

# *Childhood Awakening*

Visions from "An American Childhood" by Annie Dillard

*for mixed chorus a cappella*

(2000)

Don Freund



## Texts from **An American Childhood** by Annie Dillard

*From page 11:*

Children ten years old wake up and find themselves here, discover themselves to have been here all along...

I woke in bits, like all children, piecemeal over the years.  
I discovered myself and the world, and forgot them, and discovered them again.  
I woke at intervals until the intervals of waking tipped the scales,  
and I was more often awake than not. I noticed this process of waking,  
and predicted with terrifying logic that one of these years not far away  
I would be awake continuously and never slip back,  
and never be free of myself again.

*From pages 16 and 17:*

... In the kitchen I watched the unselfconscious trees through the screen door, until the trees' autumn branches like fins waved away the silence. I forgot myself, and sank into a dim and watery oblivion.

A car passed. Its rush and whine jolted me from my blankness. The sound faded again and I faded again down into my hushed brain until the icebox motor kicked on and prodded me awake. "You are living," the icebox motor said, ...or the dripping faucet said, or any of the hundred other noisy things that only children can't stop hearing. Cars started, leaves rubbed, trucks' brakes whistled, sparrows peeped. Whenever it rained, the rain spattered, dripped, and ran, for the entire length of the shower, for the entire length of days-long rains, until we children were almost insane from hearing it rain because we couldn't stop hearing it rain. ...The silence, like all silences, was made poignant and distinct by its sounds.

What a marvel it was that the day so often introduced itself with a firm footfall nearby. What a marvel it was that so many times a day the world, like a church bell, reminded me to recall and contemplate the durable fact that I was here, and had awakened once more to find myself set down in a going world.

In the living room the mail slot clicked open and envelopes clattered down. In the back room ...the steam iron thumped the muffled ironing board and hissed. The walls squeaked, the pipes knocked, the screen door trembled, the furnace banged, and the radiators clanged. This was the fall the loud trucks went by. I sat mindless and eternal on the kitchen floor, stony of head and solemn, playing with my fingers. Time streamed in full flood beside me on the kitchen floor; time roared raging beside me down its swollen banks; and when I woke I was so startled I fell in.

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# Childhood Awakening

Visions from "An American Childhood" by Annie Dillard  
for mixed chorus a cappella  
Commissioned by Voces Novae

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2000

$\text{♩} = 60$

S Child-ren — ten years old wake up and find them - selves—

A Child-ren — wake up and find them - selves—

T Child-ren — ten years old wake up and find them - selves—

B Child-ren — Child - ren wake up and find them - selves—

4

S here, dis-cov-er them - selves to have been here all — a - long.

A here, dis-cov-er them - selves to have been here.

T here, dis-cov-er them - selves to have been here all — a - long.

B here, dis-cov-er them - selves to have been here Child - ren... —

4

♩ = 144

*mf, conversational, "recitative"*

9 S solo

A solo *mf, conversational, "recitative"* I dis - cov - ered my - self and the

I woke in bits, like all child - ren, piece - meal ov - er the years.

*pp, inward, subliminal*

Tutti I woke in bits, like all child - ren,

9 I woke in bits, like all child - ren,

*mf*

*pp*

15 S solo

A solo world, *mf*

T solo *mf, conversational, "recitative"* I woke at in - ter - vals un - til the

and for - got them, and dis - cov - ered them a - gain.

Tutti piece - meal ov - er the years.

15 piece - meal ov - er the years.

*mf*

20 S solo *mf*

A solo and I was more of - ten a - wake than not.

A solo in - ter - vals of wak - ing tipped the scales, *mf, conversational, "recitative"*

B solo I no - ticed this

Tutti I dis - cov - ered my - self

I dis - cov - ered my - self

20

6

25 S solo *mp*

A solo *mf* *mp* that

B solo *mf* *mp* that

Tutti and the world, and for - got them,

25 *mp*

29 S solo *still mp*

A solo *still mp*

T solo *still mp*

B solo *mp*

Tutti and dis - cov - ered them a - gain.

