

Elvis likes himself with style. This afternoon  
 he will play guitar and sing “I Taste a Liquor  
 Never Brewed” to the tune of “Love Me Tender.” 15

Emily will clap and harmonize. Alone  
 in their cabins later, they’ll listen to the river  
 and nap. They will not think of Amherst

or Las Vegas. They know why God made them  
 roommates. It’s because America 20  
 was their hometown. It’s because

God is a thing  
 without feathers. It’s because  
 God wears blue suede shoes.

.....

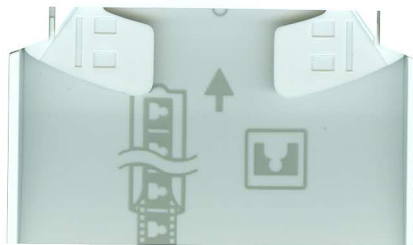
### Exploring the Text

1. What does Hans Ostrom’s pairing of Elvis Presley and Emily Dickinson suggest about the poem’s idea of heaven?
2. The poem depends somewhat on the reader’s familiarity with the works of Dickinson and Presley. Look up the references you don’t recognize — such as Dickinson’s poems “I taste a liquor never brewed” and “Hope is that thing with feathers,” Presley’s song “Love Me Tender,” Little Richard, Amherst, and naugahyde. Then reconsider Ostrom’s poem with all the blanks filled in.
3. What is the intention and effect of the period after “friends” in line 9?
4. In nearly every stanza, Ostrom uses enjambment — when one line ends without a pause and continues into the next line for its meaning. What is the effect?
5. In the last two stanzas, Ostrom says God made Presley and Dickinson roommates for three reasons. What do these reasons suggest about the importance of pop culture in America?

## *Sanctuary: For Harry Potter the Movie*

NIKKI GIOVANNI

Nikki Giovanni (b. 1943) grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, but in summers returned to her birthplace in Knoxville, Tennessee, to visit her grandparents. She graduated from Fisk University with honors in history and went on to graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania. Since 1987, she has been a professor of writing and literature at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Giovanni has written volumes of



poetry, illustrated children's books, and three collections of essays, including *Sacred Cows . . . and Other Edibles* (1988). Among Giovanni's many awards and honors are three NAACP Image Awards. The following "not quite poem" comes from *Quilting the Black-Eyed Pec: Poems and Not Quite Poems* (2002).

The movie should have started with drums. Small drums maybe bongos then trap drums then the full complement of jazz drums. Silhouetted figures straddling drums. Male figures riding really big deep drums. Hands flying. Sweat flicking through the air. A spiral of light with a certain . . . well . . . heaviness implied. 5  
Followed by a Quiet. Then the Savannah. A community of elephants. The camera moving in on the baby trailing just slightly behind its mother. The bull elephant turns his head upward testing the air. Something is awry. The bull elephant drops behind the community. He wants to bring up the rear. He 10  
seems to know something. The bull elephant suddenly charges into the bush and we hear the 40 OD six go off. The bull elephant continues toward the bush and we hear over and above the drumming the report of gunfire. The elephants turn to gather round the fallen bull. The elephants try to keep him on his feet 15  
but the bull elephant is mortally wounded. The alpha female takes up the charge while the other females surround the baby. The alpha female is repeatedly shot. the shots are in rhythm with the drumming. The juvenile elephants take up the fight while the females try to get the baby elephant away. A barrage of 20  
gunfire . . . rhythmic . . . sweaty . . . heavy . . . insistent . . . intrudes. Dust is swirling. Then silence. A wearisome silence. The settling dust can almost be heard. Then the buzzing of flies. A dark cloud of hundreds no thousands of flies heads toward us. The camera however does not move. As the dust settles and just before the 25  
flies land we see, surrounded by the carnage, still standing . . . standing still . . . the baby elephant. The object of this search. He is looking at all the death and destruction. He is trying to decide: Should I live? Do I want to live with these memories? He sees the men coming toward him with nets and chains. He has to decide: 30  
Will I live? Do I want to live . . . like this . . . with these people who have destroyed everything I cherish? Then we see a flicker of light. A promise perhaps. Surely a sign of hope. Live and tell the story. Live and sing the song of your people.

