

**LEARNING**

**HOW**

**TO**

**SEE**

with

**Brian**

**McLaren**

**Season 7, Episode 2**

**Seeing Nature as an Poet**

feat. Drew Jackson and Pádraig Ó Tuama

Brian McLaren: I was an English major in college, yeah, one of those guys. And I remember three times when one of my professors got choked up and shed a tear both through my undergraduate and graduate years. Once was when a history professor told the story of the dissolution of the British Empire. All of us students, I think, were too young and uninformed to feel the intensity of what he felt, that the largest empire in human history would think of itself as so great and yet have to come to terms with the fact that it had caused great harm on its road to greatness. And then that that empire would have to go through the process of letting go of its holdings and seeking a new beginning. And I remember, as our professor lectured, he was overcome by that emotion and we just didn't really understand it.

A second episode of a professor choking up involved one who had had a bit too much to drink before class, that's all I'll say about that one. The third was a professor who read us the beginning of a long poem by William Wordsworth, a poem often known as Tintern Abbey. Just about anybody who's had a British literature class or a basic poetry class will have been exposed to this poem. The actual title is Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13th, 1798. And I'd like to just try reading the first few sections of this poem to you right now and I'll make a few comments as we go along.

Five years have passed, five summers with the length of five long winters and, again, I hear these waters rolling from their mountain springs with a soft inland murmur. Once again, do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs that, on a wild secluded scene, impress thoughts of more deep seclusion and connect the landscape with the quiet of the sky? And so, there Wordsworth invites us into this place that he's visiting, that he's remembered for five years and now sees it again. And there's the sound of water on rocks, there's this sense of seclusion and perhaps a quiet of the sky that reflects the internal quiet that he is feeling as he views this beautiful scene. He goes on, the day has come when I again repose here under this dark sycamore and view these plots of cottage ground, these orchard tufts which, at this season, where their unripe fruits are clad in one green hue and lose themselves mid-groves and copses.

Once again, I see these hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines of sportive wood run wild, these pastoral farms green to the very door and wreaths of smoke sent up in silence from among the trees. And so, here now he helps us sit with him under the sycamore tree and look out over orchards and cottages, again, this feeling of silence, the silent smoke rising through the branches. Then he says, with some uncertain notice as might seem of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods or of some hermit's cave where, by his fire, the hermit sits alone. And so, maybe now we hear hermit and we might think of a hermit monk in his refuge and his monastic hideaway and we get this feeling that this isn't just a rural scene but there's a holy silence in this scene. And then come, to me, what are really amazingly crafted lines.

These beautiful forms, through a long absence, have not been to me as is a landscape to a blind man's eye but oft, in lonely rooms and mid the din of towns and cities, I have owed to them in hours of weariness sensations sweet felt in the blood and felt along the heart and passing even into my pure mind with tranquil restoration, feelings too of unremembered pleasure. Such perhaps has had no slight or trivial influence on that best portion of a

good man's life, his little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and love. And so, here Wordsworth is saying that these memories have often come back to him and they've gone into the deeper parts of him and it's brought to him a restorative tranquility and maybe influenced him, he says, to be a better man. Somehow these beautiful serene memories of this beautiful tranquil place have inspired him to be more kind and loving than he would've been otherwise.

And then came the part that I remember brought my professor to tears as he read them in that sophomore English class when I was a student. Nor lest I trust to them I may have owed another gift of aspect more sublime, that blessed mood in which the burden of the mystery in which the heavy and weary weight of all this unintelligible world is lightened. That serene and blessed mood in which the affections gently lead us on until the breath of this corporeal frame and even the motion of our human blood almost suspended. We are laid asleep in body and become a living soul while, with an eye, made quiet by the power of harmony and the deep power of joy we see into the life of things. Now, Wordsworth was called a romantic poet and some people make fun of the romantics. But honestly, I can hardly think of a better description of contemplation than these words. With an eye made quiet by the power of harmony and the deep power of joy we see into the life of things.

In some ways, I think this whole podcast Learning How to See is inspired by that line, we see into the life of things. How can we learn to see more deeply into the life of things? To help us do that, in this episode, we will be joined by two amazing poets, people I'm so grateful that I know as friends as well as gifted poets. And we're going to ask them to help us see as they see and we're going to invite them to share, from their own poetry and from poetry they love, lines that might help you and I see into the life of things.

