

Poetry Series

**william upton**  
**- poems -**

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# william upton()

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A man's soul should not be decided on his deathbed  
When a life-locked near-cadaver lies in despair  
Except for an utterance of the inevitable final cry  
For a life's worth of forgiveness.  
Can the words, 'I accept you as my Lord and Savior'  
Be enough on salvation's resume,  
Or is it too late for a death row  
Governor's midnight reprieve?  
Even more, we should be concerned if there is grace for us  
Who, when given chances time and time again,  
Failed to look for the prodigal,  
Derelict in our duty to break from the 99  
To salvage the one that is lost.  
We are the ones who are remiss  
In following commands.  
We are the Pontius Pilates who washed our hands  
Now covered with resurrection blood.  
God is loving and merciful.  
He knows our hearts better than we know them.  
In His grace may He take the departed to be with Him  
To finally learn of His ways,  
And may He show ample Grace to cleanse the blood stain  
From our own hands  
That now appears crimson indelible.

william upton

# A New York Minute

Lost

Smack in the middle of Manhattan

Between hotel and cab,

Waiting for the final curtain to fall,

Then off to the airport of farewells

To carry home mystical mid-town dreams

Of unbridled passion and joy

Laced between romantic mischief and freedom.

Windows of unrelenting opportunities

Had been exposed for a 48 hour voyage into wonderland.

Paradise Lost had finally caught Paradise Found

In a magic symphony never before played.

Surreal visions glided past Rockefeller Center skaters

And lit up every single light in Times Square.

The horses' eyes from their Central Park carriage

Turned around to look at lovebird eyes as though they knew.

Wedding crasher, Plaza Hotel ballroom dancing

Shared the speed of the city

With the quickening pulse of a relationship about to blossom

Into a rose.

Crazy laughter and happiness shouted at the full New York City midnight moon

And walked together, hand in hand, through the diamond, star-studded eternity  
of wonder.

So unfair to count goodbye minutes in real time.

So wrong to watch helplessly as my cab sped away,

Leaving behind the stardust memories,

Knowing the scales had fallen off blind eyes

To realize there would not again be such a time...

And that life would never be quite the same.

william upton

# A Reconnection Of Spirit

Over time  
Something separates the best of friends-  
Geography, marriage, divorce, kids, apathy-  
Something that really shouldn't be.  
We remember the best times of our lives,  
Yet we lose track of those who made them possible.

Time is a divider.  
It is the constant in the equation  
That makes us lose sight of one another.  
The older we get, the fewer reunions.  
But, why?  
Have we become so involved in our own lives  
That we forget those who had been closest to us?  
Are we so lazy or full of procrastination  
To not be able to pick up a phone or drop a note?

Several months ago I located and called my college roommate  
Who I hadn't seen or spoken to since graduation.  
(Who lives 3 hours away) .  
Within 5 minutes, 40 years of distance had evaporated,  
And we were both 20 years old again,  
Laughing, screaming like monkeys,  
Hooting,  
Hollering,  
Reminiscing-  
Once again grateful for our relationship, our bond,  
And the memories we will have forever.

It doesn't take long to reconnect with importance.  
Within 5 minutes you will remember  
Why you were friends long ago...  
And always will be.

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# Alliance

On any given Sunday morning,  
Hundreds of motorists get detoured  
Around thousands of runners in full stride  
In the 10 K du jour.  
Police blockades pop up at major intersections,  
Causing angst for drivers in a hurry  
For their five dollar cup of Starbucks.

Across town, within 2 blocks of one another,  
Two popular breakfast diners  
Have crowds standing in lines that stretch  
Around the block in anticipation  
Of a couple of eggs and a stack of pancakes.

Mall parking lots fill up so quickly  
That shoppers circle in perpetuity for an open space  
So that they can 'attack' the stores  
And find the sales that bring the price of sweaters,  
And shoes, and whatever flotsam and jetsam  
That can be imagined,  
Down to 50% off with a coupon.

Several miles away at Heinz Field,  
67,000 strong-standing room only (and since 1971!) fans  
Stand in line to enter,  
To get a hot dog,  
To use the bathroom,  
To scream, party, and root  
For their 'hometown heroes'  
To uphold the tradition of the city  
With another football victory.

On a corner in the Northside stands a church.  
Apart from the crowds by only a mile or two,  
But wrapped in the fabric of the community,  
It stands humbly, with doors wide open to all.  
Without fanfare,  
With no blockades,  
No \$30. parking prices.

Less than a mile away from an event  
That will gather strangers together in purpose,  
That will unite thousands for a three hour thrill,  
Is a sanctuary and an opportunity  
To gather in fellowship where no one is a stranger,  
To cheer,  
To honor the only One worthy of 'Hero'.  
You would think you couldn't even push your way in...  
On any given Sunday morning.

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# And, In The End

When it's time,  
The writers, the poets, the dreamers  
Will run out of description  
For the beauty and the magic.  
Their visions and their wonders  
Will all be used up one day,  
And there will be nothing left but stardust.

When it's time  
Every sunset and moonlight will have been painted,  
Every song will have been sung,  
Every pounding wave of the surf will be counted.  
No joyous moment will come back uncelebrated,  
No sadness will be left without tears.  
Night and day will appear as one,  
The sun in collision with the moon.

At the appointed time that we will not know,  
Memories will be the sole survivors.  
The writers, the poets, the dreamers  
Will have exhausted their oxygen tank supplies,  
Unable to dive any deeper.

One day it will be over.  
We will close our eyes and remember  
What was seen, what was felt,  
What was lived.  
In the strongest of hues, in the magnificence of emotions,  
Within the yin and yang halls of greatness,  
We will absorb and be absorbed.

When it is time,  
We will take a lifetime breath  
Of all the serenity we have experienced,  
And we will bow our heads  
And begin the journey  
Home.

william upton

# Armageddon

From a world away  
It is meant to strike fear in us,  
Although it cannot carry appropriate artillery  
To fulfill its evil manifesto.  
Volatile, hate-spewed rhetoric at jet engine volume  
Swallows the evening news with barbaric force.  
Unspeakable acts of inhumane violence  
Are shown and threatened and used  
As a human life and death red rover call out.  
Misguided valor under the despicable guise of religious order  
Becomes blasphemous idolatry spit in the face of every American.  
We are not new to war, nor are we weak.  
When pushed, we know what to do.  
For those who misjudge this strength,  
There will soon be a reality.  
There is a price to pay for crimes on humanity  
Lying in wait  
To permanently answer the beast  
From a world away.

Beware, the calm before the storm.

william upton

## Au Revoir?

There is separation among us as groups and as individuals.  
In first grade we say goodbye to first friends until next year,  
Only to discover they were taken away to new classrooms in second grade.  
And so we begin to find new friends, thinking the old ones  
Were gone forever.  
This process repeats itself throughout the school years.  
Finally, after college, we find out for sure  
That there are now friends who we will indeed not see again.  
Life's reality is the eventual separation  
From nearly everyone and everything.  
Change is the only constant.  
One of the hardest emotional heart tugs  
Is losing real love,  
But we do.  
People lose each other.  
But not this time-not this way.  
Come home...  
Dance with me.

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# Battle Cry

There will always be fear.  
There will always be danger.  
Physical, mental, emotional explosions  
Become more challenging with age.  
Confidence loses momentum under duress.  
The chance of loss often seems greater  
Than the chance of success.  
Winter cold comes in to suffocate summer spirit.

Timidity in tenuous situations becomes cancerous,  
Metastasizing into the human will to go on.  
Roadblocks get harder to navigate.  
Moral drivers' licenses get suspended.  
The word 'NO' shuts down possibilities of agenda rebounding.  
No one wants to stand up and fight,  
And therein lies the problem.  
Regardless of fear, of danger, of repercussion,  
We always have a chance-  
ALWAYS-  
A-L-W-A-Y-S.  
Outcomes aren't decided until they ring the bell.  
No matter the enemy,  
Believe until the end.  
Learn to visualize the 'what ifs'.  
There is always one last knockout punch lurking,  
Waiting for the moment.  
Throw the Hail Mary pass.  
Trust in the receiver.  
Never cease to be amazed by  
The astonishment of non-surrender.

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# Blather

'At the end of the day',  
'Allegedly',  
'You know what I'm sayin'? '

ENOUGH.

Stop saying these words at the end of every utterance.

Pick up a dictionary or take a speech class-

Anything,

But PLEASE stop the subconscious repetitive usage

Of these phrases and words.

Develop a stronger vocabulary in order to enter

And exit thoughts and statements.

Don't use crutch phrases to extend your message.

If it isn't strong enough on its own,

These nuisance additives will not drive home your point.

People sometimes ad lib slowly.

They buy time in between spoken thoughts.

Their political correctness has become 'unbecoming'.

They add unnecessary beginning and ending words to sentences.

For me, it turns what might have otherwise been a good idea

Into a repetitious verbal hand me down.

Also, try to limit 'Have a good day'(while we're at it) .

It means you have run out of things to say,

And you don't know how to leave!

'At the end of the day'

All overused phrases 'allegedly'

Need to find replacements.

'You know what I'm sayin'? '

When in doubt...

.

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# Boomerang

Even in their early days  
They spent time apart and found it  
Not to their liking,  
Although it was necessary  
Because of jobs and travel and logistics.  
It became apparent that one of them,  
And then the other, periodically,  
Would need to be gone for a while.

It became a physical and an emotional loss,  
This separation of bodies and spirits.  
Days became weeks became months,  
Became absence.

As years advanced in a different format,  
They still spent time apart.  
She left to see the world-to harvest her craft.  
As before, the separation was real,  
But again, not unlike before, a variable became an absolute,  
Because in his mind and in his deepest thoughts-  
The thoughts reserved for heroic dreams-  
He realized in the chamber of his heart  
She would never be gone.

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# Capuccino Church

Sunday mornings are custom built.  
Birds chirping, recognizing the day of rest;  
Newspapers on the porch  
Brimming with overflow news, sales, and weight.  
After the tumultuous battles fought in the workplace all week,  
Sunday offers truce.  
We breathe in the quietness,  
We measure the peacefulness.  
We celebrate our way through the freedom.  
We sip our cappuccinos,  
Navigate our smart phones,  
Jog and bike, and walk the dog.  
We garden  
And brunch,  
And walk the malls.  
We decompress in the midst of Mother Nature.  
Sunday seems tailor-made for mankind's benefit,  
But, actually, Sunday is the Lord's day.  
No matter how many 'intellects' and/or 'elitists' gather  
To speak about how 'spiritual' they feel in the atmosphere  
Of Sunday morning  
In the confines of a coffee shop or on a bike trail-  
In the malls or at the tailgate parties,  
Spirituality is found in the House of God.  
It is there where we gather to renew.  
It is there where we give thanks for all of life.  
ONE HOUR to honor the Creator.  
That's all.  
He visits us in the hospital,  
He comes when we call His name.  
He rescues us in the most dangerous moments of our lives,  
And He never stops for coffee  
Or sidetracks to the mall  
Or tells us He is 'resting'.  
He is there when WE call.  
Why can't we go to His house when HE calls...  
On Sunday morning?

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# Cautious Incarceration

Enter at your own risk.  
Proceed with caution.  
Caveat Emptor, aka... Buyer Beware.  
No exit.  
No U Turns.  
Don't upset the applecart.  
Don't make waves.  
I wouldn't go in that direction.  
STOP in the name of love.

WHY?

Life is not safe, it is unsafe,  
And it is not finite, it is infinite,  
Yet we are urged to put safety concerns  
At the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.  
We have a tendency to shake in our boots when danger appears,  
Knowing all the while that it would.  
We sit WAITING for it TO happen.  
We jump when lightning strikes, we imagine horrors  
When darkness sets in.  
When the weatherman says, 'a CHANCE' of rain,  
We combine an umbrella, a hat, AND a raincoat...  
Just in case.  
Just in case of what?  
Why do we become Pavlov's dog  
When we hear the 'don't' bell ring?

Name the people who have changed the world by playing safe.  
Identify any shade of greatness that never overcame risk.

We are meant to live our lives without fear of failure.  
We aren't caged animals who cower and shake with fear.

Whatever you've been told,  
You can survive and thrive in the most dangerous of conditions.  
Stop signs, red lights, and safety belts were made for vehicles.  
They were not created for ideas, for growth, for your life.  
Step out of your comfort zone.

There are many paths to achievement, but few are safe to travel.

william upton

# Checkmate

And the call went out to summon a leader  
Which brought about the raising of 20 sets of hands.  
Among those volunteers were hidden alter-egos,  
Weak characters and false prophets  
From whom exuded short-comings  
Exposed daily by the New York Times and Fox News.  
Guns, we have learned, are no longer  
The main weapons of the mercenaries.  
Twitter accounts have supplanted them  
As the means of ruin du jour.  
Boldfaced lies that once were whispered to avoid exposure  
Now are shouted from the mountain tops  
Without the batting of an eyelash.  
Disagreements and name calling frenzies  
Now 'trump' policy issues.  
And the call went out to summon a leader  
Which brought about the raising of 5 sets of hands.

The American Dream has taken a sabbatical.  
The red, white, and blue colors of Old Glory  
Have run together to create a purple rain,  
A torrential downpour onto the over saturated fields of liberty,  
Flooding the land with the future promise of leadership  
That would sell its soul for 30 pieces of silver  
For personal gain.

America waits for its White Knight to ride into view,  
But the stables are empty,  
Quarantined by corruption and arrogance.

And the call went out to summon a leader  
Which brought about the raising of 2 sets of hands.

Sadly and uncharacteristically,  
The flag now flies at half-mast  
Commemorating the death of the soul of the nation.  
Sadly and unexpectedly,  
The eagle has abruptly landed...  
Eliminated by friendly fire.

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# Classic

Whispering, it rings-  
Canon in D Major by Johann Pachelbel.  
He has never heard it before,  
But he will hear it for the rest of his life.

