

**Walking in Two Worlds at Once:  
A playshop that leaps between details and dreams**

**Something to think about:**

Part of the magic of the poem is that it goes beneath the story. It is more than a retelling of what happened, though it is that, too. I think that the best poems will allow us to engage both our sense memory and our emotional memory. They ask us to walk in two worlds at once—a world of details and images—the world of pagers, cell phones, to do lists, robinsong, blizzard and mud. And also they ask us to inhabit a world dedicated to meaning making--the world we inhabit when we dream, imagine and feel.

**How do we do that in our own poems?**

- a) images that show
- b) a chink, and by chink, I mean a place where we see in past the details to the workings of the heart. You've heard you should show, not tell. Yes. And. This is the part where we spell it out, a little, anyway. A small telling. Or at least where we allow for the reader to see in.

**Today:**

- 1) Let's read a few poems that exemplify this leaping between the two worlds. Choose a line and write for 20 minutes. Use stream of consciousness and keep your pen moving. If you get stuck, repeat what you just wrote, go to a new prompt, start asking questions.

**In a Time of Economic Downturn, I Gaze Up at the Sky**

Michael Blumenthal

"Tonight when I get home ..."

**August**

Mary Oliver

What does your body have to accept?

**To Hold**

Li-Young Lee

"So we're dust. In the meantime ..."

**Failing and Flying**

Jack Gilbert (which blends myth and personal story)

"Everyone forgets that ..."

2) Collect images: any nearby location. stairwell, street, park, sidewalk. Use all the senses to jot down what you experience. Be specific. Gather as many images as possible in 15-20 minutes.

3) Putting it all together. Try to weave ideas and images from the two writings into one.

**In a Time of Economic Downturn, I Gaze Up at the Sky**

Michael Blumenthal

The sun came up this morning, just  
as I knew it would. My morning coffee  
tasted exactly like yesterday's: a tad bitter,  
but nonetheless revivifying. The faces  
of our dead Presidents on Mount Rushmore,  
are still there, speaking of their trials  
and tribulations from their scenic outlook  
of granite. Tonight, when I get home from work,  
my lover will make her way downstairs,  
wearing my favorite underwear. We'll lie  
in bed, pretending to watch a movie, both  
knowing what we really want. The Dow,  
no doubt, will continue its slide, just as the moon,  
that lozenge of indifference, will continue  
its path downward among the clouds. All of us—  
sun, moon, coffee, clouds— might feel a twinge  
of guilt: such indifference to profit and loss!  
Yet, all over the world, tiny birds with broken wings  
and injuries of all sorts are making their way  
back to their nests, even the waterlogged anhinga  
is drying its wings in the sun. It's good to know  
so much keeps going on, despite everything.  
Come closer, sweetheart, let's put the film on pause,  
let's profit from whatever we've got—before  
the closing bell, before the riffraff of recovery  
finds us and brings us down again.

**more >>**

**August**

Mary Oliver

When the blackberries hang  
swollen in the woods, in the brambles  
nobody owns, I spend

all day among the high  
branches, reaching  
my ripped arms, thinking

of nothing, cramming  
the black honey of summer  
into my mouth; all day my body

accepts what it is. In the dark  
creeks that run by there is  
this thick paw of my life darting among

the black bells, the leaves; there is  
this happy tongue.

**To Hold**

Li-Young Lee

So we're dust. In the meantime, my wife and I  
make the bed. Holding opposite edges of the sheet,  
we raise it, billowing, then pull it tight,  
measuring by eye as it falls into alignment  
between us. We tug, fold, tuck. And if I'm lucky,  
she'll remember a recent dream and tell me.

One day we'll lie down and not get up.  
One day, all we guard will be surrendered.

Until then, we'll go on learning to recognize  
what we love, and what it takes  
to tend what isn't for our having.  
So often, fear has led me  
to abandon what I know I must relinquish  
in time. But for the moment,  
I'll listen to her dream,

and she to mine, our mutual hearing calling  
more and more detail into the light  
of a joint and fragile keeping.

**Failing and Flying**

Jack Gilbert

Everyone forgets that Icarus also flew.  
It's the same when love comes to an end,  
or the marriage fails and people say  
they knew it was a mistake,  
that everybody said it would never work.  
That she was old enough to know better.  
But anything worth doing is worth doing badly.  
Like being there by that summer ocean  
on the other side of the island while  
love was fading out of her, the stars  
burning so extravagantly those nights  
that anyone could tell you they would never last.  
Every morning she was asleep in my bed  
like a visitation, the gentleness in her  
like antelope standing in the dawn mist.  
Each afternoon I watched her coming back  
through the hot stony field after swimming,  
the sea light behind her and the huge sky  
on the other side of that.  
Listened to her while we ate lunch.  
How can they say the marriage failed?  
Like the people who came back from Provence  
(when it was Provence) and said  
it was pretty but the food was greasy.  
I believe Icarus was not failing as he fell,  
but just coming to the end of his triumph.

*Poet and presenter Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer is the author of If You Listen, a three-time award winning book of poetry, editor of Charity: True Stories of Giving and Receiving, and leads TAG: You're It seminars on creativity, positive attitude and finding purpose. Visit her at [www.wordwoman.com](http://www.wordwoman.com).*