

THE GLOBAL CANON

Each discipline has a canon. Each canon is comprised of that which is consistently observed, analyzed, categorized, classified, defined, known, as well as that which is consistently known as most excellent, powerful, compelling of that which is ineffable. Actors claiming status within these disciplines are responsible for knowing this canon, while, at the same time, testing its veracity, extending its limits, and blasting through its boundaries and charting its overlaps with other disciplines as new thought occurs, new forms of expression are created, new means of study are developed, new findings are made, and for – in so far as their temperament allows – proffering their creations and discoveries to other scholars and the public for consideration, response, and critique



The world - whatever we might think when terrified by its vastness and our own impotence, or embittered by its indifference to individual suffering, of people, animals, and perhaps even plants, for why are we so sure that plants feel no pain; whatever we might think of its expanses pierced by the rays of stars surrounded by planets we've just begun to discover, planets already dead? still dead? we just don't know; whatever we might think of this measureless theater to which we've got reserved tickets, but tickets whose lifespan is laughably short, bounded as it is by two arbitrary dates; whatever else we might think of this world – it is astonishing.

Wisława Szymborska,
[View From a Grain of Sand](#)
Nobel laureate in poetry for 1996

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Standardized Tests Questions on *Whatever Else It Is, It Is Astonishing*

When Wislawa Szymborska won the Nobel for poetry in 1996, much of the press included descriptions of her as an immensely private person, for whom the public glare - even at this, its most rarified, was both unfamiliar and unsought.

➤ **The sentence or phrase closest in meaning to the above *Known* statement is:**

- A. Each canon is comprised of that which is consistently... known as the most excellent, powerful, compelling of that which is ineffable.
- B. Actors within these disciplines are responsible for...extending [the canon's] limits and blasting through its boundaries.
- C. Actors within these disciplines are responsible for – in so far as their temperament allows – proffering [their creations and discoveries] to other scholars and the public.
- D. Each canon is comprised of that which is consistently observed, analyzed, categorized, classified, defined, known...

And, yet, Ms. Szymborska had always published her poetry - even when its materializing on the free side of the Iron Curtain endangered her own private freedom behind it. Manuscripts were smuggled out and published from 19xx to xx.

Short Essays:

- **Using *That Which is Known* about the canon, write what you think might have caused her to take these risks.**
- **The image above was chosen to illustrate the passage from the poet (it is from an Art for Children final project). In an essay, say why you think this was so.**
- **Types of Language: There is only one metaphor in the passage from Szymborska. What is it?**
can a universe be indifferent? dead planets?
- **What is your theory about why the Szymborska passage is all one sentence? 3 sentences.**