“The Names” by Billy Collins This poem is dedicated to the victims of September 11 and to their survivors.

Yesterday, I lay awake in the palm of the night.
A soft rain stole in, unhelped by any breeze,
And when I saw the silver glaze on the windows,
I started with A, with Ackerman, as it happened,
Then Baxter and Calabro, *5*
Davis and Eberling, names falling into place
As droplets fell through the dark.
Names printed on the ceiling of the night.
Names slipping around a watery bend.
Twenty-six willows on the banks of a stream. *10*
In the morning, I walked out barefoot
Among thousands of flowers
Heavy with dew like the eyes of tears,
And each had a name --
Fiori inscribed on a yellow petal *15*
Then Gonzalez and Han, Ishikawa and Jenkins.
Names written in the air
And stitched into the cloth of the day.
A name under a photograph taped to a mailbox.
Monogram on a torn shirt, *20*
I see you spelled out on storefront windows
And on the bright unfurled awnings of this city.
I say the syllables as I turn a corner --
Kelly and Lee,
Medina, Nardella, and O'Connor. *25*
When I peer into the woods,
I see a thick tangle where letters are hidden
As in a puzzle concocted for children.
Parker and Quigley in the twigs of an ash,
Rizzo, Schubert, Torres, and Upton, *30*
Secrets in the boughs of an ancient maple.
Names written in the pale sky.
Names rising in the updraft amid buildings.
Names silent in stone
Or cried out behind a door. *35*
Names blown over the earth and out to sea.
In the evening -- weakening light, the last swallows.
A boy on a lake lifts his oars.
A woman by a window puts a match to a candle,
And the names are outlined on the rose clouds -- *40*
Vanacore and Wallace,
(let X stand, if it can, for the ones unfound)
Then Young and Ziminsky, the final jolt of Z.
Names etched on the head of a pin.
One name spanning a bridge, another undergoing a tunnel. *45*
A blue name needled into the skin.
Names of citizens, workers, mothers and fathers,
The bright-eyed daughter, the quick son.
Alphabet of names in a green field.
Names in the small tracks of birds. *50*
Names lifted from a hat
Or balanced on the tip of the tongue.
Names wheeled into the dim warehouse of memory.
So many names, there is barely room on the walls of the heart.

**Necessary Poetry**

Excerpt of a Blog post BY [RIGOBERTO GONZÁLEZ](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/?author=16) from https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2007/08/necessary-poetry/

There are certain songs I cannot listen to anymore because they remind me of someone associated with the pain of loss. R.E.M.’s “Losing My Religion” reminds me of an old heartbreak in college, Gnarls Barkley’s “Crazy” of a more recent heartbreak, and listening to Luther Vandross’ “Dance with My Father” is my quickest trip to tears because it speaks to the emptiness I feel after the death of my own father. Music, it seems, owes its popularity and success to the way it can be absorbed by the listener and given a personal context. We give intimate meaning to a song, responding to the sentiment of it in the same way we will mouth the lyrics—we make it about us.
I believe that a slightly different dynamic becomes established in poetry. We read certain poems because we wish to experience the emotion. I am not referring to elation or nostalgia, since music can fulfill that need as well. I’m talking about the poetry that gives us permission to be moved, perhaps to help us understand or at least give language (when our own words fail us) to our feelings of grief or confusion or distress. I will go ahead and call it catharsis since this relationship is set by the reader, not the writer. I will go ahead and call it bibliotherapy, which acknowledges the intent of the reader, not the writer. And I believe there is nothing wrong with this. In fact it is necessary. Certainly it gives reading a poem a function aside from reading for pleasure or for artistic appreciation. It gives the poet and the non-poet alike a personal reason to turn to poetry.
I recall that after the tragedy of 911 (the 6th anniversary fast approaching), poetry was suddenly in demand. Billy Collins made an appearance on national television to read a poem. Former poet laureates offered poetry suggestions in newspapers. People began to make sense of the aftermath by writing poems that spoke to the recent events or by reading old poems that offered solace because they were suddenly endowed with new meaning. Poets were sent out to the schools in NYC to use poetry in helping children make sense of the shattered safety of their homes.
I suspect it’s because of all places, even in cold-shouldered New York City, poetry is where emotion is still allowed. Song as well, of course. I remember listening to Bette Midler’s heartfelt rendition of “Wind Beneath My Wings” at the televised Yankee Stadium ceremony for the families and friends of 911 victims. And then the fundraising followed via poetry readings and the sale of poetry anthologies.… I saw the humanity of the poetry world once again. …
Anyway, a poem I keep going back to is an old standby: from Bertolt Brecht’s “Motto,” which he wrote, I believe, while in exile after the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany:
In the dark times,
Will there also be singing?
Yes, there will be singing.
About the dark times

Assignment: