

# From Blossoms



## SUMMARY

The speaker points out that the peaches they hold in a brown paper bag began as flower blossoms. They bought the fruit from a boy on the side of the road, having followed signs that said "Peaches" around a curve.

The peaches came from branches that were heavy with fruit. Those boughs were then picked by hands that placed all the delicious peaches together into crates, and eventually their sweet juices reached the speaker on the side of the road. Now, the speaker gobbles up these tasty and tender fruits, all the way down to the dusty fuzz that coats their skin. This makes the speaker feel as though they're eating the dustiness of the summertime itself.

The speaker rejoices in being able to consume something that they love so much. To eat these peaches is to walk around with an entire orchard inside of their body. They eat not just peach fuzz, but also the shade in which the peaches grew; they taste not just the peaches' sweetness but also the summer days during which they ripened. The speaker marvels at the ability to hold a peach in their hands and then sink their teeth into a plump bit of joy itself.

Some days, the speaker says, it seems death doesn't even exist. On such days people bounce from one pleasure to another; free as birds, they flit from one flower to the next, from one unimaginable flower to another.

"shade" of the trees and the warm, pleasant "days" of summer during which the peaches ripened. In other words, the speaker isn't *just* enjoying a peach; they're reveling in all the things the peach represents: happiness, beauty, abundance, and the sweetness of life itself.

The joy of eating these peaches is so intense that the speaker can even believe, for a moment, that life is nothing but pure delight. The speaker muses that some "days" it seems "as if death were nowhere / in the background." When the speaker is "bit[ing] into" the "jubilation" of a peach, it's as if the unpleasant reality of death doesn't exist.

And yet, the speaker also realizes that such lovely moments can't last forever. Note how much the poem focuses on the peach's *origins*: the speaker couldn't eat this peach at all were it not for the "blossoms" it came "from," the "days" that let it ripen, and the "bins" that transported it from "an orchard" to the speaker's "hands." Even as savoring the peach seems to stop time, then, the speaker also knows that this peach couldn't exist without time moving forward.

Thus, while days like this grant the speaker a taste of immortality, the speaker knows that one can't just go "from blossom to blossom / to impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom." To do so would be "impossible" because blossoms themselves don't last forever: eventually, blossoms turn into fruit that's eaten (or rots), and summer comes to an end.

The speaker also notes that roadside fruit is also covered in "the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat," recalling the phrase "dust to dust" from the Christian Bible and also the Book of Common Prayer. This suggests that the speaker is consuming part of the earth from which they once came and to which they will one day return. Life and death, the poem suggests, go hand in hand.

The fact that life's pleasures and joys can't last is what makes it so important to appreciate them in the moment. The speaker says the peaches were "bought from the boy / at the bend in the road," suggesting the unexpectedness of this beautiful bounty—they couldn't have predicted it, and they could easily have passed it up if they weren't paying attention to the "signs" along the road. Like the proverbial "stopping to smell the roses," these roadside peaches seem to suggest that pleasure is something one must seek out, slow down for, and take advantage of whenever one can.

### Where this theme appears in the poem:

- Lines 1-22



## THEMES



### APPRECIATING LIFE'S SIMPLE, FLEETING PLEASURES

"From Blossoms" celebrates the simple pleasure of eating peaches from a roadside stand in summer. The speaker seems nearly dizzy with delight while eating these ripe, delicious peaches, which make the speaker feel like they're taking a bite out of summertime itself—a season of abundant growth, when the chill of winter is still far away. Holding an emblem of so much life and joy in their "hands," the speaker can even momentarily forget that "death" is lurking "in the background." In this way, the poem speaks to the importance of savoring life's pleasures whenever one can. At the same time, the poem suggests that it's the fleeting natures of these pleasures—the fact that they, like everything else, can't last—that makes them so precious in the first place.

The speaker imagines that, in addition to eating the peach in front of them, they're also devouring the whole "orchard"—the



## LINE-BY-LINE ANALYSIS

## LINES 1-5

*From blossoms comes ...*

...

The opening stanza describes an experience that many readers might relate to: purchasing fresh fruit, in this case peaches, from a seller on the side of the road. But there's a lot of information tucked into these seemingly simple lines.

For one thing, readers know the speaker isn't alone: they use the plural pronoun "we," referring either to other travelers in their car or other people who also stopped to enjoy these fresh peaches. The "bend in the road," meanwhile, suggests the unexpected nature of this stop—that it's hidden and out of the way, and that the speaker deliberately decided to follow the "signs painted *Peaches*" to reach it. This moment of pleasure happened in part because the speaker was open to a slight change in plans, then: they "turned toward" the peaches rather than driving by.

