

Selections for January 22, 2026

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886)
“Tell all the truth but tell it slant”

5 Tell all the truth but tell it slant -
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind -

The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition, ed. R. W. Franklin (Cambridge: Belknap, 1998), text from Emily Dickinson Archive. Franklin dates the poem to 1872.

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Anne Bradstreet (ca. 1612–1672)
 “The Author to Her Book”

Thou ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain,
 Who after birth didst by my side remain,
 Till snatched from thence by friends, less wise than true,
 Who thee abroad, exposed to public view,
 5 Made thee in rags, halting to th’ press to trudge,
 Where errors were not lessened (all may judge).
 At thy return my blushing was not small,
 My rambling brat (in print) should mother call,
 I cast thee by as one unfit for light,
 10 Thy visage was so irksome in my sight;
 Yet being mine own, at length affection would
 Thy blemishes amend, if so I could:
 I washed thy face, but more defects I saw,
 And rubbing off a spot still made a flaw.
 15 I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet,
 Yet still thou run’st more hobbling than is meet;
 In better dress to trim thee was my mind,
 But nought save homespun cloth i’ th’ house I find.
 In this array ’mongst vulgars may’st thou roam.
 20 In critic’s hands beware thou dost not come,
 And take thy way where yet thou art not known;
 If for thy father asked, say thou hadst none;
 And for thy mother, she alas is poor,
 Which caused her thus to send thee out of door.

The Works of Anne Bradstreet, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 221, ACLS Humanities E-Book. The poem was first published anonymously, six years after Bradstreet’s death, in *Several Poems: Compiled with great variety of Wit and Learning, full of Delight...By a Gentlewoman in New-England* (Boston: John Foster, 1678), a scan of which is available on Early English Books Online.

Lorine Niedecker (1903–1970)
Poet's Work

Grandfather
advised me:
Learn a trade

I learned
to sit at desk
and condense

No layoff
from this
condensery

Collected Works, ed. Jenny Penberthy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 194, [jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnvf6](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnvf6).
According to Penberthy, this poem's manuscript is dated June 8, 1962.