Directions:

1. Take a couple moments to read quietly and annotate on your own, on both poems.
2. Read the poems ALOUD in your groups, reading sentence by sentence.
3. Discuss, and add to your annotations as needed, and identify ANY stylistic techniques or figurative language that shows up (simile, irony, personification, etc.) as well as what the poet’s message or overall meaning is.
4. When you have finished—both poems—answer the following questions on the back…

W.H. Auden: Musee Des Beaux Arts

*(French for Museum of fine arts)*

About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters; how well, they understood
Its human position; how it takes place
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
For the miraculous birth, there always must be
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
On a pond at the edge of the wood:
They never forgot
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.
In Breughel's Icarus, for instance: how everything turns away
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the ploughman may
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,
had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.

William Carlos Williams: Landscape with the Fall of Icarus

According to Brueghel
when Icarus fell
it was spring

a farmer was ploughing
his field
the whole pageantry

of the year was
awake tingling
with itself

sweating in the sun
that melted
the wings' wax

unsignificantly
off the coast
there was

a splash quite unnoticed
this was
Icarus drowning

Questions:

1. How do the poems differ and compare when it comes to their view of this art piece and myth?
2. How does the different authors’ syntax affect you as the reader?