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Meeting of Mavericks

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Loverne Brown



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•Samuel A. Maverick owned a lot of cattle, and he let them roam around Texas without a brand, or identification mark, seared into their skins. Samuel was a maverick for going against the common practice of tracking his animals, and his last name became part of the English language as both an adjective and a noun in the 19th century.

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MAVERICK

- A maverick is an independent, unconventional person, someone who don't follow the normal rules and expectations of society. He / She is either a rebel or a brave person, depending on your perspective.



POEM

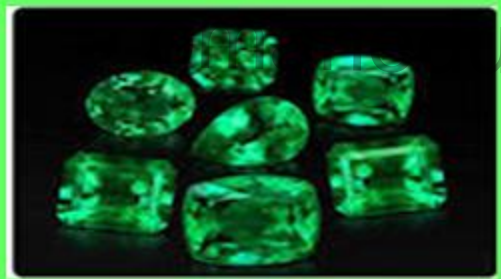
- Milkweed grows by my fence.
- Don't ask me to pull it.
- Weeds were my friends in childhood –

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- emerald explosions
- in the dull cinders of train track,
- green lace at the sleeves
- of our water trough.



• Eyes starved for color
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- were well fed by fire weed
- elbowing tin cans aside
- to take over the dump.

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• live in the city now
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- but claim kinship whenever
- the uncombed head of a dandelion
- pops up like a gopher
- in the midst of a groomed lawn,



• or a purple thistle—
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- remembered from roadside ditch
- looms insolent
- in an enclave of roses.

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• Today a prickly thing
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- I don't know the name of
- is exploiting a crack
- I greet it as a friend:
- "Hello, I too
- like to challenge the fissures
- in my firmament,
- squeeze through, sometimes,
- more often fracture my skull."



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• My new acquaintance braces his spine

• along the crack, and shoves.

• Cement crumbles.

• I think tonight I will sneak out and water
this one!

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QUESTIONS

1. What is the importance of the use of colour in the poem?
2. Explain why the poet identifies with the weeds. Use the title to help you.
3. Which image in the poem did you like the most? Why?

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The Journey-Mary Oliver

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Mary Oliver (born September 10, 1935) is an American poet who has won the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. The New York Times described her as "far and away, [America's] best-selling poet".

• A prolific writer of both poetry and prose, Oliver publishes a new collection every year or two.

• Her main themes continue to be the intersection between the human and the natural world, as well as the limits of human consciousness and language in articulating such a meeting.



• "Mend my life!"
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- each voice cried.
- But you didn't stop.
- You knew what you had to do,
- though the wind pried
- with its stiff fingers
- at the very foundations,
- though their melancholy
- was terrible.

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• It was already late
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- •enough, and a wild night,
- •and the road full of fallen
- •branches and stones.

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- But little by little,
- as you left their voices behind,
- the stars began to burn
- through the sheets of clouds,
- and there was a new voice
- which you slowly
- recognized as your own,
- that kept you company
- as you strode deeper and deeper
- into the world,
- determined to do
- the only thing you could do--
- determined to save
- the only life you could save.



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- This is a poem about the difficult journey of self-discovery.

- The poem uses the past tense to reflect that the narrator is looking back at the moment she had decided to leave to become who she is now, and the poem is a kind of internal monologue.
 - Each stanza focuses on a particular time or event and there is a clear progression or movement in the poem.
 - Stanza one looks at how the speaker had to ignore the voices of those who made such demands on her in order to find herself.
 - Stanza two focuses on her journey itself. It reveals that both the physical and metaphorical journeys were filled with obstacles, challenges and turmoil, but the speaker persevered.
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Mary Oliver and The Journey

- The Journey is a poem that focuses on the need to leave behind what is bad and wrong and harmful and start out on a new path.
- It has become a popular poem for those seeking guidance and strength in their lives.
- 'Tell me, what is it you plan to do
- with your one wild and precious life?'

