

Harding Students, each of the following poems corresponds to one of our Throughlines. As you read each poem, think of how that poem connects to the respective Throughline. Some are fairly straightforward, but others will require some deeper thinking. Make sure you check to see if your grade has an additional assignment to complete with the poems. Those assignments will be shared on the Harding website along with the summer reading assignment lists.

Throughline Master List:

Creation Keeper: 'The Peace of Wild Things'

Servant Worker: "To Be of Use"

Image Reflector: "The Creation"

Justice Seeker: "The Hill We Climb"

Community Builder: "How Things Work"

God Worshiper: "I thank you God"

Idolatry Discerner: "Ozymandias"

Wisdom Pursuer: "What Life Should Be"

Order Discoverer: "Let Evening Come"

Beauty Creator: "The Summer Day"

What Life Should Be

Pat A. Fleming

To learn while still a child
What this life is meant to be.
To know it goes beyond myself
It's so much more than me.
To overcome the tragedies,
To survive the hardest times.
To face those moments filled with pain,
And still manage to be kind.
To fight for those who can't themselves,
To always share my light.
With those who wander in the dark,
To love with all my might.
To still stand up with courage,
Though standing on my own.
To still get up and face each day,
Even when I feel alone.
To try to understand the ones
That no one cares to know.
And make them feel some value
When the world has let them go.
To be an anchor, strong and true,
That person loyal to the end.
To be a constant source of hope
To my family and my friends.
To live a life of decency,
To share my heart and soul.
To always say I'm sorry
When I've harmed both friend and foe.
To be proud of whom I've tried to be,

And this life I chose to live.
To make the most of every day
By giving all I have to give.
To me that's what this life should be,
To me that's what it's for.
To take what God has given me
And make it so much more.
To live a life that matters,
To be someone of great worth.
To love and to be loved in return
And make my mark on Earth

To be of use
Marge Piercy

The people I love the best
jump into work head first
without dallying in the shallows
and swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.
They seem to become natives of that element,
the black sleek heads of seals
bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who go into the fields to harvest
and work in a row and pass the bags along,
who are not parlor generals and field deserters
but move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.

The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.

“i thank You God for most this amazing”
E. E. Cummings

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky;and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes
(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday;this is the birth

day of life and of love and wings:and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)
how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?
(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

Ozymandias
Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Let Evening Come
Jane Kenyon

Let the light of late afternoon
shine through chinks in the barn, moving
up the bales as the sun moves down.

Let the cricket take up chafing
as a woman takes up her needles
and her yarn. Let evening come.

Let dew collect on the hoe abandoned
in long grass. Let the stars appear
and the moon disclose her silver horn.

Let the fox go back to its sandy den.
Let the wind die down. Let the shed
go black inside. Let evening come.

To the bottle in the ditch, to the scoop
in the oats, to air in the lung
let evening come.

Let it come, as it will, and don't
be afraid. God does not leave us
comfortless, so let evening come.

The Peace of Wild Things
Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

How Things Work
Gary Soto

Today it's going to cost us twenty dollars
To live. Five for a softball. Four for a book,
A handful of ones for coffee and two sweet rolls,
Bus fare, rosin for your mother's violin.
We're completing our task. The tip I left
For the waitress filters down
Like rain, wetting the new roots of a child
Perhaps, a belligerent cat that won't let go
Of a balled sock until there's chicken to eat.
As far as I can tell, daughter, it works like this:
You buy bread from a grocery, a bag of apples
From a fruit stand, and what coins
Are passed on helps others buy pencils, glue,
Tickets to a movie in which laughter
Is thrown into their faces.
If we buy a goldfish, someone tries on a hat.
If we buy crayons, someone walks home with a broom.
A tip, a small purchase here and there,
And things just keep going. I guess.

The Creation

James Weldon Johnson

And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said,
"I'm lonely —
I'll make me a world."

And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God reached out and took the light in His hands,
And God rolled the light around in His hands
Until He made the sun;
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God himself stepped down —
And the sun was on His right hand,
And the moon was on His left;
The stars were clustered about His head,
And the earth was under His feet.
And God walked, and where He trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.

Then He stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.
So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And He spat out the seven seas;
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed;
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled;
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,

And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around His shoulder.

Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And He said, "Bring forth! Bring forth!"
And quicker than God could drop His hand.
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said, "That's good!"

Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that He had made.
He looked at His sun,
And He looked at His moon,
And He looked at His little stars;
He looked on His world
With all its living things,
And God said, "I'm lonely still."

Then God sat down
On the side of a hill where He could think;
By a deep, wide river He sat down;
With His head in His hands,
God thought and thought,
Till He thought, "I'll make me a man!"

Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled Him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand;
This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till He shaped it in His own image;

Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

The Hill we Climb

Amanda Gorman

When day comes we ask ourselves,
where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
The loss we carry, a sea we must wade.
We've braved the belly of the beast.
We've learned that quiet isn't always peace.
In the norms and notions of what just is isn't always justice.
And yet, the dawn is ours before we knew it.
Somehow, we do it.
Somehow, we've weathered
and witnessed a nation that isn't broken,
but simply unfinished.
We, the successors of a country and a time
where a skinny Black girl
descended from slaves and raised by a single mother
can dream of becoming president,
only to find herself reciting for one.
And yes, we are far from polished.
Far from pristine.
But that doesn't mean we are
striving to form a union that is perfect.
We are striving to forge our union with purpose,
to compose a country committed to all cultures,
colors, characters and conditions of man.
And so, we lift our gazes not to what stands between us,
but what stands before us.
We close the divide because we know,
to put our future first,
we must first put our differences aside.
We lay down our arms
so we can reach out our arms to one another.
We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true.
That even as we grieved, we grew.
That even as we hurt, we hoped;
that even as we tired, we tried;
that we'll forever be tied together, victorious.
Not because we will never again know defeat,
but because we will never again sow division.
Scripture tells us to envision
that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree,
and no one shall make them afraid.
If we're to live up to our own time,
then victory won't lie in the blade,
but in all the bridges we've made.
That is the promise to glade,
the hill we climb if only we dare it.
Because being American is more than a pride we inherit;
it's the past we step into and how we repair it.
We've seen a forest that would shatter our nation
rather than share it.
Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
And this effort very nearly succeeded.

But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
it can never be permanently defeated.
In this truth,
in this faith we trust.
For while we have our eyes on the future,
history has its eyes on us.
This is the era of just redemption.
We feared it at its inception.
We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
of such a terrifying hour,
but within it, we found the power
to author a new chapter.
To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
Wo, while once we asked,
“How could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?”
Now we assert, “
How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?”
We will not march back to what was,
but move to what shall be:
a country that is bruised, but whole;
benevolent, but bold; fierce and free.
We will not be turned around
or interrupted by intimidation,
because we know our inaction and inertia
will be the inheritance of the next generation.
Our blunders become their burdens.
But one thing is certain,
if we merge mercy with might,
and might with right,
then love becomes our legacy,
and change our children’s birthright.
So, let us leave behind a country
better than one we were left.
With every breath from my bronze-pounded chest,
we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
We will rise from the gold-limned hills of the West.
We will rise from the wind-swept Northeast
where our forefathers first realized revolution.
We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states.
We will rise from the sun-baked South.
We will rebuild, reconcile and recover
in every known nook of our nation,
in every corner called our country
our people diverse and beautiful
will emerge battered and beautiful.
When day comes, we step out of the shade
aflame and unafraid.
The new dawn blooms as we free it.
For there is always light,
if only we’re brave enough to see it.
If only we’re brave enough to be it.

The Summer Day
Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down--
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?