



Andrew Wyeth
*First Snow, Study for
 Groundhog Day*
 (1959)

***The Open Door:
 A Biweekly Tidbit on the
 Monthly Theme***

January: Curiosity

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Essential Questions:

How is curiosity a dance of the
 mind that provides an
 accompaniment to our
 ordered living?

Why does curiosity provide
 what education or
 explanation cannot?

Does curiosity dance us to the
 ending or to the beginning?

Mary Oliver

Where Does the Dance Begin, Where Does It End?

Don't call this world adorable, or useful, that's not it.
 It's frisky, and a theater for more than fair winds.
 The eyelash of lightning is neither good nor evil.
 The struck tree burns like a pillar of gold.

But the blue rain sinks, straight to the white
 feet of the trees
 whose mouths open.

Doesn't the wind, turning in circles, invent the dance?
 Haven't the flowers moved, slowly, across Asia, then Europe,
 until at last, now, they shine
 in your own yard?

Don't call this world an explanation, or even an education.

When the Sufi poet whirled, was he looking
 outward, to the mountains so solidly there
 in a white-capped ring, or was he looking

to the center of everything: the seed, the egg, the idea
 that was also there,
 beautiful as a thumb
 curved and touching the finger, tenderly,
 little love-ring,

as he whirled,
 oh jug of breath,
 in the garden of dust?

Mary Oliver (1935 - 2019) was an American poet who won a Pulitzer and a National Book Award and sold more poetry than most of her living contemporaries. Her work sounds very UU to us and, indeed, it is grounded in Emerson and Thoreau. She walked every day and took her inspiration from nature. Because she valued solitude, people compare her to Emily Dickinson, but her kind of withdrawal has a happy release as she connects with the rhythm of natural life. She says, "[I] go off to my woods, my ponds, my sun-filled harbor, no more than a blue comma on the map of the world but, to me, the emblem of everything." She was curious and thoughtful about everything and each thing. She nearly always found a link between the natural and the spiritual, and in this poem she certainly connects the ebbing and flowing of that cycle clearly. Few poets paid more attention to the simple power of what makes a whole experience. We lost one of our great American poets this week, and what she did with her wild, precious life will touch us for generations to come.

Andrew Wyeth (1917 – 2009) was an American realist painter whose life was his most intense visual subject. Like Mary Oliver he saw more than was on the surface of things. He said in a 1965 interview for Life Magazine, "My people, my objects breathe in a different way: there's another core—an excitement that's definitely abstract. My God, when you really begin to peer into something, a simple object, and realize the profound meaning of that thing—if you have an emotion about it, there's no end." Curiosity makes you peer into things more deeply, opening up possibility.