

**Option 7 Examples** – Write a free-verse poem about any subject important to you, and powerfully capture your chosen experience, subject, or point of view without relying on regular rhythm and rhyme.

**Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)**

**Filling Station**

Oh, but it is dirty!  
—this little filling station,  
oil-soaked, oil-permeated  
to a disturbing, over-all  
black translucency.  
Be careful with that match!

Father wears a dirty,  
oil-soaked monkey suit  
that cuts him under the arms,  
and several quick and saucy  
and greasy sons assist him  
(it's a family filling station),  
all quite thoroughly dirty.

Do they live in the station?  
It has a cement porch  
behind the pumps, and on it  
a set of crushed and grease-  
impregnated wickerwork;  
on the wicker sofa  
a dirty dog, quite comfy.

Some comic books provide  
the only note of color—  
of certain color. They lie  
upon a big dim doily  
draping a taboret  
(part of the set), beside  
a big hirsute begonia.

Why the extraneous plant?  
Why the taboret?  
Why, oh why, the doily?  
(Embroidered in daisy stitch  
with marguerites, I think,  
and heavy with gray crochet.)

Somebody embroidered the doily.  
Somebody waters the plant,  
or oils it, maybe. Somebody  
arranges the rows of cans  
so that they softly say:  
ESSO—SO—SO—SO  
to high-strung automobiles.  
Somebody loves us all.

**Nate Marshall (b.1989)**

**on caskets**

*After Suji Knock Kim*

1

decorating the dead is among the most basic human instincts, to return the borrowed body & acknowledge Earth as maker & home.

Neanderthals used antlers & flowers. Egyptians had pyramids with peasants buried in the walls they built. some niggas just get a pine box. hopefully you get a hole or a flame. some only get a cold cabinet in the morgue until somebody or nobody claims them as a loss.

2

a permanent fixture on my to-do list is research life insurance plans. pick a good one with a fair rate & enough money to buy a nice box.

3

*everything gonna be all right this morning* & i contemplate the implications of the statement for the night. everything in Mississippi is too cruel to bury.

i wonder what that means if every body in Chicago has red clay in its lineage. Chief Keef must know in his bones *ball like it's no tomorrow* from what Muddy time-capsuled into the South Side ground.

4

when grandma died she left mama a notepad with instructions. the one i remember was *get the casket you want. what you like. don't be pressured.*

we wore blue at the service. we matched the box & its glossy painted ribbons, gold-flecked & light.

5

house slaves are responsible for preparing the dead of the master's house. they clean & clothe. they dig the hole. they don't bury any black body really, only dispose. one of the concessions won by slave riots was the right to a funeral. whitefolk were

confused at how the Africans sometimes

wore white, smiled, shouted like joy.  
they seen funerals. not homegoings.

6

my mother used to say my father loved  
funerals. he worked graveyard shift & spent  
the days & weekends visiting bodies.  
running his finger alongside the box  
& signing the greeting book.

the most decent thing you  
can do is visit the funeral of  
someone you didn't know  
for someone you do: sister's coworker, lover's friend  
accountant's mother, your aunt's  
high school rival.

7

black churches formed burial societies  
after slavery. every week you chipped  
off a piece of your pay to save for the shovel  
& the rough hands that would lower you.

i know some black folks now buying  
their plot foot-by-foot. saving for a  
final mortgage.

8

it is día de los muertos & i have a check  
folded in between the pages of a book about  
genocide. i will send the money next week  
to the other side of my family  
& help bury grandma's sister.

9

i can't think of a black rapper who hasn't  
contemplated their own death on record.  
*ready to die, life after death, death is certain,*  
*do or die, get rich or die tryin', death certificate.*

this is natural.  
all my verses mention  
boxes or holes.

10

*once we lay this brother  
down in the ground  
we got work to do.*

*when i was a young boy  
at the age of five  
my mama said i gon' be  
the greatest man alive.*

*these children don't  
expect to live past 30.  
they come to these funerals  
& they represent.  
they put themselves in  
the place of the person  
in the casket.*