Welcome, everyone, to this episode of Learning How to See. In this season, we are looking at the question of how we see nature and we're, especially today, looking at poetry and how poets and poems help us see differently. And I'm so happy to have two wonderful poets and friends to be in this conversation today, Pádraig Ó Tuama and Drew Jackson. And I wonder if we could begin by just having each of you introduce yourself, what would you like folks to know who don't know you and your work already. And let me start with you, Drew.

Drew Jackson: Well, thanks, Brian. It's good to be here. Yeah, so I am living here in Brooklyn, New York with my wife and our two twin daughters who just turned 10 years old about a week ago so we're in full celebration mode. And I have been immersed in this world of poetry for a long time now but have been writing in really the forms that I've been writing in now since about ... I really jumped in at the beginning of the pandemic as a way to explore everything that was going on in me and around me at the time. And poetry found me in a fresh way at that time.

Brian McLaren: That's great. And folks who want to learn more about you, we'll have all kinds of links in the show notes. Pádraig, you're often in my ears because I listen to your podcast Poetry Unbound and I hope lots and lots of people already do. I think more will want to after they're a part of this conversation today. How would you like to introduce yourself?

Pádraig Ó Tuama: Thanks, Brian. It's nice to be with you and Drew. I am an Irish poet, I currently live in New York City and I present Poetry Unbound. I did training in theology so I have an

interest in these big questions although I don't have membership of anything that claims any sense of certitude about answers. And yeah, I love language, I'm fascinated by the spikiness of language, the strangeness of it, I'm intrigued by how it is that something can mean more than just one thing. And so, that's always of interest to me when it comes to thinking about a poem or any language really about power and about nature as well.

Brian McLaren: Thanks. I want to, of the huge scope of things we could talk about, I'd like to focus on the fact that the three of us woke up this morning in a world that we know is in trouble. We all have some sense of the fact that we humans aren't living with the earth very well. We are taking more from the earth than the earth can replenish, we're pumping out more wastes and toxins and so on than this living amazing earth can detoxify and that puts us in a tough situation. As I've been writing about this and thinking about this and living with this, it's funny how I've been drawn more deeply to poetry than maybe anytime in my adult life. And I want to share with you two reasons why and then I'd love to hear your thoughts and any poems that come to mind or anything that comes up for you as poets yourselves.

First, I don't think I have ever felt grief as deep as I have felt these last few years thinking about, literally, to think that the Amazon rainforest, which I've never visited but I know is beautiful and is part of the world and I love it even though I've never been there, and I just think of the Amazon burning and being plowed under for beef. And I think of coral reefs and I think of places that I used to visit and love and now they're literally ... We've paved some paradises and put up parking lots. So, the grief and then to think what could be coming in the next 50 or a hundred or 200 years, I have been drawn to poetry that helps me grieve.

So, that's the first thing. But the second thing is I've also been drawn to poetry that just celebrates the beauty of the natural world because it feels like one of the ways that we might help people keep from destroying this beautiful, precious, diverse world that we live in is if they appreciate it more and love it more the way a poem can help people love it. So, that's one of the reasons I was so happy that both of you said yes because I think you are people who help people with both of those problems. So, yeah, any thoughts? Pádraig, maybe start with you.

Pádraig Ó Tuama: Well, I hope it's okay if I start off by problematizing the idea of nature. We are nature and we are the natural world. I remember, when I was studying some Greek learning, that the Greek word for nature is *physeis* from which we get physics. And what we now call physics was used to be called natural sciences. And so, therefore, questions about stars, questions about time, questions about what we are doing with time, our relationship with time, how human beings interact with each other, how human beings segregate into different groups of belonging and decide who should and who shouldn't be favoured, war, eating and sunflowers are all part of nature, every single one of those. And so, I see nature poetry as anything essentially ... I suppose I see every poem as a nature poem because every poem, in a certain sense, has some consideration of the human condition and humans are part of the natural world.

I am a living, breathing being likely to do much more damage than a lion. For me,

there's an ethical recognition in that of wanting to wake up. It can seem ... If I was to hear that a particular kind of fish is going extinct, that can seem abstract but to recognize that I am part of nature and how is it that I am being part of nature in the wild and wide field of that which lives at the moment and I won't, obviously. In nature, we seem to be one of the few beings who contemplate our own end but, in nature, we also seem to be the being that speeds it, not just for ourselves, but for others. And that interests me from the point of view of ethical consideration as well as what warning can mean as well as what it can mean to expand how it is that I think of nature in order to make sure that I include myself and time.