Perhaps most importantly, the poem's title and first line both focus on *origins*—on where these peaches the speaker now holds came "from." The speaker considers the way these peaches started out as "blossoms," delicate flowers that bloom on a tree in spring and eventually transform into fruit as summer comes around. Right away, the speaker seems to marvel at the process that brought this moment to them, a process that involved growth, time, and change.

These lines are rich with sonic devices. In just the first two lines, for example, note how bold /b/ and /p/ [alliteration](#) adds bouncing intensity to the scene, while the buzz of /m/ and /z/ sounds (as [consonance](#)) might evoke pleasure—someone saying "mmm":

From blossoms comes  
this brown paper bag of peaches

There's also [assonance](#) here, with the short /uh/ of "from" and "comes," making the lines even more musical. The melodiousness of the opening lines adds to the poem's joyful, wondrous tone.

## LINES 6-8

*From laden boughs, ...  
... the roadside, succulent*

The second stanza begins with the same word as the first: "From," which then repeats at the start of the next two clauses (an example of [anaphora](#)):

From laden boughs, from hands,  
from sweet fellowship at the bins,

This [repetition](#) once again stresses the importance of the peaches' *origins*; they didn't just appear at this stand out of nowhere! The speaker in fact traces the peaches' life story: they began as delicate "blossoms" that matured on "laden boughs," or tree limbs heavy with fruit. They were then picked by human "hands" and loaded into "bins."

The phrase "sweet fellowship" might refer to the way that the speaker goes through "the bins" alongside others who have stopped to buy peaches, feeling a sense of companionship with these people. Alternatively, the speaker might be [personifying](#) the individual peaches themselves as being companions to the other fruit in these bins. Either way, these lines present the peaches as a source of connection—with other people, with the earth, and even with the passage of time itself.

Note how this anaphora overlaps with [asyndeton](#). With no coordinating conjunction between one event and the next, the poem seems to collapse time: each link in the peaches' chain blurs together, evoking the way that actually eating these "succulent" fruits seems to pause time for the speaker.

The word "nectar" is interesting here too. It literally refers to the sweet juice of those peaches, but it's also the name of the drink of the gods in ancient Greek mythology. It's like eating these peaches has given the speaker a taste of divinity, right there "at the roadside."

Musicality once again highlights the beauty and pleasure of this moment. The thick /k/, /n/, /s/, and /t/ [consonance](#), plus short /uh/ [assonance](#) ("comes nectar at the roadside, succulent"), evokes the sensuousness of consuming these juicy, delicious peaches. Reading the poem aloud, it's hard not to feel the juices trickling down one's chin!

## LINES 9-10

*peaches we devour, ...  
... dust we eat.*

The speaker again seems to marvel at the miraculous journey of these humble peaches, which traveled all the way from "laden boughs" to "the roadside" where the speaker and others now "devour" them—that is, enthusiastically gobble them up.

They eat even the "dusty skin," a reference to peaches' fuzzy outer layer and, perhaps, literal dust from the earth that still clings to them. This dust is "familiar" to the speaker, the "dust of summer" itself. In other words, the speaker enjoys the peaches not only because they're juicy and delicious, but because they connect the speaker to the summertime—a season filled with vibrant color, life, and joy, when the darkness of winter is out of mind.

The repetition of "dust"/"dusty" in these lines may also [allude](#) to the Bible, which contains multiple passages about human beings' dusty origins. Take Genesis 3:19 (quoted here from the King James Version of the Bible):

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

The phrase "dust to dust" was also made famous by a funereal passage in the Book of Common Prayer. It refers to the idea that God created human beings from the "earth" and that everything must eventually die and return to the "dust," or earth, from which it came. Dust is thus linked with both life and death.

Consuming this "dust" suggests the speaker's feeling of connection with the peaches and the earth itself. It also suggests that these peaches remind the speaker of the cycle of life and death that rules over everything. The peaches grew out of dust (i.e., soil), the speaker eats the peaches, and the speaker will one day return to "dust," out of which new peaches may grow.

Lines 9-10 also contain more [alliteration](#), [consonance](#), and [sibilance](#):

peaches we devour, dusty skin and all,  
comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat.

The /st/ sounds here are particularly evocative and almost [onomatopoeic](#), calling to mind the hiss and crunch of "dust" itself.

### LINES 11-14

*O, to take ...  
... but the days,*

To eat peaches, the speaker says in the third stanza, is "to take what we love inside." Literally, the process of eating fruit brings that delicious fruit into the speaker's body. But the speaker isn't just being literal here; they're celebrating being able to become intimately connected with something they love, to "take" pleasure and joy and summer into themselves.

The next few lines build up a [metaphor](#) about what it means to eat a peach:

O, to take what we love inside,  
to carry with us an orchard, to eat  
not only the skin, but the shade,  
not only the sugar, but the days [...]

