

## When Death Comes

When death comes  
like the hungry bear in autumn;  
when death comes and takes all the bright coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;  
when death comes  
like the measles-pox

when death comes  
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering:  
what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything  
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,  
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common  
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,  
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something  
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say all my life  
I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
if I have made of my life something particular, and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.

Mary Oliver <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [When Death Comes - Poem by Mary Oliver \(famouspoetsandpoems.com\)](https://www.famouspoetsandpoems.com/poem/mary-oliver/when-death-comes) , (accessed July 23, 2024).

Storytelling in a small group or personal reflection. One by one, each person shares their answer to the first prompt below. Then go to the next question and so forth. A person can pass.

**1. Share how you feel after hearing or reading Mary Oliver's words:**

“when death comes like an iceberg between the shoulder blades, I want to step through the door full of curiosity, wondering: what is it going to be like, that cottage of darkness?” **Are you curious about your own death?**

**2. Share about your beliefs, faith, and understanding of what will happen to you after your death.** How do you deal with the dying process and death of a beloved family member or friend?

**3. Talk about your thoughts and feelings after hearing or reading Mary Oliver's words:** “And therefore I look upon everything as a brotherhood and a sisterhood, and I look upon time as no more than an idea, and I consider eternity as another possibility, and I think of each life as a flower, as common as a field daisy, and as singular, and each name a comfortable music in the mouth, tending, as all music does, toward silence, and each body a lion of courage, and something precious to the earth.” **How do you most often look at “everything” in your life?** (from joy, love, fear, anger, sadness, connection, isolation, mystery, etc.)

**4. Talk about your thoughts and feelings after hearing or reading Mary Oliver's words:** “When it's over, I want to say all my life I was a bride married to amazement. I was the bridegroom, taking the world into my arms. When it's over, I don't want to wonder if I have made of my life something particular, and real. I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened, or full of argument. I don't want to end up simply having visited this world.” **What is your passion that brings you amazement? Are you a visitor to this world or an active participant? What are your wishes, wonders, and worry's these days?**

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