

May 12, 2007

Billy Collins's "The Death of the Hat"

Posted by Poet in Prose category, May 12, 2007 @ 11:08 am

The images in this wonderful poem are so strong, you may never be able to look at a man in a hat, especially a man in a hat in a grainy old black-and-white photo or movie – without thinking of Billy Collins's words. Without eulogizing the hat, Collins makes it represent a whole world of loss – lost values, lost innocence, not to mention lost style. Which came first – the "greatest generation" or the hat? And when JFK killed off the hat by going bareheaded to his 1961 inauguration, did something else die as well?

The Death of the Hat

Once every man wore a hat.

In the ashen newsreels,
the avenues of cities
are broad rivers flowing with hats.

The ballparks swelled
with thousands of strawhats.
Brim and bands,
rows of men smoking
and cheering in shirtsleeves.

Hats were the law.
They went without saying.
You noticed a man without a hat in a crowd.

You bought them from Adams or Dobbs
who branded your initials in gold
on the inside band.

Trolleys crisscrossed the city.
Steamships sailed in and out of the harbor.
Men with hats gathered on the docks.

There was a person to block your hat
and a hatcheck girl to mind it
while you had a drink
or ate a steak with peas and a baked potato.
In your office stood a hat rack.

The day war was declared
everyone in the street was wearing a hat.
And they were wearing hats
when a ship loaded with men sank in the icy sea.

My father wore one to work every day
and returned home
carrying the evening paper,
the winter chill radiating from his overcoat.

But today we go bareheaded
into the winter streets,
stand hatless on frozen platforms.

Today the mailboxes on the roadside

and the spruce trees behind the house
wear cold white hats of snow.

Mice scurry from the stone walls at night
In their thin fur hats
to eat the birdseed that has spilled.

And now my father, after a life of work,
wears a hat of earth,
and on top of that,
a lighter one of cloud and sky – a hat of wind.

Comments:

;) And, if you were bald, as my father, you surely wore a hat. And he was quite pleased when golf hats became fashion as he could wear these on the weekend.

Comment by Peter Whelan, May 13, 2007 @ 7:15 am

A terrific poem. Thanks, John.

Does anyone (besides me) remember a phenomena known as

Comment by Jamie Sykes, May 16, 2007 @ 10:42 am

:?: :!: :(:x :lol: :o :cry: ;) :roll: :P :oops: :idea: :D :evil: 8) :? :) 8O :arrow: :twisted: :| :mrgreen:

Comment by john, May 29, 2008 @ 5:10 pm

Hello! gkddfdd interesting gkddfdd site!

Comment by Anonymus, July 22, 2011 @ 1:31 am

Umm, are you really just giving this info out for nthoing?

Comment by Anonymus, August 13, 2011 @ 5:48 am

8KdLoi xhhdlrwostxw

Comment by Anonymus, August 15, 2011 @ 10:43 am

I just read through the entire comment of yours and it was quite good. Peña de Apuestas de Quiniela. This is a great article thanks for sharing this useful information.

Comment by Anonymus, August 22, 2011 @ 2:24 pm

Useful job about this post. Literally looks better in comparison with the last handful. Hold it high.

<http://www.yvonnemusic.com/if-you-need-to-get-fast-cash-98112.html>

Comment by Anonymus, September 2, 2011 @ 1:10 am

Hello my name is nhl jerseys and I really liked your page, it's kind of link <http://www.macrojerseys.com/category-324-b0-NFL-JERSEY.html> in a sense.

<http://www.macrojerseys.com/category-324-b0-NFL-JERSEY.html>

Comment by Anonymus, September 24, 2011 @ 2:51 am

Nice one, would you mind if I use some of this text on my website?

Comment by Anonymus, September 24, 2011 @ 4:21 pm

iphone 3g cases

Comment by Anonymus, October 17, 2011 @ 1:18 pm

This can be any sensible blog. I imply it. You have so much understanding about it issue, and so much passion. You also understand how to produce women and men rally behind it, of course through this responses. Youve acquired a styling here thats not as well flashy, but tends to produce a statement as huge because what youre saying. Great task, in fact.

