Table of Contents

Course Syllabus 6

Poets on Poetry 10

32 Most Beautiful Words in the English Language: 14

Some Fundamentals of Poetry 15

Types of Metrical Feet 15

Types of Metrical Lines 16

Verse Forms 17

Devices of Sound 18

Figures of Speech 20

Stanza Forms 22

Glossary of Poetic Terms 24

Poetry Explications 33

Preparing to Write the Explication 33

The Large Issues 33

The Details 33

The Patterns 34

Basic Terms for Talking about Meter 34

I Got Rhythm 35

Writing the Explication 36

The First Paragraph 36

The Next Paragraphs 37

The Conclusion?? 37

Tips to keep in mind 37

Sample explication of The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost 38

Speaker 40

What is speaker? 40

Here's an example of a speaker explicated 40

Oral Presentation Guidelines 41

Written Submission Guidelines 43

Poet Study 46

Whom should I study? Some suggestions 47

Poetry 49

EDMUND SPENSER (1552-1599) 49

Amoretti LV: So oft as I her beauty do behold 49

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-1586) 49

Astrophil and Stella 1: Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show 49

Astrophil and Stella 2: Not at first sight, nor with a dribbèd shot 50

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616) 50

Sonnet 1: From fairest creatures we desire increase 50

Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun 50

Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day? 51

JOHN DONNE (1572-1631) 51

Holy Sonnets: Death, be not proud 51

The Funeral 52

The Dream 52

ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1674) 54

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time 54

ANNE BRADSTREET (1612-1672) 54

To My Dear and Loving Husband 54

Before the Birth of One of Her Children 54

ANDREW MARVELL (1621-1678) 55

To His Coy Mistress 55

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744) 56

Ode on Solitude 56

WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827) 57

The Chimney Sweeper: A little black thing among the snow 57

The Chimney Sweeper: When my mother died I was very young 57

The Lamb 58

The Tyger 58

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850) 59

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud 59

The World Is Too Much With Us 60

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798 60

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834) 63

Kubla Khan 63

LORD BYRON (GEORGE GORDON) (1788-1824) 65

She Walks in Beauty 65

My Soul is Dark 65

When We Two Parted 66

There is Pleasure in the Pathless Woods 66

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822) 66

Ozymandias 66

Love’s Philosophy 67

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821) 67

Ode to a Nightingale 67

Ode on a Grecian Urn 69

from Endymion 70

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882) 72

Give All to Love 72

Fate 72

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806-1861) 73

Sonnets from the Portuguese 14: If thou must love me, let it be for nought 73

Sonnets from the Portuguese 43: How do I love thee? Let me count the ways 73

A Curse for a Nation 73

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882) 76

A Psalm of Life 76

A Gleam of Sunshine 77

EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849) 79

Annabel Lee 79

A Dream Within a Dream 80

The Raven 80

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809-1892) 83

Ulysses 83

EMILY BRONTË (1818-1848) 84

I Am the Only Being Whose Doom 84

Come, Walk with Me 85

WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892) 86

O Captain! My Captain! 86

When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer 86

O Me! O Life! 86

I Sit and Look Out 87

Song of Myself (1892 version) 87

EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886) 92

Because I could not stop for Death – (479) 92

“Hope” is the thing with feathers - (314) 92

“Faith” is fine invention (202) 93

My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun (764) 93

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain, (340) 94

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY (1849-1903) 94

Invictus 94

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939) 95

When You Are Old 95

Easter, 1916 95

The Second Coming 97

Leda and the Swan 97

The Lake Isle of Innisfree 98

EDWARD ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1869-1935) 98

