

Touching Ground: Defining Gravity Through a Poetic Lens

Gravity, an enigmatic force that governs our physical world, has captivated the human imagination for centuries. Its influence extends beyond the realms of science, permeating art, literature, and philosophy. In this article, we delve into the poetic exploration of gravity, examining how words and imagery provide unique insights into its profound nature.

Gravity's Embrace





Touching Ground (Defining Gravity Series Book 5)

by Genevieve McKay

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Poets have long used gravity as a metaphor for connection, intimacy, and the bonds that unite us. Emily Dickinson's poem "Because I could not stop for Death" depicts the speaker's gentle transition from life to death, escorted by a personified Death who "kindly stopped for me." The poem suggests that even in the face of our mortality, we are held by a gentle force that guides our passage.

Similarly, in Elizabeth Bishop's "Sandpiper," the speaker observes a bird's delicate dance on the beach, its feet merely "touching the sand with uncertain contract." This image evokes a sense of vulnerability and dependence, as the bird is both supported and constrained by the pull of the earth beneath it.

Gravity's Weight



Gravity can also be a burden, weighing us down with expectations, responsibilities, and the weight of the world. In Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy," the speaker grapples with the oppressive force of her father's presence, describing him as a "black shoe" in which she is "under arrest." The poem explores the psychological weight that can be exerted by external forces, creating a sense of suffocating oppression.

W.H. Auden's poem "Musee des Beaux Arts" depicts a scene from Pieter Brueghel's painting of Icarus's fall. In Auden's interpretation, the onlookers remain indifferent to the tragedy unfolding above them, continuing their daily tasks unperturbed. This apathy highlights the idea that we often fail to acknowledge the suffering and tragedies that may be weighing down those around us.

Gravity's Release



Despite its oppressive nature, gravity can also be a source of release and liberation. In Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem "The Windhover," the speaker describes a hovering falcon as a "brute beauty" that "rides the air." The poem captures the exhilaration of movement and the sense of freedom that comes from defying the pull of gravity.

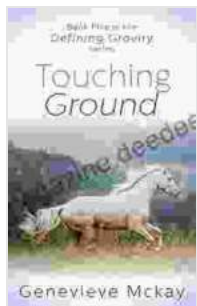
Similarly, in Mary Oliver's poem "When Death Comes," the speaker confronts the inevitability of death with a sense of acceptance and even anticipation. She describes death as a force that will "come with a great wind" and "break the door," but also as something that will "free" her "into the beautiful."

Through the lens of poetry, gravity emerges as a multifaceted force that shapes our lives in profound ways. It is a source of connection and intimacy, a weight that burdens and oppresses, and a catalyst for release and liberation. By exploring gravity's poetic manifestations, we gain a deeper understanding of its complex nature and its impact on the human experience.

As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote in his poem "Gravity":

> "And yet even this, our falling, > this our plummeting through the world, > is necessary for the maturing of spirit."

By embracing gravity in all its forms, we embrace the fullness of our humanity and the transformative power of the world around us.



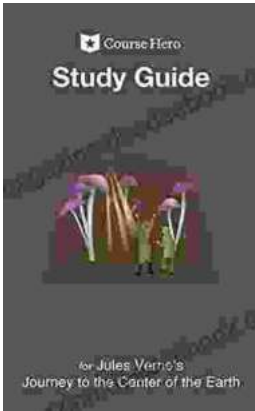
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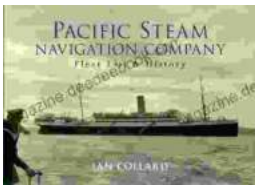
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