

Below are the two (2) poems you need to read for the American Literature Summer Reading.

Taken From:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/92063/an-american-sunrise>

An American Sunrise

By [Joy Harjo](#)

We were running out of breath, as we ran out to meet ourselves. We were surfacing the edge of our ancestors' fights, and ready to strike. It was difficult to lose days in the Indian bar if you were straight. Easy if you played pool and drank to remember to forget. We made plans to be professional — and did. And some of us could sing so we drummed a fire-lit pathway up to those starry stars. Sin was invented by the Christians, as was the Devil, we sang. We were the heathens, but needed to be saved from them — thin chance. We knew we were all related in this story, a little gin will clarify the dark and make us all feel like dancing. We had something to do with the origins of blues and jazz I argued with a Pueblo as I filled the jukebox with dimes in June, forty years later and we still want justice. We are still America. We know the rumors of our demise. We spit them out. They die soon.

Taken From:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/143934/how-to-write-a-poem-in-a-time-of-war>

How to Write a Poem in a Time of War

By [Joy Harjo](#)

You can't begin just anywhere. It's a wreck.

Shrapnel and the eye

Of a house, a row of houses. There's a rat scrambling

From light with fleshy trash in its mouth. A baby strapped to its mother's back

Cut loose.

Soldiers crawl the city,

The river, the town, the village,

The bedroom, our kitchen. They eat everything.

Or burn it.

They kill what they cannot take. They rape. What they cannot kill they take.

Rumors fall like rain.

Like bombs.

Like mother and father tears swallowed for restless peace.

Like sunset slanting toward a moonless midnight.

Like a train blown free of its destination. Like a seed fallen where

There is no chance of trees or anyplace for birds to live.

No, start here.

Deer peer from the edge of the woods.

We used to see woodpeckers

The size of the sun, redbirds, and were greeted

By chickadees with their good morning songs.

We'd started to cook outside slippery with dew and laughter, ah those smoky sweet sunrises.

We tried to pretend war wasn't going to happen.

Though they began building their houses all around us and demanding more.

They started teaching our children their god's story,

A story in which we'd always be slaves.

No. Not here.

You can't begin here.

This is memory shredded because it is impossible to hold by words, even poetry.

These memories were left here with the trees:

The torn pocket of your daughter's hand-sewn dress,

The sash, the lace.

The baby's delicately beaded moccasin still connected to the foot,

A young man's note of promise to his beloved —

No! This is not the best place to begin.

Everyone was asleep, despite the distant bombs. Terror had become the familiar stranger.

Our beloved twin girls curled up in their nightgowns, next to their father and me.

If we begin here, none of us will make it to the end

Of the poem.

Someone has to make it out alive, sang a grandfather to his grandson,
His granddaughter, as he blew his most powerful song into the hearts of the children.
There it would be hidden from the soldiers,
Who would take them miles, rivers, mountains from the navel cord place
Of the origin story.
He knew one day, far day, the grandchildren would return, generations later
Over slick highways constructed over old trails
Through walls of laws meant to hamper or destroy, over the libraries of
The ancestors in the winds, born in stones.
His song brings us to his home place in these smoky hills.