The Home on the Hill 98

PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (1872-1906) 99

We Wear the Mask 99

Ships that Pass in the Night 99

Life’s Tragedy 100

A Negro Love Song 100

ROBERT FROST (1874-1963) 101

The Road Not Taken 101

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening 101

Mending Wall 102

RAINER MARIA RILKE (1875-1926) 103

Duino Elegies: The First Elegy 103

The Second Elegy 105

The Third Elegy 106

Love Song 108

Losing 109

I Live my Life in Widening Circles 109

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883-1963) 109

The Red Wheelbarrow 109

Complete Destruction 110

Young Woman at a Window 110

EZRA POUND (1885-1972) 110

In a Station of the Metro 110

A Girl 110

MARIANNE MOORE (1887-1972) 111

A Graveyard 111

Poetry 111

Poetry (1967) 112

T. S. ELIOT (1888-1965) 112

The Hollow Men 112

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock 115

CLAUDE MCKAY (1889-1948) 118

If We Must Die 118

Harlem Shadows 119

America 119

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1892-1950) 120

“What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why” 120

Conscientious Objector 120

First Fig 121

A Visit to the Asylum 121

E. E. CUMMINGS (1894-1962) 122

Humanity I Love You 122

[in Just-] 122

If 123

Let’s Live Suddenly Without Thinking 124

anyone lived in a pretty how town 124

LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967) 125

The Negro Speaks of Rivers 125

Dream Deferred 126

Life is Fine 126

Democracy 127

Mother to Son 127

I, Too 128

COUNTEE CULLEN (1903-1946) 129

Incident 129

A Brown Girl Dead 129

PABLO NERUDA (1904-1973) 129

If You Forget Me 129

I Do Not Love You Except Because I Love You 131

MARY ELIZABETH FRYE (1905-2004) 131

Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep 131

ELIZABETH BISHOP (1911-1979) 131

One Art 131

ROBERT HAYDEN (1913-1980) 132

The Whipping 132

DYLAN THOMAS (1914-1953) 133

Do Not Go Gentle… 133

Fern Hill 133

WILLIAM BURROUGHS (1914-1997) 135

Advice for Young People 135

GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917-2000) 136

We Real Cool 136

The Mother 137

The Bean Eaters 137

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI (1919-) 138

The World is a Beautiful Place 138

Dog 139

CHARLES BUKOWSKI (1920-1994) 141

Roll the Dice 141

ALLEN GINSBERG (1926-1997) 142

America 142

A Supermarket in California 144

My Sad Self 144

ANNE SEXTON (1928-1974) 146

The Double Image 146

45 Mercy Street 151

Her Kind 153

MAYA ANGELOU (1928-2014) 153

Phenomenal Woman 153

Still I Rise 155

Caged Bird 156

SHEL SILVERSTEIN (1930-1999) 157

Where the Sidewalk Ends 157

When I am Gone 157

SYLVIA PLATH (1932-1963) 157

Lady Lazarus 157

Daddy 160

Mad Girl’s Love Song 162

AMIRI BARAKA (1934-2014) 162

Black Art 162

MARY OLIVER (1935-) 164

The Summer Day 164

Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness 164

Mindful 165

The Journey 165

MARGARET ATWOOD (1939-) 166

Siren Song 166

A Sad Child 167

This is a Photograph of Me 168

SEAMUS HEANEY (1939-2013) 168

Blackberry-Picking 168

BILLY COLLINS (1941-) 169

Forgetfulness 169

On Turning Ten 170

SHARON OLDS (1942-) 171

The Victims 171

NIKKI GIOVANNI (1943-) 171

Legacies 171

Choices 172

Knoxville Tennessee 172

RITA DOVE (1955-) 173

Fifth Grade Autobiography 173

Exit 173

# Course Syllabus

The philosophical foundation of the course:

Since the 1980s, there has been a resurgence of interest in writing poems in rhyme, meter, and traditional forms. This movement, often called The New Formalism, arose partly as a rebellion against the hegemony of free verse (or "open form" as some now call it) since the early century. New Formalism, however, is also based on the work of older poets, such as Richard Wilbur and X. J. Kennedy, who have resolutely continued to write in traditional verse from mid-twentieth-century till today.

Our pedagogical underpinning originates from an even older idea, the age-old practice of apprenticeship to a guild craftsperson. The contemporary version of this notion is that, before one can experiment and “be” avant-garde, one must first be steeped in traditional techniques. In this spirit, our course is devoted to studying specific meters, set stanzas, and inherited forms, as a firm base or background to write in whatever mode—free verse or formal verse (“closed form”)—you might select for future work.

