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?