

**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  
All the thought got combed out: 10

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 vermillion 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 vermillion 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 vermillion petal quivers before me.

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

Locate *I*  
*love you* some-  
where in

teeth and  
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  
or impatient points of buds on spindly bushes – 5  
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.