

THE ROSENBACH

Tools of the Poet's Trade Level: Grades 3-12

This is a draft of "The Arctic Ox," the poem we discussed in the last lesson. Marianne Moore would create many, many versions of her poems before she was happy and sent the final version off for publication. Sometimes she'd change the poems after they were already published!

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THE ARCTIC OX
(or goat)

To wear the arctic fox
you have to kill it. Clad in
musk-ox underwear or qiviut
pulled off like a sweater

To wear the arctic fox
you have to kill it. Clad in
musk-ox underwear or qiviut
pulled off like a sweater -
your coat is warm; your conscience, better.

I should like a suit of
qiviut, so light I did not
know I had it on; and in the
course of time another
since I had not had to murder

the goat that grew the fleece
that grew the first. These Arctic qivies
are not oxen and they have
no musk; nor do they sweat.
Bury your nose in one when wet.

It smells of water, nothing else,
with sweat-glands just on
the hind feet! Its distinction -
never never loathsome scent -
is that it is intelligent.

Chinchillas, otters, water-rats,
and beavers keep us warm
but think; the qivie grows six pounds
of qiviut; the cashmere ram,
only yields three pounds of cashm.

Lying in an exposed spot,
basking in the blizzard,
these qivies summarize the rare
hairs market in Kashan and yet
you could not have a safer pet.

They join you as you work,
love jumping in and out of holes,
play in water with the children,
learn fast, know their names,
will open gates and invent games.

While not incapable
of courtship, they may find fuss,
servitude and fluttery too much
like Procrustes' bed -
(contented to remain unwed.)

Camels are snobbish
and sheep, unintelligent;
water-buffaloes, neurasthenic -
even murderous.
Reindeer seem over-serious?

whereas these scarce qivies, wit
with golden fleece and winning ways -
outstripping every fur-bearer -
there in Vermont quiet -
could demand Bold Ruler's diet:

Mountain Valley water, da
dandelions, carrots, oats -
encouraged besides - with bed
made fresh three times a day -
to roll and revel in the hay.

*I may complement myself that you
are pondering that I am serious man
I have forgotten it as I thought
qiviut - the under wool of the arctic
ox*

these are made musk-oxen

*these bondsmen could compare
mountain*

*epitomize the scarce
Synthesize
dominate*

*to some birds to stay unwed.
Some therefore choose*

also by bed

DEC 27 9 28 29 30
TUE
WED
THU
FRI
SAT

Mr. Howard Moss
The New Yorker

25 West 43rd Street

InEatable for
willow-leaves alone,
the qivie-curvi-capricornus--
capricornus sheds down

qivie-curvi
Insatiable for willow
willow-leaves alone, *over goat like*
the qivie-curvi-capricornus
sheds down ideal for a nest.
Song-birds find qiviut best.

If you fear that you are reading-an
reading an advertisement,
you are. If we can't be cordial *creatures*
to these qivies' fleece,
I think that we deserve to freeze.

Derived from "Golden Fleece of the Arctic" by John J. Teal, Jr.,
who ~~who~~ *rears* musk oxen on his farm in Vermont. Atlantic Monthly, March, 1958

Suppose you had a bag of it. A pound of qiviut
gives a nearly twenty-five-mile thread, spun forty-ply;
won't shrink when boiled, takes any dye.

Suppose you had a bag of it. A pound of qiviut
will give in a nearly twenty-five-mile thread spun forty ply.
won't shrink when boiled and will take any dye
Boil it and it does not shrink
Boiled, it does not shrink and it takes any dye

Suppose you had a bag of it
of it spun in a twenty-five-mile
thread spun forty ply

Suppose you had a bag
of it. A pound of qiviut
spun in a twenty-four or five
mile thread, *say* forty-ply -

Suppose you had a bag
of it and spun a pound of it
of it; you could spin a pound
into a twenty-four or five
mile thread forty-ply.
that boiled, won't shrink, in a
that will not shrink in any d

*You very helpful - can you bring on another book
An X after think another version for me?
is better*

Did she get everything right in the poem the first time she wrote it down or did she make changes?

Do you see that she used both a typewriter and handwriting when writing her poems? Why do you think she does that? Why might handwriting be easier or better than using a computer?

Do any of you write poetry or any other kind of writing? What is your method? Do you use a paper and pen, a computer or both?

When you're writing something for school, do you go through a lot of drafts or do you hand in the first or second version of what you've written?

This is a picture of the other side of the draft of her poem. When she wrote the draft, she didn't use a new piece of paper, she used a calendar from the People's National Bank of Brooklyn.



Why do you think she decided to use the back of a calendar and not a clean, new sheet?

Is there anything else we can learn about Marianne Moore by looking at this draft poem?