

The Bridge Prompt 2025

Prompt: Let your poem today be centered on or include a real or metaphoric bridge.

Bridge

Most of my life was spent
building a bridge out over the sea
though the sea was too wide.
I'm proud of the bridge
hanging in the pure sea air. Machado
came for a visit and we sat on the
end of the bridge, which was his idea.
Now that I'm old the work goes slowly.
Ever neared death, I like it out here
high above the sea bundled
up for the arctic storms of late fall,
the resounding crash and moan of the sea,
the hundred-foot depth of the green troughs.
Sometimes the sea roars and howls like
the animal it is, a continent wide and alive.
What beauty in this darkest music
over which you can hear the lightest music of human
behavior, the tender connection between men and galaxies.
So I sit on the edge, wagging my feet above
the abyss. Tonight the moon will be in my lap.
This is my job, to study the universe
from my bridge. I have the sky, the sea, the faint
green streaks of Canadian forest on the far shore.

Jim Harrison
from *Dead Man's Float*

I Stood On The Bridge

I stood on the bridge
in the early morning to watch
shadows shimmy on the weedy stream.
A frog thrummed and plopped in.

I thought of other times I'd stood there.
Once a huge snake wound its way
up a shrub beside me.
Many the Pooh Stick game with the children,
and often we hunkered on the rocks
below the bridge to watch
the fork-tailed swallows swoop
close to the water, graze for bugs,
and return to their young in cupped nests
pasted against the bridge beams.

Walking home I passed
under the blooming catalpa.
The long pods of last season
still hung open and twisted
amid this summer's blossoms.
From the ground I picked up
one spent flower and looked
into its purple, flecked throat
striped with rust.

The opening just fit the tip
of my ring finger.
I said, "I do."
Yes, world,
I do
 love you.

jch 6/27/2004

Small Bridges

Since the very day that I was born
I have been learning only this:
to build bridges in the world as many bridges as I can.

Against the morning light
I build a bridge across the narrow space between two buildings.
I build a bridge over the gap between the hearts
of people who aimlessly rush by,
but
no one's hand can connect the distance
between hearts that are torn apart.

Under the infrared rays of the evening
I build a bridge between the passing moment and the upcoming
moment.
I build a bridge between the love and hatred of a person
who is walking with his head drooping, without reason.
And I dream of building a bridge someday
between human and human, between time and place
which no storms can destroy.

Ever since the very moment I was born
I have lived with only this thought:
to build bridges in the world as many bridges as I can.

Kihara Koichi (Small Bridges page 82)
from *Like Underground Water:*
The Poetry of Mid-Twentieth Century Japan
Translated by Naoshi Koriyama and Edward Leuders

Water Under the Bridge

You won't catch me
bringing it up.
Let's hope it's gone,
far away down river .

We both appear
smaller now, lighter somehow—
our bones more prominent.

Sometimes you look
like a stranger
even when we sit
side by each on the steps
eating chocolate pudding
with two spoons
out of the same
small dish.

jch 10/8/2016