

**LYING IN A HAMMOCK AT WILLIAM DUFFY'S FARM IN PINE ISLAND, MINNESOTA**

*by James Wright (1927-80)*

Over my head, I see the bronze butterfly,  
Asleep on the black trunk,  
Blowing like a leaf in green shadow.  
Down the ravine behind the empty house,  
The cowbells follow one another  
Into the distances of the afternoon.  
To my right,  
In a field of sunlight between two pines,  
The droppings of last year's horses  
Blaze up into golden stones.  
I lean back, as the evening darkens and comes on.  
A chicken hawk floats over, looking for home.  
I have wasted my life.

[1961]

**THE RURAL CARRIER STOPS TO KILL A NINE-FOOT COTTONMOUTH**

*by T. R. Hummer (b. 1950)*

Lord God, I saw the son-of-a-bitch uncoil  
In the road ahead of me, uncoil and squirm  
For the ditch, squirm a hell of a long time.  
Missed him with the car. When I got back to him, he was all  
But gone, nothing left on the road but the tip-end  
Of his tail, and that disappearing into Johnson grass.  
I leaned over the ditch and saw him, balled up now, hiss.  
I aimed for the mouth and shot him. And shot him again.

Then I got a good strong stick and dragged him out.  
He was long and evil, thick as the top of my arm.  
There are things in this world a man can't look at without  
Wanting to kill. Don't ask me why. I was calm  
Enough, I thought. But I felt my spine  
Squirm, suddenly. I admit it. It was mine.

[1982]

**WE REAL COOL**

THE POOL PLAYERS.

SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

*by Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)*

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.

[1960]