds and embraces us, was as simple as it was exalted. To him it was the supreme conception, bringing with it the fullest measure of joy and satisfaction possible in this life.

The worship of the "Great Mystery" was silent, solitary, free from all self-seeking. It was silent, because all speech is of necessity feeble and imperfect; therefore the souls of my ancestors ascended to God in wordless adoration. It was solitary, because they believed that He is nearer to us in solitude, and there were no priests authorized to come between a man and his Maker. None might exhort or confess or in any way meddle with the religious experience of another. Among us all men were created sons of God and stood erect, as conscious of their divinity. Our faith might not be formulated in creeds, nor forced upon any who were unwilling to receive it; hence there was no preaching, proselyting, nor persecution, neither were there any scoffers or atheists.

There were no temples or shrines among us save those of nature. Being a natural man, the Indian was intensely poetical. He would deem it sacrilege to build a house for Him who may be met face to face in the mysterious, shadowy aisles of the primeval forest, or on the sunlit bosom of virgin prairies, upon dizzy spires and pinnacles of naked rock, and yonder in the jeweled vault of the night sky! He who enrobes Himself in filmy veils of cloud, there on the rim of the visible world where our Great-Grandfather Sun kindles his evening camp-fire, He who rides upon the rigorous wind of the north, or breathes forth His spirit upon aromatic southern airs, whose war-canoe is launched upon majestic rivers and inland seas—He needs no lesser cathedral!

That solitary communion with the Unseen which was the highest expression of our religious life is partly described in the word *bambeday*, literally "mysterious feeling," which has been variously translated "fasting" and "dreaming." It may better be interpreted as "consciousness of the divine."

The first *bambeday*, or religious retreat, marked an epoch in the life of the youth, which may be compared to that of confirmation or conversion in Christian experience. Having first prepared himself by means of the purifying vapor-bath, and cast off as far as possible all human or fleshly influences, the young man sought out the noblest height, the most commanding summit in all the surrounding region. Knowing that God sets no value upon material things, he took with him no offerings or sacrifices other than symbolic objects, such as paints and tobacco. Wishing to appear before Him in all humility, he wore no clothing save his moccasins and breech-clout. At the solemn hour of sunrise or sunset he took up his position, overlooking the glories of earth and facing the "Great Mystery," and there he remained, naked, erect, silent, and motionless, exposed to the elements and forces of His arming, for a night and a day to two days and nights, but rarely longer. Sometimes he would chant a hymn without words, or offer the ceremonial "filled pipe." In this holy trance or ecstasy the Indian mystic found his highest happiness and the motive power of his existence.

When he returned to the camp, he must remain at a distance until he had again entered the vapor-bath and prepared himself for intercourse with his fellows. Of the vision or sign vouchsafed to him he did not speak, unless it had included some commission which must be publicly fulfilled. Sometimes an old man, standing upon the brink of eternity, might reveal to a chosen few the oracle of his long-past youth.

The native American has been generally despised by his white conquerors for his poverty and simplicity. They forget, perhaps, that his religion forbade the accumulation of wealth and the enjoyment of luxury. To him, as to other single-minded men in every age and race, from Diogenes to the brothers of Saint Francis, from the Montanists to the Shakers, the love of possessions has appeared a snare, and the burdens of a complex society a source of needless peril and temptation. Furthermore, it was the rule of his life to share the fruits of his skill and success with his less fortunate brothers. Thus he kept his spirit free from the clog of pride, cupidity, or envy, and carried out, as he believed, the divine decree—a matter profoundly important to him.

It was not, then, wholly from ignorance or improvidence that he failed to establish permanent towns and to develop a material civilization. To the untutored sage, the concentration of population was the prolific mother of all evils, moral no less than physical. He argued that food is good, while surfeit kills; that love is good, but lust destroys; and not less dreaded than the pestilence following upon crowded and unsanitary dwellings was the loss of spiritual power inseparable from too close contact with one's fellow-men. All who have lived much out of doors know that there is a magnetic and nervous force that accumulates in solitude and that is quickly dissipated by life in a crowd; and even his enemies have recognized the fact that for a certain innate power and self-poise, wholly independent of circumstances, the American Indian is unsurpassed among men.

The red man divided mind into two parts,—the spiritual mind and the physical mind. The first is pure spirit, concerned only with the essence of things, and it was this he sought to strengthen by spiritual prayer, during which the body is subdued by fasting and hardship. In this type of prayer there was no beseeching of favor or help. All matters of personal or selfish concern, as success in hunting or warfare, relief from sickness, or the sparing of a beloved life, were definitely relegated to the plane of the lower or material mind, and all ceremonies, charms, or incantations designed to secure a benefit or to avert a danger, were recognized as emanating from the physical self.

The rites of this physical worship, again, were wholly symbolic, and the Indian no more worshiped the Sun than the Christian adores the Cross. The Sun and the Earth, by an obvious parable, holding scarcely more of poetic metaphor than of scientific truth, were in his view the parents of all organic life. From the Sun, as the universal father, proceeds the quickening principle in nature, and in the patient and fruitful womb of our mother, the Earth, are hidden embryos of plants and men. Therefore our reverence and love for them was really an imaginative extension of our love for our immediate parents, and with this sentiment of filial piety was joined a willingness to appeal to them, as to a father, for such good gifts as we may desire. This is the material or physical prayer.