Brian McLaren: Oh, thanks so much for that, Pádraig. Before we go to Drew, Pádraig, by us having this word nature that, typically, it's used to bracket out certain things, I think it's used to bracket out maybe what we call culture. Tell me what you think happens when we bracket things out from nature.

Pádraig Ó Tuama: Well, I hear sometimes in poetry where people say, "Oh, I don't really like contemporary political poetry, I just like nature poetry from before." So, why don't we get back to I wandered lonely as a cloud, okay, something like that that floats on high or veils in hills and all at once. I saw a crowd, a host of golden daffodils. Even within that poem, there's power because there's the question as to who is it that's allowed to wander lonely as a cloud in the middle of the day without it being comforted upon? And that's nature too. Not the cloud, not the wandering, not the daffodils, not all of that, it's the question as to how it is that somebody has set up a system where someone is and many are not allowed to do that and that is nature.

And so, therefore, I'm really interested in how it is that we engage with what we call nature because that deserves to be scrutinized very seriously. Jason Allen-Paisant is a Jamaican poet who has a book of poems. This is terrible, I'm going to slightly miss recall. It's something with trees. It's terrible. It'll come to me in a while probably just when we hang up from this phone call. But we did make a Poetry Unbound episode about it and so much about what he's looking at in his poem is about trees but then is what it's like for him as a Jamaican who lives in England to enjoy walking amongst trees and the things that are said to him as he's walking amongst trees, I think it might be called *Walking Among Trees*, and all of that is of the quality of nature poetry. I think that it's that ground that we need to expand because there can be a sentimental relationship with what you might call nature-based art and nature-based art has always been political because it has been reserved for particular populations and other populations have been deliberately excluded from the possibility of such entertainment.

Brian McLaren: Fascinating, thanks so much. Drew, any responses?

Drew Jackson: Yeah, I want to pick up on some of those very same threads that Pádraig was pointing to and I immediately was thinking about the series of poems from Hanif Abdurraqib, his series of poems called *How Can Black People Write Poetry or Write About Flowers at a Time Like This*. And he talks about how he was at a poetry reading and there was a Black woman who was reciting, reading some of her own poems, beautiful poems that were talking about the flowers. And as she was reading, there was a white

woman sitting behind him who said, “How can Black people write about poetry at a time like this?” So, he talks just about his reaction to that internally, the tension that he felt. But he said something and I’ve heard him say this a number of times about how what he was most drawn to in that moment was how flowers are actually the perfect thing for Black people to write about at a time like this. To write about something that arrives beautifully and dies slowly before our eyes is the way he put it.

And so, when I think about this question of nature and what is nature and how poetry is interacting with nature, it is a political question because it really sits in that realm of who gets to enjoy this, who gets to be a part of this. We can’t think about nature without thinking about questions of environmental racism, we have to wrestle with those sorts of questions. And Pádraig, to your first point about humanity, people being part of nature, living here in New York, it’s been something that has really awakened me to that in a new way where there’s so many of us, as we’re living here, we talk about the need to get out of the city to get into nature. And I remember having this moment of literally having that thought of saying to myself, well, nature’s all around us, it’s just a part of nature that we don’t want to recognize as nature for some reason, that we want to bracket off from nature for some reason.

But what if we were able to see one another in the same way that we look at and are in awe of the Grand Canyon or the wildflowers growing in the field. How might that change the ways that we interact with one another, the ways that, if we could see, not just the awe in one another, but... And Brian, I think this is getting a little bit at what you said but the ways that we actually do belong to one another, the same ways that we belong to the natural world which we’ve forgotten. We’ve forgotten all of that, we’ve lost it and that’s the thing that I’m interested in is how can our reflections on this and how can writing poetry about it help us to recover our foundational connection with creation, nature itself, the land itself and one another as part of this whole oneness that we exist in. How can we recover that, that’s what I’m interested in.

Brian McLaren: Learning How to See will be back in a moment. Drew, I don’t want to put you on the spot, you’re just making me curious so let me pose a question to you. When you think about a poem that you’ve written, so many of your poems hit on these what we might call political or social or justice-related realities. Something I love about your poetry is it is often poetry connected to anger or grief or outrage or just protest. And when you imagine someone reading one of your poems, what do you hope happens in them? Do you know what I’m saying? It may be that you don’t think about that because you’re focusing on your part of the job to create something but I’m partly thinking ...

