



nine poems & a wealth of readers

**common**

*threads*

volume 2, spring 2012



**Common Threads: Nine Poets and a Wealth of Readers**

Volume 2

Compiled and edited

by

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**Contents**

Contents ..... 3

    Introduction to Volume 2 ..... 5

    The Author To Her Book ..... 6

        by Anne Bradstreet ..... 6

    The Fire of Drift-Wood ..... 7

        by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ..... 7

    No. 1129 - Tell all the Truth but tell it slant ..... 9

        by Emily Dickinson ..... 9

    For the Union Dead ..... 10

        by Robert Lowell ..... 10

    Baseball ..... 12

        by Gail Mazur ..... 12

    The Hardness Scale ..... 14

        by Joyce Peseroff ..... 14

    if see no end in is ..... 16

        by Frank Bidart ..... 16

    Out at Lanesville ..... 17

        by David Ferry ..... 17

    Horseface ..... 19

        by Sam Cornish ..... 19

    General Questions to Aid Discussions of the Poems ..... 20

    Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced Guided Reading Questions for Each Poem ..... 21

    Resource Links for Information on the Poets ..... 27

        Anne Bradstreet ..... 27

        Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ..... 27

        Emily Dickinson ..... 27

        Robert Lowell ..... 28

        Gail Mazur ..... 28

        Joyce Peseroff ..... 28

www.concordpoetry.org/zPeseroff.html.....	28
www.umb.edu/academics/cla/faculty/joyce_peseroff/ .....	28
Frank Bidart.....	29
Frank Bidart- Poets.org - Poetry, Poems, Bios & More.....	29
Frank Bidart : The Poetry Foundation.....	29
Frank Bidart - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.....	29
Poet: Frank Bidart - All poems of Frank Bidart .....	29
Frank Bidart - Poems, Biography, Quotes.....	29
David Ferry .....	29
David Ferry- Poets.org - Poetry, Poems, Bios & More .....	29
David Ferry (poet) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia .....	29
David Ferry : The Poetry Foundation .....	29
Sam Cornish .....	29
Sam Cornish Biography .....	29
Interviews - Sam Cornish .....	29
Cervena Barva Press Poetry Interview with Sam Cornish.....	29
Sam Cornish .....	29
Additional Resources .....	30
Sources New to Volume Two.....	30

## Introduction to Volume 2

Greetings! Welcome to the second volume of Common Threads, a celebration of poets and poetry with ties to our great State of Massachusetts. This year's collection features nine poets who span the breadth of the Commonwealth as well as the centuries, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century Colonial period to the dawn of the current century.

You will notice a few changes have been made to the organizational structure of this year's volume in response to advice from the many readers of last year's collection. First, the poems appear on the page without questions or guiding commentary. This allows you, the reader, to enter the poem free of any perspective from the editors, and it is our hope that you will take this opportunity to engage in the unfettered discovery of what each poem has to say to you. Second, for those of you who wish to engage in prompts for the poems, do not fear, the questions have not disappeared, they have simply been moved to a section that follows the poems. Third, questions have been organized into beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels for you to pick and choose. Fourth, the paragraph biographical sketches of the authors have been replaced by links to websites that discuss the poets in this volume. This has been done to cut back on repetitious information and open up our readers to a taste of the many sources available to anyone interested in exploring poetry. And finally, there are links to the previous year's volume that discuss poetry, its forms and structures, etc., for those who wish to dabble in the academics of the writing, including a bibliography of other sources of interest. These are materials one may use to practice writing poetry, learn more about the crafting of a poem, explore the history of a poetic form, or feed some other curiosity you have.

We thank you for participating in this statewide poetry reading event, and encourage you all to read these poems aloud to yourself and to others, or to come hear Gail Mazur, Joyce Peseroff, Frank Bidart, David Ferry and Sam Cornish read their poems in person on Saturday, April 21 at the Mass Poetry festival. For more information about the festival—a weekend long celebration of poetry from April 20-22, 2012, in Salem, Massachusetts—visit [MassPoetry.org](http://MassPoetry.org). Thanks for celebrating National Poetry Month!

Best Wishes & Happy Reading!