29 *still mp*

37 *tutti, pp, but clear* *mp* *p* *pp*

Tutti *tutti, pp, but clear* *mp* *p* *pp*

*tutti, pp, but clear* *mp* *p* *pp*

*tutti, pp, but clear* *mp* *p* *pp*

37 *pp* *mp* *p* *pp*

43  $\text{♩} = 60$

*mp* *pp* *mp* *f*

Child - ren — ten years old wake up and find them - selves —

*pp* *f*

Child - ren — wake up and find them - selves —

*mp* *pp* *mp* *f*

Child - ren — ten years old wake up and find them - selves —

*pp* *p* *f*

Child - ren — Child - ren wake up and find them - selves —

46

*fp* *f* *mp*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here all a - long.

*fp* *f* *p*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here

*fp* *f* *mp*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here all a - long.

*fp* *f* *p* *pp*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here Child - ren... —

46

*fp* *f* *mp* *pp*

51  $\text{♩} = 144$

*mp*

*mp* In the kit - chen — I watched the

*pp*

In the kit - chen — I watched the

*pp* Scat, e.g. "doo-wa-da", not necessarily consistent; improvised, subliminal

51 *pp* Scat, e.g. "dubbada buh-da", not necessarily consistent; improvised, subliminal

un - self - con - scious trees through the screen door, un - til the trees'—

un - self - con - scious trees through the screen door, un - til the trees'—

*(pp)*

*(pp)*

4:3

*mf* *p* *mp*

*mf* *p* *mp*

54

- au - tumn bran - ches like fins waved a - way the si - lence.

- au - tumn bran - ches like fins waved a - way the si - lence.

*mf* *mp* *p*

*mf* *mp* *p*

58

I for - got my - self, and sank

I for - got my - self, and sank

*mp* *pp*

*mp* *pp*

*pp* *pp*

*pp* *pp*

64



69 *mp*  
 in - to a dim and wa - ter - y ob -  
*mp*  
 in - to a dim and wa - ter - y ob -

69 *mp*  
 in - to a dim and wa - ter - y ob -

74 *p* (♩ = 144) *mp*  
 liv - ion. A car —  
*p* *pp* Scat, more legato  
*pp* Scat, more legato *mp*

74 *p* *pp* *mp*  
 liv - ion. A car —  
*pp* *pp*

79 *mf* *pp* *mp* < *mf*  
 passed. (pp) (scat) *mf* *f*  
 Its rush and whine  
 (pp) *mf* *mp* *mf*

79 *mf* *pp* *mp* *mf*  
 passed. Its rush and whine *mf*  
*mf* *pp* *mp* *mf*  
*mf* *f*



97 *p* un - til the ice - box mo - tor *pp nasal!* kicked *f*

*(pp)* uhnn *pp nasal!* kicked *f*

un - til the ice - box mo - tor uhnn

97 *(pp)* *p* *pp* *f*

101 *f* on — *f* and prod - ded me, — prod - ded —

kicked on — *mp* and prod - ded me, — prod - ded —

on — *f* and prod - ded me, — prod - ded —

kicked on — *mp* and prod - ded me, — prod - ded —

101 *f* *mp* *f*

105 — me, prod - ded me — a - wake.

prod - ded me — a - wake.

me, *mf* "You are

ded me — *mf* "You are liv - ing,"

105 *f* *mf*

*Basses Divided*



115

S *mf* "You are  
liv - ing," *f* "You are liv - ing,"

A *f* or an - y of the hun - dred oth - er nois - y things

T *f* or an - y of the hun - dred oth - er nois - y things

B *mf* "You are liv - ing," "You are liv - ing,"

115 *f* *mf*

117

S liv - ing," "You are liv - ing,"

A *f* that on - ly child - ren can't stop hear - ing,

T *f* that on - ly child - ren can't stop hear - ing,

B *mf* are liv - ing," "You are liv - ing,"

117 *f* *mf* "You are liv - ing," "You are liv - ing,"

120

S *mf* "You are liv - ing," *mf* "You are liv - ing,"

A *f* can't stop hear - ing, *ff* can't stop

T *f* can't stop hear - ing, *ff* can't stop

B *mf* "You are liv - ing," *f* "You are liv - ing,"

120 *mf* *f* *ff* *ff* *f*

124 *f* (♩ = 144)

S *f* "You are liv - ing,"

A *f* hear - ing. *pp* (scat)

T *f* hear - ing. *pp* (scat)