-Gotera

If you have at least an interest in poetry and have an interest in the humanity behind the art form as well as a tolerance for a teacher who may at times get overly excited about verse and the moments of life captured therein, then you are in the right place. This course concerns itself with the reading and experiencing of poetry. We will focus both on what poetry "means" and what it does: what needs and desires does poetry fulfill in its writers and readers? When does it leave the static page and become something performed, ritually memorized, communally celebrated, or otherwise brought to life? How do we draw the dividing lines between poetry and prose, poetry and song, "good" poetry and doggerel? How does cultural conditioning affect the way one defines and values poetry?

It is important that you understand that this course will rarely feature the lecture; rather, it will consist almost entirely of open discussion and poetry workshops. So, now is the time to find your voice!

Think of this poetry course as one divided into two sections—the heart and the mind. Let me begin with the mind.

Poetry Seminar—The Mind:

Here we find the intellectualization of the art form. As the term wears on, we will explore various movements in poetry (i.e. Romanticism, Imagism, etc.). We will familiarize ourselves with the historical, social, and political context of each movement. Naturally, we will study the poetry and the poets associated with each movement. As we go on, emphasis will be placed on formalism (i.e. a return to metrical and rhymed verse). You will be expected to explicate the poetry we read in search of the how’s and why’s of poetry. Further, we will reflect the various themes of the studied movements in our own poetry. And yes, you will be expected to adhere to the formalist principles of poetry in your own (i.e. rhyme, meter, etc.).

Poetry Seminar—The Heart: It is my opinion that if we were to over-intellectualize poetry, we would be doing the art form and its artists a disservice. We cannot lose sight of the most important element of poetry—that it reflects the wonderfully subjective perspective of the poet. Herein, we will concern ourselves with the theme of each poem. I will encourage you to internalize the essence of each poem as we seek its truth. Consider Robert Frost’s thoughts on poetry:

'There are three things, after all, that a poem must reach: the eye, the ear, and what we may call the heart or the mind. It is most important of all to reach the heart of the reader.'

Before we explore the wonders of poetry, I want you to rest easy knowing that this course is designed as an introductory course! You are not expected to be a poet at the outset; you are only expected to be interested in poetry and the poet.

**Policies and Procedures**: In order to make this year successful, you will want to have the following information:

1. **Arrival**: It is imperative that you make it to class on time every day. If for some reason you will be late for school, please provide a parent or guardian’s note of explanation. Lateness must not become a habit because not only does it affect your performance in my class due to reduced participation, but it is also disruptive to a class already in progress. Each unexcused lateness will result in a **5 point deduction** to your participation grade. Often short book quizzes are given at the very beginning of class, so if you are late and miss the quiz, you will get a big fat “goose egg” (zero). Walking in even one minute late is LATE.
2. **Attendance**: In addition to progress through the course work, attendance also plays a vital role in your success. All absences must be excused by a note from either parent/guardian or doctor. It is the student’s responsibility to make up any class work, homework, and tests that are missed. The Beacon portal is a wonderful resource that can be accessed at any time to check on any missed homework. Each unexcused absence will result in a **10 point deduction** from your participation grade (in addition to the detriment of falling behind in class due to your absence).
3. **Be Prepared**: Our days are short and we have lots of material to cover. Therefore, you must come to class prepared **every day** with a pen, a loose-leaf 3-ring binder or journal, and any relevant texts. A student will be marked unprepared if one of these items is missing, and points will be deducted from the participation grade ultimately affecting the final grade. Most importantly, if you do not have the relevant text for any given class period, your participation grade will suffer a **10 point deduction**.
4. **Homework and Reading**: We will read and/or write about poetry every night!

Failure to complete written/typewritten homework will result in a zero. I expect the homework to be neat and complete. If there is a legitimate reason for a student not completing his homework, the parent must send a note to me on the day the homework is due stating the reason it was not completed. Otherwise, **NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED**! Once again I encourage you to make use of the Beacon portal and check homework assignments.

