POETRY

Tread Softly

Written by Dina Anastasio

www.readinga-z.com

Tread Softly

A Reading A–Z Poetry Book • Word Count: 1,583

Visit www.readinga-z.com for thousands of books and materials.
Tread Softly

Written by Dina Anastasio

www.readinga-z.com
Some things, such as flying south, weaving a spider’s web, and building a nest, are done by instinct. It’s just built in, like blinking and suckling are for humans.

Silken Scaffold

I wish I were a spider,
For I would know, just know,
Without being told,
How to spin a silken ladder,
And a spiral scaffold.
Without being told,
How to spin a silken ladder,
If my woven scaffold snapped,
Would you be my silken net?
Or must I spin a parachute
To carry me to the cold, hard ground below?

Tread Softly • Poetry
Many animals and insects escape danger by hiding in places that are the same colors as they are. This is called camouflage.

I Thought It Was a Twig

I almost snapped a walking stick. It wasn’t very big. I was strolling through the woods, and thought it was a twig. The walking stick lay taut and still. It almost fooled me, until I saw it shudder as my fingers touched the tree. I almost snapped a walking stick. It wasn’t very big. Until its body trembled, I thought it was a twig.

Morning Twilight

Sometimes, in the soft morning twilight, When the world is silent and the shadows still, I tiptoe out to the little roofless house And lie in the dawn dew, weaving daffodils through my fingertips. Above my head, a corner nest slips a twig or two. Spiders spin and weave, Twisting silken webs. A monarch butterfly waits to go Thousands of miles to escape the snow. How do they know? How do they know? I close my eyes, and wonder why.
Some animals, such as dolphins and bats, send out sounds to find their way or to catch prey. The sounds bounce off objects and echo back to the animals. This is called echolocation.

If I Could Ride a Dolphin

Oh, to ride a dolphin,
To leap and dive and play.
If I could ride a dolphin,
We’d click to find our way.

We’d skim around a submarine,
And slide around a whale,
Our clicks would echo off of them
And guide us as we sailed.

We’d click our way through sunken ships
Hidden in the sea.
Oh, to ride a dolphin.
What magic that would be!

Frog on a Log

This is called metamorphosis.
Some animals completely change their body shape as they grow older.

Tread Softly • Poetry
Sometimes one creature, such as a caterpillar, completely changes shape and becomes something else, such as a pupa and then a butterfly. This is called complete metamorphosis.

**How Odd to Be a Butterfly**

How odd to be a butterfly,  
For butterflies don’t know  
That once they all were caterpillars  
Not too long ago.

How odd to be a butterfly,  
For butterflies don’t know  
That once they all were pupas  
Not too long ago.

How odd to be a butterfly,  
For butterflies don’t know  
A peaceful hush will follow them  
No matter where they go.
Many creatures have developed ways to protect themselves and their young from predators. These are called defense mechanisms.

Barefoot

As I was strolling barefoot
Through a late October day,
I came upon a porcupine,
Going on his way.

His quills rose up to greet me,
I shrugged and stepped away.

He padded on. I heard him grunt,
On that late October day.

Tread Softly

I do not need the wings of a bird
to soar beyond a mountain’s canvas.
I go on foot, treading higher, uphill,
Giant strides fading to labored baby steps,
Past quaking aspen.

I do not need flippers,
Because I live on the land,
Or a parrot’s beak,
Or claws like a falcon.
But I need lips so that I can kiss you,
And fingers so that I can hold your hand.

On that late October day,
He padded on. I heard him grunt,
I shrugged and stepped away.
His quills rose up to greet me,

Come on this way,
I came upon a porcupine,
Through a late October day,
As I was strolling barefoot.
I Swam Beside a Seahorse

I swam beside a seahorse,
Deep inside the sea.
His pouch was full of tiny eggs.
He did not look at me.

I swam beside a seahorse.
He did not seem to care.
Perhaps his mind was on the eggs
Their mother had left there.
Many animals live in groups, but almost always of their own kind.  
There is safety in numbers, and the members of the group help to protect each other.

