

Wild Geese

by Mary Oliver

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting-
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

DRA Comment: *This is a poem that David Bottoms, Georgia's former Poet Laureate, reads on the last day of all his classes. It was written by Mary Oliver, who lives in the northeast, and is still writing into her eighties. She won a Pulitzer Prize for this work. It speaks of freedom, imagination, independence and, ultimately, of eternity.*