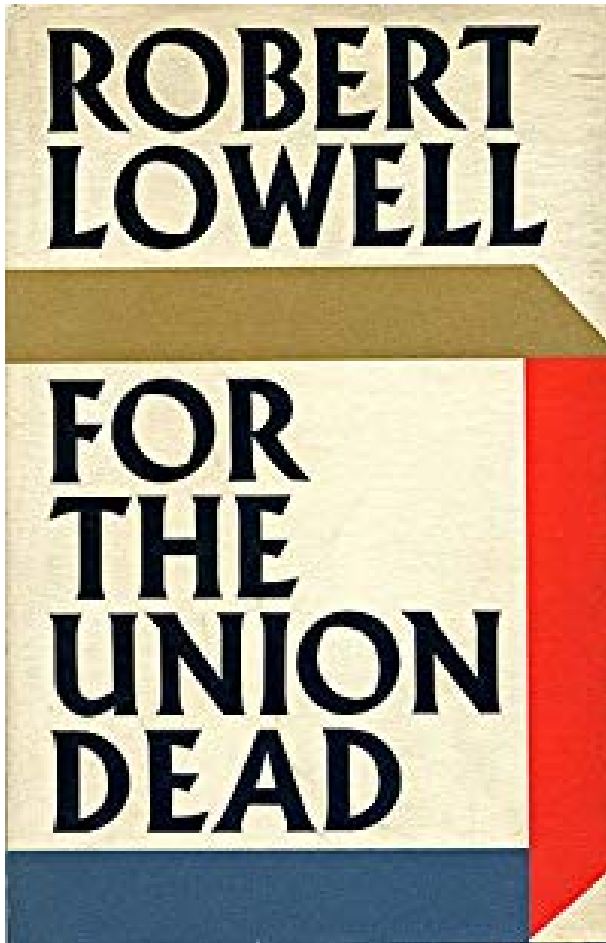


For the Union Dead



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| Pages: | 72 |
| Genre: | Poetry |
| Language | English |
| Author: | Robert Lowell |
| ISBN10: | 0571135447 |
| Goodreads Rating: | 3.93 |
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For the Union Dead is a well-known 1964 poem by Robert Lowell, published in a book of the same name and originally written for the Boston Arts Festival in 1960 where Lowell first read it in public. The title references Allen Tate's 1928 poem "Ode to the Confederate Dead." The setting of the poem is the Boston Common near the well-known Robert Gould Shaw Memorial. In the poem, Lowell's visit to the park leads to a series of associations that the dug-up park conjures. First, watching the construction of the underground parking garage beneath the Common makes him think about his childhood and how Boston had changed; in particular, the South Boston Aquarium that he'd visited as a child had recently been demolished in 1954. This leads him to think about the Robert Gould Shaw memorial and the history associated with the memorial (including Robert Gould Shaw and the all-black 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry that he led). Finally, Lowell thinks of the then-controversial civil rights movement and the images of the integration of black and white schoolchildren that Lowell had recently seen on television. The final lines of the poem, which read, "The Aquarium is gone. Everywhere,/ giant finned cars nose forward like fish;/ a savage servility/ slides by on grease" are particularly well-known for their rather dark description of the large American cars that were popular at the time.