In eating the peach, the speaker is eating the peach's entire life story. Consuming the peach is akin to consuming the whole "orchard" where it grew—everything from the "shade" of the trees to the long, luxurious summer "days" during which the fruit ripened. Even as the speaker lingers in this moment, these lines again emphasize that this moment couldn't exist without time, movement, and change.

Notice the use of [anaphora](#) in these lines, with the [repetition](#) of the word "to" at the beginnings of successive clauses ("to take what we love inside, / to carry within us an orchard, to eat"). This repetition adds rhythm and momentum to the poem, and reflects the idea that all of these separate elements are part of one whole: the peach itself.

### LINES 14-16

*to hold ...  
... jubilation of peach.*

The speaker marvels at the ability "to hold / the fruit in our hands." It's something of a miracle that this product of "days" and "shade" has made its way to the speaker. The peach represents things like joy, life, summertime—intangible, wonderful things that the speaker now, miraculously, holds in the palm of their hand.

And the speaker feels grateful not only to "hold" the peach, but also to "adore it"—that is, they feel grateful that they get the *opportunity* to love this peach. Here is a simple distillation of the poem's message: being grateful for the chance to enjoy life's pleasures. "Bit[ing] into / the round jubilation of peach" is more or less like "seizing the day," completely immersing oneself in the present moment. The speaker isn't just biting into a peach here, but into joy itself.

### LINES 17-22

*There are days ...  
... sweet impossible blossom.*

The speaker turns away from the peach in the poem's final stanza. Having taken a bite out of pure joy itself, the speaker reflects on what this moment means in the grand scheme of things.

On "days" like this, the speaker says, "we live / as if death were nowhere / in the background." In other words, there are some days that are so full of joy and wonder that the fact of death seems impossible. Life's pleasures can make death disappear; eating this peach by the side of the road, it's as though the sweetness of summer will never end.

In fact, while one is immersed in a beautiful moment, it's easy to think one could live one's whole life this way—"from joy / to joy to joy." The use of [diacope](#) here adds rhythm to the poem as well as a kind of breathlessness, evoking the wild happiness of someone who is skipping from one pleasure to the next.

The speaker continues by comparing this kind of breathless, deliriously happy movement as living "from wing to wing" and "from blossom to blossom." This description might imply that such "joy[ous]" living would result in one feeling as light and free as a bird (or a buzzing bee) with "wing[s]" outstretched, moving from flower to flower, both drinking nectar and pollinating the "blossoms" that will later produce fruit.

The final line, however, complicates things:

[...] to  
impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.

The addition of the word "impossible" reflects the fact that the speaker's vision of bouncing endlessly between joys isn't real. Blossoms don't last forever; they turn into fruit—fruit like the peaches that spurred this whole reflection in the first place.

The impossibility of endless blossoms is thus a reminder that such "joy" is only ever temporary. Peach blossoms eventually give way to peaches that will either be eaten or rot, summer gives way to winter, and life gives way to death. One might fantasize about endless happiness, the poem implies, but it's best to appreciate the pleasures that exist in the here and now before they're gone.



## SYMBOLS



### BLOSSOMS

In this poem, "blossoms" [symbolize](#) the delicate, fleeting nature of beauty, joy, and new life.

The speaker thinks back to the origins of the "bag of peaches" they just bought at the side of the road, imagining the peach trees flowering before delivering fruit. These lovely blossoms are a sign of spring and new growth, and they promise the sweetness of summer to come.

Before the speaker can partake in this sweetness, however, these blossoms must give way to fruit. Thus even as the act of eating these peaches seems to stop time and banish thoughts of death, the poem's focus on the peaches' origins, on their beginnings as "blossoms," reminds readers that these peaches couldn't exist without time and death. Peaches can't exist while the peach trees are flowering: one season must eventually give way to the other, meaning life and death go hand in hand.

At the end of the poem, the speaker imagines going "from joy / to joy joy [...]" and "from blossom to blossom to / impossible blossom." In other words, the speaker wants to bounce from one pleasure to the next, and the poem again links these pleasures with the peach blossoms mentioned in the poem's first lines. But the interjection of the word "impossible" is a reminder that such "joy" is by nature fleeting—it simply cannot last forever.

#### Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "From blossoms comes / this brown paper bag of peaches"
- **Lines 19-22:** "from joy / to joy to joy, from wing to wing, / from blossom to blossom to / impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom."



### PEACHES

The peaches in this poem [symbolize](#) joy, vitality, and the sweetness of life. When the speaker bites in a peach, they feel like they're taking a bite out of summer itself: a season filled with abundant warmth and growth. During the sunny days of summer, the gloom of winter seems far away. Thus, while biting into a "succulent" peach, the speaker can "live / as if death were nowhere / in the background."