Pádraig, I was listening to an episode of Poetry Unbound recently and you’ve been doing a series about the relationship between poetry and peacemaking and conflict resolution which has been a big theme in your life. And you say, “Look, poems can be our teachers but not someone telling us what to do or giving us steps to solve problems, there’s something else that poetry works in us and does in us.” I guess that’s the question I’m asking you, Drew, in these ways, how do you imagine it happening?

Drew Jackson: I don’t know if I can imagine it happening, I don’t know. Once I write a poem, what I’ve recognized about myself is that I’m not a person who very easily can get in touch with my own anger and so poetry has been a way for me to tap into the emotions that are very hard

for me to articulate. If you were to just ask me how do you feel about that, it's very hard for me to really tap into and get underneath the surface of that and so poetry has been a way for me to explore. So, if there's any hope for me in the poems that I write as they meet the audience, it's that the audience would be invited to explore the question what's going on in me as I consider this thing that's happened? What's going on in me as I interact with this question that's being brought to the surface? What does it mean for me to live inside of a wrestle with this tension that doesn't necessarily have a resolution?

That's something that I've had to work my way towards in my poetry where, when I first started writing poetry, I was much more, and this, Brian, has a lot to do with having pastoral training, training and preaching where you're trained to give people answers. And as I've gotten into writing poetry, I've had to let go of that need to give an answer for something. And Pádraig actually has been one of the guides and mentors for me who's helped me wrestle with that and to think about how to introduce tension into a poem that doesn't need resolution. And so, I think that's the thing that, if there's any hope for me, it's that the audience would step into that tension with me somehow or discover whatever tension it is that is brought to the surface in them as they read the poem.

Brian McLaren: Mm-hmm. I'd love to know what you're thinking as you're listening to Drew there, Pádraig.

Pádraig Ó Tuama: Well, it's striking me that a poem isn't a manifest. Well, some of them are, I suppose. A poem isn't a piece of propaganda, I mean that in a negative sense. A poem, this is true for any art, any written art that the person who writes it is the last one to say what it can do. And of course, there's what you imagine it might do but it always does something else. And every poem is looking for a reader or a listener, every piece of writing is looking for a reader or a listener and that's the whole point of it. You make something that makes itself and it makes you back, it's bigger than you and so it can mean something entirely different. At the moment, I'm rereading my favorite book, *A Suitable Boy* by Vikram Seth, and I'm not Indian, I wasn't alive in India in post-partition India. That book is so far from my experience but there are sections of it that have attached themselves to me with a level of intimacy where I relate to certain characters and certain events in their lives with my own joy or grief or sadness or shame, the likes of which couldn't have been imagined, I think, by the writer Vikram Seth.

So, partly in art, art can never be commodified for a single purpose and I think that's what propaganda tries to do. It tries to use the emotional currency of art in order to communicate a singular message that is impenetrable. And I think art just continues to find a way to defy it, to make it bigger and to expand and expand and expand and to be about something, to be about nothing, to frustrate the strategic plan that might've been imagined by somebody who had a strategic plan for what it is that's being written. I've been writing a little bit more about making specific use of some elements of animals that I saw a lot during the pandemic. To my mind, this isn't a new element in my work, it's exploring the same themes using some different language.

Mary Oliver, who I think is ... There's all kinds of people who love Mary Oliver and some people don't like her and some ... I don't think you have to love all of her work and I don't love all of her work but she is renowned as a poet who spoke a lot about the natural world



and hated by some, I suppose, who spoke a lot about the natural world. At one point, she has a poem called, I think it's called A Bitterness. It's a character who is thinking about the place where the character's father is buried and she speaks the speaker and the poem speaks about the father being buried under the wild, amoral, reckless flowers of the hillside. I love those adjectives, wild, amoral, reckless. And often, I think, there can be a way of writing about nature, about the natural world that seems to imply benevolence, it's hard to take that seriously.

If you look at earthquakes, earthquakes are the feat of nature. Obviously, they might be. We're talking about climate change earlier on but there's ways within which certain seeds are only released under intense fire and certain things have grown to require something like how it is that Hindus understand the role of Kaal, that destruction that's also a making and I find that very interesting. I can read a short poem, it's called In the Name of the Bee.