Mary Oliver is best known for her poems on nature. She is considered one of the foremost modern romantics of her time, appealing to those who are sensitive to environmental issues and those looking for spiritual awakening. Nature for her is a constant revelation, she gets inside the skin and whispers back in intimate style to her readers.

- The Journey is a little different in that it is more involved with the life of a person who is struggling to find meaning in a relationship and with themselves. The references to the natural world are few and distant - this poem is about necessity for change, leaving one dark situation and finding another that is more positive.

- This person who, one day, finally knew what they had to do, is someone who is coming in from the cold, into the light from the dark, re-joining the world of the whole, finding their own voice, no longer a broken individual.

The Journey is a free verse poem, it doesn't have a set rhyme scheme . On the page it is a thin poem of thirty six short lines, one stanza, written in an informal yet wise manner.

- Some lines do rhyme but not frequently enough to suggest a definite scheme. They provide a weak bond, for example: knew/you (lines 1 and 3) and do/do, save/save (end four lines).

It is a poem with metaphor - the title itself being one, life as a journey - where a house becomes the self. And there are symbols: the wind, the night, the road with branches and stones, the stars and clouds; all could be seen as representing something else in the challenging life of this person.

• Note the interesting approach to time in this poem and the fact that the first two words 'One day' suggest that this person has gone through a kind of hell for a long time, for many, many days. The reader meets the poem at a crucial point in this person's life: this is the day when everything is about to change, for the good.

Diction (Language)

- In the opening twenty two lines there are several words that suggest negativity in the life of this person. These create a dark and slightly sinister background: shouting their bad advice....tremble...old tug....melancholy..terrible..wild night...fallen branches and stones.
- It is only when the voices are left behind that the language changes to a more positive vibe: stars began to burn...a new voice....kept you company...to save the only life.

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And note the lines three and six:

- though the voices around you...though the whole house
- and lines fourteen and seventeen:
- though the wind pried...though their melancholy
- This is a near repeat which reflects the person's life - repeating mistakes perhaps, unable to let go of the old voices.

- The opening eleven lines suggest that here is a person who has waited a long time for this day to arrive. Now at last they're about to start on a journey out of the dark past and into a brighter future.
- Despite those voices from any number of people trying to drag you back, giving their 'bad advice' as loudly as they could, you had made up your mind out of necessity.

Note the use of the house which is a symbol of the self, how it was made to tremble, that is, how close this person came to completely collapsing. It's not a home but an empty person. And the voices are powerful because they represent negative energy, old patterns that this person had to break out of. There were huge demands made on 'you' but you just had to escape.

- Lines 12 - 22

- In a repeat of the opening line the speaker clearly declares determinedly that 'you know what you had to do'. There is no looking back, no stopping, no chance of holding onto that past life. However, the wind is still at you, trying to destroy and undermine.

This is threshold time. This person set off in the day but now it is night and chaos still might rule. This is the chaotic energy of the past still attempting to stop the new progress, end this journey - sticks and stones may break the bones - but voices are not enough to cause a halt.

- You cannot cling to the past, you cannot afford to dwell on what has gone. Continue those first few steps. Time will start to heal.

• Lines 23 - 36

- The transition is nearly complete, ready for the next phase. Stars are visible once again, the cloud cover not strong enough to diminish their light. Stars, what the old navigators used, now you can use. The voice which had been drowned out by those negative false calls for help is renewed. And it is strong, and it is yours alone.

The emphasis is on coming back into the world following what has been a challenging and chaotic and terrifying experience.

- To be able to listen again to that inner voice of wisdom and truth, a sort of companion throughout the ordeal.
- At the last moment, in the nick of time, before it was too late, the speaker (the person, 'you') began the journey and overcame the obstacles both real and imagined.

- **Final Assessment**
- 1. Is the journey in the title of the poem a literal or a figurative one? Explain.
- 2. Who is the speaker, and who is being spoken to?
- 3. Explain the last two lines of the poem: "determined to save/ the only life you could save".