**Monday, 17 September 2018**

**Poetry Appreciation/Sub Day**

**Directions: Read the four poems provided. Then answer the questions that follow.**

**The Humor of the Universe**

**Ron Wallace**

Who was it said, comedy is when  
you slip on a banana peel and fall down  
and smack your head; tragedy is when  
I get a hangnail? The universe doesn't  
care, or distinguish the two, but goes on  
about its business of what might seem to us  
irony, but, of course, isn't, any more than  
our parody of order is ever that. And yet,  
we care, all 5.5 billion of us, gods of our   
domains, in our houses or hovels, our  
forests or factories, doing what we do  
best, producing meaning, as if there is  
an order to it all, and not just nothingness  
and the rending fabric of space.  What place  
in the grand scheme of things do we have  
but to sit on our hands and project ourselves   
out into the future, as if there were a  
scheme of things, and as if it were grand.

"Four Poems by Ron Wallace." *Four Poems by Ron Wallace | Superstition Review*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.

**Could Have**  
Wislawa Szymborska

It could have happened.  
It had to happen.  
It happened earlier. Later.  
Nearer. Farther off.  
It happened, but not to you.

You were saved because you were the first.  
You were saved because you were the last.  
Alone. With others.  
On the right. The left.  
Because it was raining. Because of the shade.  
Because the day was sunny.  
  
You were in luck -- there was a forest.  
You were in luck -- there were no trees.  
You were in luck -- a rake, a hook, a beam, a brake,  
A jamb, a turn, a quarter-inch, an instant . . .  
  
So you're here? Still dizzy from  
another dodge, close shave, reprieve?  
One hole in the net and you slipped through?  
I couldn't be more shocked or  
speechless.  
Listen,  
how your heart pounds inside me

"Daniel Traister's Home Page--Wislawa Szymborska Poem." *Daniel Traister's Home Page*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Aug. 2016.

**The Iceberg Theory**

[**Gerald Locklin**](http://writersalmanac.publicradio.org/author.php?auth_id=1347)

all the food critics hate iceberg lettuce.  
you'd think romaine was descended from  
orpheus's laurel wreath,  
you'd think raw spinach had all the nutritional   
benefits attributed to it by popeye,  
not to mention aesthetic subtleties worthy of  
verlaine and debussy.  
they'll even salivate over chopped red cabbage  
just to disparage poor old mr. iceberg lettuce.

I guess the problem is  
it's just too common for them.  
It doesn't matter that it tastes good,  
has a satisfying crunchy texture,  
holds its freshness,  
and has crevices for the dressing,  
whereas the darker, leafier varieties  
are often bitter, gritty, and flat.  
it just isn't different *enough*, and  
it's too goddamn *american*.

of course a critic has to criticize:  
a critic has to have something to say.  
perhaps that's why literary critics  
purport to find interesting  
so much contemporary poetry  
that just bores the shit out of me.

at any rate, I really enjoy a salad  
with plenty of chunky iceberg lettuce,  
the more the merrier,  
drenched in an italian or roquefort dressing.  
and the poems I enjoy are those I don't have  
to pretend that I'm enjoying.

Keillor, Garrison. "The Iceberg Theory." *Good Poems*. New York: Viking, 2002.

**Hitler's First Photograph**  
Wislawa Szymborska  
  
And who's this little fellow in his itty-bitty robe?   
That's tiny baby Adolf, the Hitlers little boy!   
Will he grow up to be an LL.D.?   
Or a tenor in Vienna's Opera House?   
Whose teensy hand is this, whose little ear and eye and nose?   
Whose tummy full of milk, we just don't know:   
printer's, doctor's, merchant's, priest's?   
Where will those tootsy-wootsies finally wander?   
To garden, to school, to an office, to a bride,   
maybe to the Burgermeister's daughter?  
  
Precious little angel, mommy's sunshine, honeybun,   
while he was being born a year ago,   
there was no dearth of signs on the earth and in the sky:   
spring sun, geraniums in windows,   
the organ-grinder's music in the yard,   
a lucky fortune wrapped in rosy paper,   
then just before the labor his mother's fateful dream:   
a dove seen in dream means joyful news,   
if it is caught, a long-awaited guest will come.   
Knock knock, who's there, it's Adolf's heartchen knocking.   
  
A little pacifier, diaper, rattle, bib,   
our bouncing boy, thank God and knock on wood, is well,   
looks just like his folks, like a kitten in a basket,   
like the tots in every other family album.   
Shush, let's not start crying, sugar,   
the camera will click from under that black hood.   
  
The Klinger Atelier, Grabenstrasse, Braunau,   
and Braunau is small but worthy town,   
honest businesses, obliging neighbors,   
smell of yeast dough, of gray soap.   
No one hears howling dogs, or fate's footsteps.   
A history teacher loosens his collar   
and yawns over homework.

"Constant Reader - Poetry: Apr 19 - Hitler's First Photograph - Wislawa Szymborska (showing 1-21 of 21)." *Constant Reader - Poetry: Apr 19*. N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Oct. 2016.

Appreciation Questions:

1. What kind of poems do you think these are? Lyric? Free verse? Sonnet? Something else? How do you know?
2. What sensory language is used in each poem? Images described? Comparisons readers can see, feel, taste, and smell? Which poem, in your opinion, does these things the best? Why?
3. Where are the humorous lines, if any? What does humor add to the poems? What could it add?
4. How do the themes/messages of each poem differ?
5. How do the point of views differ?
6. Most importantly, what poem is your favorite? What do you like or not like?
7. What strategies can you steal?
8. What else do you find interesting?