

8.

Poems About Stories

Write a poem somehow about stories, perhaps about the labyrinthian nature of stories, how stories live embedded in a tangle of other stories. Your poem might make reference to stories you could write as memoir or from pure imagination. You might write about why we or you write stories.

A Story

The swallows have a story
they tell no one,
not even the rats,
the rats you once saw standing
on their hind legs
at the dump
late in the dark,
the car silent.
Not even the shopping cart
of the wind
as it wheels through the foliage—
Everyone has a story,
like a string of invisible Christmas lights
wound into the heart.
And every story has a story
that hides inside its own labyrinth.
The past has a story
as wide and as deep as the world.
Every word has a story
and every stone.

Morlena Morling
anthologized in: *Between Water & Song:
New Poets for the Twenty-First Century*
edited by Norman Minnick

3.

At a little pond in the woods
I decided: this is the center of my life.
I threw a big stick far out, to be
all the burdens from earlier years.
Ever since, I have been walking

lightly, looking around, out of the woods

Part 3. from "Stories to Live in the World with"
in *Stories That Could Be True*
William Stafford

Why We Tell Stories

For Linda Nemeč Foster

1.

Because we used to have leaves
and on damp days
our muscles feel a tug,
painful now, from when roots
pulled us into the ground

and because our children believe
they can fly, an instinct retained
from when the bones in our arms
were shaped like zithers and broke
neatly under their feathers

and because before we had lungs
we knew how far it was to the bottom
as we floated open-eyed
like painted scarves through the scenery
of dreams, and because we awakened

and learned to speak

2.

We sat by the fire in our caves,
and because we were poor, we made up a tale
about a treasure mountain
that would open only for us

and because we were always defeated,
we invented impossible riddles
only we could solve,

monsters only we could kill,
women who could love no one else

and because we had survived
sisters and brothers, daughters and sons,
we discovered bones that rose
from the dark earth and sang
as white birds in the trees.

3.

Because the story of our life
becomes our life

Because each of us tells
the same story
but tells it differently

and none of us tells it
the same way twice

Because grandmothers looking like spiders
want to enchant the children
and grandfathers need to convince us
what happened happened because of them

and though we listen only
haphazardly, with one ear,
we will begin our story
with the word *and*

Lisel Mueller
in *Alive Together: New and Selected Poems*

God made man because he loves stories.
Yiddish Proverb