

POETRY NOW!

List poem

Things That Go Away & Come Back Again

thoughts
airplanes
boats
trains
people
dreams
animals
songs
husbands
boomerangs
lightning
the sun, the moon, the stars
bad weather
the seasons
soldiers
good luck
health
depression
joy
laundry

by Anne Waldman

Anne Waldman (1945 -), author of over 40 volumes of poetry, is famous for her exuberant poetry performances. She is the co-founder (with beat poet Allen Ginsberg) of the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at the Naropa Institute of Boulder, CO, where she currently lives.

Poetry Idea

This poem is called a “list” poem. What makes it a poem, when it’s just a list of words? Good question. I think it is the idea behind the poem (hint: look at the title), which links things as different as “joy” and “laundry”.

1. Think of an interesting category of things, for instance, “Things That Grow.”
2. Brainstorm all the things that might fit into this: toenails, grass, love, poems, dust bunnies, etc. Try to think of both concrete things (grass) and abstract things (love).

3. Choose what you think are the most striking things/words for your list poem (or use all of them). List them in what you think is the most interesting arrangement. For your last two things, try (as Anne Waldman did) to choose words that don't seem to fit together, but do—in your poem (“joy / laundry”).

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