

Thursday 4 October 2018

Change

A collection of poems on the theme of change, specially curated by The Reader to celebrate National Poetry Day.

#NationalPoetryDay



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Outgrown **by Penelope Shuttle**

It is both sad and a relief to fold so carefully her outgrown clothes and line up the little worn shoes of childhood, so prudent, scuffed and particular. It is both happy and horrible to send them galloping back tappity-tap along the misty chill path into the past.

It is both a freedom and a prison, to be outgrown by her as she towers over me as thin as a sequin in her doc martens and her pretty skirt, because just as I work out how to be a mother she stops being a child.

Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth by Arthur Hugh Clough

Say not the struggle nought availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars; It may be, in yon smoke concealed, Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers, And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking Seem here no painful inch to gain, Far back through creeks and inlets making, Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

Phonebox Elegy by Matthew Francis

No one noticed them leaving as no one had noticed how every evening at some almanacked hour

they must have switched on in the twilight their introverted glow of dashboard and luminous watch. Never quite part of the street,

they just seemed to appear with that Close-Encounters hovering look when you'd searched for them long enough.

And you stood in the chilled belljar of light and mimed your lifestory to whoever was waiting outside.

More compact than a church and less subtle in its demands for money, it was a heavy-doored shrine to the invisible,

censed with breath and the smell of breathed-on plastic, absorbing our prayers — 'Pick it up. Pick it up — '

also forgotten wallets, chewing gum, the phone numbers of vice girls as impossible as archangels,

and the occasional urge to desecrate it by urine, evisceration or the cramming in of too many bodies. We were translated there.

The Call by Charlotte Mew

From our low seat beside the fire

Where we have dozed and dreamed and watched the glow

Or raked the ashes, stopping so

We scarcely saw the sun or rain

Above, or looked much higher

Than this same quiet red or burned-out fire.

Tonight we heard a call,

A rattle on the window pane

A voice on the sharp air,

And felt a breath stirring our hair,

A flame within us: Something swift and tall

Swept in and out and that was all.

Was it a bright or a dark angel? Who can know?

It left no mark upon the snow,

But suddenly it snapped the chain

Unbarred, flung wide the door

Which will not shut again;

And so we cannot sit here anymore.

We must arise and go:

The world is cold without

And dark and hedged about

With mystery and enmity and doubt,

But we must go

Though yet we do not know

Who called, or what marks we shall leave upon the snow.

Transformations by Thomas Hardy

Portion of this yew Is a man my grandsire knew, Bosomed here at its foot: This branch may be his wife, A ruddy human life Now turned to a green shoot. These grasses must be made Of her who often prayed, Last century, for repose; And the fair girl long ago Whom I often tried to know May be entering this rose. So, they are not underground, But as nerves and veins abound In the growths of upper air, And they feel the sun and rain, And the energy again That made them what they were!

The Rec by David Constantine

Back home and finding the rec gone Flogged off, become a gated community CCTV in every hanging basket And identical shaven-headed fat men Aiming remotes at his own portcullis

How can I make of it a 'luminous emptiness' As Heaney did of his axed chestnut tree? It's a space stuffed full of hardware Loungers and meat. At thirty paces It lights up sodium white. Pitbulls prowl the wire.

Oh that man who stands at the bus-stop all day long And whatever number bus comes he never gets on But tells everybody waiting, It was all fields round here When I was a boy – day by day, more and more He's me. I tell them Miss Eliza Smythe left the rec

In trust to the Town in perpetuity
For the health of children, her line dying out.
It was an old enclosure quick-set with hawthorn
And we lay there watching and waiting for our turn
In a team-game on the free ground under the open sky.

Only the moon and stars lit up the rec.
Few still believe there was such a playing-place
But, yes, another elegy would be very nice
So remember all you like. Can we live on lack?
Should have stopped them grabbing it. Should take it back.

Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May by Robert Herrick

(To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time)

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying: And this same flower that smiles to-day To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun, The higher he's a-getting, The sooner will his race be run, And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first, When youth and blood are warmer; But being spent, the worse and worst Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time, And while ye may, go marry: For having lost but once your prime, You may for ever tarry.