Morie Deykute & Kevin R. Morrisette

## The Author To Her Book

*by Anne Bradstreet*

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,  
Who after birth did'st by my side remain,  
Till snatcht from thence by friends, less wise than true,  
Who thee abroad, exposed to public view,  
Made thee in rags, halting to th' press to trudge,  
Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).  
At thy return my blushing was not small,  
My rambling brat (in print) should mother call.  
I cast thee by as one unfit for light,  
The visage was so irksome in my sight;  
Yet being mine own, at length affection would  
Thy blemishes amend, if so I could.  
I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,  
And rubbing off a spot still made a flaw.  
I stretcht thy joints to make thee even feet,  
Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet.  
In better dress to trim thee was my mind,  
But nought save home-spun cloth i' th' house I find.  
In this array, 'mongst vulgars may'st thou roam.  
In critic's hands beware thou dost not come,  
And take thy way where yet thou art not known.  
If for thy father askt, say, thou hadst none;  
And for thy mother, she alas is poor,  
Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

## The Fire of Drift-Wood

*by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

DEVEREUX FARM, NEAR MARBLEHEAD.

We sat within the farm-house old,  
Whose windows, looking o'er the bay,  
Gave to the sea-breeze, damp and cold,  
An easy entrance, night and day.

Not far away we saw the port, -  
The strange, old-fashioned, silent town, -  
The lighthouse, - the dismantled fort, -  
The wooden houses, quaint and brown.

We sat and talked until the night,  
Descending, filled the little room;  
Our faces faded from the sight,  
Our voices only broke the gloom.

We spake of many a vanished scene,  
Of what we once had thought and said,  
Of what had been, and might have been,  
And who was changed, and who was dead.

And all that fills the hearts of friends,  
When first they feel, with secret pain,  
Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,  
And never can be one again;

The first slight swerving of the heart,  
That words are powerless to express,  
And leave it still unsaid in part,  
Or say it in too great excess.

The very tones in which we spake  
Had something strange, I could but mark;  
The leaves of memory seemed to make  
A mournful rustling in the dark.

Oft died the words upon our lips,  
As suddenly, from out the fire  
Built of the wreck of stranded ships,  
The flames would leap and then expire.

And, as their splendor flashed and failed,

We thought of wrecks upon the main, -  
Of ships dismasted, that were hailed  
And sent no answer back again.

The windows, rattling in their frames, -  
The ocean, roaring up the beach, -  
The gusty blast, - the bickering flames,  
All mingled vaguely in our speech;

Until they made themselves a part  
Of fancies floating through the brain,  
The long-lost ventures of the heart,  
That send no answers back again.

O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!  
They were indeed too much akin,  
The drift-wood fire without that burned,  
The thoughts that burned and glowed within.



**No. 1129 - Tell all the Truth but tell it slant**

*by Emily Dickinson*

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant—  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind—

## For the Union Dead

by Robert Lowell

*"Relinquant Omnia Servare Rem Publicam."*

The old South Boston Aquarium stands  
in a Sahara of snow now. Its broken windows are boarded.  
The bronze weathervane cod has lost half its scales.  
The airy tanks are dry.

Once my nose crawled like a snail on the glass;  
my hand tingled  
to burst the bubbles  
drifting from the noses of the cowed, compliant fish.

My hand draws back. I often sigh still  
for the dark downward and vegetating kingdom  
of the fish and reptile. One morning last March,  
I pressed against the new barbed and galvanized

fence on the Boston Common. Behind their cage,  
yellow dinosaur steamshovels were grunting  
as they cropped up tons of mush and grass  
to gouge their underworld garage.

Parking spaces luxuriate like civic  
sandpiles in the heart of Boston.  
A girdle of orange, Puritan-pumpkin colored girders  
braces the tingling Statehouse,

shaking over the excavations, as it faces Colonel Shaw  
and his bell-cheeked Negro infantry  
on St. Gaudens' shaking Civil War relief,  
propped by a plank splint against the garage's earthquake.

Two months after marching through Boston,  
half the regiment was dead;  
at the dedication,  
William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes breathe.

Their monument sticks like a fishbone  
in the city's throat.  
Its Colonel is as lean  
as a compass-needle.

He has an angry wrenlike vigilance,  
a greyhound's gentle tautness;

he seems to wince at pleasure,  
and suffocate for privacy.

He is out of bounds now. He rejoices in man's lovely,  
peculiar power to choose life and die--  
when he leads his black soldiers to death,  
he cannot bend his back.

On a thousand small town New England greens,  
the old white churches hold their air  
of sparse, sincere rebellion; frayed flags  
quilt the graveyards of the Grand Army of the Republic.

The stone statues of the abstract Union Soldier  
grow slimmer and younger each year--  
wasp-waisted, they doze over muskets  
and muse through their sideburns . . .