Wall to wall, sun-soaked outdoor wedding guests  
Await.  
One hundred strong surrounded by emerald green grass  
And picture perfect flowers awash in rainbow colors.  
The eerie quiet of nature and humanity,  
Save for the high flying bird chorale-  
Anticipation of a moment soon to be marked in time.  
Sixty seconds in all-the farewell brief, bridal processional  
With a father handing forward his glory-  
Daddy's little angel.  
His precision thoughts are evident in his expression,  
Thoughts gathered from a lifetime  
Of nurturing,  
Of protecting,  
Of loving his little girl.  
Surrounding them was a support system  
Of friends, relatives, employees,  
Ghosts of loved ones past,  
Standing as one as a fiercely loyal army-  
A solidarity within a solidarity.  
The intensity and peace of this moment  
Will never be matched again.

A life transition becomes final  
As he gives her hand to the groom.  
In the background, echoes of Canon in D Major  
Still ringing in memory.  
He has never heard it before,  
  
But he will hear it for the rest of his life.

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# Confession

Reality eventually takes a front seat  
Even though lifetime denials  
Attempt to 'spin' its actual existence.  
Men hide and delay and deny what their spirits know  
To be true  
Simply to lead more convenient lives,  
Avoiding uncomfortable moral confrontations  
Until being trapped into submission by inevitable certainties.  
When was the last time an apology was given PRIOR  
To exposure of facts?  
When facing a judge in a court of law,  
Why do hardened criminals invest in spanking brand new suits and ties,  
Apparel they would not even consider donning outside the courthouse?  
Isn't it odd that men deny the existence of God  
Until they are faced with the up close existence  
Of IV hookups, of foxhole residencies, of prison cell realities?  
Out of nowhere, God seems to become real when death knocks  
On the front door.

Down inside a man's soul  
Is the silent reminder of the difference between right and wrong,  
Mortality and immortality.  
Apologies, masquerades hiding bad behavior, and death bed conversions  
Are always desperate attempts for atonement.  
They arrive late and they reek of insincerity.  
Life is not a t-ball trophy dinner  
Where every player-win or lose- gets a prize.  
Life has consequences.  
Life has hard landings for cover ups and denials.

While there still is time  
Man must set aside smug behavior and lack of faith  
That only leads to ruin.  
He must pick up the baton of his innermost good self  
To acknowledge the realities of this life...  
And the next.

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# Court Cost

Through the eyes of a friend  
Are seen rare opportunities of comfortable trust  
That are not recognized with others.  
Advice and criticism are brothers to praise and encouragement  
In ways that do not translate to the general populace.  
There is no 'time out chair' or 'hurt feelings penalty box' with friends.  
All that exists are exposed, raw nerve endings that do not find offense  
With direct dialogue,  
Recognizing that the ultimate benefit would be one for another.  
No matter the crime, no matter the punishment,  
The court of friendship does not impose verdicts.  
The only ruling that comes down-the only court cost-  
Is that the friendship is to be honored as a 'life sentence',  
And the key to the cell has been thrown away.

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# Crest Lane

Within the loose leaf remnants of poetry from yore  
Lies the magic spirit of childhood memory,  
Transparent through glistening eyes.  
A gleeful smile returns  
With distant thoughts of youth  
When the poems of the Masters  
Were the sounding board of the day.  
The rhythm of the past returns.  
The shackles of time and age loosen and fall off  
From the memory of verse and prose once loved.  
Life is new and fresh and free.  
The search outside the box to find the elixir,  
The Ponce de Leon 'Fountain of Youth' is over.  
It is here  
Between the loose leaf remnants of poetry from yore.  
The travails of love and hope and laughter and life  
Are all revealed again.  
The barriers between all the years in between  
Melt into the sunshine with a reaffirmation of life...  
And all that was good.

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# Dave

Wolves in sheep's clothing-  
They lie in wait,  
Eager to pounce on the innocent, the weak.  
They smile and compliment,  
They agree.  
They shake hands and kiss babies,  
And they lie in wait.  
They are wolves.

They called him a wolf.  
He acted the part.  
He seldom agreed.  
He never complimented,  
Publicly.  
He would verbally rip heads off  
In his mission to plunder and pillage.  
His aim was destruction,  
But the difference was  
Those with whom he disagreed  
And never complimented,  
Those whose heads he hunted,  
Those who were his targets,  
The people he sought to destroy,  
They were the evil ones.  
He went AFTER the wolves in sheep's clothing,  
Being dressed like a wolf himself.  
He righted wrongs in the only way he knew.  
He beat up the playground bullies  
And protected the innocent and the weak.  
He was the SHEEP in wolves' clothing  
To those who knew him well.  
He was a lamb  
To those who knew him better.  
To those who knew him best,  
He actually was the shepherd.

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# D-Day

She had known in her heart  
That this day would arrive.  
No amount of wishing it away would matter.  
How difficult to walk from love.  
Some choices destroy, but in every life  
There is a moment that announces change.  
Heartbeats diminish, eyes lose sparkle,  
Excitement morphs into comfort  
That stagnates into indifference.  
Emotionally injured nerve endings roadblock the loss  
While inner summers turn to autumn and fade  
To winter.  
The day for her was here,  
And with the turn of the heart's calendar moment,  
A silent, burning tear ran down an empty face  
And fell into the outbox of broken dreams.  
Quietly and sadly...  
Farewell.

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# Demise

Station to station the news is the same,  
Stronger today than yesterday.  
Heinous crimes, intense, evil passion.  
Suicide bombers killing children, shattering parental dreams-  
All in the name of Allah.  
Kidnappings, random unchecked lunacy in the marketplace,  
Blatant disregard for human life.  
Mankind turning from itself.  
Unblinking consciences squeezing triggers on defiant weapons.  
Lies and denials have become universal currency.  
Immoral short cuts have become off ramps for the autobahn misdirects.  
We can't crop dust the evil from our jaded souls.  
Deliberate lack of respect  
Has eaten the moral fiber from our DNA.  
Each day we stand on guard for basic safety.  
Around every corner lies the possibility of harm-  
New harm, stronger harm, deadly harm...  
The room is too big.  
General Patton has just left the building.  
We are running dangerously low on antibiotics for evil.  
We have become ancient Rome-  
With exponentially larger weapons.

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# Dig

Something incurable is different  
Than something that has no cure.  
Incurable is final,  
Not having a cure is a temporary stop.  
It is a potentially movable roadblock,  
Not an intransigent death sentence.  
But we don't usually do enough homework to know that.  
The detective chromosome in us rarely puts forth an effort  
That gets to the roots of solutions.  
We allow distractions and naivete  
To hasten our philosophies.  
We've lost energy and attitude for the paper chase to truth.  
We vote for the majority because it is easier  
Than swimming upstream for answers.  
We stop short of searching for hidden agendas.  
As we age, face value issues seem less threatening, less work.  
We don't fight to the finish anymore.  
We buy the cliff notes to avoid reading the book.  
We surrender to common explanations, blind faith.  
We love happy endings, rides into the sunset, happy ever afters.  
We do not like hard landings.  
We don't like doing homework.  
These days are different days.  
People and things are not as they appear.  
There are more wolves than sheep in the barns,  
Though to the naked eye they look the same.  
Today we need more than superficial responses to life.  
The ancient poet, Rumi, said it best,  
'Here's the new rule: break the wine glass  
And fall toward the glassblower's breath.'

william upton

# Dissolve

It was all right there.  
Everything.  
Every answer, every emotion,  
Passageways to conclusions,  
Right or wrong,  
Certain or unsure,  
Yet always available  
Right in front of me.  
Three feet away from solutions  
To everything.  
Approval and denial,  
Access and blockade,  
A direct laser light to the truth,  
A glance away from happiness.  
Tears from love,  
From pride,  
From hurt-  
Defining moments of a life  
Staring vacantly as the hourglass empties.  
Moments that could have been realized  
Vanish, unrescued.

It was all right there...  
Everything-  
Every answer-  
In her eyes...

And I looked away.

william upton

# Divergent Disciples

Peter denied Him.  
Simultaneously, he lost his courage  
And his faith.  
When he pleaded, 'Not me, Lord',  
He spoke with the failure of humanity's lip service-  
Not unlike the lip service we hear today  
From hypocrites,  
From politicians,  
From deceivers who say one thing  
And act in diametrically opposite manners.  
The difference-and it was a huge difference-  
Was that Peter believed his words.  
He did not deliberately,  
Nor for personal advantage-  
Deny the Lord.  
His moment of ultimate weakness  
Came as a surprise, a glancing setback  
Against his actual belief system.  
Although overt in nature, his sin was involuntary.

Judas betrayed Him.  
It was not just an unfortunate roll of the dice.  
He voluntarily premeditated his actions,  
Weighed his greed against his conscience  
And emotionally separated himself from his Master.  
He made a deliberate choice at that time for idolatry.  
Many are like him in current society-  
The progressive, secular elitists who have 'discovered'  
Their own gods (some by just looking in the mirror) .  
The self-appointed spiritual gurus  
Who translate scripture in a manner to satisfy their own narrative,  
Who offer validation and reasoning for sinful life choices.  
They will meet you in any coffee shop and go toe-to-toe  
With Biblical directives,  
Laughing at the possibility of Heaven and Hell  
And marginalizing the role of God in this world.  
Their betrayal, like that of Judas, remains voluntary.

Peter and Judas.

Denial and betrayal.

Remorseful endings, both.

God did not play favorites when deciding on mercy.

Peter was given a second chance...

Judas was not.

Evidently, involuntary denial and deliberate betrayal

Get reviewed differently.

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## Divine E.T.A.

Within the pain  
Comes the anxiousness that couples the uneasy realization  
With the thought of our own immortality.  
The appearance of disease symptoms  
Can be emotionally paralyzing as we try to pray them away.  
We get lost, nervously, in attempting to rationalize our fate  
When it appears that life and death have moved closer together  
In our mirror.

Within the heart of a true believer  
Is the lifeline of faith  
Which is called upon in less urgent times,  
But is prepared to act heroically  
In severe moments.  
When we stare down death  
We do not stare it down alone.  
The calm, invisible, invincible hand of God  
Reaches down for us when we reach the final knot on the rope.  
When courage runs out, when hope becomes terror,  
He waits,  
He listens,  
And when it is time,  
He intercedes.

Always.

william upton

# Divine Mealticket

The waiting for this moment was over.  
The family who neglected the man in life,  
Who ignored him in his desperate illness,  
Now lined up to divide the spoils of his will.  
As he breathed his last breath,  
The man they found little value for in life  
Now had meaning within his death.  
At last, his existence would benefit them  
As they gathered around like ravenous wolves  
Waiting for his safe to be opened  
To boldly step up and claim their spoils of inheritance.  
They jockeyed for position for the first taste of war chest blood-  
Party money right around the corner,  
New flat screens for the house.  
As the insurance policy unfolded  
There was an audible gasp from the 'nouveau riche'.  
The number on the policy was big and it was bold.  
\$100,000.00.  
The collective scream went up-  
One that is usually reserved for Super Bowl victories  
Or game winning World Series home runs.  
A roomful of greedy emotional cash registers  
All together rang up the sale.  
The complete dismantling, the gutting of the relationship  
With the deceased was final.  
All at once the discovery was made.  
Embedded across the policy was the indelible stamp of the notary seal stating in  
celebration- stopping rhetoric,  
'LAPSED'.  
In the flash of a millisecond  
And for the first time in their lives,  
15 people saw, undeniably,  
The face of God.

william upton

# Double Crossing Guard

Reality patrols the border of aging  
As it always does,  
Not allowing the frivolous pipedreams of youth  
To muddy the water of mid-life,  
Not permitting youthful invincibility  
To have an infinite shelf life.  
It chases down for capture  
Elements of health and wide-eyed dreams of youth.  
It mans toll stations  
Denying entrance to prior victorious battles  
While steering geriatric traffic to the yield zones.  
Realism breeds frustration, contempt  
With the knowledge that as days go forward  
More game day faces and plans  
Will involuntarily slip into plan B mentalities.  
Aches and pains that once were distractions  
Now become unfortunate conversation starters.  
Former independent, daring thoughts and hopes and actions  
Become lassoed-in by a conservative, safe new board of directors.  
Yes, the line is clearly drawn  
For the diameters, the parameters of youth.  
It is a difficult and sentimental line to cross over,  
And it comes with glass mountain climbing boots for rescue.  
The border is the bitter pill we all swallow,  
And we don't realize  
How very difficult it is to digest,  
How frustrating it is...  
To defeat.

william upton

# Drop

Mercy shut down the office early today-  
Sent the workers home without their paychecks-  
Locked the doors behind them.  
No explanation given.

Trust walked away today  
Not saying where it was headed,  
Just declaring  
It wasn't returning.

Truth set itself on fire today,  
Drenched in gasoline and dishonesty,  
Burned beyond recognition.  
The family was notified.

One by one we are losing our virtues.  
We are abandoning our means of Grace,  
Voluntarily, with no resistance  
We are morally imploding,  
Sacrificing the core of our character.

We don't need binoculars to see the invading army  
Advancing swiftly toward our front gates,  
But we have evidently lost the courage, the spirit,  
The very tenets of our constitution  
While abandoning our own fort.