1. **Stay Organized**: Notebooks will be checked from time to time. Students are responsible for keeping their notebooks up to date, neat, and orderly.
2. **Plagiarism**: Per Merriam-Webster: Plagiarize means to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own**:** use (another's production) without crediting the source. Also to commit literary theft**:** present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source. So, if the thoughts or ideas are not your own, give credit where credit is due. Once again, To avoid confusion, students should keep in mind that plagiarism occurs not only when someone copies an author word for word, but also when someone uses another's ideas without giving credit, even if the ideas are paraphrased. Always document your sources! Plagiarism is academic suicide. If you are found guilty of plagiarism you will receive a zero for the assignment. Further, if you plagiarize the PBA, you will fail the course.
3. **Participate**: Ladies and gentlemen, this class is rooted in discussion. In many ways this class will function as a typical English class where your insightful thoughts and questions represent the foundation of each class. You will be challenged to analyze, critique, synthesize, elaborate, and discuss each poem. Yet, this class also requires that we share our own poetry! This is a requirement of the course so leave your inhibitions at the door and allow yourself to be a bit vulnerable.
4. **Tutoring**: I am here every day after school, usually accessible during lunch, as well as during tutoring hours. If you have any questions, feel free to visit room 332.
5. **Listen**: It is a critical life skill! Listen intently to your peers with an open mind avoiding your default intellectual impulse. You will become a better student of English and a better YOU.
6. **Eye contact**: When you refer to one of your peers (which I expect you to do often), look at him or her. Also, NEVER give someone your back when he/she is talking. That is just weirdly inhuman behavior. So, turn around and make eye contact.
7. **Support**: You will quickly learn that this year will be an intense experience, so be supportive of one another.
8. **Respect**: I have established a classroom based on the principal of respect—**WE** respect each other. Disruptive, rude, and disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. It is absolutely critical that each member of this community feel comfortable in sharing his/her thoughts. Once again I will not allow anyone in this class to deny anyone the opportunity to freely participate in our “free flow of ideas.” In short, I can stomach many issues in the classroom, but I have **zero tolerance** for any form of disrespect.
9. **Once again, NO LATE WORK IS ACCEPTED**.
10. **Packing Up to Go:** Often the most critical minutes in a class session are the last five, where conclusions aredrawn and assignments are made. Please do not start to pack up your belongings beforethe end of class.

**Grading Policy**

Each term, your grade will be determined based on the percentages below.

(25%) **Original** **Poetry/Readings/Project**—Over the course of the term you will write poetry, lots of it. Your poetry, with few exceptions, will have to follow certain formal guidelines, but essentially the heart of the piece belongs to you. While you will be graded on each poem, you are essentially working your way to a Poetry Portfolio that will be due at the end of the term. Additionally, you will be expected to share your poetry with the class during our readings. Have no fear! While this may seem horrifying, we will create an atmosphere where you will feel comfortable taking risks.

* Poetry Portfolio (Collection of poems written for the course)
* Original Poems
* Poetry Readings
* Creative Project (Visual Poetry)

(20%) **Poetry Explications/Poetry Journal—**This part of your grade for the term reflects the “mind” of the course or our intellectualization of poetry.Youare expected to demonstrate great control of the “nuts and bolts” of poetry (think glossary of terms) in your explications. Additionally, you will be expected to lead the class in an explication of at least one of your own poems. Additionally, this grade includes the various poetry writings as the term wears on.

* Reading Journals (Poetry anaylsis/explication/internalization)
* Two Formal Poetry Explications
* One Explication of Original Poetry—Class Presentation
* Nearly nightly poetry practice

(10%) **Poem Annotations**

(25%) **Course Participation/Attendance**

Essentially, this category includes discussions of poetry read for homework and any other participation not included in previous categories. Course participation grades are not automatic. They are based on oral contributions to the collective learning experience of the class as a whole in terms of asking pertinent questions, answering questions, making insightful observations, and offering other meaningful expressions of interest in the material that help encourage learning. As the term wears on, I expect to hear greater control of poetic form and devices in your commentary.

