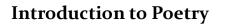


## BILLY COLLINS

b. 1941



I ask them to take a poem and hold it up to the light like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

5 I say drop a mouse into a poem and watch him probe his way out,

> or walk inside the poem's room and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski

across the surface of a poemwaving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do is tie the poem to a chair with rope and torture a confession out of it.

15 They begin beating it with a hose to find out what it really means.



1988

