

“maggie and milly and molly and may” by E.E. Cummings

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach(to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles,and

milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and

may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose(like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

"Mercy" by Rudy Francisco

after Nikki Giovanni

She asked me to kill the spider
Instead, I get the most
peaceful weapons I can find.

I take a cup and a napkin.
I catch the spider, put it outside
and allow it to walk away.

If I am ever caught in the wrong place
at the wrong time, just being alive
and not bothering anyone,

I hope I am greeted
with the same kind
of mercy.

“Stomp” by Nikki Grimes

I come home,
feet about to bleed
from angry stomping.
“Boy!” says Mom.
“Quit making all that racket.”
But what does she expect
when, day after day,
haters sling words at me
like jagged stones
designed to split my skin?
I retreat to my room,
collapse on the bed,
count, “One. Two. Three...”
When I get to ten,
I snatch up journal and pen,
flip to a clean page,
and unload my hurt, my rage
’til I can breathe, again.
Letter by letter,
I rediscover
my power to decide
which words matter,
which words don’t,
and whose.
Calm, now, I remember:
I get to choose.

Excerpt from ["I Am Alive in Los Angeles!"](#) by [Mike Sonksen](#)

I am alive in Los Angeles!
I am alive in Los Angeles!
Here in the wild, wild west..
The warm wind hits my face,
I walk across stained concrete,
I cry tears of joy on Flower Street..
I watch families dancing
on their porches on Christmas Eve.
I smile widely.
I move thru the city,
my heart beating swiftly
as sirens speed by me.
I revel in the sadness—my soul is deep
I take full responsibility.
Give me everything!

“Whatif” by Shel Silverstein

Last night, while I lay thinking here,
some Whatifs crawled inside my ear
and pranced and partied all night long
and sang their same old Whatif song:
Whatif I'm dumb in school?
Whatif they've closed the swimming pool?
Whatif I get beat up?
Whatif there's poison in my cup?
Whatif I start to cry?
Whatif I get sick and die?
Whatif I flunk that test?
Whatif green hair grows on my chest?
Whatif nobody likes me?
Whatif a bolt of lightning strikes me?
Whatif I never learn to dance?
Everything seems well, and then
the nighttime Whatifs strike again!

"Life Doesn't Frighten Me" by Maya Angelou (excerpt)

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn't frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all.

Life doesn't frighten me at all.

"Earth Day" by Jane Yolen (excerpt)

I am the Earth
And the Earth is me.
Each blade of grass,
Each honey tree,
Each bit of mud,
And stick and stone
Is blood and muscle,
Skin and bone.

As long as life,
As dear, as free,
I am the Earth
And the Earth is me.

"Remember" by Joy Harjo

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is.
Remember the sun's birth at dawn,
Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth,
You are evidence of
Your mother's life, and her mother's, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.

"Dreams" by Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken-winged bird
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams
For when dreams go
Life is a barren field
Frozen with snow.

[“Ode to My Shoes”](#) by [Francisco X. Alarcón](#)

my shoes
rest
all night
under my bed

tired
they stretch
and loosen
their laces

wide open
they fall asleep
and dream
of walking

they revisit
the places
they went to
during the day

and wake up
cheerful
relaxed
so soft

Ode to Chicharrones (excerpt)

By Gary Soto

They are shaped
Like trumpets,
The blow of salt
On your lips
The music is a crunch
On the back molars,
A hard crunch
When you're through,
The dog will lick
Your palms for the flakes
Of oil and salt,
And he will wag
His tail
And pump his legs
In his parade of dog happiness
Even the ants,
Know what's good
they dropped their bread crumbs
For a single flake
Of chicharron.

Chaos Theory (excerpt)

By Clint Smith

If twenty million years ago
The butterfly flew in a different
Direction do you think
We would have met, maybe
We wouldn't have even been
People
Maybe you would have
Been a tortoise and I would
Be a raspberry.

It would have been
Such a tragedy
If something happened
That would have prevented me
From meeting you
Like a butterfly
Who didn't realize it was flying
In the wrong direction.

Goodbyes

By Pat Mora

How loud they are
our silent hugs
out-roar the airport's blare

heart to heart

we seek to hide
the sting of tears
our insides
out

spilling smiles
we so long to invent.