

Modern Poetry by Mary Oliver

## The Summer Day

Who made the world?  
Who made the swan, and the black bear?  
Who made the grasshopper?  
This grasshopper, I mean —  
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,  
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,  
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down —  
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.  
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.  
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.  
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.  
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down  
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,  
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,  
which is what I have been doing all day.  
Tell me, what else should I have done?  
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?  
Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?

## Thirst

Another morning and I wake with thirst  
for the goodness I do not have. I walk  
out to the pond and all the way God has  
given us such beautiful lessons. Oh Lord,  
I was never a quick scholar but sulked  
and hunched over my books past the hour  
and the bell; grant me, in your mercy,  
a little more time. Love for the earth  
and love for you are having such a long  
conversation in my heart. Who knows what  
will finally happen or where I will be sent,  
yet already I have given a great many things  
away, expecting to be told to pack nothing,  
except the prayers which, with this thirst,  
I am slowly learning.

Mary Jane Oliver (September 10, 1935 - January 17, 2019) was an award-winning American poet whose work was inspired by nature and her lifelong love of solitary walks in the wild. Her poems are known for their vivid imagery, plain language, and sense of wonder at the natural world.. She published twenty books of poetry and six books of prose.

Oliver's poetry is grounded in memories of Ohio and her adopted home of New England. Provincetown is the principal setting for her work after she moved there in the 1960s.

Oliver was often compared to Emily Dickinson, with whom she shared an affinity for solitude and inner monologues. Her poetry combines dark introspection with joyous release. Though criticized for writing poetry that assumes a close relationship between women and nature, she found that the self is only strengthened through immersion in the natural environment The Harvard Review describes her work as an antidote to "inattention and the conventions of our social and professional lives. She is a poet of wisdom and generosity whose vision allows us to look intimately at a world not of our making."

In 2007, she was declared the best-selling poet in the United States. Oliver won the Pulitzer Prize in 1984 and the National Book Award in 1992. She also received the Lannan Literary Award, the American Academy of Arts & Letters Award, and the Poetry Society of America's Shelley Memorial Prize.

Wikipedia.



Learn more about Mary Oliver  
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## Ancient Biblical Wisdom Poetry by Qoheleth (traditionally King Solomon)

### Ecclesiastes 3

New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition

<sup>1</sup> For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven:

<sup>2</sup> a time to be born and a time to die;  
a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted;

<sup>3</sup> a time to kill and a time to heal;  
a time to break down and a time to build up;

<sup>4</sup> a time to weep and a time to laugh;  
a time to mourn and a time to dance;

<sup>5</sup> a time to throw away stones and a time to gather stones together;  
a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing;

<sup>6</sup> a time to seek and a time to lose;  
a time to keep and a time to throw away;

<sup>7</sup> a time to tear and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silent and a time to speak;

<sup>8</sup> a time to love and a time to hate;  
a time for war and a time for peace.

The book of Ecclesiastes is traditionally attributed to King Solomon. The book itself identifies its author as "the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem". While the book explores themes of meaninglessness and the futility of worldly pursuits, it also emphasizes finding meaning in God and enjoying the simple gifts of life.

<sup>9</sup> What gain have the workers from their toil? <sup>10</sup> I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. <sup>11</sup> He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. <sup>12</sup> I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; <sup>13</sup> moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil. <sup>14</sup> I know that whatever God does endures forever; nothing can be added to it nor anything taken from it; God has done this so that all should stand in awe before him. <sup>15</sup> That which is already has been, that which is to be already is, and God seeks out what has gone by.

<sup>16</sup> Moreover, I saw under the sun that, in the place of justice, wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there as well. <sup>17</sup> I said to myself, "God will judge the righteous and the wicked, for he has appointed a time for every matter and for every work." <sup>18</sup> I said to myself with regard to humans that God is testing[b] them to show that they are but animals. <sup>19</sup> For the fate of humans and the fate of animals is the same; as one dies, so dies the other. They all have the same breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals, for all is vanity. <sup>20</sup> All go to one place, all are from the dust, and all turn to dust again. <sup>21</sup> Who knows whether the human spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth? <sup>22</sup> So I saw that there is nothing better than that all should enjoy their work, for that is their lot; who can bring them to see what will be after them?

**AS YOU READ TODAY'S POETRY, RATHER THAN TRYING TO UNDERSTAND IT**

**- RATHER, ASK YOURSELF HOW IT MAKES YOU FEEL?**

**HOW DOES IT CONNECT WITH YOU, WHAT YOU'RE LIVING, YOUR QUESTIONS IN LIFE?**