(20%) **Poet Study**

While I want you to aim for more than an A in this class (that will make more sense later), I understand the pragmatic nature of grades. So, to earn an A, do the following (To fail, dance with the antithesis):

* Rarely ever miss class!
* Rarely, and I mean rarely, ever get to class late! (I will often give a quiz at the beginning of morning classes…arriving late means a big ole zero for that quiz)
* Maintain a complete, organized, and, most importantly, thoughtful poetry journal.
* Read AND annotate EVERY poem. (I collect every text and assess your annotations)
* Contribute meaningfully to classroom discussions…let your voice be heard…Yawp!
* Work diligently and meticulously on all poems and explications. Make meaningful use of the writing process.
* Produce creative work that you would be proud to share with the entire class!

|  |
| --- |
| Poets on Poetry Famous quotations about poetry: |
| 'Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity.' |
| [William Wordsworth](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/wordsworth.htm) |
| 'A good poet is someone who manages, in a lifetime of standing out in thunderstorms, to be struck by lightening five or six times; a dozen or two dozen times and he is great.' |
| [Randall Jarrell](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/jarrell.htm) |
| 'Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.' |
| [T.S.Eliot](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/eliot.htm) |
| 'Milton, Madam, was a genius that could cut a Colossus from a rock; but could not carve heads upon cherry-stones.'  (To Miss Hannah More, who had expressed a wonder that the poet who had written *Paradise Lost* should write such poor sonnets.) |
| [Samuel Johnson](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/johnson.htm) |
| 'Deprivation is for me what daffodils were for Wordsworth.' |
| [Philip Larkin](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/larkin.htm) |
| 'Poetry is the record of the best and happiest moments of the happiest and best minds.' |
| [Percy Bysshe Shelley](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/shelley.htm) |
| 'Writing free verse is like playing tennis with the net down.' |
| [Robert Frost](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/frost.htm) |
| '...nine-tenths of what passes as English poetry is the product of either careerism, or keeping one's hand in: a choice between vulgarity and banality.' |
| [Robert Graves](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/graves.htm) |
| 'Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.' |
| [T.S.Eliot](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/eliot.htm) |
| 'Most people ignore most poetry because most poetry ignores most people.' |
| Adrian Mitchell |
| 'No man can read Hardy's poems collected but that his own life, and forgotten moments of it, will come back to him, in a flash here and an hour there. Have you a better test of true poetry?' |
| [Ezra Pound](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/pound.htm) |
| 'I wish our clever young poets would remember my homely definitions of prose and poetry; that is prose; words in their best order; - poetry; the *best* words in the best order.' |
| [S.T.Coleridge](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/coleridge.htm) |
| 'Well, write poetry, for God's sake, it's the only thing that matters.' |
| [e. e. cummings](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/cummings.htm) |
| 'In my view a good poem is one in which the form of the verse and the joining of its parts seems light as a shallow river flowing over its sandy bed.' |
| [Basho](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/basho.htm)  (Translated by Lucien Stryk) |
| 'Use no superfluous word, no adjective, which does not reveal something. Don't use such an expression as 'dim land of peace.' It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realising that the natural object is always the *adequate* symbol. Go in fear of abstractions.' |
| [Ezra Pound](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/pound.htm) |
| 'Poetry is the journal of a sea animal living on land, wanting to fly in the air.' |
| [Carl Sandburg](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/sandburg.htm) |
| 'Poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance.' |
| [Matthew Arnold](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/arnold.htm) |
| 'I consider myself a poet first and a musician second. I live like a poet and I'll die like a poet.' |
| Bob Dylan |
| 'Poetry fettered fetters the human race.' |
| [William Blake](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/blake.htm) |
| 'Swans sing before they die - 'twere no bad thing  Did certain persons die before they sing.' |
| [S.T.Coleridge](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/coleridge.htm) |
| 'The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given , the emotion is immediately evoked.' |
| [T.S.Eliot](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/eliot.htm) |
| 'To break the pentameter, that was the first heave.' |
| [Ezra Pound](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/pound.htm) |
