

It's time for *you* to find a poem!

Use this poem by Irene Latham as a “nest” poem to find your own nestlings after reading *THIS POEM IS A NEST* by Irene Latham, illus. by Johanna Wright (Boyds Mills & Kane, 2020).

The New Puppy Promise

by Irene Latham

Puppy, I promise to make a home for you
where you will always be safe.
I will be patient with you as you learn
where to do your business
and what not to chew.
I will play with you every day
and take you on grand adventures,
so you, too, can see the world.
I will listen to what your ears and tail
and eyes are telling me.
I will help you find your favorite spot
to be scratched.
I will let you be a dog who barks and romps,
but I will also take the time to show you
how to be courteous to me and to others.
Sometimes we may disagree.
Sometimes we may get mad
and hurt each other's feelings.
But Puppy, I promise to never give up on you.
Please don't give up on me!
I may be slow sometimes, but I will learn.
I will do what it takes to keep you healthy.
I will be generous with walks and hugs and treats.
Each day we'll discover new things together.
You will be mine,
and I will be yours –
 forever.

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How to Rise

by Irene Latham

A kite needs wind,
smoke needs fire.

A whale dives

d
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 e
 p

before it swims up for air.

A balloon doesn't stop
to ask, *what's it all for?*

It simply lifts,
drifts,
find new mountains
to float over.

And each day the sun returns,
reminding us

to try
 once more.

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This Poem is Green

by Irene Latham

Green like a hillside
gowned in clover,
green like sea-washed glass.
It's pushing up through hardscrabble soil,
tender leaves unfurling
on a frosty March morning.
Each day it begins,
or begins again –
there is always something new to learn.
Sometimes it gets wobbly,
like now: it's queasy heart
squeezed by the tides
of opinion.
Sometimes it sees other poems
that are far better-dressed,
poems with wings,
and this poem grows even green-er.
What else is there to do then,
than retreat to the forest?
This poem knows to listen
to giants. It carried their wild songs
like DNA in each syllable,
it holds lost fathers and daughters
in its branches,
and when it breathes,
the sky tastes like salt.
See? This poem is so green
it's already turning blue.

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A Taste of Summer

by Irene Latham

warm melons
cracked open
on the back
picnic table,
their red
or golden meat
arousing songbirds
and inviting
black ants
to trail in –
always enough
for everyone

peaches fresh
off the truck
Granddaddy
drove all the way
from Georgia,
the scent
of gasoline
and tickle
of sweet-sticky
juice dribbling
down to our elbows
as we would
bite in

the whine
of the electric
ice cream maker
and the slush
of ice and salt
as we waited:
is it ready yet?

strawberry jello
mixed with
whipped-cream
clouds
in a glass bowl
at the end
of the table,
Grandma saying,
something sweet,
for a sweet girl.

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birthday poem *by Irene Latham*

to you happy birthday
on this most beautiful day
stick a candle in every island
blow your sweet breath across
oceans into my seashell ear

to you happy birthday
in my rivers a thousand thank yous
for candles oceans the universe you
on this most beautiful day
for you i wish

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If You Want to Know My Heart, Come Inside My Studio

by Irene Latham

one chamber:
four walls to hold
eighty-eight piano keys
five cello strings

two dozen shelves
fat with books
and hungry for *more*
more more

a hodgepodge gallery
of watercolor, collage,
pen and ink
the exact same scent
as woodsmoke

its heartbeat,
a window
carrying inside
tree mountain
bluebird lake

one light, pulsing
and strung
with yellow-edged
pictures of
loved-ones' faces

open-shut-open
door taped over
with *Dear* ___ greetings

two roomy closets
where poems tuck
themselves between
quilts paint
ribbon thread

the air aswirl
with dreams
made red with words –

some silent
and true as stars,
others slipping
whispering, still:

dust
beneath the door.

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I Could Say I Believe in the Ocean

by Irene Latham

But what I mean is,
I believe in water:
leagues wide
and miles deep,
still-cool-cold on one shore,
warm-salty on the other.

I believe in clownfish
and anemone,
riotous coral reef
and cruising grouper,

octopuses origami-ing
themselves into
castaway bottles
and now-you-see-em-
now-you-don't krill
diving into
the mouths of whales.

I believe in turquoise
and teal, cobalt
and blacker-than-black.
In shipwrecks
and tsunamis
and deep-sea
luminescence.

I believe in a world
with enough *anything*
for everyone
where I am a boat
floating quiet
as a moon jellyfish,

weaving between sharks
and icebergs,
allowing the current
to carry me
wherever it will.

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Prayer for the Berry Pickers

by Irene Latham

May tender sun ever guide
you to sweetness

May gray dog
rattle snakes from brambles

May your buckets hang light,
then heavy

May you know the flavor
of sunlight and rain

May your purpling fingertips
bring grins, giggles

May you leave plenty
for birds and bears to feast

May your love for one another
ripen, not rot

May warm scent of berries
ever remind you

of this day

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I Give Thanks for Trussville, Alabama

by Irene Latham

For the boxy blue house
on Lake Street

the low branch on the chinaberry tree,
perfect for spying

the rattle of the Red Flyer
as we pull it empty

across sidewalks cracked
and raised by the roots of ancient oaks.

For the library three blocks down
and one block over

where we build a soon-to-be
avalanche of books –

our wagon turned pumpkin
turned carriage turned train.

For the one stop light
blinking *caution caution caution*

for the noonday bus
wheezing its promise to carry us away –

someday,
but not until we're ready.