Evil has many faces- some visible, some not,  
But the dark cloud it sends to surround our souls  
Will never leave on its own.  
It will never be defeated just by maintaining an upright position.  
It will require that we, collectively,  
In prayer,  
Go to our knees.

william upton

# Emergence From The Pack

There is the wolf,  
Quiet for so long,  
Hiding within his kingdom,  
Resting from the chase,  
Preparing to reconvene.  
His howl has been silenced, tabled  
For the next vote.  
Appearing in sheep's clothing  
With his loins at rest  
And his fangs filed down  
To domestic dimensions,  
He lays in wait.  
But he is lurking, preparing to pounce.  
He is waiting to recover his dominance  
In the animal kingdom-  
To break his night time lullaby.  
Hold your surprise,  
For, after all, he is the wolf...  
Prepare for the call of the wild.

william upton

# Enough

No, this time it is necessary.  
It's gone too far,  
We've lost too much.  
Backtracking stops here.  
The soul of our country has been hijacked.  
Somewhere along the way we've broken our own back.  
We lie exposed, spineless.  
Our freedoms have mistakenly been compromised  
To extend 'freedoms' to the most vocal.  
Political correctness (an oxymoron of great magnitude)  
Has driven a stake in the heart of America.  
Our moral compass has spun out of control.  
We allow evil masquerades to diminish conscience.  
We misinterpret 'freedom of' for 'freedom from'.  
As a society we sue our fellow man irresponsibly and irrationally  
In despicable money grabs.  
We listen to politicians, to individuals, to nations  
Who do not have our best interests in mind.  
We believe direct camouflaged lies to our faces.  
Righteous behavior is ridiculed and misrepresented.  
Vital aspects of humanity  
Have been led to the slaughter.  
Our former rich heritage  
Has been miswoven into the current fabric  
Of disgrace in the streets.  
It has been stolen without ransom  
By a generation of apathetic, weak, and morally bereft youth  
Who have slanted the world's philosophy  
To fit their own misguided agenda.  
Everyone covers up-  
With political corruption,  
With guns speaking for justice,  
With hoodies and masks and darkness being used  
To hide bad behavior.  
With radical, uninformed, incendiary blogs  
Being sent into cyberspace from authors perched on couches  
In the safety of basements in their mothers' homes.  
Flags are burned in front of veterans who have fought for rights  
That the demonstrators use to burn them.

God's name can be on every piece of payroll currency,  
But children are punished for saying His name in school.  
The Bible, upon which each newly inaugurated president  
Places his hand and takes an oath  
Is not allowed to be quoted at school graduations.  
No, the time to sing 'Kum-ba-ya' around the campfire  
Has passed.  
Now we've gone too far. We've lost too much.  
Here's the sand.  
Here is the line.  
Draw.

william upton

# Escape To Rescue

I ran so hard and so fast and created distance  
Between you and me.  
100 miles an hour  
Everyday,  
Every night.  
Maybe to escape,  
Maybe to show you I was good enough  
To do this without your help.  
I navigated hairpin curves without slowing down  
Until there was nothing left to see  
In the rearview mirror.  
You threw up your roadblock system-  
Your 'lifeway' patrol  
To stop me in my tracks  
Before I drove off the rails.  
You had to lasso me.  
You had to get me in your headlock.  
Although I was a wild horse,  
I was your wild horse-  
One that you must have thought was worth saving.  
You pulled me even  
And narrowed the problem I had created-  
The distance...  
Between you and me.

william upton

# Ex-Mas

It started out so quietly  
But evolved into a monster.  
Christmas-  
The rush,  
The state of mind,  
Fragileness of emotions,  
Frantic traffic leading to mall hypnosis.  
Non-stop carols and sales  
Beginning 30 seconds after Thanksgiving midnight.  
Overnight sleepers outside of big box stores  
Waiting in zero degree temperatures  
To get first dibs, to lead retail cattle calls  
For electronic sales' discounts.  
Gluttonous, epicurean feasts weigh down dining room tables  
With enough fruitcake and sugar cookies to initiate  
A diabetic outbreak.  
Mandatory cards are sent to people with whom  
No communication has been made in a year.  
Office trinkets with price limits are distributed  
Grab bag style to strangers and friends at random.  
Obligatory family once-a-year church visits  
Awkwardly reaffirm fading religious views and traditions  
In an attempt to find real 'spirituality' in the holiday.  
Materialism, emotional land mines, and feigned joy  
All congregate on December 25th.

It all started out so quietly...

It all began as a 'silent night'.

william upton

# Exposed

And the beast came forward  
From out of the shadows  
After committing heinous acts for centuries-  
Putting nations at war, dividing families,  
Creating atrocities.

The beast came forward  
After living under many disguises:  
Materialism, atheism, racism,  
Pride, deceit, envy, apathy, genocide even.  
Under any name, the cloak of anonymity has helped  
Masking the identity of the betrayer  
Until now.

Satan walks the earth and appears as an ally.  
He blinds us from his intentions by taking on roles.  
He could be a friend, a teacher, a leader,  
A parent, a priest, a savior.  
He wins the trust of the masses  
By showing shortcuts to easier lives through evil ways.  
With unholy glaucoma he makes it impossible for people to see  
The danger in which they are lurking.

A country, a people, a generation of souls are being lost to him.  
Even worse, he appears through blurry eyes to be the second coming.

Yes, the face of evil, the liar of liars, has arrived.  
He has been picked out of the police lineup-  
The fallen angel, the poisonous snake, the enemy  
Is in our midst...unmasked,  
Daring us, inviting us, encouraging us.

He is the dark pounding in our heads  
That threatens to eliminate our conscience.  
He is the temptation from the song of the sirens.  
He is the one who had the audacity to tempt Christ Himself.

Yes, he is alive and has always been,  
But the difference is that now

He is no longer in hiding.  
Right now  
He is at your front door  
In full body armor.

william upton

# Extraction

Hollywood explains life to us.  
It enlightens us on social issues  
And political agendas.  
It teaches a new version of religion,  
The don't ask-don't tell,  
We are our own god,  
Karma-based, anything goes dogma.  
It further proves its case for wealth trumping morality.  
It sequesters the elitists from the common man.  
It turns artistic talent into idolatry.

Rappers also explain life to us -  
In a way that desensitizes humanity.  
They instruct us on issues such as respect for women,  
Obedience to authority,  
Discipline in education,  
Adherence to responsibility.  
They show us how to succeed in a different economy.

Neither group has the courage to stand for right.  
Both groups espouse radical ideologies  
In order to further selfish, attention-grabbing,  
Unrighteous agendas.

Hollywood and rappers-  
The roadmap for life in America 2016.  
Come, thou long expected Jesus...  
Please.

william upton

# Field Trip

'We need to make it a level playing field',  
It's said in politics, in sports, in school,  
In life.  
Usually it is uttered by those on the side of the field  
That may not seem level.  
But, should there be such a playing field?  
Should each situation afford the same opportunities  
For everyone  
Regardless of ability, or intellect, or experience?  
Obviously, it should,  
But, is ability an unfair advantage  
Or is it a result of work ethic?  
Is intelligence an unfair advantage  
Or is it a result of disciplined learning habits?

People that can do things better than other people  
SHOULD be rewarded  
Whether it is in business, sports, or in life itself.  
The playing field is NOT level,  
Nor will it ever be.  
Being superior in an endeavor trumps being mediocre-  
It's not about arrogance or having a 'holier than thou' attitude.  
There simply are no real trophies for runners up.  
No one in the real world hands out blue ribbons for participation.  
As harsh as that may seem, that's real life.  
The only way to make it a level playing field is for YOU,  
Not THEM, to up the ante.  
It is your job, alone, to make your game strong enough  
To right what you mistakenly thought to be unfair.

william upton

# Fight

We strongly condemn the violence  
While planning more diplomatic meetings  
To determine possible sanctions  
That won't appear overly aggressive  
Regarding beheadings, genocide against Christians,  
And rape, slaughter, and slavery of women and children.  
We STRONGLY condemn it.  
Time after time after time, we condemn it.

Government spokespuppets remind us that  
'We share sympathy, and our prayers go out to the families'.  
America, we are assured, 'stands shoulder to shoulder'  
In solidarity with our allies in denouncing evil.

The world around us is completely on fire,  
And we passively condemn and sanction and stand shoulder to shoulder.  
What does it have to take for us to get off the canvas?  
We used to be world champions for righting wrongs.  
Now we're no more than a punch drunk club fighter  
Who has lost the courage to lace up its' gloves.

You can talk and reason and sanction and condemn  
Until the sands run out of the hourglass,  
But we are now at critical mass,  
And we had better rise to this call to arms  
Before the referee gives this country  
The standing 8 count.

william upton

# Final Answer

At your moment of fear,  
In your most terrifying time,  
You cannot release His hand.  
Remember,  
He is different than you.  
When the bullets fly  
He does not surrender.  
He fights.  
His nerves do not get frayed,  
His patience does not run out,  
His vision is never blurred,  
His arms are never weak.  
He does not follow the trail-  
He makes the trail.  
He does not answer to evil.  
He never leaves,  
He never fails.  
His voice will defeat your most ominous enemy.  
He does not abandon the ship.  
He is the mercy.  
He is the ANSWER.

william upton

# Flame

It was not just a voice,  
It was a ghost.  
It never spoke out loud,  
But hovered silently in a subconscious state.  
It was the extraordinary visitor  
That would not leave.  
It did not come when called,  
And it did not revisit the 'crime scene',  
Somehow eluding eviction  
Year after year,  
Decade after decade,  
Nearly a lifetime.  
There was no hacking device available  
To break into the circuitry.  
The bomb squads were unable to dismantle the device,  
And the encryption could not be cracked.  
It was there,  
And it was meant to be there.  
The other night the phone rang.  
It was not just a voice...  
It was the ghost.

william upton

# Flight Plan

It happens to us all.  
The subtlety of the change  
Can occur within the blink of an eye.  
One perfect sun drenched, blue sky summer day  
I realized my suspicions were wrong.  
Until now, I thought the turn of the new calendar year  
Simply meant business as usual, plus one.  
Auld Lang Syne ends at midnight without fanfare.  
New year, January 2-back to work, back to the gym,  
Back to 'as it was'.  
Life rebounds on its own,  
No heavier lifting, no bigger deal.  
Until I looked down to see the 'S' coming unstitched on my chest.  
It was peeling off, and I couldn't salvage the original art.  
Was this the moment for the man and the hour to finally meet?  
How long it has taken for me to digest  
That I could no longer leap tall buildings.  
This time when I looked in the mirror  
Only Clark Kent looked back.  
It seems, finally, the flight plan has changed.

But the Man of Steel is still alive out there.  
Somewhere...  
Somehow.

william upton

# Forever Young

Riding to the edge of town  
For one last look,  
One last showdown  
Into the darkened sky of memory.  
To breathe in the comfort of hometown breeze  
And wistfully recall the 'could have beens',  
The 'should have beens'.  
Racing brain energies clinging to every sunny day curtain call.  
Too much to gather at a glance.  
Too strong an emotion to sever ties  
With auld lang syne.  
The lake is a stranger,  
And the forest paths are cul de sacs.  
Old heartbeats die hard  
For thoughts of dance halls and road trips.  
It seems so distant, this farewell to arms,  
But it is enough to know  
That these miles were traveled well-  
They were caressed in spontaneity  
Through the eyes of a dreamer,  
And the dream lives on forever.

william upton

# Foundation

'Solid as a rock',  
Rock-solid,  
That's the term for toughness,  
The image of superior strength.  
Everyone wants to be the 'rock'  
For the family,  
In a relationship,  
In dangerous times.  
It implies 'hard to break',  
'Deliberate',  
'Unbeatable',  
'Courageous',  
'Impenetrable',  
'Stable, immovable'.  
We see the majestic mountains  
Built by powerful rock formations,  
Pillar upon pillar,  
Created from the beginning of time,  
Seen as a metaphor for life-  
Ageless wonders,  
Broad shoulders,  
Fortresses,  
Always reaching toward the heavens.  
'Rock'.

In life, however, there is a weathering process  
Through physical and chemical breakdowns,  
Rock eventually becomes sand,  
Externally unrecognizable from a prior shape,  
Reduced to particles along beaches,  
Gravel mixed into roads.  
The purpose of rocks changes with age.  
Once they were forts of protection.  
Eventually they become foundations upon which we navigate through life.

People are like rocks.  
When they're young, they protect,  
They are strong,  
They stand upright and show strength for their loved ones.

They defy the world and back down from nothing.  
As they age, they become like the sand.  
Their musculoskeletal structure gets rearranged.  
They become paths and roads and informational highways  
For those who came after.

Rocks inevitably morph into sand.  
It's just a different arrangement of molecules  
Adjusted to serve another mission.  
Don't lose sight.  
Although your elders once were there to protect you,  
They are now the foundation to direct you.  
The most important thing to remember is...  
The sand is still the rock.

william upton

# Ghost

Someone said you were looking for me.  
They said they had seen you at my house.  
They said you had a perplexed look on your face  
As though you were trying to figure out  
Where else to look.  
I heard you went to the lake and took a walk around,  
And then drove down to the riverwalk.  
Finally, I heard you went into the church  
Trying to find me.  
You know you don't need to search.  
I've been everywhere you had looked.  
I was there with you.  
Close your eyes,  
Give me your hand.  
I'm always here with you.

william upton

# Greenville

The eyes of 18-  
They see so quickly  
And make decisions  
That tingle.  
They walk hand in hand,  
They skate,  
They fly above time,  
They dream awake.

The hearts of 18-  
They beat so fiercely,  
They spontaneously combust,  
They bleed fresh blood.

Young love drives without brakes,  
It makes the rules as it goes,  
It fights impossible fights,  
And dances after the music stops.  
It runs red lights  
And laughs at consequences.

As we age,  
We still dream these thrills.  
We lie awake,  
Remembering,  
Reliving,  
Aching  
To once again experience  
The eyes...  
The heart...  
Of 18.

william upton

# Heal Thyself

Poets compose in highs and lows  
Leaving the in-betweens for others to validate.  
Life and death, heartbreak and glory  
Touch their pens and interpret themselves.  
Some even say depression can be tamed through poetry-  
Poetry that empties pain from hopeless spirits.  
Joy can be explained to the joyless  
Through emotionally charged rhetoric from the poet,  
Brimming with sensory enhancement.  
Loss of love can be absorbed and soothed by verse  
With verbal closure to severed heart strings.  
The sting of death can be lessened by acknowledgement of the gut punch  
Felt within the process of assimilation.  
Poetry is the mechanism through which we heal,  
By the gift of release and comfort within the disclosure.  
Therapy, through poetry, can trump medical medicine  
In matters of the heart.  
It can spiral feelings during life's defining moments-  
From epicenters of pain  
Through black holes of remedy.  
Poetry does not just reflect life.  
Poetry does not just magnify life.  
The cathartic magic is real.  
Poetry BECOMES life.

william upton

# Heart Of Stone

Young, intense love shattered.  
Most people walk away,  
Check the box for 'experience'.  
She did not.  
The impact was immense,  
The fault proved to be hers.