The elements and majestic forces in nature, Lightning, Wind, Water, Fire, and Frost, were regarded with awe as spiritual powers, but always secondary and intermediate in character. We believed that the spirit pervades all creation and that every creature possesses a soul in some degree, though not necessarily a soul conscious of itself. The tree, the waterfall, the grizzly bear, each is an embodied Force, and as such an object of reverence.

The Indian loved to come into sympathy and spiritual communion with his brothers of the animal kingdom, whose inarticulate souls had for him something of the sinless purity that we attribute to the innocent and irresponsible child. He had faith in their instincts, as in a mysterious wisdom given from above; and while he humbly accepted the supposedly voluntary sacrifice of their bodies to preserve his own, he paid homage to their spirits in prescribed prayers and offerings.

In every religion there is an element of the supernatural, varying with the influence of pure reason over its devotees. The Indian was a logical and clear thinker upon matters within the scope of his understanding, but he had not yet charted the vast field of nature or expressed her wonders in terms of science. With his limited knowledge of cause and effect, he saw miracles on every hand,—the miracle of life in seed and egg, the miracle of death in lightning flash and in the swelling deep! Nothing of the marvelous could astonish him; as that a beast should speak, or the sun stand still. The virgin birth would appear scarcely more miraculous than is the birth of every child that comes into the world, or the miracle of the loaves and fishes excite more wonder than the harvest that springs from a single ear of corn.

Who may condemn his superstition? Surely not the devout Catholic, or even Protestant missionary, who teaches Bible miracles as literal fact! The logical man must either deny all miracles or none, and our American Indian myths and hero stories are perhaps, in themselves, quite as credible as those of the Hebrews of old. If we are of the modern type of mind, that sees in natural law a majesty and grandeur far more impressive than any solitary infraction of it could possibly be, let us not forget that, after all, science has not explained everything. We have still to face the ultimate miracle,—the origin and principle of life! Here is the supreme mystery that is the essence of worship, without which there can be no religion, and in the presence of this mystery our attitude cannot be very unlike that of the natural philosopher, who beholds with awe the Divine in all creation.

It is simple truth that the Indian did not, so long as his native philosophy held sway over his mind, either envy or desire to imitate the splendid achievements of the white man. In his own thought he rose superior to them! He scorned them, even as a lofty spirit absorbed in its stern task rejects the soft beds, the luxurious food, the pleasure-worshipping dalliance of a rich neighbor. It was clear to him that virtue and happiness are independent of these things, if not incompatible with them.

There was undoubtedly much in primitive Christianity to appeal to this man, and Jesus' hard sayings to the rich and about the rich would have been entirely comprehensible to him. Yet the religion that is preached in our churches and practiced by our congregations, with its element of display and self-aggrandizement, its active proselytism, and its open contempt of all religions but its own, was for a long time extremely repellent. To his simple mind, the professionalism of the pulpit, the paid exhorter, the moneyed church, was an unspiritual and

unedifying thing, and it was not until his spirit was broken and his moral and physical constitution undermined by trade, conquest, and strong drink, that Christian missionaries obtained any real hold upon him. Strange as it may seem, it is true that the proud pagan in his secret soul despised the good men who came to convert and to enlighten him!

Nor were its publicity and its Phariseism the only elements in the alien religion that offended the red man. To him, it appeared shocking and almost incredible that there were among this people who claimed superiority many irreligious, who did not even pretend to profess the national faith. Not only did they not profess it, but they stooped so low as to insult their God with profane and sacrilegious speech! In our own tongue His name was not spoken aloud, even with utmost reverence, much less lightly or irreverently.

More than this, even in those white men who professed religion we found much inconsistency of conduct. They spoke much of spiritual things, while seeking only the material. They bought and sold everything: time, labor, personal independence, the love of woman, and even the ministrations of their holy faith! The lust for money, power, and conquest so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race did not escape moral condemnation at the hands of his untutored judge, nor did he fail to contrast this conspicuous trait of the dominant race with the spirit of the meek and lowly Jesus.

He might in time come to recognize that the drunkards and licentious among white men, with whom he too frequently came in contact, were condemned by the white man's religion as well, and must not be held to discredit it. But it was not so easy to overlook or to excuse national bad faith. When distinguished emissaries from the Father at Washington, some of them ministers of the gospel and even bishops, came to the Indian nations, and pledged to them in solemn treaty the national honor, with prayer and mention of their God; and when such treaties, so made, were promptly and shamelessly broken, is it strange that the action should arouse not only anger, but contempt? The historians of the white race admit that the Indian was never the first to repudiate his oath.

It is my personal belief, after thirty-five years' experience of it, that there is no such thing as "Christian civilization." I believe that Christianity and modern civilization are opposed and irreconcilable, and that the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same.