Shaw's father wanted no monument  
except the ditch,  
where his son's body was thrown  
and lost with his "niggers."

The ditch is nearer.  
There are no statues for the last war here;  
on Boylston Street, a commercial photograph  
shows Hiroshima boiling

over a Mosler Safe, the "Rock of Ages"  
that survived the blast. Space is nearer.  
When I crouch to my television set,  
the drained faces of Negro school-children rise like balloons.

Colonel Shaw  
is riding on his bubble,  
he waits  
for the blessed break.

The Aquarium is gone. Everywhere,  
giant finned cars nose forward like fish;  
a savage servility  
slides by on grease.

## Baseball

*by Gail Mazur*

*for John Limon*

The game of baseball is not a metaphor  
and I know it's not really life.  
The chalky green diamond, the lovely  
dusty brown lanes I see from airplanes  
multiplying around the cities  
are only neat playing fields.  
Their structure is not the frame  
of history carved out of forest,  
that is not what I see on my ascent.

And down in the stadium,  
the veteran catcher guiding the young  
pitcher through the innings, the line  
of concentration between them,  
that delicate filament is not  
like the way you are helping me,  
only it reminds me when I strain  
for analogies, the way a rookie strains  
for perfection, and the veteran,  
in his wisdom, seems to promise it,  
it glows from his upheld glove,

and the man in front of me  
in the grandstand, drinking banana  
daiquiris from a thermos,  
continuing through a whole dinner  
to the aromatic cigar even as our team  
is shut out, nearly hitless, he is  
not like the farmer that Auden speaks  
of in Breughel's Icarus,  
or the four inevitable woman-hating  
drunkards, yelling, hugging  
each other and moving up and down  
continuously for more beer

and the young wife trying to understand  
what a full count could be  
to please her husband happy in  
his old dreams, or the little boy  
in the Yankees cap already nodding  
off to sleep against his father,  
program and popcorn memories

sliding into the future,  
and the old woman from Lincoln, Maine,  
screaming at the Yankee slugger  
with wounded knees to break his leg

this is not a microcosm,  
not even a slice of life

and the terrible slumps,  
when the greatest hitter mysteriously  
goes hitless for weeks, or  
the pitcher's stuff is all junk  
who threw like a magician all last month,  
or the days when our guys look  
like Sennett cops, slipping, bumping  
each other, then suddenly, the play  
that wasn't humanly possible, the Kid  
we know isn't ready for the big leagues,  
leaps into the air to catch a ball  
that should have gone downtown,  
and coming off the field is hugged  
and bottom-slapped by the sudden  
sorcerers, the winning team

the question of what makes a man  
slump when his form, his eye,  
his power aren't to blame, this isn't  
like the bad luck that hounds us,  
and his frustration in the games  
not like our deep rage  
for disappointing ourselves

the ball park is an artifact,  
manicured, safe, "scene in an Easter egg",  
and the order of the ball game,  
the firm structure with the mystery  
of accidents always contained,  
not the wild field we wander in,  
where I'm trying to recite the rules,  
to repeat the statistics of the game,  
and the wind keeps carrying my words away.

## The Hardness Scale

*by Joyce Peseroff*

Diamonds are forever so I gave you quartz  
which is #7 on the hardness scale  
and it's hard enough to get to know anybody these days  
if only to scratch the surface  
and quartz will scratch six other mineral surfaces:  
it will scratch glass  
it will scratch gold  
it will even  
scratch your eyes out one morning--you can't be  
too careful.  
Diamonds are industrial so I bought  
a ring of topaz  
which is #8 on the hardness scale.  
I wear it on my right hand, the way it was  
supposed to be, right? No tears and fewer regrets  
for reasons smooth and clear as glass. Topaz will scratch glass,  
it will scratch your quartz,  
and all your radio crystals. You'll have to be silent  
the rest of your days  
not to mention your nights. Not to mention  
the night you ran away very drunk very  
very drunk and you tried to cross the border  
but couldn't make it across the lake.  
Stirring up geysers with the oars you drove the red canoe  
in circles, tried to pole it but  
your left hand didn't know  
what the right hand was doing.  
You fell asleep  
and let everyone know it when you woke up.  
In a gin-soaked morning (hair of the dog) you went  
hunting for geese,  
shot three lake trout in violation of the game laws,  
told me to clean them and that  
my eyes were bright as sapphires  
which is #9 on the hardness scale.  
A sapphire will cut a pearl  
it will cut stainless steel  
it will cut vinyl and mylar and will probably  
cut a record this fall  
to be released on an obscure label known only to aficionados.  
I will buy a copy.  
I may buy you a copy  
depending on how your tastes have changed.  
I will buy copies for my friends

