

1. Today by Frank O'Hara (1926-1966)

Oh! kangaroos, sequins, chocolate sodas!
You really are beautiful! Pearls,
harmonicas, jujubes, aspirins! all
the stuff they've always talked about

still makes a poem a surprise! 5
These things are with us every day
even on beachheads and biers. They
do have meaning. They're strong as rocks.

2. What Is Poetry by John Ashbery (1927-2017)

The medieval town, with frieze
Of boy scouts from Nagoya? The snow

That came when we wanted it to snow?
Beautiful images? Trying to avoid

Ideas, as in this poem? But we 5
Go back to them as to a wife, leaving

The mistress we desire? Now they
Will have to believe it

As we believed it. In school 10
All the thought got combed out:

What was left was like a field.
Shut your eyes, and you can feel it for miles around.

Now open them on a thin vertical path.
It might give us--what?--some flowers soon?

3. Confusion by Kenneth Rexroth (1905-1982)

I pass your home in a slow vermilion dawn,
The blinds are drawn, and the windows are open.
The soft breeze from the lake
Is like your breath upon my cheek.

All day long I walk in the intermittent rainfall. 5
I pick a vermilion tulip in the deserted park,
Bright raindrops cling to its petals.
At five o'clock it is a lonely color in the city.
I pass your home in a rainy evening,
I can see you faintly, moving between lighted walls.
Late at night I sit before a white sheet of paper,
Until a fallen vermilion petal quivers before me.

4. The Language by Robert Creeley
(1926-2005)

Locate *I*
love you some-
where in

teeth and 5
eyes, bite
it but

take care not
to hurt, you
want so

much so 10
little. Words
say everything.

I
love you
again, 15

then what

is emptiness
for. To

fill, fill.
I heard words 20
and words full
of holes
aching. Speech
is a mouth.

5. These Days by Charles Olson (1910-1970)

whatever you have to say, leave
the roots on, let them
dangle

And the dirt

Just to make clear 5
where they come from

6. Celebration by Denise Levertov (1923-1997)

Brilliant, this day – a young virtuoso of a day.
Morning shadow cut by sharpest scissors,
deft hands. And every prodigy of green –
whether it's ferns or lichens or needles 5
or impatient points of buds on spindly bushes –
greener than ever before. And the way the conifers
hold new cones to the light for the blessing,
a festive right, and sing the oceanic chant the wind
transcribes for them!

A day that shines in the cold 10
like a first-prize brass band swinging along
the street
of a coal-dusty village, wholly at odds
with the claims of reasonable gloom.