

STARTER KIT

*And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.*

Edward Arlington Robinson

Be it Monday, December, first period and dark yet
another forty minutes, or even Friday, June,
the bell about to ring, it's money in the bank
that nine of ten high school juniors will let loose

an *ooh!* (less shock than satisfaction)
when "slim," "rich" Cory "puts" – not *pounds*,
not *slams* – that "bullet through his head." Thank heaven
for this ringer in an uphill year of Bradford's winter

and Edwards' hell, hell, hell. Praise God all America
gets envy, and, with a little prodding, that someone
will sub Trump or Diddy for Cory, and someone else
will say he saw an *E! True Hollywood* that went riches

to rehab, and after that all hands will bandy theories
why this dreamboat sunk. Ten minutes left,
I wrap things up with Simon's folk rock adaptation
that always has them nodding: *oh I wish*

*that I could be / oh I wish that I could be / oh I wish
that I could be / Richard Cory.* And if the vibe's right,
I'll take Garfunkel's harmony, my off-key falsetto
getting laughs that dull the pain of questions one

through ten. Dismissed. Still, anyone could do this;
this kit runs itself. Four quatrains and the rhyme scheme.

First person and the last line payoff. Ask: *Why do we learn what we learn in this order?* Ask: *Why is it summer*

in the end? Remember, the job's more sleight of hand, less therapy. Bell rung, you too will forget poor Cory, that teachable irony, that jack-in-the-box reset, waiting again for the catch.