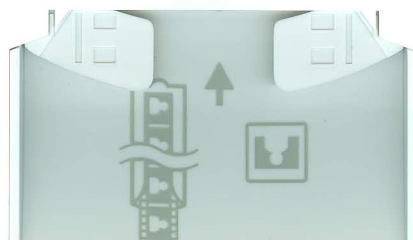
*"Live! and have your blooming in the noise of the whirlwind."*

—GWENDOLYN BROOKS, *In the Mecca*



Harry Potter was just a boy who lived. Like all of us. On the forced marches to uninhabitable reservations. Through the smallpox-infested blankets. From the stench and starvation of middle passage. From the auction blocks where the unimaginable took place. From the ghettos of Europe and in the inner cities of America. From the enforced hopelessness that only a song . . . that only an imagined grandmother's hum . . . only a dream of a better day could assuage . . . A bright star . . . like a real fat shooting star comes from the back of the screen. We see a bungalow that is near destruction. We hear the questioning voices of people running to the scene. A giant swoops down from the sky on a motorcycle. He hits the kickstand down runs into the house and emerges with something bundled in a blanket. He jumps back on the cycle and heads into the sky. As the light from the cycle shoots out we follow it to the farthestmost point where it turns into a streetlight dimming out. Two distinguished figures are peering into the sky . . . waiting . . . hoping . . . sending comforting looks to each other. Then *voilà!* The cycle comes down. A giant steps off with the bundle. The waiting man and woman discuss the wisdom of the baby being left with these people. "They are all the family Harry's got. Harry needs time, even in this sterile environment, to understand what has happened and how famous he is. He needs time to prepare himself," says the waiting man. "And you think," challenges the woman, "*these people* can provide the help?" The man looks at her gently: "They are all he has. We must try to do the right thing." In the background we hear a song coming up "boop boop a boom you went to school to learn girl what you never never knew before . . . *i* before *e* except after *c* and how 2 plus 2 are four . . ."

We now cut to a man and a woman sitting in a café. There are two glasses of wine, the man drinking a red and the woman having a not too expensive champagne. It is late afternoon. The sun is setting wide and very red. The man, a young man in about his midthirties, is saying to the woman, "You know this sky reminds me of something I can't remember." "That's silly," she says. "How can you remember nothing?" "No. Well, yes. Oh well. There was a giant once named Hagrid. Hagrid was a friend of my mother and father's. He loved me. And I, he. He saved me from evil by telling me who I am. And where I came from." The background music is from the *New World* Symphony. The man looks deep into the eyes of the woman. It is obvious he cares for her



very much. “You never asked me about my scar,” he says. She looks into her champagne glass then at the ring on her finger then up at him. “I know an evil thing struck you and left a mark I know that. But, no, I haven’t asked, Harry, because I know when you know I love you no matter what, you will share your thoughts about it with me.” “Well, it was my mother, you know. It was my mother’s love that protected me from harm. It was the love my mother threw over me when the evil came that kept evil from being able to touch me. After the bloodshed and the bloodletting I know that some of my blood is in evil and some evil is in my blood. But I am neither the white man you think I am nor the Black man I hope to be. I’m just the boy who lived and in living I have to find my way.” He called for the check and paid. They stood. “Want to go to Aruba? We can walk the beach and talk . . .” “Oh, Harry, it takes all day to get to Aruba . . .” “Not when you’re with a magical guy . . .” And off they go talking about Hagrid and Hogwarts and Dumbledore and McGonagall and Ron and Hermione and Mountain Trolls and the Mirror of Erised and Quidditch and baby elephants and manatees and the vanishing Savannah and . . .

### Exploring the Text

1. How does the text use a different film genre to comment on the Harry Potter story and movie?
2. What is Nikki Giovanni’s purpose in opening with the scene of drums and elephants?
3. What is the effect of the line from the Gwendolyn Brooks poem that Giovanni uses to make the transition to Harry Potter (l. 35)?
4. What does Giovanni mean when she writes, “Harry Potter was just a boy who lived”? Is she criticizing the Harry Potter novels? Praising them?
5. How would you characterize the genre of Giovanni’s text? Is it a prose poem? An essay? A stream-of-consciousness commentary? Why do you think she chose this form?
6. How does Giovanni’s interpretation of the Harry Potter movie jibe with yours? What other ways can readers and viewers interpret the Harry Potter movies and novels?
7. What is suggested by the title of the “not quite poem”? Consider the different meanings of the word *sanctuary*.

