

Peace and Quiet in Troubled Times

September 2025

Welcome to this opportunity to give yourself time and space away from the daily tasks, worries and fears which put our minds in turmoil. You are invited to focus on the music, words and pictures. You may find it helpful to read the poems out loud and then to keep silences in between, entering into an oasis of calm, to engage in 'mindfulness'. Each month we explore a different theme, relevant to our common experiences of life and the world around us. We follow the pattern of the Church year. **We are now in Creation Season.**

*Please click on the underlined text beneath the images to hear the music via YouTube.
Please do skip or close any adverts that appear.*

Changing Seasons, Changing World

It seems to me that the natural world is the greatest source of excitement; the greatest source of visual beauty; the greatest source of intellectual interest. It is the greatest source of so much in life that makes life worth living.

Sir David Attenborough - November 2021

Every breath of air we take, every mouthful of food that we take, comes from the natural world. And if we damage the natural world, we damage ourselves.

Sir David Attenborough - July 2022



Climate Change

How long back did we stop answering
the season's call? What did it take to have wings,
to silk, swell and float in the gentlest directions
through this city of wrong, our cargo of pollen
an opiate for every garden's pain?

Tell me, botched larva,
how long back did we stop in our tracks,
preferring muck to air, feasting to tending?

Adil Jussawalla

Sky Poem

I look up
at the blue embrace of sky,
its arms open wide,
trying to hold a world
that's doing its best
to kill it.

Gideon Heugh



<https://youtu.be/6gMopnCsv1I>

Mariage d'Amour (Spring Waltz) – Chopin

Thaw

Over the land freckled with snow half-thawed
The speculating rooks at their nests cawed
And saw from elm-tops, delicate as flower of grass,
What we below could not see, Winter pass.

Edward Thomas



A Northern Morning

It rained from dawn. The fire died in the night.
I poured hot water on some foreign leaves;
I brought the fire to life. Comfort
spread from the kitchen like a taste of chocolate
through the head-waters of a body,
accompanied by that little-water-music.
The knotted veins of the old house tremble and carry
a louder burden: the audience joining in.
People are peaceful in a world so lavish
with the ingredients of life:
the world of breakfast easy as Tahiti.
But we must leave. Head down in my new coat
I dodge to the High Street conscious of my fellows
damp and sad in their vegetable fibres.
But by the bus stop I look up: the spring trees
exult in the downpour, radiant, clean for hours:
This is the life! This is the only life!

Alistair Elliot

Lines written in Early Spring

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

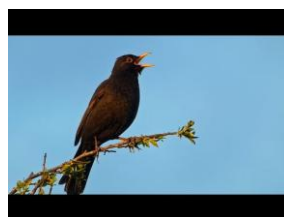
To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played,
Their thoughts I cannot measure -
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

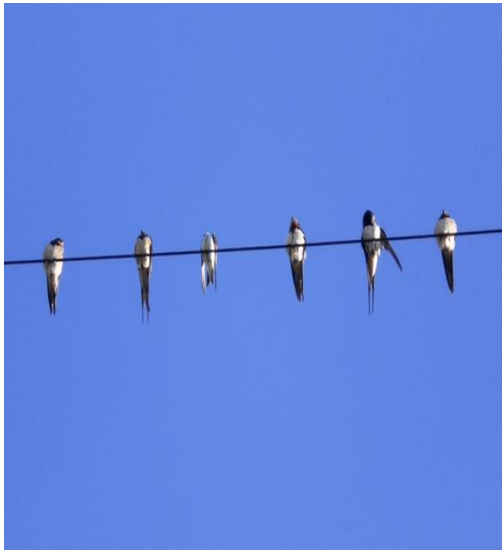
The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.
If this belief from heaven be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

William Wordsworth



https://youtu.be/eqPR4_6J93I

Swallows



When winter is over
And spring has pushed up green
From the sleeping ground,
The swallows come back.

One morning they're there again;
Little black streamers with forked tails,
Trapeze artists, zigzagging from wire to
wire,
Whizzing over our heads.

They fly all the way from Africa -
Thousands and thousands of miles -
And return to the very same street
They left at the end of autumn.

Each one of them
Weighs less than the smallest coin.
Kenneth Steven



<https://youtu.be/CrEMHDgN5dI>

Antonio Vivaldi – Guitar Concerto in D 2nd movement

The Summer House

The window opens so the wind
blooms through the lit rooms.
The doors breathe, and upstairs
the curtains in the bedroom are all closed
so the cool is kept till the dark returns.
I remember my childhood home
and the oranges there on the kitchen table -
hot glows of softness. I smelled them
and closed my eyes to a journey:
the faraway blue of sky and sea
and trees that were heavy with fruit.
Summer is the corns of sand in my shoes;
a garden warm with easy talk -
night and the windows breathing free.
Kenneth Steven



<https://youtu.be/02jpLx83Jws>

Goldfinch singing

Paper Moon

hundreds
of birdsongs fill
the evening mind
feeding colour
to a blind woman

"We teach a child colours from nature" the headmistress tells me when I meet with her on admission day.

"We also believe in mixing age groups in the initial years. Both your children would be in the same class, and we find this interaction really works wonders." I can recollect her warm smile.

The school is close to the shores of the Arabian Sea in Mumbai. After a week, I linger quietly at the back of their class to watch how my two kids are doing.