At the same time, the speaker realizes that peaches are just one stage in a plant's life cycle; they arrive only after the "blossoms" of spring have disappeared, and are either consumed or left to rot and return to the earth (from which new life will then grow come the following spring). It seems to be the speaker's knowledge that this moment of joy can't last forever that makes it so precious.

#### Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-5:** "From blossoms comes / this brown paper bag of peaches / we bought from the boy / at the bend in the road where we turned toward / signs painted / Peaches / ."
- **Lines 9-10:** "peaches we devour, dusty skin and all, / comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat."
- **Lines 14-16:** "to hold / the fruit in our hands, adore it, then bite into / the round jubilation of peach."



### DUST

Dust in the poem [symbolizes](#) the cycle of life and death. The peaches are coated in a layer of "dusty skin," which literally refers both to their fuzzy outer layer and the fact that they still have some dirt on them from the orchard. But the mention of "dust" twice in line 10 ("comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat.") also likely [alludes](#) to the familiar phrase "dust to dust" from Christian religious tradition.

This phrase refers to the idea that human beings are made from earth (quite literally in Christianity, in the sense that God created Adam, the first man, from dirt) and that they return to the earth when they die. Human bodies may nourish soil from which new life—perhaps a new peach!—then grows. In consuming the peaches' "dusty skin and all," the speaker is eating the peach itself, the earth it came from, and the earth to which it will one day return (when the speaker dies and is buried in the earth).

#### Where this symbol appears in the poem:

- **Lines 9-10:** "peaches we devour, dusty skin and all, / comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat."



## POETIC DEVICES

## ALLITERATION

"From Blossoms" features lots of [alliteration](#), which adds rhythm and musicality to the poem. The first stanza is particularly jam-packed with the device, and the richness of sound here evokes the richness of the experience being described:

From blossoms comes  
this brown paper bag of peaches  
we bought from the boy  
at the bend in the road where we turned toward  
signs painted *Peaches*.

Notice the abundance of /b/ and /p/ sounds, which add a bold, bouncy rhythm to the opening stanza that's suggestive of the poem's attention to life's little pleasures.

Alliteration is less intense in later stanzas, but still adds moments of interest for the reader. Note, for example, the /d/ sounds in line 9: "peaches we devour, dusty skin and all." Here, the heavy sounds add to the intensity of this image of fruit being devoured.

The third stanza contains some softer alliterative sounds, such as the /sh/ of "shade" and "sugar," and the /h/ sounds in "hold" and "hands." These softer sounds suggest a certain tenderness as the speaker considers what it is about these "succulent" peaches that brings such utter joy. And in the final stanza, the /d/ sounds of "days" and "death" link these two words, perhaps evoking the way that "death" is lurking in the background of all our "days."

## Where Alliteration appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "blossoms"
- **Line 2:** "brown," "paper," "bag," "peaches"
- **Line 3:** "bought," "boy"
- **Line 4:** "bend," "turned," "toward"
- **Line 5:** "painted," "Peaches"
- **Line 9:** "devour," "dusty"
- **Line 13:** "shade"
- **Line 14:** "sugar," "hold"
- **Line 15:** "hands"
- **Line 17:** "days"
- **Line 18:** "death"

## CONSONANCE

Like [alliteration](#), [consonance](#) adds rhythm, musicality, and intensity to the poem. Take a look at the opening line, for instance, with its humming /m/ and buzzing /b/ sounds:

From blossoms comes

The soft, sensual /m/ sounds might evoke the speaker's pleasure (people often say "mmm" when something tastes good!). The whole first stanza is rich with shared sound, and its musicality evokes the beauty and intensity of this moment.

In lines 8-10, note the abundance of crisp /t/ and /k/ sounds and the swishing /s/ sounds:

comes nectar at the roadside, succulent  
peaches we devour, dusty skin and all,  
comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat.

The poem's close attention to sound here suggests the clarity of the moment; eating these peaches, the speaker feels utterly alive and present, attuned to every little detail. The /s/ sound here is almost [onomatopoeic](#); it has a dusty feel to it that evokes what's being described. There's [assonance](#) here too (the short /uh/ of "come," "succulent," "dusty," "dust," and "summer"), making the stanza sound even more musical.

And in the poem's final lines, /b/, /l/, /m/, and /s/ sounds all mix together:

impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.

This swirl of overlapping sound again evokes the beauty and intensity of the moment. Consonance also links these words, reiterating that the ever-lasting "blossoms" the speaker envisions are "impossible"; blossoms are just one stage in a plant's life, and they can't remain blossoms forever.

