

A Set of Instructions To Be Used When Reading A Poem

Glenn Colquhoun

1. To begin with lift the poem carefully out of its paper.
2. Balance the poem in the palm of your hand.
3. Don't be afraid of the poem.
4. Run your fingers around the outside of the poem:
 1. Is it rough or smooth?
 2. Is it heavy or light?
5. Throw the poem up into the air. Does it float?
6. Put the poem into your mouth, either:
 1. Squeeze a small amount onto your tongue like toothpaste
 2. Enter the whole poem into your mouth like cake.
7. Remove the first word and the last word from the poem. Shake vigorously. Each word should fall out of line.
8. Place the words into your mouth and roll them around. Suck. Chew. Gargle. Hide the words in your cheeks. Spit them at people.
9. When you are finished put the words back where they belong.
10. Whisper the poem quietly to yourself.
11. Yell the poem out loud.
12. Recite the poem in broad daylight / in moonlight / with the lights on / with the lights off / in the bathroom / in the garden / underneath a tree.
13. Recite the poem on fine days / on rainy days / on calm days / on windy days / on an empty stomach / with your mouth full.
14. Put the poem on blocks and lie underneath it. Tinker with the timing. Pack each word in grease. File off the engine numbers. Re-paint the poem.
15. Eat breakfast on the poem. Stain the poem with coffee.
16. Stand on the poem.
17. Water the poem.
18. Mix the poem in with the washing.
19. Carry the poem around in your pocket for a week.
20. Now the poem belongs to you.

Sonnet (inspired by Sonnet 22)

Wendy Cope

My glass can't quite persuade me I am old –
In that respect my ageing eyes are kind –
But when I see a photograph, I'm told
The dismal truth: I've left my youth behind.
And when I try to get up from a chair
My knees remind me they are past their best.
The burden they have carried everywhere
Is heavier now. No wonder they protest.
Arthritic fingers, problematic neck,
Sometimes causing mild to moderate pain,
Could well persuade me I'm an ancient wreck
But here's what helps me to feel young again:
My love, who fell for me so long ago,
Still loves me just as much, and tells me so.

“What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why”

Edna St Vincent Millay

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,
I have forgotten, and what arms have lain
Under my head till morning; but the rain
Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh
Upon the glass and listen for reply,
And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain
For unremembered lads that not again
Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.
Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,
Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,
Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:
I cannot say what loves have come and gone,
I only know that summer sang in me
A little while, that in me sings no more.

Sonnet 138: When my love swears that she is made of truth

William Shakespeare

When my love swears that she is made of truth,
I do believe her, though I know she lies,
That she might think me some untutored youth,
Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
Although she knows my days are past the best,
Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
On both sides thus is simple truth suppressed.
But wherefore says she not she is unjust?
And wherefore say not I that I am old?
Oh, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
And age in love loves not to have years told.
Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
And in our faults by lies we flattered be.

The One About Fred Astaire

By Adrian Mitchell

No
it's
not so much
how
he
moves so much
so much
as how he
stops
and then moves so
much again all
over
every
anywhere
all over
so much
thank you
Mister Astaire
so much