10H Remote Learning Assignment #2

1. Read each of the following poems. Most but not all of these are from Poetry 180, but in any case you can find them with a simple google search\*:

Introduction to Poetry by Billy Collins

It’s Raining in Love by Richard Brautigan

The Bagel by David Ignatow

Fat is not a Fairy Tale by Jane Yolen

Did I Miss Anything by Tom Wayman

Cartoon Physics, part 1 by Nick Flynn

The Death of Santa Claus by Charles Harper Webb

Evening Ritual by Andrew Bennett (\*not online, but pasted at end of this

document)

1. Those are all examples of **Free-Verse poems**. The most basic definition of a free-verse poem is one that has **no rhyme and no regular rhythm** (also called meter); on a more complex level, it means that the poet pays **special attention to line breaks and stanza breaks, as well as line *lengths*** (and so should try to end lines and stanzas with good words); on yet another level, it means that **each line should be of itself an interesting unit of poetry**. Free-verse doesn’t really mean free-for-all or a lack of form, but rather than **the poet is making their own limitations rather than conforming a prescribed set** (such as sonnet or limerick).
2. With this definition in mind, go back and read that list of poems one more time. As you reread each one, try to identify how it uses the form that we call free verse. How does each of these poems use line breaks and stanza breaks? What do they have in common in this sense? How is each one unique from the others? How do they create tension/surprise/pleasure with language in a small amount of space in the absence of rhyme and meter? Which line and stanza length/break choices do you think create the best effects? You don’t have to answer these questions for me—this is all to apply to your own poems that you will write.

Also, go back to other poems you found that you liked in Poetry 180. Most of these are in free verse, too. As yourself the same set of questions when it comes to those.

1. Write 2 free-verse poems of your own. If you’re not sure how to get started, it’s never a bad idea to go back to poems you’ve read that you like, and try to do something like those. Free verse is the required form here, but the topics, based on your nominations and votes, are: **experience-you’ve-had-that-doesn’t-seem-real-but-is** and **irrational hatred**. Interpret these prompts however you’d like. It could be that your poem is about a related personal experience; or maybe the poem is not really about that at all, but it just uses the word or phrase at some point. Maybe the prompt led you to think down a particular path that in the end bears no evident connection to your finished poem.

\***If you accept this mission, share poems with me by Wednesday 3/25\***

**Evening Ritual**

My two daughters are in the bathtub, one

washing her doll’s hair, the other packing

as many soap bubbles she can into

a cup, leveling the top as though measuring

flour for a cake or sand for a castle

tower. I’m reading an article on

my phone about doomsday preparations

for the superrich--we all know this world’s

about to blow up; some have time and money

to buy bunker-condos with tilapia

tanks and grow lights, I guess.

“Why are you

staring at your phone?”

my older daughter

asks.

“I’m reading.” I want her to know I’m

reading something *intelligent*, something

*well-written*.

“I am reading a *book*,” I

lie, “that’s on the internet.”

“What is

the internet?”

She dumps bubbles onto

her sister’s head. My younger daughter

splashes in retaliation, the older

one ducks, and a wave of water soaks my

sock.

“Olive, keep the water in the tub.

Ella, stop attacking your sister with

bubbles. The internet,”

goddammit, “is

a place with lots of books and pictures and

games.”

“Like the library?”

“Yes, but it’s real

small, the stuff that is, so small it fits in

one place, but the place is big enough so

anyone can see it, from anywhere.”

“What does dess mean?”

“What’s dess? This?”

“DESS.”

“Thus?”

“Dea-th?”

“Death?”

“Yeath. Yess.”

Shit. “Death?”

“Death. What does it

mean?”

“Means,” MotherTrucker, “you’re not... any...”

“When are you gunna die, Daddy?”

“I don’t

know.”

“Soon?”

“No.”

“What does it *feel* like?”

“I don’t

know.”

“Does it hurt?”

“Probably.”

“It hurts?”

“Yes.”

Olive holds her doll upside down by the

ankles, lowers its head in the water.

“All done?” I say.

“Daddy,” she says, “how do

pigs turn into bacon?”

1. **Bennett**