**Together**

I wonder if a pride of lions high-steps proudly through the jungle,  
And do gaggles of geese squawk and cry and howl and yowl?  
Do armies of ants stomp and clomp and stamp and tramp?  
Do broods of pheasants ponder and muse?  
And do kindles of kittens poke and stir and fan the fire?  
Isn’t it odd that a multitude of huge whales is called a pod,  
And a bunch of fish is called a school?  
Tell me why  
You and you and you and I,  
Are called a group  
Instead of a sounder or a flock.

When a newborn animal learns to follow and behave like his mother, it is called imprinting.
I Wonder Why

I guess that I will never see
A swallow in a perfect V
Of snow geese far up in the sky.
I wonder why.
I’ll never see a jay take wing
Because he hears a robin sing,
Or watch an eagle in the sky
Teach a blackbird how to fly.
I wonder why.

Animal Homes

Creatures must find food, care for their young, and protect themselves from predators.
Animal homes differ because the needs of creatures are not the same. But all...
Many creatures imitate others so that they can escape from their enemies. This is called mimicry.

Spots

I have seen a falcon flee From the spots on a clearwing butterfly’s wings, Thinking they were the eyes of a hungry cat. I have seen a falcon flee Unblinking cat eyes. 

I cannot see him come and go. No ripples shift the quiet.

But somewhere just beneath the ice, The beaver slips away To search for food, Then he returns And sleeps another day.

The beaver pond is frozen now. The beaver’s lodge is silent. I’ve seen him carry twigs and clay. I’ve seen him build his dome. I hope he thought to weave a door, To close when he comes home.

The Beaver

Fly away, falcon, Confused falcon trembling. Unblinking cat eyes. You have been fooled.

Butterfly wings shuddering, From the spots on a clearwing butterfly’s wings, Spots

This is called mimicry.
Many creatures travel thousands of miles to return to the place where they were born to lay eggs, or spawn.

When I Am Old

When I am old,
I will follow the eels through the waves’ ridges and hollows,
To the far away Sargasso Sea.

I will pin my gray hair up,
And wait there, above the deep tangled grasping seaweed.
Drifting beneath the star-sprinkles,
I will whisper hello—hello,
To the eels that have come the other way.
I will stay, as they lay their eggs,
And if I cannot find my way,
And say goodbye, as they drift and die,
I will stay, as they lay their eggs,
To the eels that have come the other way.

We will watch the sky,
I will follow the spawn.
And if I cannot find my way,
And say goodbye, as they drift and die,
I will lay their eggs,
To the eels that have come the other way.

I will whisper hello—hello,
Drifting beneath the star-sprinkles,
I will follow the eels through the waves’ ridges and hollows.
When I am old,

Many snakes, lizards, and insects shed their skins, or molt, when they outgrow them.

Silent Snake

Silent snake, slipping through my dawdlying shadow,
Where have you disappeared to?
Are you there, in that dome of bronze and amber leaves?
Have you left your too-tight, dog-eared skin behind for me to find?

When I am old,

Many creatures travel thousands of miles to return to the place where they were born to...
Many creatures travel a very long way to escape the cold. This is called migration.

Outside My Window

Outside my open window,
Something moves through the charcoal night,
No stars dust the shadows with sprinkles of light.
Something moves there, then moves again,
Rustling the foxgloves and ivy.
There is no moon tonight.
I tiptoe across the room
To close the window tight,
Then hesitate, and wait—listening.
Rolled-up hedgehog, pulsing owl,
Gasping raccoon, growling badger.
Who is there?
I turn to find my bed in the darkness,
And leave the window open.

Nocturnal animals sleep during the day and come out at night.

Flying South

Black-framed orange ladybug,
Tiptoe from the white, white snow,
Hitch a ride on the wing of the reigning monarch butterfly.
Go now, and glide through the gray threatening sky,
Below the stormy moon.
Tip toe from the white, white snow,
Black-framed orange ladybug.
Tip toe from the white, white snow,
Hitch a ride on the wing of the reigning monarch butterfly.
Go now, and glide through the gray threatening sky,
Below the stormy moon.
Tip toe from the white, white snow,
Black-framed orange ladybug.
Tip toe from the white, white snow,