She had no answers,  
Yet continued to carry him with her.  
Years went by, other relationships appeared  
And disappeared.  
She revisited her first love  
In her mind,  
In her heart.  
The feelings remained hushed,  
The feelings were never revealed.

Unexpectedly, she became consumed by new love-  
A strong and cherished love,  
And she tried to bury her thoughts,  
Suppressing old feelings,  
Refusing to let them resurface  
Even though they could not be forgotten.  
She focused on 'to have and to hold',  
Relentlessly,  
Turning a section of her heart to stone.

While she was blessed with love and comfort and security,  
She confronted the unthinkable,  
And a life passed on.  
Her cherished love was shattered  
And, in her mind, was her life.  
She was devoured by grief  
And surrendered to the loss.

Not understanding 'why' and  
Not knowing where to turn,  
She noticed, one day, a letter in her mailbox.  
Her first love, physically absent for a lifetime,

Again had come alive, offering words of support,  
Of healing,  
Of rescue.  
She became, again and finally, inundated with the love  
She never should have shattered.

william upton

# Heartache

He stares straight ahead,  
His focus on the television  
Or the wall  
Or inside himself.  
His communication is limited  
To yes or no  
Or to past phrases, brief and measured.  
He sits and eats and naps  
Day after day-  
WAITING  
In a windowless room.  
When he was first admitted, he was the youngest patient,  
And he could realize the lifeless humanity that surrounded him  
From the slumping heads in wheelchairs  
To the tombstone eyes barely reflecting any sign of humanity.  
WAITING.  
This once dynamic athlete,  
This former young executive  
Flying through life in championship formation,  
Now struck down by the slow, torturous beast of MS-  
The monster that prolongs the grinding deterioration  
Of the flesh and the spirit.  
WAITING.  
During our last visit he remembered in his eyes,  
In his silent smiles, the girlfriends he once had.  
He laughed without words at the craziest memories we had  
As best friends,  
Yet he could not remember if he had a roommate.  
It was heartbreaking to witness the travesty  
Of a man internalized by disease,  
Confined to deeply embedded memories  
With dwindling comprehension of matters at hand.  
It's a throat lump seeing a brother  
Fading away day by day-  
Sitting there staring straight ahead...  
WAITING.

william upton

# Heat Transfer

In order to process pain  
We need to shift the burden of translation  
From the heart to the brain.  
We need to unplug emotional life support  
And trust our minds to process hardship.  
However much we realize this,  
We always get too close to the fire.  
We love, we need, we want so strongly  
That separation implodes the core of our heart muscle.  
We drop to our knees and close our eyes not to see.  
We negotiate with emotions that have been hijacked  
As though they were prisoners of war.  
In these moments, we need to scotch guard our heart  
So that our mind can assume the command post.  
Storm clouds pass-  
Every single one.  
This, too, shall pass but not before leaving carnage in its wake.  
We must be diligent to channel the resolution  
From our hearts to our minds  
Before the fading cardio pulse becomes flat-line.

william upton

# Hey, Dad. You Wanna Have A Catch?

10 years old is a rough age  
For a boy to figure things out  
Like disappointment,  
Like defeat in sports,  
Like letting his dad down.  
All three together would constitute a disaster  
For a little leaguer,  
Finding himself and his team in the World Series-  
Best of 3, winner takes all-  
His first trip into unknown territory.  
On the sideline was his father  
Who had played catch and taught fundamentals  
For several years in the yard,  
Probably drawing from a deep reservoir of patience,  
Careful not to discourage,  
While being tough enough to repetitively instill  
The foundation of discipline  
That would last for the rest of life.

Game one went to the home team.  
Game two went to the last inning with two outs,  
Down by a run,  
And the 10 year old on second base representing the tying run.  
The next batter singled, giving the boy a chance to score  
To tie the game.  
But, as fate would have it, the throw to the plate was perfect.  
It was waiting in the catcher's mitt before the boy got there.  
He realized that a head on collision was the only way to score.  
In an instant his skinny but determined 70 pounds  
Met full tilt with the catcher.  
He was tagged out as he went airborne and landed  
Flush on his left knee.  
Game over, home team loses.  
The boy lay at home plate trying to absorb every ounce  
Of disappointment,  
Of defeat in sports,  
Of letting his dad down.  
It was a moment which would never leave his memory.  
His knee, puffed up to twice its size, prevented him

From a dignified walk off the field.  
Seeing that, his father, knowing that this was a  
Teachable moment under the worst possible circumstance,  
Immediately herded him into the car to go to the hospital.  
Water on the knee was the diagnosis and was treated by a needle,  
One that looked and felt like a sword to the kid  
As it punctured then drained the fluid.  
After immobilizing the knee, the doctor told his father  
That there would be no game 3 for his son.  
His knee needed to stay inactive to heal.  
Evidently, there is something deep in a father's DNA  
That forces him to allow his boy to become a man  
Under difficult circumstances.  
The next day, after hours of negotiating, pleading, in every way possible,  
The kid had his dad almost convinced to let him play.  
They drove to the field without a decision.  
The manager pulled his father aside and had a conversation.  
The only words heard by the kid were, 'We need your boy today'.  
After what seemed an eternity, his father nodded to him.  
It was a nod that taught the boy the meaning of 'game day'.

We ended up winning that game,  
And, with it, the Little League championship that year.  
I don't remember how I played that day, but that I played,  
And evidently it made a difference to someone.  
After the ceremonial team hug at the end of the game,  
The first face I saw was that of my dad.  
To this very day I remember an unbridled feeling of pride-  
For the unspoken bond between a father and his son.  
With that knowing wink, a smile, and that certain look of trust,  
He had started me on the road to manhood.

william upton

# Holding Pattern

We wait too long-  
For everything.  
We deliberate and have self doubt.  
It's never the perfect time,  
And it will never be the perfect time.  
As we procrastinate,  
Opportunities, relationships, and chances  
Disappear into darkness.  
One day we will learn the value of 'now'.  
'Seize the day' was not simply  
A line from a movie.  
Tomorrow seldom materializes-  
It is never guaranteed, nor is it the correct option.  
At times, it begs the question  
Of whether it actually exists.  
Today-this very moment-  
Is all we really control.  
Without movement,  
Without positive, decisive movement,  
Our future vanishes  
Right in front of our own eyes.

Tomorrow never comes.

william upton

# Hollow

Unfortunately, there was nothing left to say.  
Words can't always translate feelings adequately  
Or appropriately.  
They don't fully measure reality magnitude,  
And they don't explain loss in quantifiable terms.  
This time it was for the best  
Not to hear the audio echoes  
To a dream collapsing from within.  
It was enough to allow the heaviness of the moment  
Carry its own weight

In silence.

william upton

# Honesty Lost

God must get very tired (!)  
Overseeing His gift of freewill.  
His patience must be tried on a minute by minute basis  
With trying to keep up with our deviations from His Word.  
Even from the disciples-  
Peter denied,  
Thomas doubted,  
Judas betrayed.  
It has never stopped since.  
Today, deliberate lies,  
Determined deceptions,  
Intentional disobedience  
Infiltrate daily life -no longer in a subtle way,  
But in a blatant manifestation of wrong behavior.  
From O.J.'s 'innocence'  
To Hillary's emails,  
To daily disregard of forthrightness,  
We have allowed 'spin' to displace honesty,  
To advance agendas,  
To justify bad behavior,  
To avoid punishment,  
To mask wrongdoing.  
We have paper shredded anything that has 'trust' on it.  
Love of money and unhealthy levels of narcissism  
Provide obvious paper trails to the root of the problem.

Long ago God created the world in 6 days,  
And then He declared the 7th, the Sabbath, a day of rest.  
He could see from the first bite of the apple in the garden,  
He would need all His strength.  
And He could surely see that He would not then,  
And not ever  
Be out of a job.

william upton

# Identity Theft

Who are we?

Really.

Life factors change the contours of our journey

Like GPS systems gone awry.

We confront physical dead ends and emotional off ramps.

Virtual realities collide with actual reality.

Personalities are diminished by abuse and depression.

Character is challenged by temptations of pride and greed.

Humility hides behind false bravado.

Ego stands front and center during decision making moments.

Disregard for opposing view points erupts

From the classroom to the boardroom.

We dream heroically-

We awake as cowards.

Verbally, we dismiss immorality,

Yet, in reality, we practice it.

We break Commandments everyday,

But on Sunday mornings

We morph into Christian soldiers,

Marching as to war.

Who are we...

Really?

william upton

## If You Build It...

What happens in dreams, and why are they so lifelike?  
How do visions of stark reality,  
Of lifelike melodrama,  
Wander through our unconscious, sleeping minds?

In my dreams  
I save people that I love.  
The next time out, I am in need of rescue myself.  
I have experienced moments, days, situations  
With deceased family members and friends.  
I've talked with them and listened to them.  
We have interacted, one with another, without incident.  
There have been wild animals and evil in whatever form  
Chasing me.  
I have realized, sadly, that I must regress  
To do-over my senior year in college,  
Sacrificing the memory of everything  
And everyone I had in my current life.  
I have been put in the situation to win every major sporting championship game-  
All with seconds left on the clock-  
All with ferocious pressure,  
And have come up victorious in every single one.  
I have been given warnings and deadlines and ultimatums-  
Extraordinarily dramatic moments  
That never come to full closure.  
There are always subplots,  
Stories within stories,  
Running parallel with reality and fantasy  
Simultaneously producing heart pumping dramas.

Perhaps dreams represent the spirit souls  
Contacting us during sleep.  
Our own souls may be released in these moments  
Receiving a 'hall pass' so to speak  
To search for kindred spirits  
In order to finalize unresolved issues.

Every dream is interwoven with  
Urgency,

Responsibility,

Fear,

Love.

The source may be a mystery,

But the intrigue and the possibilities

Are beyond startling,

Beyond human comprehension.

Maybe the dream is the first step into the cornfield.

Stronger still, it could be the gateway...

william upton

# Intentional Deliverance

I didn't see it coming.  
At the moment it happened, I was unaware  
Of the weight of the event  
And was ill-prepared to understand  
That it was preordained.  
A connection in a passing moment-  
Out of the blue-  
Seemed strangely out of normal sync,  
Yet the mystery of memory,  
Evidently,  
Never lost consciousness.  
God has His methods for message delivery.  
He does not work through coincidence.  
He places people into others' lives with intent;  
They end up in dreams with invisible missions;  
They become bedrock, partner foundations of trust,  
And they reaffirm issues of faith.  
Meetings set by God are not accidental.  
He works beneath the conscious surface  
And, with Divine subtlety,  
Introduces us  
To our  
Souls.

william upton

# Lantern Honesty

The political season has begun  
Although elections are more than a year away,  
Yet, every day  
Each step and misstep from the candidates  
Makes the headlines and gets catalogued  
For future rebuttal and frame of reference.  
It is remarkable how many ideas get introduced  
Every four years on how to fix America,  
But we seem to keep sinking deeper into increasingly worse  
Economic,  
Social,  
And moral quagmires.  
We need to wise up to the fact that most of these 'ideas'  
Are theoretical and politically motivated  
And seldom birth into problem- solving realities.  
We get fooled every four years.  
Our hearts and our ears betray us as we try to believe  
Another set of rescue plans for the Red, White, and Blue-  
Plans hatched from and influenced by superficial voter appeal,  
Lobbyist pressures, and popularity contests.  
We are suckers for patriotic rhetoric,  
Even though we understand that many times it is artificial  
And phony.  
We long to find someone worthy of our trust,  
But after dissecting hundreds of political stands and maneuvers,  
After trying to understand the misspeaks, the cover ups,  
The non-disclosures with the shady mechanisms put in place  
To attract the vote,  
I'm afraid we will end up as Diogenes, the Cynic,  
The ancient Greek philosopher who spent his life wandering  
In broad daylight with his lantern,  
Looking, searching for an honest man.  
Just one,  
Only to perish with his mission...  
In vain.

william upton

## Love T.K.O.

Many years ago I dated a woman  
Who, for the most part,  
My friends did not like.  
'Too snobby, a user, not for you'-  
I heard it all but didn't listen to any of it.  
One night, in the middle of happy hour,  
The kind that is the venue for solving all the problems  
Of the universe and beyond,  
I told my best friend I was going to marry her.  
After staring a hole through me for about 15 seconds,  
He hauled off and backhanded me to the face,  
Nearly knocking me off the stool from surprise.  
All he said was, 'Wake up'.  
Nothing more, nothing less.  
'Wake up'.  
It was, strangely enough, a well- intended, loving  
Call to order,  
One that only a best friend could deliver.  
(I'm laughing even now,30 years later thinking of it!) .

The bluntness of a true friend-  
Not just a friend but a REAL friend  
Is a blessing in life  
Because he tells you the truth.  
Not what you want to hear,  
But what may save your life to hear.

william upton

# Luna

The supermoon sat still above the city.  
A perfectly round spotlight  
Illuminating the night for the exiting baseball crowd.  
Reflecting itself into three rivers of stillness,  
Resting high above the human hubbub in motion below.  
Everywhere the city lights exploded in dreamlike sparkle,  
With headlights and neon and starbursts of color.  
Fireworks exploded over a mass exodus of kinetic, urban diversity.  
Above the chaos,  
Alone, looking down, was the solitary man in the moon.  
So quiet from this vantage point-  
So deliberately peaceful.  
A minute ago was the roar of humanity,  
Collaborating with the eventual scattering in every direction,  
Creating a canvas of brilliant artistic surrealism.  
Now, just the moon in the sky without so much as a breeze,  
Dwarfing the darkness of the universe  
While overlooking a city on fire with colors.  
It sits alone from my view on the hill...  
Peacefully ending the evening.

william upton

# Marathon

The great endurance of life.  
Weathering storms,  
Chasing dreams,  
Turning back tides.  
Hearts and souls cleansed from within  
Through faith, communication, and exercise.  
Freed from the accumulated stress of life.  
Starting up again, fresh...new.  
The personality replenishment of a warm, sunny day.  
Hopes we chase over rainbows.  
Elusive, yet within our stretch.  
The heartbreak and the healing,  
The character building within the emancipation.  
The fury and the rage.  
The daily challenge to replenish  
The will, the desire, the strength  
For the seemingly insurmountable mountain climbs,  
For the marathon struggles that numb and break any will power to go on.  
This great endurance of life.  
This magnificent daily rebounding of spirit.

william upton

# Millennial Justice

The trial was over without a verdict  
As is the norm nowadays.  
Criminals walk out of courtrooms  
Into Uber getaways.  
Juries go home weary,  
Knowing they did nothing wrong-or right,  
Falling for the 'abused as a child' defense  
Just as the prior one had fallen for the  
'No father growing up ' excuse.  
Bad behavior walks arrogantly out of courtrooms  
With the faux swagger of justice,  
Realizing that 'beyond the shadow of a doubt'  
Gets closer to unprovable with each passing year.  
Loopholes and 'technically' possible scenarios  
Allow crimes to go unpunished.  
Victims' families cry themselves to sleep at night  
While judges neatly remove their robes each day,  
Hang them on the neutral scales of justice hooks,  
And head off to happy hour to clear their consciences.  
The current panacea of justice having been served  
Because of the recent plague of politically correctness  
Has polluted our court system beyond repair.  
Innocence and insanity have become synonymous.

william upton

# Mind Stress-Body Stress-Distress

Every negative in life morphs into stress.  
Silently, without medical diagnosis, it is what kills us all.  
No matter what it reads on the death certificate,  
There is a paper trail flow chart leading back to it  
As the underlying cause.

Our bodies and our minds lock down in negative situations.  
We press unnecessary and premature panic buttons.  
We over think despair.  
We freeze our healthy, positive mental hard drives,  
Our creative juices.  
We self impose internal behavioral viruses  
That set off alarms, thus disengaging us from simple realities.  
We allow our 'fight or flight' chromosome formations  
To wage battles of cognitive dissonance  
In a separate universe we don't even recognize.  
We call ourselves 'stressed out',  
But we simply are mired in disappointment quicksand.  
We choke with the game on the line.  
The stress overpowers our subconscious heroism.  
It slithers into our bloodstreams  
And poisons our thoughts.

When we force resolution to our stress at the point of impact,  
We feed its fever.  
If we distance ourselves from the madness, however the method,  
We can observe the sun magically, and through osmosis,  
Rise again when morning comes.

99% of life's problems,  
Life's frustrations,  
Life's stresses  
Can be solved by releasing our internal pressure valve  
And allowing our inner, still, small voice of calm  
To become the gradual, yet deliberate means  
Of antiseptic nutrient.

william upton

# Mountain

Years ago I wrestled a bear  
Who was the main promotion for a shopping mall Halloween weekend.  
His name was 'Victor- the Rasslin' Bear',  
And standing at 8 feet 3 inches on his 2 legs,  
650 pounds, and undefeated in his wrestling career,  
He traveled town to town wrestling pro football players  
And professional wrestlers.  
Not only did he possess 'animal' strength,  
But he was well-trained in wrestling moves.  
When I got into the ring, I looked across at him,  
And I was introduced, mentally, to a hopeless situation.  
I had 3 minutes in front of about 1000 screaming people  
To either pin him, be pinned, or be used as a rag doll.  
He pushed me around the ring with such strength in his arms  
That I didn't have a plan that would work.  
I decided to make a potentially suicidal move on him  
As I dove at his legs, trying to wrap them up and pull him down.  
From my knees it felt like I was trying to pull a tree trunk  
Out of cement.  
He navigated around me and put his weight against my back  
While I was on all fours.  
Crazy thoughts went through my mind, and none of them  
Offered any escape plan.  
Typical wrestling moves were not working here,  
And he was trying to push me flat to the ground,  
But I stayed on my knees, still moving around as best I could  
To get from being under him.  
Blood flowed out of the knees of my pants from friction  
Caused by his increased force to pin me.  
My survival instincts were dwindling in number.  
It felt that there was a building on my back, crumbling down,  
And I was going to be buried alive.  
Finally, mercifully, the longest 3 minutes ever  
Was up.  
Victor had retained his crown.

The reason for this story is that it mimics life.  
We encounter ferocious problems in life-  
Problems that seem not to have solutions.

But, no matter how dire they seem, we should always try  
To put forth effort to the best of our limits to solve them.  
Some problems CANNOT be defeated-  
To me, Victor could not be defeated.  
However, it is the fight within us that matures  
During battles with Goliath.  
Within the attempt to defeat the unthinkable,  
We hone our skills for battling smaller problems.

We don't fight Victor everyday.  
We don't frequently go to war with Goliath,  
But each and every day we are more prepared for life  
Because ONCE we stood up to our fear of the impossible.

william upton

# Mutiny On The Mount

I can't find chapter and verse in the Bible  
To identify what denomination of religion Jesus was.  
It probably can't be found because He wasn't part of either.  
He WAS the denomination, and He WAS the religion,  
Yet we find so many differences among our Christian friends  
Which separate us from that reality.  
We all have our denominations that we created.  
We nitpick at issues thinking we are ecumenically wiser alone.  
As we go on, we determine our guidelines for right and wrong,  
Interpreting Heavenly messages with human differences.  
When did our intellectual egos begin to supersede 'Commandments'?  
When did 'Love thy neighbor' start to include 'if you know them'?  
When did 'As you do unto the least' begin to add 'when convenient'?  
When did the Beatitudes become simply another rewards program?  
When did the Ten Commandments become a request?  
How did we take control of His government?  
Why did we storm His courts,  
And rewrite His constitution, His rulebook  
To fit our 'current' adaptations?  
WHEN DID WE BECOME OUR OWN JESUS?  
How did we scrutinize His very teachings  
To mollify our own belief system?

william upton

# No Retreat

There was a gnawing gut feeling  
That the pieces of the puzzle  
That were not in place  
Were going to be formed,  
And the mystery would be solved,  
And the worlds would collide,  
And the planets would align themselves.

We unnecessarily sell short  
The invisible power, strength, and resiliency  
That is alive and well in the world's  
Realm of possibility.  
We call it fate or karma or luck  
Or even nine lives.  
Whatever the title,  
It comes from the same Source,  
And it is astonishing how it always appears  
Simultaneously,  
And in lock step  
With the badge  
Of non surrender.

william upton

# Off Season

Here it is again-  
The annual heartbreaking, face to face call.  
Mother Nature tugging away the roots of summer,  
Though we plant our feet firmly in the sand to hold on,  
Desperately trying to prevent an inevitable calendar turn.  
The gray clouds are on the horizon now,  
Marching relentlessly forward  
Like generals advancing into war.  
Yesterday's summer song fades to black  
As it gets kidnapped by November's unsolicited RSVP.

This is that rainy day they talked about.  
Here is the moment,  
The exact moment about which songs and poems are tear jerkingly written.  
The change of seasons comes today, right now,  
And it is steeped in loss.  
It is the last ride before the park closes,  
The final pitch of the World Series,  
The farewell kiss of summer love.  
As we age, we long for eternal summers.  
We don't like seeing leaves fall.  
The loss of morning birds singing is a cruel setback.  
Sunny walks hibernate and only resurrect in dreams.

Each year we lose part of our youth,  
And this is where it is lost,  
And this is how it is lost.

Funny, here's that rainy day.

william upton

# One Nation?

We call ourselves the 'United' States of America.  
The name has stuck,  
The meaning has not.  
There are factions of this nation at war  
With one another,  
At odds with one another.  
The lines of racism stretch longer  
Than they did years ago.  
Political parties fight one another every day  
On the campaign stump,  
In the House and in the Senate,  
Brought to real life via the mainstream media.  
The rich and the poor have never been so apart.  
Police find themselves defending themselves  
As much as they defend their communities.  
Hollywood broke away from main street America years ago,  
Its lifestyle in complete opposition  
To the lifestyle of the homeland.  
God has left-or has been forced to leave:  
Schools,  
Government,  
Businesses,  
Athletics,  
Families,  
America.  
Probably He's better off than if He would have stayed.  
Sexuality and marriage have multiplied and divided  
Into prior unrecognizable formats.  
Sacred and secular no longer communicate with one another-  
At least not civilly.  
English is close to becoming a second language  
With the borders open for the world to waltz in  
And demand squatters' rights.

'I pledge allegiance to the flag  
Of the 'United' States of America.'  
Sorry, you're too late.  
We've dropped the word, 'United'.  
It was not politically correct.

More important,  
It was no longer true.

william upton

# Onward

They stood and looked at one another  
With sad, quizzical looks on their faces.  
Some were lost for words,  
Others were simply lost.  
Hundreds lined in serpentine formation  
To pay respects to the young daughter of the pastor-  
Taken at 39 years with full family left behind.  
Inch by painful inch, the line advanced.  
The church in complete solemnity became the fortress,  
Providing the appropriate backdrop  
For such a heart-wrenching farewell.  
Each mourner had looks of uncertainty  
As to what encouraging words he could offer  
That could even come close to being adequate.  
I was thrown off by a silent, direct look  
From the eyes of the preacher.  
On his face was the undeniable affirmation  
That he had engaged in full conversation with the Savior,  
And that he was not alone,  
And that his trust would not be shaken-even now  
At the darkest part of human life,  
His faith could not be broken.  
He stood on holy ground,  
While outside, hundreds of Christian soldiers,  
All with the Heart of God,  
Marched forward...  
As one.

william upton

# Opening Day

It seems the last chirps of the birds were so long ago  
In a different time, from a different mindset.  
Why do they only sing when it's warm?  
Maybe they know something more than we do.  
They're always in the mood for a warble  
When the sun's warmth returns from Christmas break..  
To provide the alarm clock  
Necessary to strike up the band.  
Isn't it refreshing to know that when they sing  
It is our clue to break out of our arctic hibernation  
And breathe again?  
To smile once more.  
Their chorus reminds us of our youth-  
The signal to come back out to play.  
The gates reopen for us,  
Our freedoms are restored.  
The gray staleness of our winter indoor imprisonment  
Is washed away,  
And we recapture the brilliant colors of youth.  
The birdsong at the break of spring  
Is the most magnificent orchestral music imaginable.  
Spring forward,  
It's Opening Day.  
PLAY BALL!

william upton

# Orange Grove

The first breath of Florida came during spring break, '74.  
Four young college lads left western Pennsylvania  
For the 24 hour drive to freedom,  
To the warmth of the sun,  
To the promise of summer regained,  
To abandon small town academia  
And the myopic vision that this was all there was.  
Leaving ten degree temperatures and collegiate boredom  
For the fantasy world of Ft. Lauderdale surf and sand,  
They buckled up their heartbeats.  
Reality and dreams were about to be introduced.

Crossing the Florida state line,  
We were struck with the boyhood fantasy-  
Palm trees, 80 degree sunshine heat, oranges falling  
Right from the trees in front of us-  
EVERYTHING we had only read about in books, seen in movies,  
Now touchable, reachable, insanely delicious.  
It was the promise realized, the mission accomplished,  
The goods delivered.  
The best of the best,  
Jump-for-joy unbridled youthful optimism.

Five days later  
The energy, the passion, the 'eyes wide open' reality  
Of having climbed the mountain and looked over the edge,  
Of having finally hoisted the victor's cup,  
Crumbled into the north and snow bound trip back home.

Attitudes were changed forever that week, however,  
Beyond any expectations or dreams.  
We saw the world-maybe for the first time-with clear vision-  
A vision filled with bigger ideas, bigger potential.  
Our hearts came home with freshness of purpose.  
What we had just witnessed was not Florida.  
What we had experienced  
Was life.

william upton

# Pale Rider

The sales force went home empty again,  
Collectively scratching its head,  
Wondering what went wrong-  
Again.

Each person had a reason for his angst:  
'They needed to think about it',  
'They never sign anything the same day',  
'The economy is bad for their industry',  
'He has to talk it over with his partner/wife/mother',  
'They don't like changing things',  
'They wanted to look over the contract',  
'They were stupid.'

A stranger walked into their weekly meeting  
And went directly to the chalkboard.  
Without saying a word, he wrote boldly and defiantly:  
'Was I clear in my presentation? ',  
'Was I believable? ',  
'Did I come across as likable? ',  
'Did they TRUST me? ',  
'HAD I DONE MY HOMEWORK? '.

Without saying a word,  
Without making a sound,  
He had hit them over the head with a sledgehammer.

The words 'they' and 'I' had been switched.

william upton

# Quixote Sunset

He dreamed awake  
Looking for the solution-  
One that would not arrive in common hours.  
His mind raced at Mach one speed,  
Hurtling through thought zones  
Amid deafening silence.  
Usually the brain supplied feedback,  
But now the echo chamber remained MIA.  
There HAD to be a way-  
There ALWAYS is an answer.  
He role played until there were no more roles to play.  
Inexplicably, his problem solving energy flat lined  
Into depletion mode.  
How rare not to be able to think  
Into conclusion.  
There are problems that cannot be solved.  
Sometimes there is no way home.  
Please, not THIS time.  
He shook his head in disbelief  
And dreamed awake  
Until the windmills of darkness absorbed his consciousness  
And swallowed him alive.

william upton

# Reality Tide

Each day  
We wait for our ship to come in.  
While we wait for OUR ship,  
20 other ships pass by in front of our eyes,  
But we sit and wait  
For OUR ship.  
If it doesn't come today,  
Most certainly it will come tomorrow.  
And if it doesn't, at least we have dreams  
That it may.  
It's ironic that WE control our forward motion.  
WE control our day to day activities,  
Yet we sit back and dream of the invisible navigator  
With our non-existent ship  
That comes home to us in our dreams  
Tomorrow.  
The sooner we learn, the better.  
There is no ship and our dreams are not real.  
Tomorrow never arrives.  
WE are the ship, and WE are the dream,  
And tomorrow happens now.

william upton

# Redemption

For years he devoted his spirit  
To master his craft,  
To become a champion,  
Overcoming obstacles and sharpening skills.  
His overwhelming, all encompassing desire to succeed  
Pushed his body and mind past typical levels of discomfort.  
He was introduced to fatigue uncommon in human conditions.  
His body ached beyond body ache.  
His mind refused to be distracted by common thought.  
He welcomed disciplined repetition past maddening levels  
To make second nature that which he would need to call upon  
In times of physical and mental weakness.  
He sweated surrender from his pores  
And drove himself past safety zones of courage.  
He cut off every artery of retreat  
With an unbending will and an incorrigible constitution.  
He left everything he had on the field,  
And looked up in shock as his opponent shook his hand  
And said, 'You were lucky today.'