we'll get a new needle,  
a diamond needle,  
which is #10 on the hardness scale  
and will cut anything.  
It will cut wood and mortar,  
plaster and iron,  
it will cut the sapphires in my eyes and I will bleed  
blind as 4 A.M. in the subways when even degenerates  
are dreaming, blind as the time  
you shot up the room with a new hunting rifle  
blind drunk  
as you were.  
You were #11 on the hardness scale  
later that night  
apologetic as  
you worked your way up  
slowly from the knees  
and you worked your way down  
from the open-throated blouse.  
Diamonds are forever so I give you softer things.

**if see no end in is***by Frank Bidart*

What none knows is when, not if.  
 Now that your life nears its end  
 when you turn back what you see  
 is ruin. You think, It is a prison. No,  
 it is a vast resonating chamber in  
 which each thing you say or do is

new, but the same. What none knows is  
 how to change. Each plateau you reach, if  
 single, limited, only itself, in-  
 cludes traces of all the others, so that in the end  
 limitation frees you, there is no  
 end, if you once see what is there to see.

You cannot see what is there to see —  
 not when she whose love you failed is  
 standing next to you. Then, as if refusing the know-  
 ledge that life unseparated from her is death, as if  
 again scorning your refusals, she turns away. The end  
 achieved by the unappeased is burial within.

*Familiar spirit, within whose care I grew, within  
 whose disappointment I twist, may we at last see  
 by what necessity the double-bind is in the end  
 the figure for human life, why what we love is  
 precluded always be something else we love, as if  
 each no we speak is yes, each yes no.*

The prospect is mixed but elsewhere the forecast is no  
 better. The eyrie where you perch in  
 exhaustion has food and is out of the wind, if  
 cold. You feel old, young, old, young: you scan the sea  
 for movement, though the promise of sex or food is  
 the prospect that bewildered you to this end.

Something in you believes that this is not the end.  
 When you wake, sixth grade will start. The finite you know  
 you fear is infinite: even at eleven, what you love is  
 what you should not love, which endless bullies in-  
 tuit unerringly. The future will be different: you cannot see  
 the end. What none knows is when, not if.



## Out at Lanesville

*by David Ferry*

*In memoriam Mary Ann, 1932–1980*

The five or six of them, sitting on the rocks  
 Out at Lanesville, near Gloucester; it is like  
 Listening to music. Several of them are teachers,  
 One is a psychologist, one is reading a book,  
 The page glares white in the summer sunlight;  
 Others are just sunning themselves, or just  
 Sitting there looking out over the water;  
 A couple of them seem to be talking together;  
 From this far off you can't hear what they are saying.

The day is hot, the absolute middle of summer.  
 Someone has written an obscenity  
 In huge letters on the rocks above and behind  
 This group of people, and someone else, one of them,  
 Maybe, or maybe a neighbor, the owner of one  
 Of the cottages up behind and back in the woods,  
 Has tried to erase it and only partly done so,  
 So that for years it will say hoarsely FUCK  
 To the random winds and to the senseless waves.

One of them is sitting with her back turned  
 To me and to the others on the rocks. The purple  
 Loosestrife and the tigerlilies are like the flags  
 Of some celebration; they bloom along the edge  
 Of a small stream that makes its way unseen  
 Down to the rocks and sand. Her shoulders are round,  
 And rather luxuriously heavy, and the whole figure  
 Has a youthful and graceful amplitude of being  
 Whose beauty will last her her whole life long.

The voices of some people out in a boat somewhere  
 Are carried in over the water with surprising  
 Force and clarity, though saying I don't know what:  
 Happiness; unhappiness; something about the conditions  
 Of all such things; work done, not done; the saving  
 Of the self in the intense work of its singleness,  
 Learning to live with it. Their lives have separate ends.  
 Suddenly she turned her head and seems to look  
 Toward me and toward the others on the rocks,

So that her body, turned away, is more expressive  
 Than her blank face, a pure reflector of light.



