

The lesson of the moth

i was talking to a moth
the other evening
he was trying to break into
an electric light bulb
and fry himself on the wires

why do you fellows
pull this stunt i asked him
because it is the conventional
thing for moths or why
if that had been an uncovered
candle instead of an electric
light bulb you would
now be a small unsightly cinder
have you no sense

plenty of it he answered
but at times we get tired
of using it

we get bored with the routine
and crave beauty
and excitement
fire is beautiful

and we know that if we get
too close it will kill us
but what does that matter
it is better to be happy
for a moment
and be burned up with beauty
than to live a long time
and be bored all the while

so we wad all our life up
into one little roll
and then we shoot the roll
that is what life is for
it is better to be a part of beauty
for one instant and then cease to
exist than to exist forever

and never be a part of beauty
our attitude toward life
is come easy go easy
we are like human beings
used to be before they became
too civilized to enjoy themselves

and before i could argue him
out of his philosophy
he went and immolated himself
on a patent cigar lighter
i do not agree with him
myself i would rather have
half the happiness and twice
the longevity

but at the same time i wish
there was something i wanted
as badly as he wanted to fry himself
archy

Don Marquis

The Bat

By day the bat is cousin to the mouse.
He likes the attic of an aging house.

His fingers make a hat about his head.
His pulse beat is so slow we think him dead.

He loops in crazy figures half the night
Among the trees that face the corner light.

But when he brushes up against a screen,
We are afraid of what our eyes have seen:

For something is amiss or out of place
When mice with wings can wear a human face.

“the lesson of the moth” by Don Marquis

Name:

1. a) What is unique about the speaker in this poem?

b) How does this relate to the lack of punctuation?

2. a) What is the moth's lesson about living life?

b) How do Archy's views differ from the moth's?

3. Find examples of the following poetic devices:

a) alliteration:

b) metaphor:

4. According to Archy, how are moths similar to human beings in the past?

5. Describe the changing tone in this poem.

6. Write a theme statement for this poem.

(Think: what is the underlying message about how people should live their lives?)