Lucky...

So that's what luck is.

william upton

# Reflection

There are chambers in the Kingdom-  
There are waiting rooms  
Where His angels wait for assignment.  
They wait for someone to protect.  
They wait for someone to sit with in time of need.  
They fly to rescue at the sound of danger's trumpet.  
INVISIBLE-  
Powerful and available,  
Walking through storms shoulder to shoulder.

Earthly angels look for assignments.  
They look for someone to protect.  
They look for someone to sit with in time of need.  
They react at the sound of danger's trumpet.  
VISIBLE-  
Powerful and available,  
Walking through storms shoulder to shoulder.

No one can see the angels from above,  
And maybe no one recognizes the earthly ones.  
I do, and I've seen one up close.  
You'll only be able to see her reflection  
When you look in your mirror.

william upton

# Return To Forever

I have discovered first hand  
That a heart full of love  
Can walk through the valley  
Of the shadow  
And not be defeated  
And not be fearful  
And not be lonely.  
Instead, it has learned to subconsciously cling to itself  
Even with eyes half closed and nightmares of evil all around,  
Understanding that love is the lifeboat which will save.  
Love is the reason to stay alive.  
It is possible to come back from death  
To love.  
We can do it from here,  
And we can do it from THERE.  
Love is the only thing strong enough to return.  
Love is the only thing real enough to return.  
It is the essence of the soul.

william upton

# Reunion

All the friends said 'he'll/she'll be back.'  
'No one leaves a guy/girl like you.'  
'Give him/her time,  
He/she will come to his/her senses.'  
Typical talk-friend to friend.  
What else can you say?  
'Try someone new? ,  
Forget about him/her? ,  
Back up on the horse? '  
Friends don't know what to say,  
Nor do they realize the depth of passion or loss  
That was spent.  
Generic answers are empty, childish, wishful,  
Nearly annoyingly offensive.  
Long relationships get lost in the deep end of the pool.  
Real love doesn't vanish overnight.  
Nor does it ever vanish.  
Years later, in another form, he/she DID come back  
As though the time between had been a dream.  
No matter how rare,  
No matter how magical,  
No matter how different,  
Nature finishes itself.

william upton

# S.O.S.

I just heard the attorney for a terrorist  
Call his client, 'the alleged shooter'.  
This monster had just been killed in a police shootout  
After he had brutally and randomly  
Killed 14 people and wounded 21 others.  
'The alleged shooter' indeed,  
Caught completely redhanded-even seen on television.  
AND I HAVE HAD ENOUGH.  
I refuse to hear it anymore.  
'Alleged'.  
We simply do not have the stomach,  
We've lost the guts  
To call out evil for what it is,  
To speak unequivocally, without wavering.  
Unfortunately, we have 'lawyered' ourselves  
Into a weak and wounded country.  
Political correctness is threatening our safety.  
We are losing our grip on the strength of America,  
A strength that was built-and then handed off - to us  
By the bravery and the blood of our fathers and forefathers,  
And we have lost it by avoiding hurting peoples' feelings  
And offending evildoers.  
We have tolerated actions we never used to tolerate.  
Our country has become a timid, overly sensitive little weakling.  
We are now the ones getting sand kicked in our face.  
There is a madness in this White House-  
The dimension we have never experienced.  
Humanity doesn't trust us right now,  
Nor do they respect us.  
It's as though the Marines lifted the flag over Iwo Jima  
Only to have it taken down by this generation  
Because it wasn't 'inclusive'.  
Like it or not, we are at war,  
And it doesn't seem like we're brave enough...  
'Allegedly'.

william upton

# Sam

At 83 years young, he was laid to rest  
In his black tuxedo, his cufflinks, his perfectly coiffed hair.  
Only a handful of mourners, mostly family.  
Such a shame.  
The great ones die alone.  
His passion for running through life at 100 miles an hour  
Could not be hidden by the earth about to be shoveled upon him.  
So handsome, so strong, so full of mischief!  
A joie de vivre unmatched by men half his age.  
The full blown essence of life now taken away.  
He walked the land as a common man,  
But he was not common.  
He danced the dance of life  
And left the ladies swooning in his wake.  
A man's man-  
A friend's friend.  
Loyalty that was never challenged or compromised.  
A larger than life person about whom you would say,  
'Now there's one guy I miss'.  
He was laid to rest on that sunny morning,  
Having given far more than he took.  
Still, a presence that lingers,  
A laugh that makes you smile.

Truly a life well lived...  
A lesson well taught.  
A magical man...  
At last, dancing with the stars.

william upton

# Scan

The big things in life  
Are found in the fine print.  
That is where, if in doubt, the truth resides-  
Too shy to appear on the marquee,  
Sometimes too embarrassed.  
It hides from the headlines  
Deliberately  
And in a sinister fashion.  
Bold faced exclamations  
Trumpet incredible offerings:  
'FREE',  
'No strings attached',  
'Everyone approved',  
'If I am elected'.  
We should know better.  
There is no free lunch-everything comes at a cost.  
But, per our history, we do not do our homework.  
Therein is the answer.  
It is always the answer.  
Research your subject.  
Don't believe the hype.  
'Too good to be true' is just that.  
The siren song is the song of temptation,  
But it is the direct path to disappointment.  
Open your eyes to harsh reality.  
Read the fine print.

william upton

# She

She was many women.  
She was 'Woman'.  
Life began with the first glance  
Being into the eyes of a woman.  
From that moment until now there were many  
Who held attention, who brought influence.  
At first she was the curious stirrings of puppy love-  
Little heart poundings without anything to compare,  
Crazy thoughts too strong to sleep away.  
She appeared at every age, often out of complete surprise.  
She shared and taught and interwove into my life  
With game- changing smiles and variations of style.  
She was playful, friendly, funny,  
Beautiful,  
Fulfilling an empty space with warmth and substance.  
She broke barriers and rules,  
Surprising like a thief in the night,  
Literally, at times, coming out of nowhere.  
She has alienated and caused grief.  
She has brought me to my knees.  
She has reopened a heart that was closed.  
She was many women,  
And she was 'Woman'.  
I see her in the mirror of my dreams.  
She is the face I can't forget.

william upton

# Shrug

The one that everyone knew,  
That everyone claimed to love,  
Disintegrated last night.  
He finally matched up the GPS coordinates  
For 'the deep end'  
And made arrangements to take up permanent residency.  
His problems were internalized-  
He swallowed them whole,  
Without sharing.  
Every one he knew had resuscitation abilities,  
Yet no one acted on them for rescue.  
As usual, it was de rigueur to get 'involved'.  
There must be a new edict that makes it unfashionable  
To get your hands dirty-  
To risk your dignity by stepping out of your comfort zone.  
Cruelly and falsely, everyone counts on the Samaritan to arrive  
So that the problems would be fixed, the wounds treated,  
And the sun would come out tomorrow.  
But, not this time.  
No Samaritan showed up on the scene,  
No hero on a white horse came riding to the rescue.  
This evening, a former pillar of the community,  
A once-strong man in his own right,  
Now beaten down,  
Found out officially  
That when his demons presented themselves in combat,  
His home team's bench was empty,  
And for all intents and purposes,  
Fatally, and unbeknownst to him,  
No one even put on his uniform.

william upton

# Solar Eclipse

Here's that day again. Same one.  
Each year it represents closure,  
Even though it flashes that sunshine smile,  
Bear hugs us with westerly winds.  
There is no holiday 'title' on its business card;  
There are no Hallmark 'moments' or special privileges.  
It simply stands courageously-alone-  
The last warm, sunny day of summer.  
It still represents the magical day 40 years ago  
That gave 20 shirtless softball playing college boys  
An unexpected 75 degree middle of January sunburn,  
And a day that each of them can recall 40 years later  
As one of the great days.  
It is the one day with the guts to stand up and seek  
Postponement of the gray skies and cold shivers  
Which cause such severe attitudinal decline  
Within the beach boy's heart that is in each of us.  
It is mercy day.  
This is Mother Nature hanging on,  
Battling to the end against environmental inevitability-  
Spitting in the face of the upcoming season  
With every ounce of persuasion and resolve  
To hold serve just a bit longer.

Today the sun feels more intense.  
Maybe it's the knowledge of imminent separation  
That the sky is cloudless, wall-to-wall blue.  
Just a subtle hint of breeze reluctantly blowing away  
The remnants of magnificent artistry.  
The innocence, the sweetness, the absolute  
Enhancement of life,  
The renewal of the unbeatable spirit  
All rest on this perfect Currier and Ives summer canvas...  
Waiting.

We hold so tightly to days, to moments like these  
Because they represent the life in our blood.  
They are what we most cherish-  
Our youth,

The freedoms we have found,  
The game changing memories we hold dear,  
The crazy love we have shared,  
The greatest happiness of life.  
All of these were created and nourished by summers past.  
Alas, with heaviness of heart,  
Today is the involuntary emotional surrender to the season.  
This is, at last, the kiss good night...  
Sadly,

This is the long goodbye.

william upton

# Soldier

A real man contains within himself  
The positive source of the Universe.  
The qualities that he muscles up affect  
Those around him in a positive manner.  
He does not apologize for unpopular opinions,  
Nor does he cave in to peer pressure.  
This man exhibits humility and grace.  
He sticks his neck out when he senses injustice,  
And tries to right the wrongs he knows are immoral.  
Whenever the wind blows, he does not sway.  
He stands.  
He draws a line in the sand for his beliefs  
And does not cross it.  
He does not shy away from conflict.  
His spirit cannot and will not be compromised.  
He demonstrates recognition for the needs of the less fortunate.  
In life's war zone  
He is the man.  
A soldier of life.

william upton

# Special Sauce

There is a secret formula for success.  
There is a reason why some people do well consistently  
And others do not.  
Although we overthink the equation,  
It is not meant to be so complicated.  
Success does not come from self help classes  
Or books or cds or weekend retreats.  
It cannot be realistically experienced in a classroom situation.  
Contrary to popular opinion, it isn't a birth rite,  
Nor can it happen simply because of daddy's money.  
Internet bloggers claim to have knowledge of it  
Even though they tweet their findings to the masses  
While sitting on second hand couches in their mothers' basements.  
Unnecessarily, we look to the stars for the answers,  
Only to bypass the simplest of answers.  
We find out after trying everything else  
There never really was a 'secret sauce'.  
The secret to success is not a 'secret' at all:  
Do what is right, not what is easy.  
Be prepared.  
Show up.

william upton

# Stalemate

There is something in the loss of a parent  
That cuts into the soul.  
It is the emotional, surgical detachment of the heartstring  
That has defined life as we know it.  
Regardless of recovery time or attempted efforts to normalize,  
There is a critical part of your brain  
That does not respond.. There is a part of your manhood that leaves  
With the man,  
And there is another part that will grow back  
After facing the harshest reality  
To sprout the seeds of a new man-  
One who has looked eyeball to eyeball  
With life and death  
And will gather the courage  
To break even.

william upton

# Stardust

Each passing day is the possibility of a Halley's comet moment-  
The one moment in a lifetime to see the shooting star.  
Some things only get one chance  
For yes or no,  
To take or leave,  
To create or destroy,  
To believe or not to believe.  
It takes more risk to press 'go',  
But then many years down the road  
The doubts are discarded,  
The questions are answered.  
Inaction at any level is the birth mother of a future lingering ghost  
That overstays its welcome.  
The greatness that may have been, the good that could have been done-  
All stays wrapped in the original packaging, unopened,  
When we fail to step out of our comfort zone.  
People go to graves without ever having laughed until they cried.  
They fade to dark too soon before having dreams come true.  
The brief time we are given must be used  
To find these moments, to CREATE these moments.  
Too many wake up to the empty hourglass with nothing but regret  
For just a few more grains of sand to savor.  
Everyone deserves to see the brilliant flash of the comet  
Streaking across the sky.  
Everyone should experience riding in on the white horse  
At least once  
Before the curtain comes down.  
We all should be able to look back with joy.  
We all deserve  
The great remember.

william upton

# Stirred, Not Shaken

In the midst of the mayhem politely called  
The work day,  
Stirs a straw, an inner straw of peace that runs through all of us.  
It is that voice that remains subdued during aggression.  
It is the voice of reason that quiets the hurricane.

Our days are head-on collisions with problematic itineraries.  
Each morning we begin as matadors, as gladiators, as warriors.  
We fight to defend every inch of turf that we have.  
Some days the noise is deafening,  
The battles are large,  
And they call on emergency energy reserves.