I asked the grasses if they believed but they said believe is a poor verb. I asked the sun but it had eclipsed. I asked the tree and it said stand. I asked the field mouse, it nibbled a seed in my outstretched hand. I asked the hare but it didn't stop. I asked the ground but it just kept spinning. Things grew, then died, then rotted, then renewed the soil, new things grew. I went to ask the bee about the future but it had gone extinct with a bead of nectar on its tongue. I asked the song Thrush About the Soul and it sang until a gate to hell opened. I asked the mountain what mattered, it said nothing.

Brian McLaren: Pádraig, I'm just feeling the beautiful weavings that you do when you read other people's poetry and then make comments on them. I'm just thinking we ought to invite all the listeners to this podcast to listen again to that poem and then see what their commentary would be and how it touched them and what it opened up in them. I want to return to that poem many times in the future. Thank you, thank you for that. I almost don't want to say anything about it, I just want to let it do its beautiful work. Thank you. Drew, is there a poem that you've written that would feel relevant for this conversation or one from someone else that comes to mind?

Drew Jackson: I wrote this poem after the solar eclipse that we recently experienced and it's called The Hour of Trial. Yesterday, the sun was blotted out as happens from time to time and the plague of darkness fell over us. Some wondered what would come next as they hugged their firstborn, others brought to awe, stopped cars and looked up from the middle of the city. A news headline read Solar Eclipse will Cost America almost 700 million in Lost Productivity and maybe this is the sign in the heavens that all it takes to stop the machine is a little bit of beauty mixed with a dash of holy dread. What happens now and next? Are we ending? I don't know but I hear Rilke sing, let everything happen to you, beauty and terror.

Brian McLaren: Oh, my goodness. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

Pádraig Ó Tuama: I love the reference in that poem too, the firstborn and going back in time like so much of your work does, Drew, to biblical narratives, I think, of the flight from Egypt and the Passover that's happening there and the way within which that too could be construed as people trying to read into certain events. Yeah, I love how it goes from that to the eclipse and that terrible measurement of productivity, awful. I shudder when I hear you use that word which is a powerful word to use in poems because it doesn't need comment because it just ...



But putting it there feels like, oh, that word should be in a poem so, therefore, putting it in, it's a confrontation, beauty and terror.

Brian McLaren: It strikes me that both of these poems that you've shared, yeah, there's something that is so disruptive and disturbing with that headline and with the extinct bee with nectar. It does something to us that, when we feel it, when we feel the disruption, if we have whatever sensitivity as we need to the language and ability to slow down and let the poem work, I just think, oh, gosh, that hurt and I really needed it. And maybe this is another reason why my sense is that a planet with a species like ours that is at this point in its development or it's having the effects that we're having, why it becomes so important for us to have poets and to listen to them and to let happen to us what needs to happen to us, to let the poems do their work in us. So, thank you so much for those gifts to us.

Let me ask you in closing, you are two thoughtful, sensitive, intelligent, gifted, aware human beings who wake up every day knowing that something's not right in our species relationship to the earth. How is that affecting you as a human being and as a poet?

Pádraig Ó Tuama: I'm struck by the title of this series that you're doing, Brian, and the Center for Action and Contemplation, Learning How to See and I like it because to see ... All of these things can be synonyms for each other even if they have definitional differences but see, notice, take heed, I think that's what I'm trying to do. In a poem, I'm not trying to solve or I'm not trying to instruct, I'm trying to see and be seen back and that is not just for the purpose of a piece of language art. I think to be alive is I hope to try to learn how to see, to see how I treat people poorly and amend not to do it again or at least to find a way to step one step back from doing that or two or three or four. And that to see, I think, is to have, in some ways, is to hold yourself to account. I think that's one of the resonances to that verb see that's present as I associate with it and what it is you have with your endeavor here on this episode and in this series that you're making. That to learn how to see is to, therefore, have something, some change to make in your life.

So, to see and to change are related in my mind and I don't write poems for that purpose, I write poems because poems write me and I don't know what their job is. But as a general aim in life, to see is to change and to admit and to move and to act.