Bright Star by John Keats

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art –
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores;
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors –
No – yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft swell and fall,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever – or else swoon to death.

The Furthest Distances I've Travelled by Leontia Flynn

Like many folk, when first I saddled a rucksack, feeling its weight on my back — the way my spine curved under it like a meridian —

I thought: Yes. This is how to live. On the beaten track, the sherpa pass, between Krakow and Zagreb, or the Siberian white cells of scattered airports,

it came clear as over a tannoy that in restlessness, in anony mity: was some kind of destiny.

So whether it was the scare stories about Larium – the threats of delirium and baldness – that led me, not to a Western Union wiring money with six words of Lithuanian,

but to this post office with a handful of bills or a giro; and why, if I'm stuffing smalls hastily into a holdall, I am less likely to be catching a Greyhound from Madison to Milwaukee

than to be doing some overdue laundry is really beyond me.
However,
when, during routine evictions, I discover

alien pants, cinema stubs, the throwaway comment – on a Post-it – or a tiny stowaway pressed flower amid bottom drawers, I know these are my souvenirs

and, from these crushed valentines, this unraveled sports sock, that the furthest distances I've travelled have been those between people. And what survives of holidaying briefly in their lives.

Breathing by Gillian Clarke

Prowl the house sniffing out gas leaks, a cloth festering somewhere, spilt milk, cat—piss, drains.

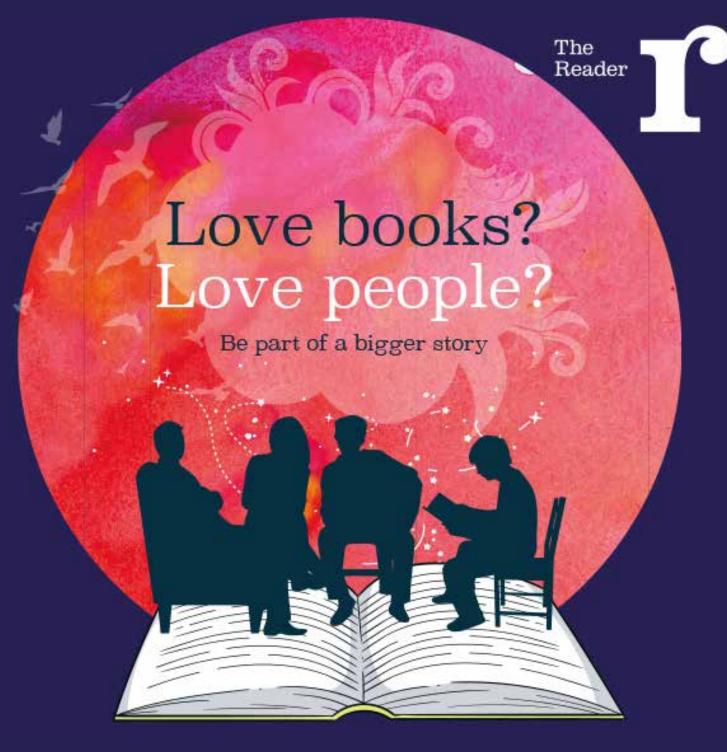
Such talent needs exercise.
Putting the cat out, inhale her musk as she pours herself into the night

like your long ago mother, her fur, her Chanel no. 5, before the whiff of a moonlighting fox, and frost, and the coats in the hall.

Some smells are faint, the distinct breath of tap-water from each place you have lived, the twig of witchhazel two rooms away.

Some are stolen like honey, the secretive salts of skin, in Waterstones, say, or the Bank, as you lean together, breathing.

Or the new-born that smell like the sea and the darkness we came from, that gasp of all the drowned in a breaking wave.



Why not join us for more Shared Reading?

www.thereader.org.uk/joinagroup

Enter your postcode to find a group near you.

YE NEED YOU

"The reading groups are
a different kind of medicine,
it's through them that
I've found a way back to life"

Shared Reading group member

Enriching volunteering opportunities with a difference

Who we are

The Reader is a national charity and social enterprise with a mission to build a world where *Shared Reading* - weekly informal read aloud groups, where great literature is shared and connections are made - is part of the fabric of life.