## Horseface

*by Sam Cornish*

Horseface  
was so dark they  
called her purple she  
appeared at dances  
without a date  
she sat and stood  
feet keeping time  
silent and alone  
little Mary (Horseface) stroked her  
hair and sighed  
little Mary so  
black her skin  
sings and shines  
so black they talk  
behind her back  
oh she was so  
black her father  
passed out  
(he wanted to lighten  
the race) my wife did  
this to me he said and left  
without a word said  
it must be some nigger  
blacker than  
me  
little Mary  
to me (Horseface  
to some black  
Mary to others)  
stood on the road waved  
at trains [maybe daddy is passin  
through] ran  
toward cars making dust  
in the afternoons sought love  
from people going north  
as her father did  
somewhere lighter  
somewhere better

### General Questions to Aid Discussions of the Poems

1. Think about the story (or stories) that come to mind when you read the titles of each poem. Share these stories with your group and think about how they are similar and different. Discuss the different images upon which group members choose to focus and why these images are important.
2. Read the poem out loud and listen for the accented syllables. Is there a musicality to the mixture of accented and unaccented syllables? Does the poem sound dissonant or melodic? How does the sound of the poem affect your understanding of it?
3. Look at the lines of the poem. Think about the ways in which each line begins and ends. Are the words nouns or adjectives, conjunctions or pronouns? Do the words, on their own, cause the reader to pause and reflect on the importance of the line or do they carry the reader forward through the line (or onto the next line)?
4. What about punctuation? What purpose does it serve the line? Look into the line itself and think about how commas and dashes, parentheses and semicolons direct the reading of the poem.
5. With music comes tone. What does the tone of the poem suggest? Is it quiet and reflective, loud and bombastic, angry, sad, joyous? Is there a shift in tone and a variety of emotions working together or at odds with each other?

### Questions Specific to Each Poem

## Anne Bradstreet's "The Author To Her Book"

## Beginning

1. Bradstreet compares her book to a child. Identify lines in this poem where this comparison is clearest. How does she translate the experience of motherhood to relate to the experience of writing and how are the two birthing experiences (artistic and actual) similar for her? How do you think they differ?
2. How does Bradstreet use metaphor in other places of the poem and what is the effect of using concrete metaphors to talk about vague or abstract concepts?

## Intermediate

1. What does Bradstreet assert about the nature of publishing and the relationship between the author, her surroundings and the publication of her work?
2. Consider the rhyme, rhythm, alliteration and other poetic devices. How does Bradstreet utilize them in this poem and what effect do they have on the reader?

## Advanced

1. What does this poem reveal about Bradstreet's view of herself and her role as a woman and a poet?
2. Take a note of the syntax and the length of sentences that Bradstreet uses throughout the poem. What effect does her choice of punctuation accomplish?

## Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "The Fire of Drift-Wood"

## Beginning

1. Often, poems possess a narrative as well as an emotional or philosophical component. What is the narrative of this poem, and how do you think it ties into the emotions this poem produces?
2. What effect do the rhyme and rhythm of the poem have on you as a reader? Do they support the emotion and tone of the poem?

## Intermediate

1. What universal themes does Longfellow address in this poem? What does his poem imply about time, loss, mortality? Point out specific lines that imply a particular assertion or opinion.
2. How does Longfellow use imagery to convey the tone and emotion of the poem to the reader?

## Advanced

1. What do you think is the significance of the title of this poem, and what central role does the fire made of shipwrecked driftwood play in this piece?
2. How does the presence of the ocean and the imagery of the sea inform your reading of this poem?

### Emily Dickinson's "Tell all the Truth but tell it slant"

#### Beginning

1. What does Dickinson assert about the truth in this poem? Why does she make such assertions?
2. What poetic devices does Dickinson use throughout this piece and what do you think her choices accomplish?

#### Intermediate

1. When Dickinson says "as Lightning to the Children eased/With explanation kind" she seems to imply a higher power. What do you think of the nature of this higher power and its relationship to the truth?
2. How do enjambment and line breaks function to facilitate the reading of the poem?

#### Advanced

1. What do you think Dickinson means by the line "Success in Circuit lies", and how does this idea of the circuit connect to her assertions about the truth?
2. Do you think the tone of this poem is straightforward or sarcastic, and what word choice and perhaps historical realities point at either interpretation?

### Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead"

#### Beginning

1. There is a distinct tone of anger in Lowell's poem, which concludes with "a savage servility/slides by on grease" to describe the outside world. What makes Lowell angry? Do you feel this anger as a reader? What other emotions does Lowell's writing invoke within this poem?
2. Consider the word choice Lowell presents in this poem as well as the words that he draws attention to through line break and emphasis. How does his use of words and metaphors like "nigger", "galvanized", "sticks like a fishbone" inform the poem?