Drew Jackson: I am thinking of this quote that I heard from a visual artist named Kameelah Janan Rasheed, she's a visual artist and she once said how can we be anything but learners in a world that is slowly revealing itself to us. And as I consider what is happening all around us, what it is we're participating in, the seeming destruction of our world, I grieve and I'm curious about how this continues to unfold and what is being revealed both in me as I consider what's going on. What's happening underneath the surface of my life that I'm being invited to see, to consider, to contemplate what's going on as our world is rocking and reeling, what are we being invited to see in a different way underneath the surface instead of skimming the surface of our world? So, it's the curiosity and the curiosity of what it might look like then for us to truly join in on whatever liberation looks like, whatever salvation means if it means anything, whatever resurrection means if it means anything. I can look into the natural world and I can see it can bear witness that there is something of renewal.

I can consider that but I also can look at the natural world and it tells me that extinction

is a real thing. How do I hold resurrection and extinction side by side? How do I consider human culpability in that extinction and what is ours to do? What is mine to do? I bring those questions to the page and allow them to wander on the page in whatever way they want to go, yeah. But it's that posture of I want to be a student, a learner of this world that I inhabit in all of the ways that it's inviting me to learn it because that's what, I think, it means, partly at least, to be in relationship with the world is to be a student of it, a learner of it.

Brian McLaren: Well, I want to thank you both so much for what you embody and exemplifying that and for the effect of your work and making people curious and giving them some sense. There's more going on here, I need to get beneath the surface and so thank you for the beautiful gifts that you give us through your work and in this conversation. Thanks to you both.

Pádraig Ó Tuama: Thanks, Brian. Thanks, Drew.

Drew Jackson: Thanks, Brian.

Brian McLaren: We hope that this season of Learning How to See will inspire you to vote wisely, to walk upon this earth gently and to speak up with grace and clarity whenever you can about our need for a new way of seeing the earth. We hope you'll become part of the growing movement to forge a new relationship among our species, our fellow species and our planet. This, I believe, is holy work, sacred work, God's work, I think it's what Jesus meant when He spoke of the Kingdom of God.

There was a moment in today's podcast that stuck out to me. Pádraig noted that the way we often use the word nature could get us into trouble. If it suggests to us that we as individuals or as a species are in one category and nature is in another, that's what poets do, they help us learn to see in new ways. When Drew and Pádraig shared their poems, there were more moments that really struck me. I felt like new depth opened up as if a flat screen TV became three-dimensional and then there was something behind what I thought was in the background. You may not be a big fan of poetry at this point in your life, that's okay, not everyone is but I want to suggest a possibility to you. Maybe you'll come to love poetry more by writing it than by reading it. So, I'd like to invite you to write a simple poem. If you'd like, you can share it with us by emailing [podcasts@cac.org](mailto:podcasts@cac.org) or by leaving a voicemail at [cac.org/voicemail](http://cac.org/voicemail).

If you don't know where to start, you might try using a form known as haiku. You write a line of five syllables, then you write a second line with seven syllables and then a final line with five syllables. You'll find links to instructions and examples of haiku in our show notes and, in our last episode, we hope to share some of your submissions. If you'd like to learn more about why I care so deeply about helping us live into a new relationship with this beautiful planet and our fellow creatures, I hope you'll check out my new book, *Life After Doom*, and also my book, *the Galapagos Islands, A Spiritual Journey*.

Sincere thanks to our guests, Pádraig Ó Tuama and Drew Jackson. I hope you'll support them by purchasing some of their poetry, you'll find links in the show notes. Big thanks to Corey Wayne and Dorothy Abrams who produce Learning How to See, thanks to April

Stace for her musical support and thanks to Sound on Studios for their support in post-production. Thanks to the Center for Action and Contemplation for making Learning How to See possible and special thanks to you for your investment of time. And thanks for sharing Learning How to See with others if you find it meaningful.

As a parting moment of shared contemplation, I'd like to share two haiku poems that our family composed this summer around a picnic table. My daughter, Rachel, whom you met in season six, would invite one of us, a grandchild, a parent, a grandparent to write a five-syllable first line and then pass the paper to the person next to them. That person would write a second line of seven syllables and the process would continue until we had group composed several poems after the meal.

Here are two that we hope will help you learn to see in some fresh ways. First is called Chapped Lips. Wake up with chapped lips, nothing seems to ease the dry. I'll go kiss the lake and flying fish. Fish fly from the stream. Air, smoke, haze, angled sunlight. Feet in the cold, slow.