## Where Consonance appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "From," "blossoms," "comes"
- **Line 2:** "brown," "paper," "bag," "peaches"
- **Line 3:** "bought," "boy"
- **Line 4:** "bend," "road," "turned," "toward"
- **Line 5:** "painted," "Peaches"
- **Line 8:** "comes," "nectar," "roadside," "succulent"
- **Line 9:** "dusty," "skin"
- **Line 10:** "comes," "familiar," "dust," "summer," "dust," "eat"
- **Line 13:** "shade"
- **Line 14:** "sugar," "hold"
- **Line 15:** "hands"
- **Line 17:** "days"
- **Line 18:** "death"
- **Line 22:** "impossible blossom," "sweet impossible blossom"

## ENJAMBMENT

[Enjambment](#) contributes to the poem's loose, free-flowing feel, and it can also create moments of suspense and surprise. For example, take a look at the first five lines of the poem:

From blossoms comes  
 this brown paper bag of peaches  
 we bought from the boy  
 at the bend in the road where we turned toward  
 signs painted *Peaches*.

Enjambment pulls readers swiftly down the page, perhaps evoking the allure of these delicious peaches and the way they pull the speaker to them. The poem's movement might even subtly reflect the fruit's own continuous movement—from blossoms to the roadside stand to the paper bag that the speaker now holds.

Enjambment can also call readers' attention to certain words by placing them at the end of a line. That's the case with "comes" in line 1, which places the peaches' origins front and center. And in the third stanza, notice the overlap of enjambment and [anaphora](#):

to carry within us an orchard, to eat  
 not only the skin, but the shade,  
 not only the sugar, but the days, to hold

Anaphora adds emphasis to the phrases "to eat" and "to hold," both of which connote a stopping of time—of the speaker consuming or possessing the joy and vivacity the peaches represent. But the enjambment of the poem doesn't let these moments last: there's no pause after "eat" or "hold," the poem instead speeding along past the line breaks in a way that might suggest time slipping through the speaker's fingers.

In moving the poem along, enjambment thus evokes the fleeting existence of this pleasure. The speaker might like to "live / as if death were nowhere / in the background," but time, like the poem itself, keeps pressing forward.

#### Where Enjambment appears in the poem:

- **Lines 1-2:** "comes / this"
- **Lines 2-3:** "peaches / we"
- **Lines 3-4:** "boy / at"
- **Lines 4-5:** "toward / signs"
- **Lines 8-9:** "succulent / peaches"
- **Lines 12-13:** "eat / not"
- **Lines 14-15:** "hold / the"
- **Lines 15-16:** "into / the"
- **Lines 17-18:** "live / as"
- **Lines 18-19:** "nowhere / in"
- **Lines 19-20:** "joy / to"
- **Lines 21-22:** "to / impossible"

## IMAGERY

The poem is filled with simple yet evocative [imagery](#). For instance, the "brown paper bag of peaches" that the speaker

purchases and the "bend in the road" with its "signs painted *Peaches*" aren't unusual or particularly striking—and that's the point. Anyone might see a "sign[]" in the road for fruit and pull over. Everyone has also likely held a "brown paper bag" of fruit in their hands at some point, which helps the poem feel more immediate and relatable.

Throughout, the poem also uses imagery to help the reader see and feel and, of course, taste the peaches—to savor this experience right alongside the speaker. Readers can picture tree limbs weighed down with ripe fruit, feel the peaches' fuzzy skin, and maybe even taste the sweet "nectar" dribbling from these "succulent" fruits as the speaker "devour[s]" them.

#### Where Imagery appears in the poem:

- Lines 2-5
- Lines 6-10
- Lines 12-16

## METAPHOR

The third stanza contains a striking [metaphor](#). The speaker says,

O, to take what we love inside,  
 to carry within us an orchard, to eat  
 not only the skin, but the shade,  
 not only the sugar, but the days [...]

In eating these peaches, the speaker and their companions feel like they're consuming the peaches' entire life story—that they're eating the "orchard" the peach came from, the "shade" and "days" in which it ripened.

Of course, the speaker and their companions can't *literally* consume the trees the peaches grew on. The metaphor suggests that the speaker is holding no simple object but rather time itself in their hands—the peach and everywhere the peach has been, everything it has been a part of. It's as if enjoying life can momentarily stop time, or even rewind it.

The metaphor also suggests that by eating these peaches, the speaker is becoming one with the very essence of life. The peach isn't just food; it's part of an ongoing process of seasons changing and things growing and later dying. The sweetness of this whole cycle is present in the taste of a simple peach.