## Intermediate

1. Lowell's poem presents a beautiful interplay between the personal, the historical and the political. Note specific places in which Lowell switches from one to another. What is the effect of such juxtaposition of subject and tone?
2. How does metaphor and imagery inform your reading of this poem? What specific metaphors does Lowell use to drive his message home?

## Advanced

1. What does Lowell reveal about his political, personal and cultural frustrations about the America of today? What does his poem say about the very idea of "Union" and the concept of the United country?
2. Consider the form of this poem. What does the alternation between shorter-line stanzas and longer-line stanzas accomplish in reading the poem and in informing its content?

## Gail Mazur's "Baseball"

## Beginning

1. Share your thoughts and perspectives about the game of baseball with each other, read the poem, then talk about the ways your thoughts and perspectives compare and contrast with those of Mazur.
2. What images in this poem help the poem to come alive in your mind? Why do you think these images spark this response?

## Intermediate

1. In the opening stanza, the speaker of Mazur's poem states, "The game of baseball is not a metaphor ." What do you think of this statement as the poem unfolds? Does the speaker keep true to his or her word, or do you think there is some sort of play going on with the word metaphor?
2. Toward the end of the poem, the speaker does make an allusion to a "scene in an Easter egg". As we celebrate National Poetry Month in April, the month in which many people most frequently celebrate Easter, what effect does this allusion have on your reading of the poem? In other words, in what ways is a ball park a "scene in an Easter egg"?

## Advanced

1. Notice that the stamina of each sentence in the poem progresses, growing more complex. Why do you think the author commands more and more of the audience's attention by increasing the length and sophistication of her sentences?

2. Flight is an important theme in this poem. Discuss the ways the theme is introduced and repeated throughout the poem. What does this layering effect have on your understanding and appreciation of the poem?

### Joyce Peseroff's "The Hardness Scale"

#### Beginning

1. Make a list of the items Peseroff lists on the hardness scale. What makes each item harder than the previous one?
2. Look at the way the lines of the poem undulate. What effect does this have on your reading of the poem?

#### Intermediate

1. Discuss the importance of science and scientific information in this poem. How does science reveal the theme of the poem? What about its juxtaposition with popular culture?
2. Think about the tones present in the poem: anger, wistfulness, humor, etc. What makes the shifts in tone work for you as a reader?

#### Advanced

1. Peseroff begins with number 7 on the hardness scale, and adds an 11<sup>th</sup> element to it, creating five "sections" within the poem. How does each item work to illustrate the narrative literally, figuratively, and metaphorically?
2. Peseroff makes strong use of enjambment, end-stops, and word choice to start or end a line. Discuss the crafting of the poem and how it serves to evoke the title and bring metaphor alive.

### Frank Bidart's "is see no end in is"

#### Beginning

1. How would you describe the speaker of this poem? Is the speaker male or female, happy or sad? What words or lines in the poem inform your response?
2. In line 4 of the poem, the word, it, is capitalized. What does this word mean (or what does it represent) to you in this line and throughout the poem?



## Intermediate

1. Bidart's poem is a beautiful contemporary example of a sestina. How does Bidart manipulate the form to suit the needs of the poem and to avoid possible stagnation and forced diction? What risks does he take in using common-place words like “no”, “if”, etc, as end words? What are his rewards for such end-word choices?
2. Bidart plays with the end words of the poem to create the poem’s title. Some might even suggest that the title is a re-imagining of the envoi, the three-lined stanza that “completes” the poem. How does this play inform the reader of the poem’s theme of looking back in time and forward to the inevitable?

## Advanced

1. Trace the passage of time and the shifts in reality within Bidart's poem. How does repetition, his use of sestina as a form and his word choice inform what he writes of life, time, meaning and mortality?
2. Who is the familiar spirit whom the speaker of Bidart's poem addresses in the italicized stanza within the poem? Why do you think this stanza was italicized, and what do you think of the speaker's questions for the spirit? Does Bidart's poem provide any answers?

David Ferry’s “[Out at Laneville](#)”

## Beginning

1. What is the emotion conveyed by “Out at Lanesville”? What specific words lead you to experience this emotion?
2. Poetry, as any writing, is essentially an exercise in elimination and selection. A poet makes linguistic choices when trying to describe a scene, a feeling, an event. What are some of the details Ferry chose to paint a unique scene and convey a particular feeling in this poem?

