

Time Like the Turning of a Page
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In his early play, *Love's Labour's Lost*, William Shakespeare gave us this thought on time. In the opening act, Lord Berowne speaking to King Navarre declares, "At Christmas, I no more desire a rose, than wish a snow in May's new-fangled mirth; but like of each thing that in season grows." Such is one of only three references to Christmas in all of Shakespeare's works. It is interesting that he chooses to tie Christmas to time. Centuries after Shakespeare but almost two centuries before today, Charles Dickens also connected Christmas with time by haunting Ebenezer Scrooge with ghosts of past, present, and yet to come. In fact, we connect Christmas with time today as well with song lyrics like "Christmas time is here", "It's the most wonderful time of the year", and "Simply having a wonderful Christmas time". What makes this time of year one of reflection?

Is it the turning of the year? Is it the all too recent passing of the Winter Solstice? The longest night is over, and we look forward and back as our daily light returns? Is it the holidays we celebrate that spark giving, gratitude, and hope be it Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Yuletide, or Christmas? Well let's get back to Shakespeare. Lord Berowne specifically reflects that he doesn't wish for things outside of their season be it roses at Christmas or snow in May, though here in Minnesota, snow in May is entirely possible. Ebenezer Scrooge, on the other hand, learns to keep "the spirit of Christmas" all the year. However, both are expressions of living in the moment- being present in the here and now.

We've all had a year to remember. How we remember it may look very different for each of us, but I think most of us could agree that much of this year has felt surreal- outside of time if you will. A bit like having life on pause or living in the twilight zone. Speaking of twilight, I can recall as a teenager helping a family member retrieve his deer toward evening in hunting season. He had forgotten his field dressing tools, so the sun was down over the horizon before we started back on foot out of the woods with the deer in tow. He had placed glow sticks as markers on his way in, but they had faded in the time it had taken for him to field dress the deer. It didn't help that the forest terrain had both thick branches overhead and steeply folded hills underfoot. When twilight fell, the whole world had turned gray. The sky was overcast, and the moon had yet to rise. Everything looked almost exactly the same. We were lost. I can still remember that feeling of panic as I found myself in a situation with so much outside of my control. Thankfully, a break in the clouds while in a clearing let me see the stars enough to know the way. With calm and direction, we found the road.

And here we all are. Our problems won't magically disappear with the turning of the year. Our bad habits won't magically change either. But it only takes a little bit of light in our situation to give us confidence and purpose, even if we can only see one step of the way at a time. It has been a tumultuous year for us here at the library. Like everyone, we have had to redesign and reevaluate what we do and how we do it, cancel,

postpone, or make new plans, and find new ways of doing things. Change is hard, but let us consider one more quote of Shakespeare. Ophelia, in the play Hamlet, said, "We know what we are but know not what we may be." Here we are, but that doesn't mean we are stuck here. I have yet to read a novel that ended the story on page 5 and all the rest was commentary. Your story goes on from this point of the plot, and time like the turning of a page will bring you to new challenges and new adventures. From all of us at the library, we wish you a happy new year, and we hope to see you soon!