Yet, within the maelstrom, at the command post,  
Standing unshaken  
Is our voice of reason, our straw that stirs the drink.  
When it is time to dock our ship,  
It is the anchor that secures another night.  
It prevents the ebb tide  
From drifting us out of harbor.

william upton

# Stone

Influences are born early in life.  
Personalities are shaped in youth.  
Character is built by observing, by listening  
To those we love, those we admire.  
Ideas, environments, relationships  
Are causative agents  
For future philosophies,  
Ideologies,  
Determining factors of values and preferences.  
One person can create another person's thought process.  
One traumatic event can blindfold future ideas.  
Some lessons in life linger past closing time.  
Eye opening discoveries or events-  
Good or bad-  
Creep into our innocent subconscious minds  
And refuse to leave.  
Some memories lock in-  
They do not erase.  
They become indelible lessons.  
They become ghosts.  
They won't go away.  
They are sealed with a kiss.  
They are written  
In  
STONE.

william upton

# Summer Of '88

It was the summer that would not melt  
With no relief from 100 degrees.  
Lakes became sanctuaries  
And Dairy Queens turned into necessary oases.  
Not before and not since has the sun spoken so clearly,  
Imposing a will and an opportunity,  
Determining in advance a destiny.  
Not deterred, they began their friendship  
In the midst of this unusual desert climate.  
They walked hand in sweaty hand to the water.  
They talked and laughed and introduced themselves  
To themselves  
And had picnics in spots normally reserved for deer.  
Through inspirational, perspirational, eye-opening afternoons,  
They learned each others' hearts.  
In untraditional meetings of Mother Nature and humanity,  
They understood from deliberate glances  
That this was not just another summer.  
It had method within the madness.  
There was warmth within the heat.

That was us who met that summer,  
And, in so many ways,  
It has remained in my mind-  
A memory that never really left,  
Innocently burning now.  
It was the summer of them all.  
It was the summer that could not melt.

william upton

# Summer's Right Of Refusal

There is plenty of summer left  
Regardless of what the calendar says,  
No matter the school busses on every corner.  
Football season starts next week,  
And the swimming pools have begun to close,  
But no matter what it looks like,  
There is plenty of summer left.  
Sunshine overrides calendars.  
Blue skies strengthen the resolve of the heart.  
Summer mentality is the toughest to break.  
No one roots against it.  
It always has home field advantage.  
Something so necessary to mental health  
Does not give up without a fight-  
An emotional battle that will not compromise.  
We hold on for dear life,  
Wringing the last drops to savor it.  
No matter what anyone says,  
There is plenty left  
Of whatever we consider 'summer'.  
Each year it has to be pried from our grip,  
And each year it gets harder to hold.  
And every year it becomes shorter in our minds  
Than the year before.  
It remains so precious because it represents  
Our youth,  
Our memories,  
Our love of life.

No, don't let them tell you that summer's gone.  
Not now-  
And  
Not Ever.

william upton

# Sunday Forward Prayer

Please,  
Forgive.  
Continue to show mercy.  
We know right from wrong,  
Yet we choose poorly so often.  
Don't give up on us.  
We try but never really hard enough.  
On Sunday morning we sing and pray and promise.  
On Monday morning we forget about Sunday morning.  
Direct us,  
Strengthen our resolve to influence others  
By our actions reflecting Your grace.  
Lead us to Your paths, not ours.  
Supervise our 'free will' that You have allowed us to have.  
Diminish temptation and poor judgment.  
Plant Kingdom thoughts that nourish.  
Distribute courage in darkness.  
Let discipline overcome weakness when it surfaces.  
Let faith lead.  
Let actions follow.  
Elevate our inner selves  
To higher ground.  
Allow us to imitate Your teachings.  
Forgive...  
Please.  
Take us past Sunday.

william upton

# Synonym

What is meant by 'I don't have time'?

Is it a permanent marker or is it an excuse?

More likely, maybe a disguise,

Because all we really HAVE is time.

What would be a legitimate reason for not having time?

After all, there are 24 hours everyday and, to my knowledge,

We never fill them completely.

Maybe disinterest, apathy, exhaustion, fear-

Maybe there is a reason I don't know

For not having time,

But I hear it being said everyday by everyone.

Listen to some reality.

Everyone has time.

Saying you don't is disrespect for an individual or an activity.

Separate some honesty from your political correctness.

Just say 'I don't care'.

Fewer words.

End of discussion.

william upton

# The Actual Arena

Half of life is disrupted by political conversations.  
Wasted good intent on saving the world  
Gets swallowed by gradual erosion of moral fiber.  
Money and lobbyists make the rules-check with them.  
Politicians need pogo sticks to hop on and off bandwagons.  
There are very few legitimate debates on right and wrong  
That cannot be swayed by future voter potential.  
There is money and there are lobbyists,  
And half of life is disrupted by political conversations.  
It takes 3 months to schedule a continuance of a meeting.  
It takes more than a year to get an appointment for a veteran.  
It takes 2 years to find conveniently lost government emails.  
Murderers wait in prisons for years because of paper delay back-ups.  
Harry Truman's 'The Buck Stops Here' sign has been misplaced.  
We talk too much,  
We over deliberate,  
We postpone inevitabilities  
In order to be politically correct-  
In order not to offend anyone.  
Where are the leaders who will act when the alarm goes off?  
Do police and firefighters have meetings when 9-1-1 calls in?  
Do they discuss the pros and cons of acting too quickly?  
We are so afraid of offending a cause or a group or a person  
In order to be perfect little angels on our not so perfect battlefields-  
Battlefields that eat up perfect little angels.  
We can't see the bottom lines anymore with the Hubble telescope.  
We cater to hundreds of politically correct subplots  
And nuances  
And niceties  
And unnecessary busy work with compromised language  
While the world is on fire around our Custer's Last Stand meeting hall.  
We're afraid of being politically incorrect-  
At times, to the result of being unable to fix serious problems in this world.  
Actually, we're just afraid, period,  
So we nervously talk and put off tough decisions,  
And we speak in gentle, non invasive terms.  
When will we pull together and reach for the tough answers?  
When will we reach for the hammer and not the tuning fork?  
The solutions are within the guts and the hearts

Of the everyday citizen foot soldiers who are not afraid to speak,  
And who dismiss, out of hand,  
That half of life disrupted by political conversations.

william upton

# The Careful Mother

It seemed like yesterday  
A 4 year old boy went to his first movie,  
Walked to it, actually,  
Hand in hand with a woman who knew the directions,  
Who would buy the tickets  
And would get him home safely.  
Several years later the same woman  
Had to find hospital transportation for the same boy  
Who broke his arm playing baseball  
While his father and the car were away on business-  
All the while knowing the trauma,  
Yet realizing she would have to get him home safely.  
As life moved on, her message was constant-'Be Careful'  
Whether it was meant for on the football field or in a snow storm  
While driving or just for the sake of it.  
She still felt the obligation to get him home safely.  
She has grown old now.  
Her knees and her hearing have left the building.  
The facial wrinkles from worry and sacrifice show through now,  
Having endured the rules of motherhood.  
She rests, knowing her mission was accomplished.  
Her memories stay etched in her soul,  
Content in the realization that after being unrelenting  
To her sacred, silent oath from childbirth,  
She made certain at last,  
That she had indeed brought him home safely.

william upton

# The Changing Of The Sun

The most gorgeous day of Spring  
Walking next to me on the Miracle Mile,  
Sunday morning stroll to the house of the Lord.  
With no clouds in the blue sky, there is something unusual-  
Something breathtaking inside the silent sun-drenched morning.  
Not a human sound within this still colored water painting  
Of paradise.  
Only the distant chirping of the birds who have become jazz masters,  
Participating in this virtual tour of Monet's still life.  
Hush-you can hear your own breathing competing with  
Nature's complete standstill of all components.  
The garden of eternity lies before -so perfect and so quiet...  
A reverence in her atmosphere.  
Church services end as they usually do  
With souls enriched in Grace and hearts full of joy.  
The return walk home still retains the magnificent silent snapshots  
Captured like lightning in a bottle-still fresh, still alive.  
Back home the door opens to a menacing 'one missed call' on the phone.  
Suspicious curiosity wonders who would call at the early break  
Of Sunday's blissful entrance..  
It would seem that someone was missing the invitation  
To the morning's impromptu garden party.  
At 11 O'clock the voice on the message struck  
Like a sledgehammer strikes an anvil,  
Echoing the unbearable grief of a brother losing his brother...  
Announcing his passing.  
I took a breath to speak but no words came out.  
The rays of the once brilliant sunshine had vanished,  
Leaving behind the shadow of this magical meadow.  
For one brief moment, Mother Nature blinked.

william upton

# The Charge Of The Goose Brigade

The geese were waiting for me at the end of my run,  
Patiently, hopefully waiting for me.  
All gathered at their riverfront headquarters,  
Pecking the frozen winter tundra in hopes of finding lunch-  
At least 50 of them,  
An army,  
A starving army- like winged web footed soldiers at Valley Forge.  
Starving, yet not surrendering.  
A sadness overcame me for their hunger  
So I drove home to retrieve a box of saltines.  
Walking slowly toward them with cracker in hand,  
I was met with suspicious opposition,  
As they, one by one, retreated slowly back into the river.  
They were refusing to risk capture even with the threat of loss,  
Loss of their one link to eat this afternoon.  
No risk takers stepped forward.  
Collectively they formed an embargo against my advance.  
Unanimously, they valued their safety more than their dinner.  
After 15 minutes of my attempts to cater the affair,  
I decided to simply leave the crackers and go home.  
But then, out of nowhere,  
As if cast from a John Wayne movie,  
The biggest of the bunch made his move.  
The boss goose, the leader of the pack, the main man  
Stuck out his neck and began a Fonzie-like stroll toward me,  
Letting the others know that the avian police commissioner had arrived.  
There was no fear in his eyes, just purpose.  
He came to survive for another day.  
He came to feed his 'hood'.  
It was ON.  
Every goose was watching him make his stand.  
He was Ali, defiantly taunting me with his boldness.  
He bit hard on the cracker and also my finger for emphasis.  
Without backing up an inch, he ate the whole thing right in front of me, right in  
what I thought was MY personal space!  
When he finished, he turned to his audience and glared -  
Evidently giving them their rite of passage to enter the cafeteria.  
Marching like robots, every single goose came at me  
With a renewed sense of bravery.

Every goose took a cracker right out of my hand (some including 'finger sandwiches') .

They had been validated by the general, the fearless general  
Who was the trailblazer for the masses.

When the box was empty, they bull rushed me to try to find more,  
Nipping at my hands and hindquarters when I started to run  
To escape this surreal scene from 'THE BIRDS'.

The 'Charge of the Light Goose Brigade' had occurred.

Laughing hysterically, I found safety inside my car,

Having learned one of the important lessons-

When you need results,

Even with geese,

You go after the leader first.

william upton

# The Final Request

Long before we were born  
You had created a master plan.  
You gave us free will to find our own path,  
Yet You put extraordinary difficulties along the way  
To test the strength of our faith.  
When hardship knocked hardest,  
You measured our resolve and our courage.  
Before it was more than we could bear,  
You made a new way where there once was none.

As a grateful recipient of Your mercy,  
I understand the bond between the good shepherd and His sheep.  
In the deepest faith that is in me,  
Please trust me one last time.  
Trust me to not become disenchanted with You  
No matter what is lost during illness-  
No matter the outcome of this life.  
Trust me that I can accept any decision,  
And I can learn every lesson taught by it.  
Although it may be the hardest of pills to swallow,  
Let me fully realize that it is Your will, not mine,  
That will be done.

Through You, let me be fireproofed to walk through this fire.  
Through You, let me be waterproofed to endure this flood.  
My faith looks up to You.  
Be with me, and that is all I will need.

william upton

# The Hesitancy Of Honesty

The words rang hollow, wreaking of cliché,  
Neither heartfelt nor authentic.  
'I'm sorry. Our prayers are with your family'  
Is all that was mustered  
For final farewell  
From a threadbare, everyman-response playbook.

'We've got to talk',  
Yet we avoid the talk when it is time.  
We are afraid of reality.  
We fear unwanted consequences  
That come with truth.  
For some reason we seldom reach into the soul  
When common lip service will do.  
We prefer sound bites to meaningful dialogue.  
However cowardly, we protect our insecurities.  
We feel safer giving kindergarten answers  
To graduate school questions.  
It is uncomfortable to bare our souls, show our hands.  
It's too controversial to make bold statements,  
To risk upsetting the applecart.

Until we begin to claim ownership  
Of our thoughts, our opinions, our feelings,  
And the very stands we make in life,  
We will be reduced to emotional flyweights,  
Socially handicapped, existentially diminished,  
And spiritually starved and void  
Of the innermost cleansing  
From our innate honesty.

william upton

# The Injustice Of Leaves

Autumn leaves don't fall.  
They are pushed.  
They are strong-armed into their demise  
By harsh charging winter winds and chill and rain.  
No, they do not voluntarily go away.  
Remember how they enjoy the summer,  
Filled with the chlorophyll of life,  
Holding firmly to their grip on the branches,  
Reaching up each morning for the nourishing rays of sunshine-  
Vitaly smiling in their glimmering best green hues.  
Autumn begins the problem,  
Suffocating the color from their bodies,  
Weakening their toehold on the perches of their trees.  
It expedites their surrender by cutting off their light supply,  
Replacing it with a gray cloud tarpaulin,  
A vitamin D- eliminating life support atmosphere.  
No, autumn leaves don't fall.  
Rain falls,  
Snow falls,  
Temperatures fall,  
Night falls-  
Autumn leaves are ambushed.  
They are mortally wounded by the elements,  
And in Mother Nature's court of justice,  
There will never be an honest witness who will testify...  
Differently.

william upton

# The Last To Leave

Shortly after birth,  
We begin a process of gradual loss.  
Before kindergarten even starts,  
We've lost our baby teeth,  
Soon to be followed by the disappearance of baby fat.  
At school, we lose our independence to play all day-  
We find, then lose puppy love.  
Growing older we lose dependence on our parents.  
We go to college to find new friends who we lose after graduation.  
Losses continue as we marry, then divorce-  
We are exposed to death as we lose family members and friends.  
In the middle of life we lose promotions, opportunities, jobs,  
Our hair, our figures,  
Once in awhile, our minds.  
Old age magnifies the reality, the losses pile higher.  
Out of nowhere we lose mobility, productivity, energy.  
Diminishing each year are our gifts of sight and hearing.  
We lose our health,  
And death knocks on our door.  
As unpalatable as it may sound,  
Organs shut down one by one-  
Lungs, kidneys, liver, brain-  
At the end we lose everything.  
From birth until death, it is gradual but certain.  
We give ground a little at a time,  
Until we suffer the biggest loss from the strongest  
And the bravest soldier -  
The one that single handedly carried us through all  
The previous losses.  
The last line of defense,  
The last to surrender...