Points for Reflection

1. Eastman declares at the end of this excerpt from *The Soul of the Indian* (1911) that "the spirit of Christianity and of our ancient religion is essentially the same." What elements of religious practice among the Dakota Sioux does he find in Christianity?
2. Eastman observes that modernity is as antithetical to the ideals of the Sioux as it is to Christianity. What elements of modernism does he find particularly troubling?
3. what role do words, buildings, and elaborate rituals play in Sioux worship?
4. which does the Sioux value more, the physical mind or spiritual mind?
5. does Eastman implicitly praise or scorn the Sioux's wiliness to see miracles in Nature?

DAY FOUR: THE DISENFRANCHISED

E. B. Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" (1846; 1848, 1850)

I.

I stand on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark, 5
I bend my knee down on this mark...
I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
I see you come out proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew. . . 10
And round me and round me ye go!
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
Who in your names works sin and woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would come 15
And kneel here where I knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar;
And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land 20
Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black;
And yet God made me, they say.
But if He did so, smiling back
He must have cast His work away 25
Under the feet of His white creatures,
With a look of scorn,--that the dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light. 30
There's a little dark bird sits and sings;
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight;
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night. 35

VI.

But we who are dark, we are dark!
Ah, God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison bars: 40
The poor souls crouch so far behind,
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed, we live beneath the sky,...
That great smooth Hand of God, stretched out
On all His children fatherly, 45
To bless them from the fear and doubt,
Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost, 50
They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost:
And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men!
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen 55
Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!--
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee;
For one of my colour stood in the track
Where the drivers drove, and looked at me-- 60
And tender and full was the look he gave:
Could a slave look so at another slave?--
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought: 65
Oh, strong enough, since we were two
To conquer the world, we thought!
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way,
And no better a liberty sought. 70

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
He said "I love you" as he passed:
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast:
While others shook, he smiled in the hut 75
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut,
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song;
Over and over I sang his name--
Upward and downward I drew it along 80
My various notes; the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they could hear,
It was only a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea-- 85
We were two to love, and two to pray,--
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!
And now I cry who am but one, 90
How wilt Thou speak to-day?--

XIV.

We were black, we were black!
We had no claim to love and bliss:
What marvel, if each turned to lack?
They wrung my cold hands out of his,-- 95
They dragged him... where ?... I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust!... not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls,... though plain as this!

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
Mere grief's too good for such as I. 100
So the white men brought the shame ere long
To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!--it was too merciful
To let me weep pure tears and die. 105

XVI.

I am black, I am black!--
I wore a child upon my breast
An amulet that hung too slack,
And, in my unrest, could not rest:
Thus we went moaning, child and mother, 110
One to another, one to another,
Until all ended for the best:

XVII.

For hark ! I will tell you low... Iow...
I am black, you see,--
And the babe who lay on my bosom so, 115
Was far too white... too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday;
Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear 120
To look in his face, it was so white.
I covered him up with a kerchief there;
I covered his face in close and tight:
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty-- 125
Ha, ha! he wanted his master right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
His little feet that never grew--
He struck them out, as it was meet,
Against my heart to break it through. 130
I might have sung and made him mild--
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:
He could not see the sun, I swear, 135
More, then, alive, than now he does
From between the roots of the mango... where
... I know where. Close! a child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
When one is black and one is fair. 140

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face,... I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad...
The master's look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash... or worse! 145
And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
He shivered from head to foot;
Till, after a time, he lay instead 150
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold,...
I dared to lift up just a fold...
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But my fruit... ha, ha!--there, had been 155
(I laugh to think on't at this hour!...)
Your fine white angels, who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power,...
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine, 160
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, for the trick of the angels white!
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,
I carried the body to and fro; 165
And it lay on my heart like a stone... as chill.
--The sun may shine out as much as he will:
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,
I carried the little body on, 170
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run:
They asked no question as I went,--
They stood too high for astonishment,--
They could see God sit on His throne. 175

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest... on:
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon. 180
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright,...
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,
All, changed to black earth,... nothing white,... 185
A dark child in the dark,--ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young:
I sate down smiling there and sung
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled, 190
The white child and black mother, thus:
For, as I sang it, soft and wild
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate!
It was the dead child singing that, 195
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay,
The free sun rideth gloriously;
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away 200
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!--in their 'stead, their hunter sons!
Ah, ah! they are on me--they hunt in a ring-- 205
Keep off! I brave you all at once--
I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:
Did you never stand still in your triumph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded wing? 210

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!--)
I wish you, who stand there five a-breast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangos!--Yes, but she 215
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she liketh best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.
I see you staring in my face--
I know you, staring, shrinking back-- 220
Ye are born of the Washington-race:
And this land is the free America:
And this mark on my wrist... (I prove what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound! 225
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
I only cursed them all around,
As softly as I might have done
My very own child!--From these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands, 230
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each: and all forget 235
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair;
While HE sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed, 240
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. We who bleed...
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed. 245

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky:
The clouds are breaking on my brain;
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain--
In the name of the white child, waiting for me 250
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