Their class is taking a walk through the coconut trees to the sea...on and off I see the teacher picking up some sand, or a pebble to show the children. Most kids stay close to the teacher and a few simply wander away. Along with them, my gaze follows the vast blue sky that dips into the deep blue sea. The teacher's hand points to the gulls that dot the sky and the catamaran on the edge of the horizon.

As if for the first time, I notice, the fishing nets spread on the beach sands, the smell of children's laughter filling the air, and the monsoon sea breeze as it brushes my face.

hammering rain
the city gutters clogged
with plastic covers Kala Ramesh



https://youtu.be/VdnB_9vPurc
Maple Leaf Rag – Scott Joplin

Autumn Song

There came a day that caught the summer
Wrung its neck
Plucked it
And ate it.

Now what shall I do with the trees?
The day said, the day said.
Strip them bare, strip them bare.
Let's see what is really there.

And what shall I do with the sun?
The day said, the day said.
Roll him away till he's cold and small.
He'll come back rested if he comes at all.

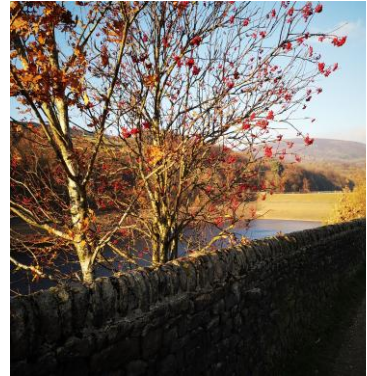
And what shall I do with the birds?
The day said, the day said.
The birds I've frightened, let them flit.
I'll hang out pork for the brave tomtit.

And what shall I do with the seed?
The day said, the day said.
Bury it deep, see what it's worth.
See if it can stand the earth.

What shall I do with the people?
The day said, the day said.
Stuff them with apple and blackberry pie -
They'll love me then till the day they die.

There came this day and he was autumn.
His mouth was wide
As red as a sunset.
His tail was an icicle.

Ted Hughes - Season Songs



Autumn

I opened the door into the wood and listened:
through the low wool of the mist
the last leaves dwindled like dancers
down to a golden floor.

It was me that broke the silence:
my boots splintered one twig
so the whole wood shook and rattled with wings -
the roe deer froze, their eyes all glazed.

Everything listened then -
the silence a waiting, the quiet a watching;
until my feet had disappeared, my shadow passed -
and only the rain fell still, in soft glass beads.

Kenneth Steven



https://youtu.be/elE-n9Tj_Zg

Antonio Vivaldi - Autumn

Winter trees

All the complicated details
of the attiring and
the disattiring are completed!
A liquid moon
moves gently among
the long branches.
Thus having prepared their buds
against a sure winter
the wise trees
stand sleeping in the cold.
William Carlos Williams



The Dipper

It was winter, near freezing,
I'd walked through a forest of firs
when I saw issue out of the waterfall
a solitary bird.

It lit on a damp rock,
and, as water swept stupidly on,
wrung from its own throat
supple, undammable song.

It isn't mine to give.
I can't coax this bird to my hand
that knows the depth of the river
yet sings of it on land.

Kathleen Jamie



Teresa Shelton

Snow

This morning winter came along
Gave everything a bright new coat.

I stood at the window and watched
As a robin left footprints on my sill.

A dog stopped by a lamp-post,
Left a bright orange pool and then ran off.

The postman came whistling up the road,
Spoiled the snow with his big, black boots.

A bus went roaring past at eight,
Leaving a trail of soot and slush.

Then the neighbours started off to work
And everything turned to dirty marzipan.

I wanted to go out and put it all right,
Begin again with everything white.

And I thought of when our world was new,
Beautiful and bright - before we spoiled it.

Kenneth Steven



<https://youtu.be/Mndn7ogRP6o>

The Snow is Dancing - Debussy



Ode to Planet Earth

they are distraught
the midnight crows
and the street dogs bark
their howling woes.
a siren moans
through the silent night
the stars are dimmed
fading out of sight.

is this an omen
thinks my mind
is this a presage
of the surreal kind?

the city is choked
with chemical fume
the trees are weighed
with dust and gloom
and yesterday's truth
is buried in lies
as we alter perceptions
and ethic dies.

now plastic bottles
dance on the sea
and the city's flotsam
floats merrily
on waters that
once were pristine
once, when the horizon
could be seen.

do you recall
how in your youth
the sky was blue
and you breathed truth?
when less was more
and life a song
of little joys
that came along.

we've travelled far
from halcyon days
let's stitch them back
let's mend our ways.
let's seed more green
let's wash the air
let's heal the world
with love and care.

Bina Sarkar Ellias

Good News

It's Saturday morning
and I'm as awake as the spring grass.
I consider turning on the TV,
that dark glass of bad news
that we don't really need.

Then out of the corner of my eye
I see a robin
doing the cha-cha
on the bird table,
as if it were a grand ballroom
with the perky flowers
and warm-hearted trees
his appreciative audience.

So I put down the remote,
pull up a chair,
I stop, I stare, and I see
that beneath the sacred blue sky
there is good news.

Gideon Heugh



<https://youtu.be/mnUPGbx88NU>

Summer – Frank Bridge