What is Shared Reading?

It's a purposeful and enjoyable experience that benefits people of all ages, backgrounds and life situations.

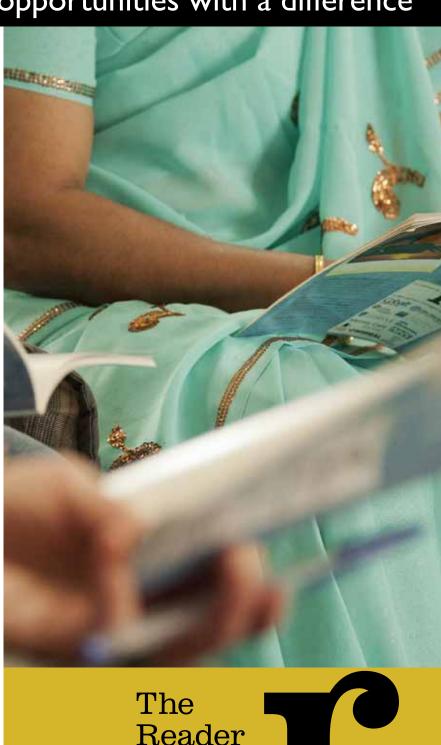
Group members take pleasure in getting together each week to read great literature, build social links and share experiences.

Volunteer-led

Across the UK, our *Shared Reading* groups are run by a network of dedicated volunteers. You'll find them in places as diverse as mental health wards, prisons, workplaces, high street cafés, schools, care homes and community centres.

By being part of The Reader's story, our volunteers are actively making a difference to people's lives by helping to build connected communities, tackle loneliness and improve health and well-being.

Our Volunteer Reader Leaders receive full training and support, beginning with our inspiring Read to Lead programme - an invigorating and thought-provoking flexible series of sessions.



Volunteer with us

Growing numbers of people around the country – and the world – are experiencing the benefits of Shared Reading but we know that there are many others who we are yet to reach.

The Reader is now actively recruiting people just like you to help us to put Shared Reading into the hands of the people who need it most.

As one of our volunteers you can expect to...

- make a lasting difference in your local area
- meet new like-minded people and enjoy a sense of community
- gain a real sense of reward
- develop new skills with high quality training

How you can get involved

If you have the enthusiasm and commitment to lead a Shared Reading group or read one-to-one with a looked-after-child, or if you would like to help to spread the word about The Reader and hear about our wider volunteering opportunities, we'd love to hear from you.

> Speak to us 0151 729 2200

Find out more online

www.thereader.org.uk

Connect with us



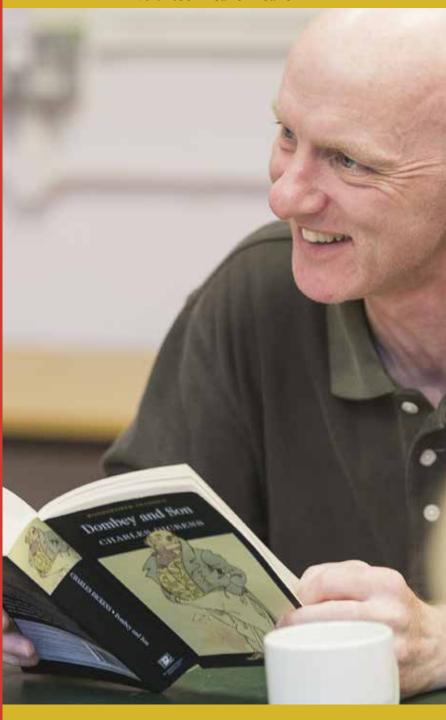
#SharedReading

Want to check out a group first?

Find your closest group at: www.thereader.org.uk/joinagroup

"The Reader is the best organisation I have ever belonged to. The training is outstanding and there is excellent ongoing support. I am always made to feel that I am a valued member of the community."

Volunteer Reader Leader











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