

20.

## Body Parts Poem Prompt

Let today's poem deal somehow with the parts of the human body.

### Bestiary for the Fingers of My Right Hand

1.

Thumb, loose tooth of a horse.  
Rooster to his hens.  
Horn of a devil. Fat worm  
They have attached to my flesh  
At the time of my birth.  
It takes four to hold him down,  
Bend him in half, until the bone  
Begins to whimper.  
Cut him off. He can take care  
Of himself. Take root in the earth,  
Or go hunting with wolves.

2.

The second points the way.  
True way. The path crosses the earth,  
The moon and some stars.  
Watch, he points further.  
He points to himself.

3.

The middle one has backache.  
Stiff, still unaccustomed to this life:  
An old man at birth. It's about something  
That he had and lost,  
That he looks for within my hand,  
The way a dog looks  
For fleas  
With a sharp tooth.

4.

The fourth is mystery.  
Sometimes as my hand  
Rests on the table  
He jumps by himself  
As though someone called his name.

After each bone, finger,  
I come to him, troubled.

5.  
Something stirs in the fifth  
Something perpetually at the point  
Of birth. Weak and submissive,  
His touch is gentle.  
It weighs a tear.  
It takes the mote out of the eye.

Charles Simic

Maxine Kumin's wonderful poem "Song for Seven Parts of the Body" is too long to type in full here. The body parts are presented as riddles. Some sections are earthier and funnier than others... these are few examples:

I.  
This one,  
a common type,  
turns in.  
Was once attached.  
Fed me as sweetly  
as an opium pipe.  
O, birthdays unlimber us,  
eyes sit back,  
ears go indoors,  
but here nothing changes.  
This was.  
This is.

VI.  
Imagine a mouth  
without you, pink man,  
goodfellow.  
A house  
without a kitchen,  
fishless ocean.  
No way to swallow.

VII.  
These nubbins,  
these hangers on  
hear naught.  
Wise men  
tug them in thought.  
Lovers may nibble each other's.  
Maidens  
gypsies and peasants  
make holes in theirs  
to hang presents.

Maxine Kumin In *Selected Poems 1960-1990*

## Happiness

This morning,  
I woke to find myself in a body—  
It was marvelous

First I saw this  
Small branch on my pillow  
And when I moved it  
The fingers on it trembled,  
This must be my hand I realized!

So I looked to the other side  
And had to hunt around a bit  
But found the other hand tucked under a smooth stone

The stone held heat still, the way the rocks do long after dark  
This must be my belly  
This small oven at my core

Above it the two fences  
Which I decided were my ribs,  
And on the other side of the left fence  
The most beautiful wild horse  
Running up and down the field  
Which I will call my heart.

I also found the cliffs of my knees  
And those shy roots which must be my toes,  
So pleased as I placed them on the floor.

Today I'll take this body on a walk  
I'll feed it something warm  
And when it's thirsty I will put the kettle on.

Tomorrow I might wake  
To find it gone.

Meg Hutchinson  
in *The Morning I Was Born*