



## MARY OLIVER

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1935-2019

### Invitation



Oh do you have time  
to linger  
for just a little while  
out of your busy

5 and very important day  
for the goldfinches  
that have gathered  
in a field of thistles

for a musical battle,  
10 to see who can sing  
the highest note,  
or the lowest,

or the most expressive of mirth,  
or the most tender?  
15 Their strong, blunt beaks  
drink the air

as they strive  
melodiously  
not for your sake  
20 and not for mine

and not for the sake of winning  
but for sheer delight and gratitude—  
believe us, they say,  
it is a serious thing

25 just to be alive  
on this fresh morning  
in the broken world.

I beg of you,

do not walk by  
30 without pausing  
to attend to this  
rather ridiculous performance.

It could mean something.

It could mean everything.

35 It could be what Rilke meant, when he wrote:  
*You must change your life.*

2008

## Landscape

Isn't it plain the sheets of moss, except that  
they have no tongues, could lecture  
all day if they wanted about

spiritual patience? Isn't it clear  
5 the black oaks along the path are standing  
as though they were the most fragile of flowers?

Every morning I walk like this around  
the pond, thinking: if the doors of my heart  
ever close, I am as good as dead.

10 Every morning, so far, I'm alive. And now  
the crows break off from the rest of the darkness  
and burst up into the sky—as though

all night they had thought of what they would like  
their lives to be, and imagined  
15 their strong, thick wings.