## Intermediate

1. David Ferry quotes a line from the Longfellow poem “The Fire of Drift-Wood”, when he writes “Their lives have separate ends.” What echoes of Longfellow do you see in this poem, which themes do you in common, and which differ?
2. Think about the character of the woman in this poem. What is her function in the poem? Do you think she is really present at the scene? What effect does the last line “her blank face, a pure reflector of light.” have on you as a reader?

## Advanced

1. What do you think about Ferry's lines "the saving/Of the self in the intense work of its singleness/ Learning to live with it." How is the self, the community, the relationships between the self, its work and the world represented in the rest of the poem?
2. Read this poem aloud to yourself (or have someone in the group read it). How does Ferry's choice of sounds, his choice of long lines, specific enjambment and line breaks affect your reading of this poem and your experience with the scene and emotion he presents?

## Sam Cornish's "Horseface"

## Beginner

1. What are your impressions of Mary after reading this poem? What details and what language does Sam Cornish use to bring Mary to life and have the reader empathize with her in his work?
2. What effect does Sam Cornish's use of very short lines create in your reading of this poem?

## Intermediate

1. Cornish's poem relies a great deal on repetition. Which words or phrases are repeated throughout the poem, and what is the effect of such repetition on the reader?
2. What does Cornish's poem say about being a woman and the choices available to a woman in the world of this poem?

## Advanced

1. Poetry often blends the personal, the historical and the political (for example, in the Lowell poem presented in this guide). How is the historical and political made personal in Sam Cornish's poem?
2. Study the line breaks in this poem. What is the effect created by Cornish's use of line breaks? Which words are emphasized? Are there any lines that gain additional/secondary meanings because of the enjambment?

## Resource Links for Information on the Poets

### Anne Bradstreet

[Anne Bradstreet Biography](#)

[www.annebradstreet.com/anne\\_bradstreet\\_bio\\_001.htm](http://www.annebradstreet.com/anne_bradstreet_bio_001.htm)

[Anne Bradstreet - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia](#)

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne\\_Bradstreet](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Bradstreet)

[Anne Bradstreet- Poets.org - Poetry, Poems, Bios & More](#)

[www.poets.org/abrad/](http://www.poets.org/abrad/)

[Anne Bradstreet quotes - Quotations](#)

[thinkexist.com](http://thinkexist.com) › [Authors](#) › [Ane Ann](#)

[Index to Anne Bradstreet](#)

[www.puritansermons.com/poetry/anneindx.htm](http://www.puritansermons.com/poetry/anneindx.htm)

### Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Biography

[www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/henry-wadsworth-longfellow](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/henry-wadsworth-longfellow)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Wadsworth\\_Longfellow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Wadsworth_Longfellow)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - Poems

[www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/henry\\_wadsworth\\_longfellow\\_2004\\_9.pdf](http://www.poemhunter.com/i/ebooks/pdf/henry_wadsworth_longfellow_2004_9.pdf)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow - Quotations

[thinkexist.com/quotes/henry\\_wadsworth\\_longfellow/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/henry_wadsworth_longfellow/)

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Poetry Aloud

[classicpoetryaloud.wordpress.com/category/henry-wadsworth-longfellow/](http://classicpoetryaloud.wordpress.com/category/henry-wadsworth-longfellow/)

### Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson's Biography | Emily Dickinson Museum

[www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/emilys\\_biography](http://www.emilydickinsonmuseum.org/emilys_biography)

Emily Dickinson - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily\\_Dickinson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emily_Dickinson)

Emily Dickinson - All poems of Emily Dickinson

[www.poemhunter.com/emily-dickinson/](http://www.poemhunter.com/emily-dickinson/)

Emily Dickinson quotes - Quotations

[thinkexist.com/quotes/emily\\_dickinson/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/emily_dickinson/)

Index of First Lines. Dickinson, Emily. 1924. Complete Poems

[www.bartleby.com/113/indexlines.html](http://www.bartleby.com/113/indexlines.html)

## **Robert Lowell**

Biography

[www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/robert-lowell](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/robert-lowell)

Robert Lowell - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert\\_Lowell](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Lowell)

All poems of Robert Lowell

[www.poemhunter.com/robert-lowell/](http://www.poemhunter.com/robert-lowell/)

Robert Lowell quotes

[thinkexist.com/quotes/robert\\_lowell/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/robert_lowell/)

Robert Lowell: Inventory of his Papers

[www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/uthrc/00081/hrc-00081.html](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/uthrc/00081/hrc-00081.html)

## **Gail Mazur**

Gail Mazur : The Poetry Foundation

[www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/gail-mazur](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/gail-mazur)

Gail Mazur

[www.gailmazur.com](http://www.gailmazur.com)

## **Joyce Peseroff**

[www.concordpoetry.org/zPeseroff.html](http://www.concordpoetry.org/zPeseroff.html)

[www.umb.edu/academics/cla/faculty/joyce\\_peseroff/](http://www.umb.edu/academics/cla/faculty/joyce_peseroff/)

## Frank Bidart

[Frank Bidart- Poets.org - Poetry, Poems, Bios & More  
www.poets.org/fbida/](http://www.poets.org/fbida/)

[Frank Bidart : The Poetry Foundation  
http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/frank-bidart](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/frank-bidart)

[Frank Bidart - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank Bidart](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Bidart)

Poet: [Frank Bidart](http://poemhunter.com/frank-bidart/) - All poems of [Frank Bidart](http://poemhunter.com/frank-bidart/)  
<http://poemhunter.com/frank-bidart/>

[Frank Bidart - Poems, Biography, Quotes  
famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/frank bidart](http://famouspoetsandpoems.com/poets/frank_bidart)

## David Ferry

[David Ferry- Poets.org - Poetry, Poems, Bios & More  
www.poets.org/dferr/](http://www.poets.org/dferr/)

[David Ferry \(poet\) - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia  
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David\\_Ferry\\_\(poet\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Ferry_(poet))

[David Ferry : The Poetry Foundation  
www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/david-ferry](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/david-ferry)

## Sam Cornish

[Sam Cornish Biography  
http://biography.jrank.org/pages/2507/Cornish-Sam.html](http://biography.jrank.org/pages/2507/Cornish-Sam.html)

[Interviews - Sam Cornish  
http://www.samcornish.com/interviews.htm](http://www.samcornish.com/interviews.htm)

Cervena Barva Press [Poetry](http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/SamCornishinterview.htm) Interview with [Sam Cornish](http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/SamCornishinterview.htm)  
<http://www.cervenabarvapress.com/SamCornishinterview.htm>

[Sam Cornish  
http://www.samcornish.com](http://www.samcornish.com)

## Additional Resources

“Thoughts about Reading Poetry” from *Common Threads*, vol.1

<http://masspoetry.org/commonthreads/reading-poetry.php>

“Further Sources for the Reading and Writing of Poetry” from *Common Threads*, vol.1

<http://masspoetry.org/commonthreads/further-sources.php>

## Sources New to Volume Two

### Writing Poetry

Goldberg, Natalie. *Writing Down the Bones*. Boston & London: Shambhala Library. 2010. Print.

Essentially a meditation on the nature of craft and the necessary dedication of a writer to his or her craft, this book presents useful techniques, personal anecdotes and careful discussion of the sometimes murky process of writing poetry.

### Reading Poetry

McClatchy, J. D. Ed. *The Vintage Book of Contemporary World Poetry*. New York & London: Vintage Books. 1996. Print.

This anthology presents international poetry from twentieth and twenty first century poets.

Diverse in styles, cultures and subjects, this work is a collection of translated poetry from over two dozen languages and represents the breadth and diversity of poetry in the world.

Pinsky, Robert, Ed. *Essential Pleasures: A New Anthology of Poems to Read Aloud*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Co. 2009. Print.

A marvelous anthology, which is notable for including poems which are pleasurable not only to read on the page, but also to read aloud. Organized in loose thematic and stylistic sections, this anthology presents work spanning several centuries, with particular emphasis on the music of the word. Includes a CD of excellent readings.

## Teaching Poetry

Behn,, Robin and Chase Twitchell . *The Practice of Poetry: Writing Exercises from Poets Who Teach*. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks. 1992. Print.

A collection of more than 90 effective poetry-writing exercises and short essays designed to spark creativity and poetry writing at all age and experience levels.

Teacher's Scholastic: National Poetry Month Resources

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/poetry/index.htm>

This website includes numerous exercises, articles and interactive resources for K-12 teachers to foster a love of poetry in the classroom and show that poetry can be both fun and profound.

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**Frank Bidart, Sam Cornish , David  
Ferry, Gail Mazur & Joyce Peseroff**

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At the Peabody Essex Museum  
Salem**

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**1:30**

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Common Threads 2012**

**For more information go to:**

**[www.masspoetry.org](http://www.masspoetry.org)**