Points for Reflection

1. EBB originally opened this poem with four italicized stanzas voiced by the narrator's male lover. Would you like to hear his perspective too, or is the female narrator's voice the one on which we should focus?
2. what central tension does E.B.B. establish in stanza one?
3. who constitutes the auditor for this poem, in its opening? [the ghosts of the original pilgrims]. At what point does the intended auditor change?
4. what provides the subject matter of the one song the narrator knows, and at what points does she prove unwilling to sing it?
5. is E.B.B. concerned more with creating a sense of high fidelity (realism) in this poem, or with shaping an emotionally and aesthetically effective polemic?
6. can we deduce what happens to the narrator's lover?
7. how does the narrator's devotion to God change in response to the abuse she received at the hands of her owners?
8. do lines 138-40 constitute an indictment of miscegeny?
9. what happens to the narrator's child, and why?
10. unpack the paradox of lines 146-47.
11. consider the central metaphor of stanza twenty-three: if "fruit" is the vehicle (ground), what is the tenor (figure)?
12. what is the dominant tone of stanza twenty three? Celebratory? Bitter? Something else?
13. how do the angels respond (at least, in the imagination of the narrator) to the narrator's surprising actions?
14. is the reader encouraged to either pity or scorn the narrator?
15. what are the five men who find the narrator preparing to do (l.211)?
16. do lines 212-15 constitute a curse or blessing?
17. towards what action is the narrator calling her fellow slaves (ll.229-32)?
18. should the reader agree with the narrator that she is "not mad" (l.218), but perfectly sane?
19. what does the narrator mean by the statement, "Our wounds are different" (l.239)?
20. does the narrator curse her captors in the poem's close?

Points for Reflection

1. does the phrase "Slant of light" (l.1) and the given season (winter) suggest an outdoor or indoor experience?
2. does the synaesthetic simile comparing light with sound (ll.1-4) suggest that church is a physically or spiritually uncomfortable place?
3. does "heavenly" in l.5 denote the agent of the described hurt, or the nature/character of the hurt?
4. what might the "Slant of light" (l.1) represent, and what type of pain is it causing in the narrator? What is Dickinson attempting to express?
5. compare the narrator's attitude towards despair with that found in STC's "Dejection: An Ode," Keats's "Ode on Melancholy," and Hopkins's "Carrion Comfort."
6. is the departure of Despair a good thing?

E. Dickinson's #620 [435] (1863)

Much Madness is divinest Sense -
To a discerning Eye -
Much Sense - the starkest Madness -
'Tis the Majority
In this, as all, prevail - 5
Assent - and you are sane -
Demur - you're straightway dangerous -
And handled with a Chain -

Points for Reflection

1. does this poem echo or interrogate the core theses of the following works?
 - a. Michel Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* (1961)?
 - b. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859)
2. be ready to explain the apparent paradoxes in lines one and three.
3. what is ED suggesting about the popular majority?

M. Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" (c.1852; 1855)

Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,
Past the dark forges long disused,
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride, 5
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,
The wind is up, and drives the rain;
While, hark! far down, with strangled sound
Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain, 10
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,
Showing--then blotting from our sight!-- 15
Halt--through the cloud-drift something shines!
High in the valley, wet and drear,
The huts of Courrierie appear.

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and higher
Mounts up the stony forest-way. 20
At last the encircling trees retire;
Look! through the showery twilight grey
What pointed roofs are these advance?--
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here! 25
Alight, and sparely sup, and wait
For rest in this outbuilding near;
Then cross the sward and reach that gate.
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come
To the Carthusians' world-famed home. 30

The silent courts, where night and day
Into their stone-carved basins cold
The splashing icy fountains play--
The humid corridors behold! 35
Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal
Invests the stern and naked prayer--
With penitential cries they kneel
And wrestle; rising then, with bare 40
And white uplifted faces stand,
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Wandering between two worlds, one dead, 85
 The other powerless to be born,
 With nowhere yet to rest my head,
 Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.
 Their faith, my tears, the world deride--
 I come to shed them at their side. 90

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,
 Ye solemn seats of holy pain!
 Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,
 Till I possess my soul again;
 Till free my thoughts before me roll, 95
 Not chafed by hourly false control!

For the world cries your faith is now
 But a dead time's exploded dream;
 My melancholy, sciolists say,
 Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme-- 100
 As if the world had ever had
 A faith, or sciolists been sad!

Ah, if it be pass'd, take away,
 At least, the restlessness, the pain;
 Be man henceforth no more a prey 105
 To these out-dated stings again!
 The nobleness of grief is gone
 Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But--if you cannot give us ease--
 Last of the race of them who grieve 110
 Here leave us to die out with these
 Last of the people who believe!
 Silent, while years engrave the brow;
 Silent--the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent, 115
 The kings of modern thought are dumb,
 Silent they are though not content,
 And wait to see the future come.
 They have the grief men had of yore,
 But they contend and cry no more. 120

Our fathers water'd with their tears
 This sea of time whereon we sail,
 Their voices were in all men's ears
 We pass'd within their puissant hail.
 Still the same ocean round us raves, 125
 But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise
And outcry of the former men?--
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,
Say, is life lighter now than then? 130
The sufferers died, they left their pain--
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore 135
The pageant of his bleeding heart?
That thousands counted every groan,
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze
Carried thy lovely wail away, 140
Musical through Italian trees
Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?
Inheritors of thy distress
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head
From the fierce tempest of thine age
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,
Or chalets near the Alpine snow? 150

Ye slumber in your silent grave!--
The world, which for an idle day
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,
Long since hath flung her weeds away.
The eternal trifler breaks your spell; 155
But we--we learned your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,
More fortunate, alas! than we,
Which without hardness will be sage,
And gay without frivolity. 160
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe
The exulting thunder of your race;
You give the universe your law, 165
You triumph over time and space!
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,
We laud them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade
Beneath some old-world abbey wall, 170
Forgotten in a forest-glade,
And secret from the eyes of all.
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,
Their abbey, and its close of graves!