The heart.

william upton

# The Red Herring Chronicles

Here's to the internet bloggers-  
Those all-knowing commentators who critique everything  
From Obamacare to Steeler losses.  
It's comforting to know that in our midst  
Are 20/20 hindsight, retro forecasters  
And Nostradamus-like soothsayers of future events.  
Mere humans, but their opinions are so strong.  
They expose the folly of every mistake that is made.  
They offer foolproof guidance for future reference.  
It's obvious, by their take, that they have the real answers,  
Heed their enlightenment!  
Here's to those winners!  
Let us celebrate their passionate diatribes.  
But, as Theodore Roosevelt said,  
'The credit goes to the man who is ACTUALLY in the arena.'  
That's the place these folks have never entered,  
Nor is it likely they ever will.

william upton

# The Sorry Band-Aid

People apologize more than ever;  
However, the sincerity has begun to ring hollow.  
Today, apology is universal currency for harmless escape-  
A 'get out of jail free' card used as emotional salve,  
A verbal Red Cross blanket used to cover a mistake.  
Politicians use apologies when they step on politically incorrect land mines  
That have opportunities to drop them in the polls.  
Hollywood uses them to appear remorseful when caught in tenuous moments  
That seemingly have no other escape hatches.  
Desperate criminals use them regularly while dressed in suits and ties  
In court, realizing it is the 'moral' thing to do,  
All the while hoping that neither their new clothing nor their apology will seem  
transparent in front of the judge.  
'I'm sorry' has become 'Have a nice day'.  
It is said at the drop of a dime and is worth even less.  
It comes from repeat offenders  
Who constantly look for easy remedies for bad behavior.  
Set your alarm for the next apology.  
There are 3 steadfast predictors to announce its arrival.  
First, it will happen as a REaction, not an action.  
Secondly, it will be involuntary.  
And finally, it will not arrive until AFTER  
The actor  
Is  
CAUGHT.

william upton

# The Spirit Is Willing

All throughout life, our mistakes and sins,  
Both those of omission and commission,  
Continuously repeat themselves  
Despite our best efforts to reverse them,  
Despite our requests to be forgiven.  
We simply are unable to move the needle to zero.  
Our lifestyles, our patterns are those of mortals.  
Although our intentions are good,  
We fall short each and every time.

We pray, we lament missed opportunities,  
We lack discipline we thought we had.  
Daily hopes for do-overs, for mulligans  
Become old.  
No matter our good intentions, life has a way  
Of intercepting good intentions.  
Our failures to lead perfect lives are just that.  
We send regrets, 'won't be attending',  
To the Ten Commandments RSVP.  
When our 'glass mountain' attempts to right our lives  
Go so far astray  
That we can barely stand to look back at the face in the mirror,  
Our call is made.  
Before us appears a vision of mercy,  
A reminder of 'I will never leave you'.  
Before us stands the Father of all the prodigals.  
Before us stands our God of second chances...  
With arms wide open...  
And we are forgiven, yes, again.

william upton

# The Substance Of Elocution

Poetry doesn't fit in a bottle.  
It represents the edge,  
The borderline  
Between sanity and insanity,  
Dreams and reality,  
Love and hate,  
Loss and gain,  
Hopelessness and euphoria,  
Memory and discard.  
It does so in a way  
That tour guides it to the very gut  
Of the most primitive emotion.  
It jackhammers, torturously, final nerve endings.  
It speaks in complexities and in gibberish.  
It uses more intensity and thought to describe  
Than do words coming from the evening news.  
It isolates, in an eclectic manner of communication,  
Problems, feelings, confusions, failures,  
Virtue, bravery, truth, righteousness.  
It is not the language of the king.  
It is the speech and the intuitive thoughts  
Of the common man.  
It is written by dreamers for dreamers,  
For those who don't surrender at the windmills of Don Quixote.  
It is for the desolate, searching for the North Star,  
The jilted lover chasing a ghost in the dark.  
It is the paycheck for the unemployed,  
The 'real' opiate of the masses.  
Poetry takes the microscopic cell of human thoughts  
And dissects it with precise interpretation.  
For all of its' intentions,  
Poetry solves nothing,  
But to a greater good,  
It offers the fresh glance,  
A deeper search into how to view small things  
And make them large,  
How to take memories and 'colorize' them.  
It is not meant to save souls.  
It is meant to navigate the verbal core of the mind

And calculate sensibility, with x-ray interpretations,  
Of simple and complex human potpourri,  
Forever crossing the line.

william upton

# The Track Meet

Youth has been served  
Through years of practice, of struggle, of sacrifice.  
It has finally come home for the holidays.  
With unyielding faith and uncommon valor,  
Your wherewithal to survive hardship and mistakes  
Has held you in good stead.  
The nose to the grindstone philosophy  
Found its way to the victor's circle today.

The pitfalls of youth are land mines,  
And we usually don't have access to bomb sniffing dogs.  
Somehow we manage to navigate around them.  
Over years,  
The turn of the calendar page becomes a beacon-  
A lighthouse for future direction.

Youth is a sandbox. It is the training wheels on a bike.  
It is the necessary precursor and exhibition game for future days.  
Dates on the calendar are closer than they seem,  
But old age does not roll into town  
Until we release the passport.

That being said,  
HELLO,60!  
Your reputation precedes you,  
And from this vantage point,  
I may have overestimated you.  
Come forward and meet me, you counterfeit bully,  
You unfortunate mental cage shaker.  
Make sure your bags are packed, your chin strap tight.  
Tomorrow we start training together.  
You'll need to keep up with me.

william upton

# The Unnecessary Explanation Of Cotton Candy

I read a poem about a footprint left in the snow,  
And it gave me more than I had bargained to know.  
By the end of the description,  
I knew the height and depth of the impression,  
The amount of snow on the ground,  
Fahrenheit and Celsius readings of the temperature,  
Approximate time of the impression,  
Wind patterns that could create drifts  
To cover up the impression,  
The type and size of the shoe worn by the actor  
Making the impression-  
Everything and more that I did and did not  
Need to know about the shelf life and upbringing  
Of the impression.  
The poem entered into a dimension that could only intrigue  
Molecular biologists and coroners.  
It became a verbal mosquito, a nuisance in the middle  
Of an otherwise entertaining sensory garden party.  
There is only so much flotsam and jetsam one can tolerate  
Until one must continue to search for the vessel.  
It is inconsequential to know of every detail of every  
Snowflake in a blizzard.  
It is imperative to define the blizzard and to figure out  
What it represents,  
How to conquer it,  
How we would emerge from it.  
And our explanations should lead to individual questioning  
And curiosity from the reader  
Who will eventually have his own take on the issue.  
It is a poet's duty to cause the reader to think deeper thoughts,  
Sometimes in untraditional terms or in heretofore  
Dormant methods of reasoning.  
It is not to keep the reader's mind fixated on minutiae,  
Exposed in lengthy diatribes of description  
In order to brush up on his literary impressionism...  
Ad nauseam.

william upton

# Unbreakable

Give thanks to God,  
Thanks for bringing you through it all,  
Thanks for demanding you stand tall.  
Thanks for courage, spirit, kindness-  
Never to lose faith,

Never to lose hope,

Never to lose direction,

Never to lose love.

Thanks for standing shoulder to shoulder,  
Always navigating through the hurricane,  
Tightening the safety net below,  
Reaffirming the strength from above.

Thanks for one more chance,  
One more time,  
One more look.

'Happy Birthday' you say.  
'Stay close' I say.

william upton

# Verdict

Today

The statute of limitations ran out on tolerance.

The 'pseudo' crime of being ostracized for not stretching

Half-truths, moral compasses, and company lines

Has expired for me.

Being tolerant of people, groups, and causes

That defy our basic foundational beliefs

For the purpose of avoiding public umbrage or isolation

Has vanished from the radar.

To jump on the hypocritically, politically correct bandwagon

Is to lose one's immunity to not be led as sheep to slaughter.

What is in your heart is in your soul.

It should not be swayed by public opinion or trendy protocol.

There are marginal psychopaths who preach to us

From the bully pulpit to the mad scientist podium,

Masquerading the fine print in their messages

Dare we attempt to untangle.

Legalese tries to carry the general elections.

Disjointed philosophies follow us as shadows,

Trying to show us the 'errors of our ways'.

For me, the meeting is adjourned.

Our former terra firma has been diluted by unprincipled quicksand.

Unchecked inmates are currently running the asylum.

Man your stations.

william upton

# What?

Am I the only one who doesn't understand  
Feng Shui?  
And why doesn't Webster's acknowledge this nature force?  
How is it different than Wang Chung?  
Is it anything like General Tso?  
What category is it under on Amazon?  
Surprise, surprise-  
It's 3000 years old.  
'Feng' is wind,  
'Shui' is water.  
Together they represent the energy balance in nature.  
It contains dual components, Yin and Yang.  
Yin is feminine and passive.  
Yang is masculine and active.  
They exist to nourish 'chi' to support energy flow  
In the body.  
Where in the world was I  
On the day they taught THIS in school?  
All this time I just figured heathy nutrition,  
Proper rest, and exercise would be enough.  
Maybe it's time for recalibrating my inner computer.  
Maybe I just need an aspirin and a glass of 'shui'!  
Lord help us all.

william upton

# Who Do You Trust?

I get fooled occasionally  
By trusting against my better judgment,  
Thinking that others will always do the right thing.  
It's not even disappointing anymore  
When a man's word no longer is worth the anguish  
Spent over seeing it broken.  
Promises are reneged upon at the drop of a distraction.  
'Something came up', 'I changed my mind', 'I forgot'-  
All empty excuses, all unacceptable.  
I have learned to be silent until I am certain  
My word will be my bond instead of a misleading utterance  
Of an incomplete or indecisive truth.  
Excuses are imaginary,  
Reliability is real.  
Keep them separate-  
They are not teammates.

william upton

# Whoosh

I miss the speed of it all-  
The high velocity blur,  
The lightning bolt strike capability,  
Adrenaline rush moments,  
The pumping of wild blood through the veins,  
The roar of the crowd-the battle cry-  
Still screams inside my head  
And can't seem to quiet itself.  
The bold, fearless marches through danger zones,  
The social situational fastballs  
Without so much as the bat of an eye-  
Yes, I miss the speed of it all.  
We ran sprints without rest breaks.  
We ran fast.  
We ran hard.  
Big highs,  
Big laughs,  
Big fun.  
The speed of youth is eternally addictive.  
There is no detox procedure for it.  
It is the unquenchable thirst,  
The drumbeat of the heart,  
The rhythm...  
The speed.

william upton

# Words Without

A speaking habit has turned into a lifestyle  
And has grown into a full blown epidemic.  
Everyone needs to find the verbal haz-mat suits,  
Because you WILL be infected.

The disease is the cautious, smoothing over of politically correct words-  
Words designed to express faux condolence in tragedy,  
Words designed to delay forward movement toward solution,  
Words that are kind, calm, synonyms for, 'I don't know what to do'.  
There are the words to buy time,  
Words to hide panic in high places,  
Words to camouflage confusion, lack of vision, and leadership,  
Strong words with full blown knowledge of failure,  
Buzz words that stand in line for lack of solution.

Baltimore burned last night.  
I heard all the words, the usual suspects,  
The shell games used for sleight of hand misleading.  
No one stands tall. That's been in motion for a while.  
The buck gets passed and does not stop anymore  
At Harry Truman's desk.  
The words are used with double entendre or with force of habit:  
Strategy,  
Transparent,  
Peaceful protest,  
Restraint,  
Dialogue,  
Civil disobedience,  
Zero tolerance,  
First Amendment rights-  
All of them used when convenient to an agenda,  
Most of which are hidden.  
All of them are pacifiers to solving real life turmoil.

'Why not another meeting to discuss proper protocol? '

In the meantime,  
Baltimore is in ashes  
While the politically correct air recycles possible solutions using

Words without.

william upton

# Yes Or No

Whatever happened to 'yes' or 'no' answers?

Just yes or just no.

We answer simple questions with speeches and excuses,

Lengthy explanations and diatribes,

Unrelated information, everything BUT

Yes or no.

We speak like children-

'Did you hit your brother?

Well, he was teasing me.'

The answer is yes,

Just yes.

There's no need for the additional paragraph of information,

Just yes.

In court, defense attorneys don't answer yes or no.

They elaborate as to intent-

They explain the family history from cradle to crime-

'Here's why, here's how he did it, '

While the question was merely, 'Did he do it? '

The segues, the sidetrack games, the sleight of verbal hand,

The annoying psycho babble

Are all utilized to avoid, to masquerade realities.

Communication is a lost art form.

Speaking is confused with answering.

We must remember, for the sake of brevity,

To get to the bottom line.

Most people have little regard for long winded chronologies.

Simple is better.

Simple is appreciated.

Try to save enough 'hot air'

Just in case you want to publish your memoirs!

william upton

# You Say Goodbye And I Say Hello

Since I was a boy, I've been given deadlines,  
Arbitrary dates and times to snap to it-  
Moments that if missed would never again be able to be repeated;  
Moments that if missed would result in  
Artificial catastrophe.

And I was young, and I believed  
That certain things must happen by certain times  
Or else my non-compliance would seal my fate,  
My ultimate destiny,  
For success.

'If you don't comply with the deadline  
It will result in failure'...

In schoolwork,  
In relationships,  
In jobs,  
In happiness,  
In life.

Over time, my vision has improved,  
And deadlines more closely resemble empty words  
From desperate salesmen,  
From frazzled parents and teachers,  
From bosses and worried loved ones.

But I learned from missing so many of them  
And, consequently, avoiding doomsday and Armageddon and Y2K,  
That they were not lethal.

They were man-made,  
But most of all,  
They never really mattered  
And they never really will.

william upton