#### Where Metaphor appears in the poem:

- **Lines 12-14:** "to carry within us an orchard, to eat / not only the skin, but the shade, / not only the sugar, but the days"

## ANAPHORA

[Anaphora](#) adds rhythm and structure to the poem and also calls

attention to some important ideas. Take a look at the [repetition](#) of the preposition "From" in lines 1, 6, and 7, for example:

From blossoms comes  
[...]  
From laden boughs, from hands,  
from sweet fellowship at the bins,

This repetition emphasizes the intricate origins of a humble peach, which began as a delicate blossom, ripened on a heavy branch, was picked by human hands, rolled around in a bin with other fruits, and finally made it to the "roadside" where the speaker now stands.

Calling attention to the peaches' origins also emphasizes the transience of this moment. These peaches didn't simply show up one day on the side of the road but had a whole history before reaching the speaker. They blossomed and grew over time before maturing and finally being consumed by the speaker. In eating this peach, the speaker feels like they're taking part in its whole life story—like they're ingesting an entire life cycle.

In the final stanza, the poem again repeats the word "from" as anaphora. Here, however, it's followed by another kind of repetition—[diacope](#):

[...] from joy  
to joy to joy, from wing to wing,  
from blossom to blossom to

There's no movement in these lines, in other words—whereas the peach moved "from laden boughs" to "hands," the speaker wants only to move from one "joy" to the next—to always be living in these beautiful, fleeting moments that exist between the difficulties of ordinary life and the eventuality of death. The speaker realizes this is "impossible," but savors the feeling nevertheless.

Elsewhere, anaphora simply draws out the poem—making this moment last:

O, to take what we love inside,  
to carry within us an orchard, to eat  
not only the skin, but the shade,  
not only the sugar, but the days, to hold

The speaker keeps using [parallelism](#), building on the same grammatical structures as it to savor this moment as long as possible.

#### Where Anaphora appears in the poem:

- **Line 1:** "From"
- **Line 6:** "From," "from"

- **Line 7:** "from"
- **Line 8:** "comes"
- **Line 10:** "comes"
- **Line 11:** "to"
- **Line 12:** "to," "to"
- **Line 13:** "not only the," "but the"
- **Line 14:** "not only the," "but the," "to"
- **Line 19:** "from"
- **Line 20:** "from"
- **Line 21:** "from"

#### DIACOPE

The poem uses quite a bit of [diacope](#). In line 10, for example, the speaker describes "the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat." The [repetition](#) of the word "dust" emphasizes an important idea: the peaches aren't a source of pleasure just because they taste good, but also because their taste reminds the speaker of "summer" itself. The speaker feels as though they're consuming an entire season filled with vibrant life and joy.

The repetition might also subtly [allude](#) to the phrase "dust to dust" from the Book of Common Prayer, which refers to the fact that all living things eventually decompose and become part of the earth. Life and death are intertwined in this poem, two sides of the same coin; while the peach tastes of summer and pleasure and life, the diacope suggests that it also tastes of death—without which, the poem implies, no new life could grow.

Diacope is particularly noticeable in lines 19-22, as the speaker describes living

[...] from joy  
to joy to joy, from wing to wing,  
from blossom to blossom to  
impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.

On one level, all of this repetition (which is also an example of the devices [parallelism](#) and [anaphora](#)) simply elevates the final moment of the poem, making the lines build up to a kind of blissful crescendo. But the repetitiveness of this language also reflects the idea that the speaker, at this moment, is envisioning a kind of joy, pleasure, and beauty that never ends and never *changes*: whereas earlier in the poem the speaker noted how the peaches moved "from laden boughs" to "hands" to "bins," there's no movement following the "from"s in these final lines.

That's why the speaker knows such "blossoms" are "impossible": blossoms are just one stage in a plant's life cycle, and there would be no peaches were time not allowed to move forward. Though the speaker wants this moment to last forever, the speaker also realizes that this pleasurable moment couldn't exist in the first place without the reality of time and death. Despite—or rather *because*—of the "impossib[ility]" of

this joy lasting, the speaker cherishes it.

#### Where Diacope appears in the poem:

- **Line 9:** “dusty”
- **Line 10:** “dust,” “dust”
- **Lines 19-20:** “joy / to joy to joy”
- **Line 20:** “wing to wing”
- **Lines 21-22:** “blossom to blossom to / impossible blossom”
- **Line 22:** “to,” “impossible blossom”

### ASYNDETON

The poem uses quite a bit of [asyndeton](#), which—like [enjambment](#), [anaphora](#), and [parallelism](#)—creates a sense of motion and momentum, pulling the reader swiftly through the poem. Listen to the asyndeton in lines 6-7, for example:

From laden boughs, from hands,  
from sweet fellowship in the bins,

Coordinating conjunctions would slow things down: “From laden boughs, from hands, / **and** from sweet fellowship at the bins.” An “and” might provide some clarity (as all three clauses indicate different scenes and different periods of time), but it would alter the *feeling* of the stanza. As it stands, all these actions swirl together in a way that suggests that the peach consists of all of these moments at *once*. The speaker is connecting all these separate scenes—the trees heavy with fruit, the workers who come and pick the peaches from the trees, and the strangers who gather roadside to purchase them—with the joy the speaker feels in this *one particular* moment. They recognize that in order for this moment of pure pleasure to exist, a lot of other things had to happen first: growth and waiting and work. Asyndeton helps to *collapse* all of this time.

