

**THE SUMMONS**  
**Theodore Roethke (1908-1963)**  
**Phi Beta Kappa Poem 1938**

*Now all who love the best, –  
Old and rebellious young, –  
Must contemplate the waste  
Of countenancing wrong:  
The human mired, the brute  
Raised up to eminence,  
The mimic following suit  
Until devoid of sense  
The good becoming gross,–  
All this we may discern;  
By slow degrees we learn  
The full extent of loss.*

*Though the small wit we have  
May nullify belief,  
The simple act can save  
The heritage of life.  
With secrecy put by,  
The heart grows less obtuse,  
And fervency of eye  
Is put to better use.  
The impulse long denied,  
The lips that never move,  
The hatred and the pride, –  
These can be turned to love.  
Now we must summon all  
Our force, from breadth to length,  
And walk, more vertical,  
Secure in human strength.*