But, where the road runs near the stream, 175
Oft through the trees they catch a glance
Of passing troops in the sun's beam--
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,
To life, to cities, and to war! 180

And through the wood, another way,
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,
Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green; 185
Laughter and cries--those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;
That bugle-music on the breeze
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise. 190
Banner by turns and bugle woo:
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply?--
"Action and pleasure, will ye roam
Through these secluded dells to cry 195
And call us?--but too late ye come!
Too late for us your call ye blow,
Whose bent was taken long ago.

Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;
We watch those yellow tapers shine, 200
Emblems of hope over the grave,
In the high altar's depth divine;
The organ carries to our ear
Its accents of another sphere.

"Fenced early in this cloistral round 205
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,
How should we grow in other ground?
How can we flower in foreign air?
--Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;
And leave our desert to its peace!" 210

Points for Reflection

1. why is the narrator of this poem (who speaks with Arnold's own voice) surprised to find himself at this Carthusian monastery in the Alps (l.66)?
2. why is the narrator crying (ll.85-90)?
3. explain the irony threaded into lines 91-108.
4. does the narrator value the "mood of sadness" (l.153) spun by the Byron and Shelley?
5. to what purpose does Arnold put the two epic similes found in lines 80-84 and 169-92?

Paul Laurence Dunbar's "We Wear the Mask" (1897, 1903)

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties. 5

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask. 10

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise, 15
 We wear the mask!

Points for Reflection

1. identify the lie perpetuated by the narrator and his kin, and the cost of this lie.
2. are the tongues and lips of those who wear the mask as complicit in this ongoing act of deception as are their eyes and cheeks?
3. who benefits from such ongoing subterfuge?
4. why does the observer--the world--take the mask for the real thing?
5. does Dunbar's poem seek succor in the same Divine source to which the narrators of Hopkins' dark sonnets turn?
6. to what might the "clay" of line thirteen refer?

Zitkála-Šá's "America's Indian Problem," from *American Indian Stories* (1921)

America's Indian Problem

The hospitality of the American aborigine, it is told, saved the early settlers from starvation during the first bleak winters. In commemoration of having been so well received, Newport erected "a cross as a sign of English dominion." With sweet words he quieted the suspicions of Chief Powhatan, his friend. He "told him that the arms (of the cross) represented Powhatan and himself, and the middle their united league."

DeSoto and his Spaniards were graciously received by the Indian Princess Cofachiqui in the South. While on a sight-seeing tour they entered the ancestral tombs of those Indians. DeSoto "dipped into the pearls and gave his two joined hands full to each cavalier to make rosaries of, he said, to say prayers for their sins on. We imagine if their prayers were in proportion to their sins they must have spent the most of their time at their devotions."

It was in this fashion that the old world snatched away the fee in the land of the new. It was in this fashion that America was divided between the powers of Europe and the aborigines were dispossessed of their country. The barbaric rule of might from which the paleface had fled hither for refuge caught up with him again, and in the melee the hospitable native suffered "legal disability."

History tells that it was from the English and the Spanish our government inherited its legal victims, the American Indians, whom to this day we hold as wards and not as citizens of their own freedom loving land. A long century of dishonor followed this inheritance of somebody's loot. Now the time is at hand when the American Indian shall have his day in court through the help of the women of America. The stain upon America's fair name is to be removed, and the remnant of the Indian nation, suffering from malnutrition, is to number among the invited invisible guests at your dinner tables.

In this undertaking there must be cooperation of head, heart and hand. We serve both our own government and a voiceless people within our midst. We would open the door of American opportunity to the red man and encourage him to find his rightful place in our American life. We would remove the barriers that hinder his normal development.

Wardship is no substitute for American citizenship, therefore we seek his enfranchisement. The many treaties made in good faith with the Indian by our government we would like to see equitably settled. By a constructive program we hope to do away with the "piecemeal legislation" affecting Indians here and there which has proven an exceedingly expensive and disappointing method.

Do you know what *your* Bureau of Indian Affairs, in Washington, D. C., really is? How it is organized and how it deals with wards of the nation? This is our first study. Let us be informed of facts and then we may formulate our opinions. In the remaining space allowed me I shall quote from the report of the Bureau of Municipal Research, in their investigation of the Indian Bureau, published by them in the September issue, 1915, No. 65, "Municipal Research," 261 Broadway, New York City. This report is just as good for our use today as when it was first made, for very little, if any, change has been made in the administration of Indian Affairs since then.

PREFATORY NOTE.