B *mf* liv - ing," *mp* Cars start - ed,

124 *pp* *mf*

128 *mf* leaves rubbed, spar -

trucks' brakes whis - tled,

128 *mf*

131 rows peeped... *f* When - ev - er it rained, *mf* the

*mp* *mf* *f* *f* When - ev - er it rained,

*mp* *mf* *f* *f* When - ev - er it

131 *f* *mf* *f* *f*

136 rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,

*mf* the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,

rained, *mf* the rain

the rain spat - tered, dripped,

136 *mf* *mf* *mf*

spat - tered, the rain  
 the rain spat - tered,  
 spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 and ran,

spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 dripped, and ran,  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped,  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped,

*pp*  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
*mp* and ran, *pp* the rain spat - tered, dripped,



144 *mp* for the en - tire length  
*mp* for the en - tire length  
*pp* the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 and ran, *pp* the rain spat - tered, dripped,

146 for the en - tire length of the  
 for the en - tire length of the  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped,

148 *mf* show - er, *mp* for the en - tire  
*mf* show - er, *mp* for the en - tire  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 and ran, *pp* the rain spat - tered, dripped,

150

length of days - long rains,  
length of days - long rains,  
the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped,

*mf* *f* *mf* *f*

150

*pp* *mf* *f*

152

un - til we chil -  
un - til we chil -  
the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped,

*mp* *mf* *mf* *mf*

152

*pp* *mf*

154

dren were al - most in - sane from  
dren were al - most in - sane from  
the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran, the rain  
and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,

*f* *f* *p* *p*

154

*p* *f*

157

hear - ing it rain, in - sane from hear - ing it  
 hear - ing it rain, in - sane from hear - ing it  
 spat - tered, dripped, and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped, and  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran, the rain

*f* *mf* *f* *mf* *mp* *mp*

161

rain be - cause we could - n't stop hear - ing it  
 rain be - cause we could - n't stop hear - ing it  
 ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 spat - tered, dripped, and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped,

*mp* *mf* *f* *mp* *mf* *f* *mp* *mf* *f*

164

rain, could - n't stop hear - ing it  
 could - n't stop hear - ing it rain,  
 the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,  
 and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped,

*f* *mf* *mf* *mf*

rain, could - n't stop hear - ing it

could - n't stop hear - ing it rain,

the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran,

and ran, the rain spat - tered, dripped,

166

rain, could - n't stop hear - ing. The si - lence,

could - n't stop hear - ing it The si - lence,

the rain spat - tered, dripped, and ran, The si - lence,

and ran, the rain spat - tered, The si - lence,

168

like all si - len - ces, was made poig - nant and dis - tinct by its sounds.

like all si - len - ces, was made poig - nant and dis - tinct by its sounds.

like all si - len - ces, was made poig - nant and dis - tinct by its sounds.

like all si - len - ces, was made poig - nant and dis - tinct by its sounds.

172

♩ = 72

178 *(stay f)* *mf* 3 3  
*(stay f)* *mf* What a mar - vel it was that the day so oft - en in - tro -  
*(stay f)* *mf* What a mar - vel it was that the day so oft - en in - tro -  
*(stay f)* *mf* What a mar - vel it was that the day so oft - en in - tro -  
178 *(stay f)* *mf* What a mar - vel it was that the day so oft - en in - tro -

182 *f* *mp* *mf* 3  
*f* *mp* *mf* 3  
*f* *mp* *mf* 3  
*f* *mp* *mf* 3  
182 *f* *mp* *mf* 3  
*f* *mp* *mf* 3

185 *subito p (but intense)* 3  
*subito p (but intense)* 3  
*subito p (but intense)* 3 *mp*  
185 *subito p (but intense)* 3 *mp*

189

re - call and con - tem - plate the du - ra - ble fact that I was here, —  
 re - call and con - tem - plate the du - ra - ble fact that I was here, —  
 mind - ed me — to re - call the du - ra - ble fact that I was here, —

*mf* 3 *f*

189

mind - ed me — to re - call the du - ra - ble fact that I was here, —

*mf* 3 *f*

192

— and had a - wak - ened once more — to find my - self set down *(stay f)* — 3 —  
 — and had a - wak - ened once more — to find my - self set down — in a  
 — and had a - wak - ened once more — to find my - self set down