Comment by Anonymus, October 25, 2011 @ 12:46 pm

Any person listed here is aware of where exactly I am able to find out a few of the brand new business banking and in addition financial facts? Thank you so much

Comment by Anonymus, October 28, 2011 @ 9:45 pm

Thank you for such a fantastic blog. Where else could I get such facts written in these kinds of an incite full way? I have a presentation that I am just now working on, and I had been trying to find such information.

Comment by Anonymus, October 30, 2011 @ 11:02 am

I'm planning to create my own blog, and a question comes up to my mind..

Comment by Anonymus, November 4, 2011 @ 8:05 am

great blog, i will come back soon. Do you have a facebook? y18 k 7

Comment by Anonymus, November 7, 2011 @ 10:46 pm

All of these positive aspects will assist you to reduce, and mend accidental injuries, from other physical exercises including the game of golf, playing golf, football, as well as rugby.

Comment by Anonymus, November 10, 2011 @ 4:01 am

Hi there! This is kind of off topic but I need some guidance from an established blog. Is it very hard to set up your own blog? I'm not very techincal but I can figure things out pretty fast. I'm thinking about setting up my own but I'm not sure where to begin. Do you have any tips or suggestions? Appreciate it

Comment by Anonymus, November 19, 2011 @ 10:04 am

Beneficial info! I have been looking for something such as this for a time now. With thanks!

Comment by Anonymus, November 27, 2011 @ 11:36 am

If you are involved in affiliate marketing, or even if you are not, you might want to take a look at this free video that includes some secret marketing methods that are now being used by top affiliates after the Google Panda update. As a side note, they are also selling a product and if you happen to be interested in it, just close the page with the video, then it will ask if you want to stay on the page for a special offer. Click to stay on the page. Then close the page again, it will once again ask if you would like to stay on the page for a special offer and this time, if you choose to stay on the page, it will offer you a 25% discount on that product. Here is the link to the video: <http://goo.gl/CEHSx>

Comment by Anonymus, December 4, 2011 @ 8:01 am

You could definitely see your enthusiasm in the work you write. The world hopes for more passionate writers like you who are not afraid to say how they believe. Always go after your heart.

Comment by Anonymus, December 18, 2011 @ 10:19 pm

I am extremely inspired together with your writing skills as well as with the structure for your weblog. Is that this a paid subject matter or did you customize it your self? Either way keep up the excellent high quality writing, it is uncommon to look a great blog like this one nowadays..

Comment by Anonymus, December 20, 2011 @ 5:28 am

Hello! I just would like to give a huge thumbs up for the great info you have here on this post. I will be coming back to The Millennial Pedestrian » Blog Archive » Billy Collins s The Death of the Hat for more soon.

Comment by Anonymus, January 2, 2012 @ 2:21 pm

hi!,I love your writing very so much! share we keep up a correspondence extra about your article on AOL? I need a specialist in this house to resolve my problem. May be that's you! Looking ahead to look you.

Comment by Anonymus, January 3, 2012 @ 12:59 pm

Hello, is your hosting company having any issues recently? I had to refresh the web page about six times till the 503 error went away and I was able to read this post!

Comment by Anonymus, January 20, 2012 @ 5:25 pm

This will be a terrific site, would you be involved in doing an interview about just how you designed it? If so e-mail me!

Comment by Anonymus, January 26, 2012 @ 9:11 am

Great Post. I like your style of writing. I think you should use your awesome writing style to get paid. Me and my husband are using this course <http://hopclicks.com/respectmoney> to improve our earning from writing articles. You should try this out.

Comment by Anonymus, January 27, 2012 @ 12:42 pm

I just wanted to give a big thank you to all the wonderful people I have met in the last few weeks - a lot of us are working together and profiting very nicely =). If you missed the boat don't worry, you can still learn how we're making \$200-\$900 per day using <http://Instant-Weekly-Income.info> with private coaching and all that. When you're in, just shoot me a message and I'll be happy to add you to our group. Cheers!!

Comment by Anonymus, January 28, 2012 @ 10:09 pm