"While this report was printed for the information of the members of Congress, it was not made a part of the report of the Joint Commission of Congress, at whose request it was prepared, and is not available for distribution."

UNPUBLISHED DIGEST OF STATUTORY AND TREATY PROVISIONS GOVERNING INDIAN FUNDS.

"When in 1913 inquiry was made into the accounting and reporting methods of the Indian Office by the President's Commission on Economy and Efficiency, it was found there was no digest of the provisions of statutes and treaties with Indian tribes governing Indian funds and trust obligations of the government. Such a digest was therefore prepared. It was not completed, however, until after Congress adjourned March 4, 1913. Then, instead of being published, it found its way into the pigeon-holes in the Interior Department and the Civil Service Commission, where the working papers and unpublished reports of the commission were ordered stored. The digest itself would make a document of about three hundred pages.

UNPUBLISHED OUTLINE OF ORGANIZATION.

"By order of the President, the commission, in cooperation with various persons assigned to this work, also prepared at great pains a complete analysis of the organization of every department, office and commission of the federal government as a whole in summary outline; it also represented an accurate picture of every administrative bureau, office, and of every operative or field station, and showed in his working relation each of the 500,000 officers and employees in the public service. The report in typewritten form was one of the working documents used in the preparation of the 'budget' submitted by President Taft to Congress in February, 1913. The 'budget' was ordered printed by Congress, but the cost thereof was to be charged against the President's appropriation. There was not enough money remaining in this appropriation to warrant the printing of the report on organization. It, therefore, also found repose in a dark closet."

TOO VOLUMINOUS TO BE MADE PART OF THIS SERIES.

"Congress alone could make the necessary provision for the publication of these materials; the documents are too voluminous to be printed as a part of this series, even if official permission were granted. It is again suggested, however, that the data might be made readily accessible and available to students by placing in manuscript division of the Library of Congress one copy of the unpublished reports and working papers of the President's Commission on Economy and Efficiency. This action was recommended by the commission, but the only official action taken was to order that the materials be placed under lock and key in the Civil Service Commission."

NEED FOR SPECIAL CARE IN MANAGEMENT.

"The need for special care in the management of Indian Affairs lies in the fact that in theory of law the Indian has not the rights of a citizen. He has not even the rights of a foreign resident. The Indian individually does not have access to the courts; he cannot individually appeal to the administrative and judicial branches of the public service for the enforcement of

his rights. He himself is considered as a ward of the United States. His property and funds are held in trust. * * * The Indian Office is the agency of the government for administering both the guardianship of the Indian and the trusteeship of his properties."

CONDITIONS ADVERSE TO GOOD ADMINISTRATION.

"The legal status of the Indian and his property is the condition which makes it incumbent on the government to assume the obligation of protector. What is of special interest in this inquiry is to note the conditions under which the Indian Office has been required to conduct its business. In no other relation are the agents of the government under conditions more adverse to efficient administration. The influences which make for the infidelity to trusteeship, for subversion of properties and funds, for the violation of physical and moral welfare have been powerful. The opportunities and inducements are much greater than those which have operated with ruinous effect on other branches of public service and on the trustees and officers of our great private corporations. In many instances, the integrity of these have been broken down."

GOVERNMENT MACHINERY INADEQUATE.

"* * * Behind the sham protection, which operated largely as a blind to publicity, have been at all times great wealth in the form of Indian funds to be subverted; valuable lands, mines, oil fields, and other natural resources to be despoiled or appropriated to the use of the trader; and large profits to be made by those dealing with trustees who were animated by motives of gain. This has been the situation in which the Indian Service has been for more than a century – the Indian during all this time having his rights and properties to greater or less extent neglected; the guardian, the government, in many instances, passive to conditions which have contributed to his undoing."

OPPORTUNITIES STILL PRESENT.

"And still, due to the increasing value of his remaining estate, there is left an inducement to fraud, corruption, and institutional incompetence almost beyond the possibility of comprehension. The properties and funds of the Indians today are estimated at not less than one thousand millions of dollars. There is still a great obligation to be discharged, which must run through many years. The government itself owes many millions of dollars for Indian moneys which it has converted to its own use, and it is of interest to note that it does not know and the officers do not know what is the present condition of the Indian funds in their keeping."

PRIMARY DEFECTS.

"* * * The story of the mismanagement of Indian Affairs is only a chapter in the history of the mismanagement of corporate trusts. The Indian has been the victim of the same kind of neglect, the same abortive processes, the same malpractices as have the life insurance policyholders, the bank depositor, the industrial and transportation shareholder. The form of organization of the trusteeship has been one which does not provide for independent audit and supervision. The institutional methods and practices have been such that they do not provide either a fact basis for official judgment or publicity of facts which, if made available, would supply evidence of infidelity. In the operation of this machinery, there has not been

the means provided for effective official scrutiny and the public conscience could not be reached."

Points for Reflection

1. how does DeSoto turn Christianity into an excuse for subjugating North America's indigenous population?
2. what does Zitkála-Šá find ironic about European immigrants use of force in the New World?
3. in what way are native Americans "legal victims"?
4. what happens to the reports prepared by a congressional commission looking into the standing of Native Americans?
5. for what reasons did the United States government disenfranchise Native Americans for so many years, according to Zitkála-Šá?

