

Favorite poems

by [Luci Shaw](#) in the [January 27, 2004](#) issue

Simple yet magical. A poem about something commonplace but captivating enough to seduce money from people's wallets--a rain stick (for listening to; it has no other use, and is, to say the least, a momentary experience). In this poem Seamus Heaney makes the most of its aural impact, and with each simile--"sluice-rush, spillage, backwash," "subtle little wets," "like a pipe being played by water," "glitter-drizzle"--the onomatopoeia extends our delighted absorption of this phenomenon so that our own imaginations capture and replay the gentle sounds from memory. At the poem's end, Heaney tells us "Listen now again," and indeed, we can't but listen.

[The rain stick](#), by Seamus Heaney