Elsewhere, asyndeton creates a sense of building emotion. Listen to lines 11-12:

O, to take what we love inside,  
to carry within us an orchard, to eat

The lack of conjunctions makes it feel like the speaker could go on and on in this list. The speaker's excitement seems to crescendo, growing ever more intense.

#### Where Asyndeton appears in the poem:

- **Lines 6-7:** “From laden boughs, from hands, / from sweet fellowship in the bins,”
- **Lines 9-10:** “dusty skin and all, / comes the familiar”
- **Line 10:** “dust of summer, dust we eat”
- **Lines 11-12:** “to take what we love inside, / to carry

within us an orchard, to eat”

- **Lines 19-22:** “from joy / to joy to joy, from wing to wing, / from blossom to blossom to / impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.”

### ALLUSION

In line 10, the speaker likens the “dust[]” on the “skin[s]” of the fresh peaches to “the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat.” This may be an [allusion](#) to various phrases that appear in the Bible. For example, Genesis 3:19 (King James Version) reads:

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for **dust** thou art, and unto **dust** shalt thou return.

Ecclesiastes 3:20 echoes this phrase as well:

All go unto one place; all are of the **dust**, and all turn to **dust** again.

The phrase also appears in a funeral service from the Book of Common Prayer (a Christian text that contains a variety of prayers for different services): “We therefore commit this body to the ground, earth to earth, **ashes to ashes, dust to dust**; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life.”

Each of these phrases refers to the idea that human beings are made from the earth and will return to the earth when they die. In the Bible, God creates Adam, the first man, from “dust.” And human beings quite literally return to the earth upon death, burial, and decomposition. But life also *comes* from the earth: the peaches that the speaker eats grew in soil, in *dust*. Life and death are thus intimately connected and cyclical, two parts of the same coin.

The allusion suggests that the peaches remind the speaker of *both* life and death. On the one hand, they come from the earth to which the speaker will one day return. At the same time, they are a testament to life's ability to renew itself—for new life to grow from the soil of death.

#### Where Allusion appears in the poem:

- **Line 10:** “comes the familiar dust of summer,,” “dust we eat”



## VOCABULARY

**Laden boughs** (Line 6) - Tree branches that are heavy with fruit.

**Fellowship** (Line 7) - Amiable companionship; people joined together in a common pursuit.



**Nectar** (Line 8) - Here, "nectar" refers to the peaches' sweet juice.

**Succulent** (Lines 8-9) - Juicy and tender; flavorful.

**Jubilance** (Lines 15-16) - Joyfulness; complete happiness.



## FORM, METER, & RHYME

### FORM

"From Blossoms" doesn't follow a traditional form (such as a [sonnet](#)), but is instead rather free-flowing. Its 22 lines of [free verse](#) are broken up into two [cinquains](#) (or five-line stanzas) followed by two [sestets](#) (or six-line stanzas). This gives the poem a gently structured feel and also might suggest a kind of expansion from the beginning of the poem to the end: the poem's stanzas grow longer much like the "blossoms" of spring expand into the "fruit" of summer. The fact that the poem itself is also relatively short at 22 lines might also evoke the short window of time in which people get to enjoy the pleasures of being alive.

### METER

"From Blossoms" is written in [free verse](#), meaning it doesn't follow any set [meter](#). Free verse is the norm for most contemporary poems, and this lack of meter adds a sense of ease and simplicity that feels particularly appropriate to "From Blossoms." After all, the speaker is describing the joy and beauty of an ordinary moment: eating a delicious peach they bought on a whim. In a way, the poem's free-flowing rhythm—its lack of rigid or perfected meter—helps to emphasize the speaker's point. Life's most beautiful moments can be stumbled on quite accidentally, but that doesn't make them any less powerful.

### RHYME SCHEME

"From Blossoms" is a [free verse](#) poem, so it doesn't use a [rhyme scheme](#). A rhyme scheme would likely have made the poem feel a bit more formal and rigid; the *lack* of rhyme scheme, by contrast, works well with the poem's insistence on the beauty of simple pleasures. There *is* music and beauty in this poem, but it doesn't come from anything so formal as a rhyme scheme. Instead, music arises more subtly from [repetition](#).



