

Introduction to Poetry

Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

Or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch

I want them to waterski
across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the
shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

WHY POETRY?

“We should read poetry because only in that way can we know man in all his moods - in the most beautiful thoughts of his heart, in his farthest reaches of imagination, in the tenderness of his love, in the nakedness and awe of his soul confronted with the terror and wonder of the Universe.”

WHY POETRY?

"Life gives us different scenery every day.
Poetry is how we notice the beauty."

"Many song lyrics are poetry,
and everyone listens to music."

"Because life is poetry"

"Because sometimes poetry speaks about
your situation even without you talking."

"It's romantic.
Girls like a guy that can write her poetry."



NO DRUGS



SMOKING

By Elton Glaser

I like the cool and heft of it, dull metal on the palm,
• And the click, the hiss, the spark fuming into flame,
Boldface of fire, the rage and sway of it, raw blue at the base
And a slope of gold, a touch to the packed tobacco, the tip
Turned red as a warning light, blown brighter by the breath,
The pull and the pump of it, and the paper's white
Smoothed now to ash as the smoke draws back, drawn down
To the black crust of lungs, tar and poisons in the pink,
And the blood sorting it out, veins tight and the heart slow,
The push and wheeze of it, a sweep of plumes in the air
Like a shako of horses dragging a hearse through the late
centennium,
London, at the end of December, in the dark and fog.

The Red Wheelbarrow



so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

William Carlos Williams

Haiku:

5 Syllables

7 Syllables

5 Syllables

Write a haiku about a subject of your choice. The traditional subject matter of haiku is nature.

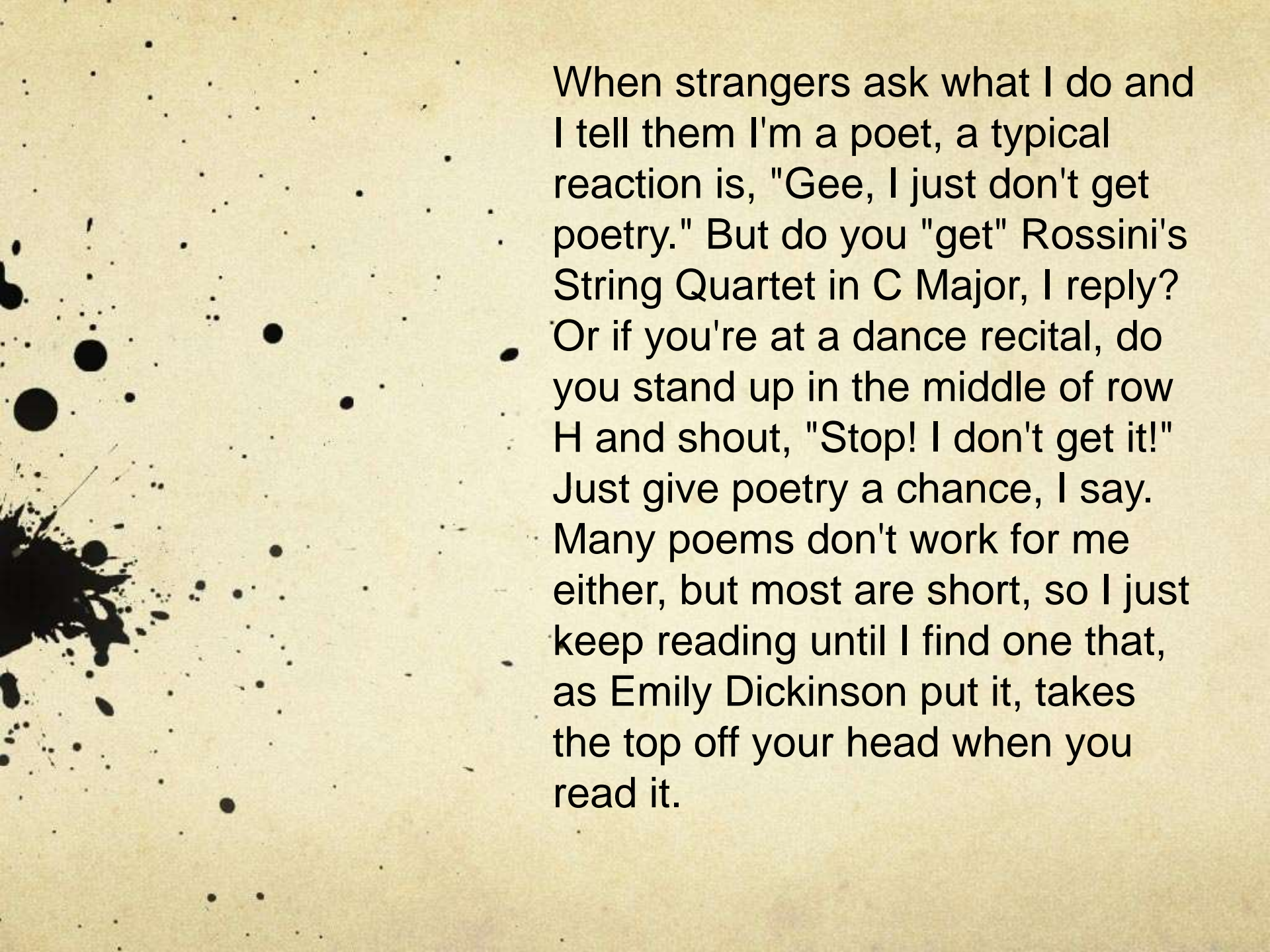
Haikus are easy,
But sometimes they don't make sense
Refrigerator.

Alternatives...

○ Slam Poetry

○ Song Lyrics

○ Freestyle



When strangers ask what I do and I tell them I'm a poet, a typical reaction is, "Gee, I just don't get poetry." But do you "get" Rossini's String Quartet in C Major, I reply? Or if you're at a dance recital, do you stand up in the middle of row H and shout, "Stop! I don't get it!" Just give poetry a chance, I say. Many poems don't work for me either, but most are short, so I just keep reading until I find one that, as Emily Dickinson put it, takes the top off your head when you read it.

Some Resources:

Beautiful and Pointless: A Guide to Modern Poetry
By David Orr

Poetry 180: A Poem a Day for American High
Schools
Billy Collins and The Library of Collins

“Can Slam Poetry Matter?” by Susan B.A. Somers-
Willett

<http://www.rattle.com/rattle27/somerswillett.htm>

“Why Poetry?” by David Kirby
The American Interest Jul/Aug 2007

“Why You Should Read Poetry...Yes, Poetry”
The Huffington Post, 10/20/07

“Why We Should Read Poetry” by Amy Lowell