

PROGRAM

Poetry & Literature

- About This Program
- Poet Laureate
- Youth Ambassador
- Prizes
- Audio Recordings
- Featured Videos
- Events

Poet Laureate

History of the Position

Consultants and Poets Laureate

Poet Laureate Projects

Living Nations, Living Words

American Conversations: Celebrating
Poems in Rural Communities

The Technicolor Adventures of
Catalina Neon

La Casa de Colores

Where Poetry Lives

Poetry for the Mind's Joy

American Life in Poetry

Poetry 180

List of All 180 Poems

More About Poetry 180

How To Read a Poem Out Loud

The Favorite Poem Project

Poetry Room Gallery

Blog

From the Catbird Seat: The official
Poetry and Literature blog

Podcast

From the Catbird Seat: The official
Poetry and Literature podcast

Subscribe

Receive notifications about events,
activities, and online resources

Related Resources

Ask a Librarian

Poetry Resources

National Book Festival

« Back to List of All 180 Poems page

Poem 133: The Summer Day

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 down 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?

—Mary Oliver

Rights & Access

Mary Oliver

Mary Oliver (1935-2019) was a Pulitzer Prize winning poet. She published several poetry
collections, including *Dog Songs: Poems* (Penguin Books, 2015).

Follow Us



Take our survey