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Before You Read

Poet and novelist William Makepeace Thackeray was born in India in 1811. He most liked to do two things when he was a boy: draw and read stories. Here is his poem about the zoo.

At the Zoo

First I saw the white bear, then I saw
the black;
Then I saw the camel with a hump upon
his back;
Then I saw the grey wolf, with mutton in
his maw;
Then I saw the wombat waddle in the straw;
Then I saw the elephant a-waving of
his trunk;
Then I saw the monkeys—mercy, how
unpleasantly they—smelt!

~William Makepeace Thackeray

Before You Read

Haiku has been described as being “like a photo that captures the essence of what is happening.”

A Giant Firefly

A giant firefly:
that way, this way, that way, this —
and it passes by.

~Kobayashi Issa

I Want to Sleep

I want to sleep
Swat the flies
Softly, please.

~Masaoka Shiki

After Killing a Spider

After killing
a spider, how lonely I feel
in the cold of night!

~Masaoka Shiki