DAY FIVE: GENDERED INTERIORITIES

Matthew Arnold's "The Buried Life" (1852) published in *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems*

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,
We know, we know that we can smile! 5
But there's a something in this breast,
To which thy light words bring no rest,
And thy gay smiles no anodyne;
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,
And turn those limpid eyes on mine, 10
And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

Alas! is even love too weak
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?
Are even lovers powerless to reveal
To one another what indeed they feel? 15
I knew the mass of men conceal'd
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd
They would by other men be met
With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd;
I knew they liv'd and mov'd 20
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb? 25

Ah! well for us, if even we,
Even for a moment, can get free
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd;
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordain'd!

Fate, which foresaw 30
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play 35
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way; 40

And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets, 45
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course; 50
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us—to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.

And many a man in his own breast then delves, 55
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.
And we have been on many thousand lines,
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;
But hardly have we, for one little hour,
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves— 60
Hardly had skill to utter one of all
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.
And long we try in vain to speak and act
Our hidden self, and what we say and do 65
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true!
And then we will no more be rack'd
With inward striving, and demand
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour
Their stupefying power; 70
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne
As from an infinitely distant land,
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey 75
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,
When, jaded with the rush and glare
Of the interminable hours, 80
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,
When our world-deafen'd ear
Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd—
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again. 85

The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,
And hears its winding murmur, and he sees
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze. 90

And there arrives a lull in the hot race
Wherein he doth for ever chase
The flying and elusive shadow, rest.
An air of coolness plays upon his face,
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast. 95
And then he thinks he knows
The hills where his life rose,
And the sea where it goes.

Points for Reflection

1. does our narrator enjoy the witty bantering in which he and his love regularly engage?
2. why have so many poets joined Arnold (ll.10-110) in suggesting that one can read another's soul in their eyes? Do you agree?
3. by "men" (l.16), does Arnold mean humankind in general, or males in particular?
4. what might Arnold mean by the claim that "the same heart beats in every human breast" (l.23)?
5. according to the narrator, why (ll.30) does Fate hide the "river of our life" (l.39) from us?
6. does Arnold identify in lines 59-66 a problem shared by the sexes?
7. under what conditions do humans presumably, briefly, know themselves and speak truly (ll.77-90)?
8. consider the careful wording of line ninety-six.
9. does this poem uphold or validate the notion that romantic love is a powerful force for good?
10. what does this poem suggest about the scope of individual self-knowledge?

C. Rossetti's "Winter: My Secret" (1857; 1862)

Perhaps some day, who knows?
But not today; it froze, and blows and snows,
And you're too curious: fie!
You want to hear it? well:
Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell. 5

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:
Suppose there is no secret after all,
But only just my fun.
Today's a nipping day, a biting day;
In which one wants a shawl, 10
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps:
I cannot ope to everyone who taps,
And let the draughts come whistling thro' my hall;
Come bounding and surrounding me,
Come buffeting, astounding me, 15
Nipping and clipping thro' my wraps and all.
I wear my mask for warmth: who ever shows
His nose to Russian snows
To be pecked at by every wind that blows?
You would not peck? I thank you for good will, 20
Believe, but leave the truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time: yet I don't trust
March with its peck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers 25
One frost may wither thro' the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,
When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud, 30
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.

Points for Reflection

1. what is the dominant tone of this poem?
2. why does the narrator withhold information from the auditor?
3. how would it change the poem if we knew exactly what the narrator was keeping back?

C. P. Gilman's "The Yellow Wall-Paper" (1892)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1899)
<https://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/history/files/lavender/wallpaper.html>

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity--but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and perhaps--(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)--perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression--a slight hysterical tendency-- what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites--whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.

But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it does exhaust me a good deal--having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus--but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a delicious garden! I never saw such a garden--large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care--there is something strange about the house--I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening but he said what I felt was a draught, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself-- before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.

He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest and all the air I could get. "Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear," said he, "and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all the time. ' So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys' school had used it. It is stripped off--the paper in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.

It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide--plunge off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.

No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,--he hates to have me write a word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.

I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer. He knows there is no reason to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able,--to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

"You know the place is doing you good," he said, "and really, dear, I don't care to renovate the house just for a three months' rental."

"Then do let us go downstairs," I said, "there are such pretty rooms there."

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.

I'm really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deepshaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

I wish I could get well faster.

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it knew what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breaths didn't match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy-store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.

I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the

nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wall-paper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother--they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit--only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wall-paper has a kind of sub-pattern in a, different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so--I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are all gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.

Of course I didn't do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don't pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell [for rest cure] in the fall.

But I don't want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don't feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I'm getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don't when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I'm getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps because of the wall-paper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed--it is nailed down, I believe--and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we'll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I will follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard

of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes--a kind of "debased Romanesque" with delirium tremens--go waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,--the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able. And I know John would think it absurd. But I must say what I feel and think in some way--it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I mustn't lose my strength, and has me take cod liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished .

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous weakness I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There's one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wall-paper.

