

The Hill We Climb
By Amanda Gorman

1. When day comes, we ask ourselves,
2. Where can we find light in this never-ending shade?
3. The loss we carry,
4. a sea we must wade
5. We braved the belly of the beast
6. We've learned that quiet isn't always peace
7. And the norms and notions
8. of what just is
9. Isn't always just-ice.
10. And yet the dawn is ours
11. before we knew it
12. Somehow we do it
13. Somehow we weathered and witnessed
14. a nation that isn't broken
15. but simply unfinished
16. We the successors of a country and a time
17. Where a skinny black girl
18. Descended from slaves and raised by a single mother
19. Can dream of becoming president
20. Only to find herself reciting for one.
21. And yes we are far from polished
22. far from pristine
23. But that doesn't mean that we are
24. striving to form a union that is perfect.
25. We are striving to forge our union with purpose
26. To compose a country committed to all cultures, colours, characters and
27. conditions of man.
28. And so we lift our gaze not to what stands between us
29. but what stands before us
30. We close the divide because we know to put our future first
31. We must first put our differences aside
32. We lay down our arms
33. So we can reach out our arms
34. To one another.
35. We seek harm to none and harmony for all.
36. Let the globe, if nothing else, say this is true:
37. That even as we grieved, we grew
38. That even as we hurt, we hoped
39. That even as we tired, we tried.
40. That we'll forever be tied together, victorious.
41. Not because we will never again know defeat
42. But because we will never again sow division.
43. Scripture tells us to envision
44. That everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree.
45. And no one shall make them afraid.
46. If we're to live up to our own time.
47. Then victory won't lie in the blade
48. But in all the bridges we've made
49. That is the promise to glade
50. The hill we climb
51. If only we dare.

52. Because being American is more than a pride we inherit.
53. It's the past we step into
54. And how we repair it.
55. We've seen a force that would shatter our nation
56. Rather than share it
57. Would destroy our country if it meant delaying democracy.
58. And this effort very nearly succeeded.
59. But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
60. it can never be permanently defeated.
61. In this truth,
62. in this faith we trust
63. For while we have our eyes on the future,
64. history has its eyes on us.
65. This is the era of just redemption.
66. We feared at its inception
67. We did not feel prepared to be the heirs
68. of such a terrifying hour
69. but within it we found the power
70. to author a new chapter.
71. To offer hope and laughter to ourselves.
72. So while we once we asked,
73. how could we possibly prevail over catastrophe?,
74. Now we assert
75. How could catastrophe possibly prevail over us?
76. We will not march back to what was
77. but move to what shall be.
78. A country that is bruised but whole,
79. benevolent but bold,
80. fierce and free.
81. We will not be turned around
82. or interrupted by intimidation
83. because we know our inaction and inertia
84. will be the inheritance of the next generation.
85. Our blunders become their burdens.
86. But one thing is certain;
87. If we merge mercy with might,
88. and might with right,
89. then love becomes our legacy
90. and change our children's birthright.
91. So let us leave behind a country
92. better than the one we were left with.
93. Every breath from my bronze pounded chest,
94. we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.
95. We will rise from the gold-limbed hills of the west,
96. We will rise from the windswept northeast
97. where our forefathers first realized revolution.
98. We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the midwestern states,
99. we will rise from the sunbaked south.
100. We will rebuild, reconcile and recover
101. and every known nook of our nation and
102. every corner called our country,
103. our people diverse and beautiful will emerge
104. battered and beautiful.
105. When day comes we step out of the shade,

106. aflame and unafraid,
107. The new dawn blooms as we free it.
108. For there is always light,
109. if only we're brave enough to see it.
110. If only we're brave enough to be it.

Discussion Questions for Amanda Gorman's "The Hill We Climb"

1. What is the function of an inaugural poem? Does Gorman's poem fill that function? Why/How?
2. What are some of the poem's ideas, concepts and themes?
3. What poetic devices do you find in the poem? In which lines?
4. What influences do you see in the poem? In which lines?
5. Regarding Gorman's reading of the poem: What differences show up for you when you read this poem to yourself vs. hearing Gorman read the poem? How important is her reading of the poem to the success of the poem, generally, and as an inaugural poem?