## SPEAKER

Readers never learn much about the poem's speaker, apart from the fact that they're reveling in the quiet beauty of one of life's simplest pleasures: eating something delicious. They seem to have arrived at this pleasure by chance: they just happened to notice a "sign[] painted" with the word "Peaches" while driving, and they decided to pull over and buy some.

Readers don't know anything about the speaker's gender, age, or occupation, however. This makes sense given that its message is meant to be universal; any and everyone should stop and appreciate life's joys, the poem implies.

The speaker also isn't alone: they repeatedly say "we" throughout the poem. This implies that the speaker is sharing this delightful moment with other people. Perhaps this moment means even more to the speaker because they're sharing it with someone they care about.

It's also worth noting that the "we" in the first stanza ("we bought," "we turned") is probably different from the "we" in subsequent stanzas ("dust we eat," "to take what we love inside," "There are days we live"). While the plural pronoun in the first stanza feels specific, referring to the speaker and the people with whom they were driving, subsequent uses of the pronoun seem to refer to human beings more *generally*. It isn't just the speaker and the speaker's companions who sometimes "live / as if death were nowhere / in the background"—it is all human being who do that.



## SETTING

The poem takes place on the side of a "bend in the road," presumably in "summer." The "bend in the road" suggests the unforeseen nature of this pleasurable experience, while "summer" implies that there is only a short window of time in which such pleasure can be enjoyed.

The poem also takes place in the speaker's imagination, as the speaker thinks back to the origins of these peaches: the "blossoms" that likewise bloom for only a short period of time. While eating the peaches, the speaker feels like some kind of bird or bee bouncing "from wing to wing," back and forth between one "impossible blossom" and the next. Partaking in such a beautiful yet simple experience seems to connect the speaker to the earth's splendor—something the speaker can almost imagine lasting forever, even though they know it can't.



## CONTEXT

### LITERARY CONTEXT

"From Blossoms" appeared in Li-Young Lee's first poetry collection, *Rose*, which was published in 1986. In the forward to the book, poet Gerald Stern (under whom Lee studied during his time at the University of Pittsburgh) praised the visionary nature of Lee's poems, which he compared to the likes of John Keats, Rainer Maria Rilke, and Theodore Roethke.

Lee's work, which is known for its lyricism, has been influenced by his Chinese heritage, his unique family history (more on that below!), and his love for classical Chinese poets such as Li Bai (also known as Li Bo) and Du Fu (also known as Tu Fu). He has

also [mentioned](#) the importance of socially "withdrawn" poets such as Rilke and Emily Dickinson, whose greatness he sees as being a result of their willingness to "get out the [poem's] way so that something bigger" can communicate through their work.

Common themes in his poetry include family, memory, consciousness, and God. Some of these themes are apparent in "From Blossoms," which celebrates the beauty of life's simple pleasures and hints at the cyclical nature of life and death.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lee was born in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1957. His parents were Chinese political exiles from influential families. Prior to moving to Indonesia, his father worked as a personal physician for Mao Zedong, the founding father of the People's Republic of China. Lee's great-grandfather on his mother's side was Yuan Shikai, the first Republican president of China, who tried (and failed) to reinstate the hereditary monarchy and himself as emperor from 1915-1916. Eventually, the Lees were forced to leave Indonesia due to increasing bias against Chinese people, and after passing through Hong Kong and Japan, they ended up settling in the United States.

Lee's father studied at a seminary and moved the family to Pennsylvania where he took a job as a Presbyterian minister; seeing his father in this role undoubtedly influenced young Lee, who has written extensively about both God and his complicated relationship with his father (such as in the poems "[My Father, In Heaven, Is Reading Out Loud](#)" and "[Little Father](#)").

"From Blossoms" seems to nod to Lee's religious background with its subtle [allusion](#) to the idea that human beings came from and will one day return to "dust." The poem doesn't refer to any specific individuals, however, nor does it gesture to historical or political events. Rather, its focus on life's simple, fleeting pleasures is timeless.



## MORE RESOURCES

### EXTERNAL RESOURCES

- [Lee's Life and Work](#) – An introduction to the poet via the Poetry Foundation. (<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/li-young-lee>)
- [A Reading of the Poem](#) – A video recording of Lee reading his poem aloud. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ApMG6YQb6OI>)
- ["A Conversation of Poetry and Consciousness"](#) – A 1995 interview between Lee and poet Michael Collier for The Writing Life about poetry, prayer, and the mind. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkB0DJ154Nk>)
- [A Conversation With Li-Young Lee](#) – An interview with the Los Angeles Review of Books in which Lee discusses how his first collection came about and the use of silence in his work. (<https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/a-conversation-with-li-young-lee/>)



## HOW TO CITE

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