“Dear John Wayne” by Louise Erdrich (Chippewa)

August and the drive-in picture is packed.

We lounge on the hood of the Pontiac

surrounded by the slow-burning spirals they sell

at the window, to vanquish the hordes of mosquitoes.

Nothing works. They break through the smoke screen for blood.

Always the lookout spots the Indian first,

spread north to south, barring progress.

The Sioux or some other Plains bunch

in spectacular columns, ICBM missiles,

feathers bristling in the meaningful sunset.

The drum breaks. There will be no parlance.

Only the arrows whining, a death-cloud of nerves

swarming down on the settlers

who die beautifully, tumbling like dust weeds

into the history that brought us all here

together: this wide screen beneath the sign of the bear.

The sky fills, acres of blue squint and eye

that the crowd cheers. His face moves over us,

a thick cloud of vengeance, pitted

like the land that was once flesh. Each rut,

each scar makes a promise: It is

not over, this fight, not as long as you resist.

Everything we see belongs to us.

A few laughing Indians fall over the hood

slipping in the hot spilled butter.

The eye sees a lot, John, but the heart is so blind.

Death makes us owners of nothing.

He smiles, a horizon of teeth

the credits reel over, and then the white fields

again blowing in the true-to-life dark.

The dark films over everything.

We get into the car

scratching our mosquito bites, speechless and small

as people are when the movie is done.

We are back in our skins.

How can we help but keep hearing his voice,

the flip side of the sound track, still playing:

Come on, boys, we got them

where we want them, drunk, running.

They'll give us what we want, what we need.

Even his disease was the idea of taking everything.

Those cells, burning, doubling, splitting out of their skins.

**The Lake Isle of Innisfree**

By W. B. Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;

There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,

And evening full of the linnet’s wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day

I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart’s core.

**The Stolen Child** By W. B. Yeats

(excerpt, the refrain quoted at the beginning of *Song of the Sea*)

Come away, O human child!

To the waters and the wild

With a faery, hand in hand,

For the world’s more full of weeping than you can understand.



William Butler Yeats, widely considered one of the greatest poets of the English language, received the 1923 Nobel Prize for Literature. His work was greatly influenced by the heritage and politics of Ireland.