

Collection of Poems by Nikki Giovanni

Winter Poem

once a snowflake fell
on my brow and i loved
it so much and i kissed
it and it was happy and called its cousins
and brothers and a web
of snow engulfed me then
i reached to love them all
and i squeezed them and they became
a spring rain and i stood perfectly
still and was a flower

The World is Not a Pleasant Place to Be

the world is not a pleasant place
to be without
someone to hold and be held by

a river would stop
its flow if only
a stream were there
to receive it

an ocean would never laugh
if clouds weren't there
to kiss her tears

the world is not
a pleasant place to be without
someone

Choices

If i can't do
what i want to do
then my job is to not
do what i don't want
to do
It's not the same thing
but it's the best i can
do

If i can't have
what i want . . . then
my job is to want
what i've got
and be satisfied
that at least there
is something more to want

Since i can't go
where i need
to go . . . then i must . . . go where the signs
point
though always understanding parallel
movement
isn't lateral

When i can't express
what i really feel
i practice feeling
what i can express
and none of it is equal

I know
but that's why mankind
alone among the animals
learns to cry

A Summer Love Poem

Clouds float by on a summer sky
I hop scotch over to you

Rainbows arch from ground to gold
I climb over to you

Thunder grumbles, lightning tumbles
And I bounce over to you

Sun beams back and catches me
Smiling over at you

the drum

daddy says the world is
a drum tight and hard
and i told him
i'm gonna beat
out my own rhythm

Poetry

poetry is motion graceful
as a fawn
gentle as a teardrop
strong like the eye
finding peace in a crowded room
we poets tend to think
our words are golden
though emotion speaks too
loudly to be defined
by silence
sometimes after midnight or just before
the dawn
we sit typewriter in hand
pulling loneliness around us
forgetting our lovers or children
who are sleeping
ignoring the weary wariness
of our own logic
to compose a poem
no one understands it
it never says "love me" for poets are
beyond love
it never says "accept me" for poems seek not
acceptance but controversy
it only says "i am" and therefore
i concede that you are too

a poem is pure energy
horizontally contained
between the mind
of the poet and the ear of the reader
if it does not sing discard the ear
for poetry is song
if it does not delight discard
the heart for poetry is joy
if it does not inform then close
off the brain for it is dead
if it cannot heed the insistent message
that life is precious
which is all we poets
wrapped in our loneliness
are trying to say

Short Biography of Nikki Giovanni

Yolande Cornelia "Nikki" Giovanni, born in Knoxville, Tennessee, is a world-renowned poet, writer, commentator, activist, and educator. Over the past thirty years, Nikki's outspokenness, in her writing and in person, has brought the eyes of the world upon her. One of the most widely read American poets; she prides herself on being "a Black American, a daughter, a mother, a professor of English." Giovanni remains as determined and committed as ever to the fight for civil rights and equality. Her focus is on the individual, specifically, on the power one has to make a difference in oneself, and thus, in the lives of others.

Nikki Giovanni has written more than two dozen books, including volumes of poetry, illustrated children's books, and three collections of essays. She has received nineteen honorary doctorates and a host of other awards, including "Woman of the Year" awards from three different magazines as well as Governors' Awards in the Arts from both Tennessee and Virginia. Two of her volumes of poetry, *Love Poems* and *Blues: For All the Changes*, were both winners of the NAACP Image Award, in 1998 and 2000, respectively. Since 1987, she has taught writing and literature at Virginia Tech, where she is a University Distinguished Professor. As a devoted and passionate writer, teacher, and speaker, she inspires not only her students, but also readers and audiences nationwide.

Poetry from Experience Many of Giovanni's poems reflect her childhood and her experience as an African-American woman. "I write," she says, "out of my own experiences- which also happen to be the experiences of my people. Human beings fascinate me. I just keep trying to dissect them poetically to see what's there." (p.205, LOL, Gr. 7)