

Poetry Packet #1:

Poetry for the New Year

“Hope
Smiles from the threshold of the year to come,
Whispering 'it will be happier'...”

– Alfred Lord Tennyson

“For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.”

– T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

Nobody claim 2021 as "your
year". We're all going to walk
in real slow. Be good. Be quiet.
Don't. Touch. Anything.

Remember that poetry responses are due by 11:59 pm on Wednesdays.

To the New Year

BY [W. S. MERWIN](#)

With what stillness at last
you appear in the valley
your first sunlight reaching down
to touch the tips of a few
high leaves that do not stir
as though they had not noticed
and did not know you at all
then the voice of a dove calls
from far away in itself
to the hush of the morning

so this is the sound of you
here and now whether or not
anyone hears it this is
where we have come with our age
our knowledge such as it is
and our hopes such as they are
invisible before us
untouched and still possible

Burning the Old Year

BY [NAOMI SHIHAB NYE](#)

Letters swallow themselves in seconds.
Notes friends tied to the doorknob,
transparent scarlet paper,
sizzle like moth wings,
marry the air.

So much of any year is flammable,
lists of vegetables, partial poems.
Orange swirling flame of days,
so little is a stone.

Where there was something and suddenly isn't,
an absence shouts, celebrates, leaves a space.
I begin again with the smallest numbers.

Quick dance, shuffle of losses and leaves,
only the things I didn't do
crackle after the blazing dies.

Year's End

BY [RICHARD WILBUR](#)

Now winter downs the dying of the year,
And night is all a settlement of snow;
From the soft street the rooms of houses show
A gathered light, a shapen atmosphere,
Like frozen-over lakes whose ice is thin
And still allows some stirring down within.

I've known the wind by water banks to shake
The late leaves down, which frozen where they fell
And held in ice as dancers in a spell
Fluttered all winter long into a lake;
Graved on the dark in gestures of descent,
They seemed their own most perfect monument.

There was perfection in the death of ferns
Which laid their fragile cheeks against the stone
A million years. Great mammoths overthrown
Composedly have made their long sojourns,
Like palaces of patience, in the gray
And changeless lands of ice. And at Pompeii

The little dog lay curled and did not rise
But slept the deeper as the ashes rose
And found the people incomplete, and froze
The random hands, the loose unready eyes
Of men expecting yet another sun
To do the shapely thing they had not done.

These sudden ends of time must give us pause.
We fray into the future, rarely wrought
Save in the tapestries of afterthought.
More time, more time. Barrages of applause
Come muffled from a buried radio.
The New-year bells are wrangling with the snow.

New Year's Day

BY [KIM ADDONIZIO](#)

The rain this morning falls
on the last of the snow

and will wash it away. I can smell
the grass again, and the torn leaves

being eased down into the mud.
The few loves I've been allowed

to keep are still sleeping
on the West Coast. Here in Virginia

I walk across the fields with only
a few young cows for company.

Big-boned and shy,
they are like girls I remember

from junior high, who never
spoke, who kept their heads

lowered and their arms crossed against
their new breasts. Those girls

are nearly forty now. Like me,
they must sometimes stand

at a window late at night, looking out
on a silent backyard, at one

rusting lawn chair and the sheer walls
of other people's houses.

They must lie down some afternoons
and cry hard for whoever used

to make them happiest,
and wonder how their lives

have carried them
this far without ever once

explaining anything. I don't know
why I'm walking out here

with my coat darkening
and my boots sinking in, coming up

with a mild sucking sound
I like to hear. I don't care

where those girls are now.
Whatever they've made of it

they can have. Today I want
to resolve nothing.

I only want to walk
a little longer in the cold

blessing of the rain,
and lift my face to it.

Snowfall

BY [RAVI SHANKAR](#)

Particulate as ash, new year's first snow falls
upon peaked roofs, car hoods, undulant hills,
in imitation of motion that moves the way

static cascades down screens when the cable
zaps out, persistent & granular with a flicker
of legibility that dissipates before it can be

interpolated into any succession of imagery.
One hour stretches sixty minutes into a field
of white flurry: hexagonal lattices of water

molecules that accumulate in drifts too soon
strewn with sand, hewn into browning
mounds by plow blade, left to turn to slush.

A Pumpkin at New Year's

BY [SANDRA MCPHERSON](#)

Heads were rolling down the highway in high slat trucks.
I knew it was time to buy you and found you,
The last sphere unscarred and undistorted in the store,
Big as my own head.

It was time too to leave you uncut and full-featured,
Like the grandpa of twenty-five pumpkins in my past,
Khrushchev-cheeked and dwelling on yourself,
Great knee of my childhood.

I plainly thought you would rot.
I remembered the fetor of other pumpkins,
Their blue populations coming out of hiding as if at the end
Of some apocalypse.

I devoted a day to reading up on minor cucurbits:
I learned your dozen names in African
And came home ready to raise or raze you,
Positive of change.

But so far—eternity. I think I would not like
Eternity, after I had used my senses up,
As I've tried with you—fingertips dragging over your world
Pole to pole

Till they go dead like explorers, nostril cilia
Detecting your fragrance more delicate than they—
And my patience. It's Christmas, it's a new year
And I hear

Of a family who's kept you for four ...
You endure like matter manufactured
And indeed your stem seems punched into your orange gathers
Like a button in a mattress.

Shall I give you a room or a shrine? And shall I
Purchase you a mate and family,
When ours is so inadequate, fixed upon your window
Deathbed as we are,

Centered upon a time and birth, new holiday, new friends,
New pumpkins, celebrating when all
That has failed us has passed away.
You have not failed.