Often between the title and the poem itself we find a short, credited quotation intended to suggest the poem’s theme. Pick a brief quotation from anything, one that speaks to you, and let it be your poem’s jump-start. Or use one of the following:

Arrange us with meaning
the words plead. Find the thread
through the dark.

Farnaz Fatemi

I’d rather be blithe than correct.

James Broughton
In “Having Come This Far”

Tradition is to a people what memory is to an individual.

John O’Donohue

…this/ is the nature of all poems. This is what we long/ for:
to cry out with our little thunder to the big/ thunder.

Mark Nepo

The strong live in the storm
Without worshipping the storm.

Mark Nepo in reduced to joy

Let it come
like wildflowers,
suddenly, because the field
must have it: wildpeace.

~ Yehuda Amichai ~
from “Wildpeace”

I might have been myself minus amazement,
that is,
someone completely different.

~ Wislawa Szymborska ~
from Among the Multitudes

You can cut all the flowers, but you can’t keep spring from coming.

Pablo Neruda
We live in the night ocean wondering,
What are these lights?

Rumi / Barks

If you aren’t in over your head,
how do you know how tall you are?

T.S. Eliot

To take for permanent
That which is only transitory
Is like the delusion of a madman.

Kalu Rimpoche

Life won’t get simple until our mind does.

Jim Harrison

To change your language
you must change your life.

Derek Walcott

Love abhors habit
and poetry is a species of love.

Christian Wiman

It’s very difficult to look at the World
and into your own heart at the same time.

Jim Harrison

This is a tale with a kernel
You’ll have to use your teeth to crack it.

Charles Simic

When the rain turns to snow
Every beast shall see its track and wonder.

Charles Simic

Ladies and gentlemen, you will hear a star,
Dead a million years, in the throat of a bird.

Charles Simic

Everybody knows the plague is coming
and it’s coming fast.

Leonard Cohen
Surely our shame and sorrow
also return,
composted by years
into something generative as wisdom.

Laura Grace Weldon

Let poems be cups of praying
made for holding silence.

Nura Yingling

We grow in kindness when our kindness is tested.

Desmond Tutu

Your ability to let this moment be is grace.

Eckhart Tolle

You couldn’t tell which way the laughter was blowing.

Naomi Shihab Nye

Certainties are arrived at only on foot.

Antonio Porchia translated by W.S. Merwin

It is a long time now since I asked heaven for anything, and still my arms have not come down.

Antonio Porchia translated by W.S. Merwin

Despair says *I cannot lift that weight.* Happiness says, *I do not have to.*

James Richardson

Absence makes the heart grow fonder; then it’s only distance that separates us.

James Richardson

You yourself may be what your poem creates
(not sure who said this…maybe Dean Young)

In poetry the language of doubt must be written in doubt-free language.

Baktin