*f* > *p* *f* > *p* *f* > *p*

192

— and had a - wak - ened once more — to find my - self set down *(stay f)* — 3 —

*f* > *p*

196

*mf* *mp* *mp*  
 go - ing world. In the liv - ing room —  
*pp* *(scat)* In the liv - ing room —

*mp*

196

*pp* *(scat)* *mf* *mp* *mp*

200

the mail slot clicked o - pen and

the mail slot clicked o - pen and

200

204

en - ve - lopes clat - tered down. —

en - ve - lopes clat - tered down. —

en - ve - lopes clat - tered down. —

en - ve - lopes clat - tered down. —

204

207

*mp* In the back room the steam i - ron

*mp* In the back room the steam i - ron

*mp* In the back room the steam i - ron

*mf* In the back room the steam i - ron

*mf* In the back room the steam i - ron

207

210

thumped the muf - fled iron - ing board and hissed. (ss) - (t)

thumped the muf - fled iron - ing board and hissed. (ss) - (t)

*f* *mp*

210

*pp* *f* *mp*

214

The walls squeaked, — *p* (scat)

The walls squeaked, — *p* (scat) *mf*

*p* (scat) *p* *mf* the

(scat) *mf* the

214

*p* *mf*

218

the screen door trem - bled, — *p*

the screen door trem - bled, — *p*

pipes — knocked, *p* (scat)

pipes — knocked, (scat)

218

*p*





230

*p* I sat mind - less and e - ter - nal on the kit - chen floor,

*p* I sat mind - less and e - ter - nal on the - kit - chen floor,

230

235

*p* *Slightly slower* ( $\text{♩} = 66$ ) *p* and sol - emn, play - ing with my fin - gers, with my fin - gers.

ston - y of head and sol - emn, *p* play - ing with my fin - gers.

play - ing with my fin - gers, with my fin - gers.

and sol - emn, fin - gers.

235

*Slower, huge* ( $\text{♩} = 120$ )

238

*f* Time *f* streamed *mf* in full

*f* Time *p* (one solo) (m) streamed *p* (one solo) (m) *mf* in full

*f* Time *p* (one solo) (m) streamed *p* (one solo) (m) *mf* in full

Time streamed in full

238



255

musical score for measures 255-256. It features four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and two piano staves (Right and Left). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics include "banks;" and "swol - len - banks;". Dynamic markings include *mf* and *f*. There are triplet markings (3) over several notes.

255

piano accompaniment for measures 255-256. It consists of two staves (Right and Left). The lyrics "and when I" are visible. Dynamic markings include *mf* and *f*. There are triplet markings (3) over several notes.

*Faster* (♩ = 72)

257

musical score for measures 257-258. It features four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and two piano staves (Right and Left). The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics include "and when I woke" and "I woke". Dynamic markings include *f*. There are triplet markings (3) over several notes.

257

piano accompaniment for measures 257-258. It consists of two staves (Right and Left). The lyrics "I woke" are visible. Dynamic markings include *f*. There are triplet markings (3) over several notes.

260

musical score for measures 260-261. It features four staves: two vocal staves (Soprano and Alto) and two piano staves (Right and Left). The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics include "was so star - tled" and "I fell in.". Dynamic markings include *ff*, *mp*, *p*, and *pp*.

260

piano accompaniment for measures 260-261. It consists of two staves (Right and Left). The lyrics "star - tled" and "I fell in." are visible. Dynamic markings include *f*, *ff*, *mp*, *p*, and *pp*.

♩ = 60

266 *mp* *pp* *mp* *f*

Child - ren — ten years old wake up and find them - selves —

*pp* *f*

Child - ren — wake up and find them - selves —

*mp* *pp* *mp* *f*

Child - ren — ten years old wake up and find them - selves —

*pp* *p* *f*

Child - ren — Child - ren wake up and find them - selves —

266

*mp* *pp* *mp* *f*

269 *fp* *f* *mp*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here all — a - long.

*fp* *f* *p*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here —

*fp* *f* *mp*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here all — a - long.

*fp* *f* *p* *pp*

here, dis - cov - er them - selves to have been here — Child - ren... —

269

*fp* *f* *mp* *pp*