If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn't have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more--I am too wise,--but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.
Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.
It is always the same shape, only very numerous.
And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don't like it a bit. I wonder--I begin to think--I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.
But I tried it last night.
It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.
I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.
John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper till I felt creepy.
The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.
I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper did move, and when I came back John was awake.
"What is it, little girl?" he said. "Don't go walking about like that--you'll get cold."
I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.
"Why darling!" said he, "our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can't see how to leave before.
"The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear, whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you."
"I don't weigh a bit more," said I, "nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away!"
"Bless her little heart!" said he with a big hug, "she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let's improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!"
"And you won't go away?" I asked gloomily.
"Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really dear you are better!"
"Better in body perhaps--" I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.
"My darling," said he, "I beg of you, for my sake and for our child's sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"
So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn't, and lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the

pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions--why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window--I always watch for that first long, straight ray--it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight--the moon shines in all night when there is a moon--I wouldn't know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candlelight, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman.

By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit I am convinced, for you see I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake--O no!

The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis,--that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times looking at the paper! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper--she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry--asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wall-paper.

I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was because of the wall-paper--he would make fun of me. He might even want to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the yellow things I ever saw--not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper-- the smell! I noticed it the moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it--there is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find what it smelled like.

It is not bad--at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house--to reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the color of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even smooch, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round--round and round and round--it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern does move--and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern--it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down,

and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why--privately--I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.

I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her, she may be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.

As if I couldn't see through him!

Still, I don't wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John to stay in town over night, and won't be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me--the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn't alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn't mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.

How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me,--not alive !

She tried to get me out of the room--it was too patent [obvious]! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner--I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will not move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner--but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to look out of the windows even-- there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.

I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope--you don't get me out in the road there !

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don't want to go outside. I won't, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why there's John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can't open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he's crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

"John dear!" said I in the gentlest voice, "the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!"

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said--very quietly indeed, "Open the door, my darling!"

"I can't," said I. "The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!"

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door.

"What is the matter?" he cried. "For God's sake, what are you doing!"

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.

"I've got out at last," said I, "in spite of you and Jane. And I've pulled off most of the paper, so you can't put me back!"

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Why I Wrote The Yellow Wallpaper" (1913)

This article originally appeared in the October 1913 issue of *The Forerunner*.

Many and many a reader has asked that. When the story first came out, in the *New England Magazine* about 1891, a Boston physician made protest in *The Transcript*. Such a story ought not to be written, he said; it was enough to drive anyone mad to read it.

Another physician, in Kansas I think, wrote to say that it was the best description of incipient insanity he had ever seen, and--begging my pardon--had I been there?

Now the story of the story is this:

For many years I suffered from a severe and continuous nervous breakdown tending to melancholia--and beyond. During about the third year of this trouble I went, in devout faith and some faint stir of hope, to a noted specialist in nervous diseases, the best known in the country. This wise man put me to bed and applied the rest cure, to which a still-good physique responded so promptly that he concluded there was nothing much the matter with me, and sent me home with solemn advice to "live as domestic a life as far as possible," to "have but two hours' intellectual life a day," and "never to touch pen, brush, or pencil again" as long as I lived. This was in 1887.

I went home and obeyed those directions for some three months, and came so near the borderline of utter mental ruin that I could see over.

Then, using the remnants of intelligence that remained, and helped by a wise friend, I cast the noted specialist's advice to the winds and went to work again--work, the normal life of every human being; work, in which is joy and growth and service, without which one is a pauper and a parasite--ultimately recovering some measure of power.

Being naturally moved to rejoicing by this narrow escape, I wrote *The Yellow Wallpaper*, with its embellishments and additions, to carry out the ideal (I never had hallucinations or objections to my mural decorations) and sent a copy to the physician who so nearly drove me mad. He never acknowledged it.

The little book is valued by alienists and as a good specimen of one kind of literature. It has, to my knowledge, saved one woman from a similar fate--so terrifying her family that they let her out into normal activity and she recovered.

But the best result is this. Many years later I was told that the great specialist had admitted to friends of his that he had altered his treatment of neurasthenia since reading *The Yellow Wallpaper*.

It was not intended to drive people crazy, but to save people from being driven crazy, and it worked.

Points for Reflection

1. what evidence do we find that the narrator's medical husband, John, values only what can be empirically verified or "rationally" explained?
2. in what ways does John regulate the environment and behavior of his wife?
3. does John succeed in his attempts to restrict his wife's artistic impulse?
4. what evidence do we find that not only the narrator's physical but also her mental mobility is regulated by her husband? Identify moments where her thoughts and conclusions seem to mold themselves to what John expects/wants her to think.
5. what about the design of the wallpaper so distracts the narrator?
6. at what point do the narrator's imaginative observations about her surroundings transition from playful fantasy into problematic paranoia?
7. why do the narrator's imaginative powers begin to work against her?
8. does the narrator's perceptiveness concerning her husband and sister-in-law increase or decrease with the growth of her delusions?
9. why does the narrator consider throwing herself out the window?
10. what is the primary cause of the narrator's growing psychosis (what contemporaries would have likely termed "hysteria")?