Poetry Response #1—October 30—Denotations and connotations are ways for words to convey meaning. Denotations are the literal, dictionary meanings of a word; for example, bird denotes a feathered animal with wings. But bird also carries connotations, associations and implications that go beyond a word’s literal meanings. Connotations derive from how the word has been used and the associations people make with it. The connotations of bird might include fragility, altitude, the sky, or freedom, depending on the context in which the word is used.

For Poetry Response #1 discuss the connotations and the denotations of naked and nude.

The Naked and The Nude

Robert Graves
(1895-1985)

For me, the naked and the nude
(By lexicographers construed
As synonyms that should express
The same deficiency of dress
Or shelter) stand as wide apart
As love from lies, or truth from art.

Lovers without reproach will gaze
On bodies naked and ablaze;
The Hippocratic eye will see
In nakedness, anatomy;
And naked shines the Goddess when
She mounts her lion among men.

The nude are bold, the nude are sly
To hold each treasonable eye.
While draping by a showman’s trick
Their dishabille in rhetoric,
They grin a mock-religious grin
Of scorn at those of naked skin.

The naked, therefore, who compete
Against the nude may know defeat;
Yet when they both together tread
The briary pastures of the dead,
By Gorgons with long whips pursued,
How naked go the sometimes nude!
Poetry Response #2—November 13—Poets give us impressions of what they experience through images. An image is language that addresses the senses. Images give us the physical world to experience in our imaginations. In your response for this week, discuss how both Adrienne Rich and Wilfred Owen use imagery to highlight how an experience might be different from how it is perceived or experienced from how it was imagined or portrayed.

**Living in Sin**
Adrienne Rich
(b. 1929)

She had thought the studio would keep itself; no dust upon the furniture of love.
Half heresy, to wish the taps less vocal, the panes relieved of grime. A plate of pears, a piano with a Persian shawl, a cat stalking the picturesque amusing mouse had risen at his urging.
Not that at five each separate stair would writhe under the milkman’s tramp; that morning light so coldly would delineate the scraps of last night’s cheese and three sepulchral bottles; that on the kitchen shelf among the saucers A pair of beetle-eyes would fix her own—envoy from some village in the moldings . . .
Meanwhile, he, with a yawn, sounded a dozen notes upon the keyboard, declared it out of tune, shrugged at the mirror, rubbed at his beard, went out for cigarettes; while she, jeered by the minor demons, pulled back the sheets and made the bed and found a towel to dust the table-top, and let the coffee-pot boil over on the stove.
By evening she was in love again, though not so wholly but throughout the night she woke sometimes to feel the daylight coming like a relentless milkman up the stairs.

**Dulce et Decorum Est**
Wilfred Owen
(1893-1918)

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks, Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge, Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs, And towards our distant rest began to trudge.

Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame, all blind; Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling, Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime.—
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light, As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil’s sick of sin,
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood Come gurgling from the froth-corrupted lungs Bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.*

* from the Roman poet Horace—“It is sweet and becoming to die for one’s country.”
(Wilfred Owen died fighting for England in World War I, a week before the armistice.)
Poetry Response 2nd Nine Weeks

Poetry Response #3—December 4—Tone is the speaker’s attitude toward the subject. Read both “Church Going” and “Dover Beach” and discuss in your response the speaker’s tone.

Church Going

Philip Larkin
(1922-1985)

Once I am sure there’s nothing going on
I step inside, letting the door thud shut.
Another church: matting, seats, and stone,
And little books; sprawlings of flowers, cut
For Sunday, brownish now; some brass and stuff
Up at the holy end; the small neat organ;
And a tense, musty, unignorable silence,
Brewed God knows how long. Hatless, I take off
My cycle-clips in awkward reverence,

Move forward, run my hand around the font.
From where I stand, the roof looks almost new—
Cleaned, or restored? Someone would know: I don’t.
Mounting the lectern, I peruse a few
Hectoring large-scale verses, and pronounce
“Here endeth” much more loudly than I’d meant.

The echoes snigger briefly. Back at the door
I sign the book, donate an Irish sixpence,
Reflect the place was not worth stopping for.

Yet stop I did: in fact I often do,
And always end much at a loss like this,
Wondering what to look for, wondering, too,
When churches fall completely out of use
What we shall turn them into, if we shall keep
A few cathedrals chronically on show,
Their parchment, plate and pyx in locked cases,
And let the rest rent-free to rain and sheep.
Shall we avoid them as unlucky places?

Or, after dark, will dubious women come
To make their children touch a particular stone;
Pick simples for a cancer; or on some
Advised night see walking a dead one?
Power of some sort or other will go on
In games, in riddles, seemingly at random;
But superstition, like belief, must die,
And what remains when disbelief has gone?
Grass, weedy pavement, brambles, buttress, sky,

A shape less recognizable each week,
A purpose more obscure. I wonder who
Will be the last, the very last, to seek
This place for what it was; one of the crew
That tap and jot and know what rood-lofts were?
Some ruin-bibber, randy for antique,
Or Christmas-addict, counting on a whiff
Of gown-and-bands and organ-pipes and myrrh?
Or will he be my representative,

Bored, uninformed, knowing the ghostly silt
Dispersed, yet tending to this cross of ground
Through suburb scrub because it held unspilt
So long and equable what since is found
Only in separation—marriage, and birth,
And death, and thoughts of these—for whom was built
This special shell? For though I’ve no idea
What this accoutered frowsty barn is worth,
It pleases me to stand in silence here;

A serious house on serious earth it is,
In whose blent air all our compulsions meet,
Are recognized, and robed as destinies.
And that much never can be obsolete,
Since someone will forever be surprising
A hunger in himself to be more serious,
And gravitating with it to this ground,
Which, he once heard, was proper to grow wise in,
If only that so many dead lie round.

"Church Going" by Philip Larkin (1922-1985)
**Dover Beach**

Matthew Arnold  
(1822-1888)

The sea is calm tonight,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits;--on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanced land,  
Listen! You hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high stand,  
Being, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.  

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles

Ah love, let us be true  
To one another! For the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

1 pebbled beaches