**12th Form National Poetry Recitation Contest**

**Title of Poem**: Forgetfulness

**Poet**: Billy Collins

**Link**: <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/37695/forgetfulness>



**About Poet**: Billy Collins is famous for his humorous, conversational poems that include interesting observations on everyday life. He is one of the most famous contemporary poets in America. One *New York Times* reviewer said that “one appeal of the typical Collins poem” is that it “helps you to remember, for a little while anyway, your own life.”

**Forgetfulness**

**By Billy Collins**

The name of the author is the first to go

followed obediently by the title, the plot,

the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel

which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never

even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor

decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,

to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine muses goodbye

and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,

and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,

the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember,

it is not poised on the tip of your tongue

or even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river

whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall

well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those

who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a

Bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night

to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.

No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted

out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

**About Poem**: This poem is about a speaker who is losing his memory. He is getting older and he is forgetting both useful and useless things.

**Discussion Guide:**

Do your grandparents often forget things?

Are you afraid to grow old and forget things?

What would you do if you forgot the name of your best friend?

Have you forgotten a lot of your childhood memories?

What are the most important things to remember?

Is the speaker of the poem sad? Resigned? What is his tone?