| 'Poetry is what in a poem makes you laugh, cry, prickle, be silent, makes your toe nails twinkle, makes you want to do this or that or nothing, makes you know that you are alone in the unknown world, that your bliss and suffering is forever shared and forever all your own.' |
| [Dylan Thomas](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/thomas_d.htm) |
| 'I have never started a poem yet whose end I knew. Writing a poem is discovering.' |
| [Robert Frost](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/frost.htm) |
| 'The poet is the priest of the invisible.' |
| [Wallace Stevens](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/stevens.htm) |
| 'Poetry is, at bottom, a criticism of life.' |
| [Matthew Arnold](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/arnold.htm) |
| 'The poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together.' |
| [T.S.Eliot](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/eliot.htm) |
| 'As a guiding principle I believe that every poem must be its own sole freshly-created universe, and therefore have no belief in 'tradition' or a common myth-kitty or casual allusions in poems to other poems or poets, which last I find unpleasantly like the talk of literary understrappers letting you see they know the right people.' |
| [Philip Larkin](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/larkin.htm) |
| 'I think a poet is anybody who wouldn't call himself a poet.' |
| Bob Dylan |
| 'You I am sure will forgive me for sincerely remarking that you might curb your magnanimity and be more of an artist, and 'load every rift' of your subject with ore.' |
| [John Keats](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/keats.htm) (in a letter to Shelley 1820) |
| 'Like a piece of ice on a hot stove the poem must ride on its own melting.' |
| [Robert Frost](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/frost.htm) |
| 'I could no more define poetry than a terrier can define a rat.' |
| [A. E. Housman](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/housman.htm) |
| 'If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.' |
| [Emily Dickinson](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/dickinson.htm) |
|  |
| 'There are three things, after all, that a poem must reach: the eye, the ear, and what we may call the heart or the mind. It is most important of all to reach the heart of the reader.' |
| [Robert Frost](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/frost.htm) |
| 'Modesty is a virtue not often found among poets, for almost every one of them thinks himself the greatest in the world.' |
| Miguel de Cervantes |
| 'Publishing a volume of verse is like dropping a rose-petal down the Grand Canyon and waiting for the echo.' |
| Don Marquis |
| 'Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle, and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves. Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world.' |
| [Percy Bysshe Shelley](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/shelley.htm) (*A Defence of Poetry)* |
| 'I've had it with these cheap sons of bitches who claim they love poetry but never buy a book.' |
| Kenneth Rexroth |
| 'Poets aren't very useful. / Because they aren't consumeful or very produceful.' |
| Ogden Nash |
|  |
| 'I believe that every English poet should read the English classics, master the rules of grammar before he attempts to bend or break them, travel abroad, experience the horrors of sordid passion, and - if he is lucky enough - know the love of an honest woman.' |
| [Robert Graves](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/graves.htm) |
| 'Great poetry is always written by somebody straining to go beyond what he can do.' |
| Stephen Spender |
| 'It is always hard for poets to believe that one says their poems are bad not because one is a fiend but because their poems are bad.' |
| [Randall Jarrell](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/jarrell.htm) |
| 'Everybody has their own idea of what's a poet. Robert Frost, President Johnson, T.S.Eliot, Rudolf Valentino - they're all poets. I like to think of myself as the one who carries the light bulb.' |
| Bob Dylan |
| 'In this poor body, composed of one hundred bones and nine openings, is something called spirit, a flimsy curtain swept this way and that by the slightest breeze. It is spirit, such as it is, which led me to poetry, at first little more than a pastime, then the full business of my life. There have been times when my spirit, so dejected, almost gave up the quest, other times when it was proud, triumphant. So it has been from the very start, never finding peace with itself, always doubting the worth of what it makes.' |
| [Basho](http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/basho.htm) |

# 32 Most Beautiful Words in the English Language:

1. Aquiver: (adj) Quivering, trembling.
2. Mellifluous: (adj) A sound that is sweet and smooth, pleasing to hear.
3. Ineffable: (adj) To great to be expressed in words.
4. Hiraeth: (n) A homesickness for a home you can’t return to, or that never was.
5. Nefarious: (adj) Wicked, villainous, despicable.
6. Somnambulist: (n) A person who sleepwalks.
7. Epoch: (n) A particular period of time in history or in a person’s life.
8. Sonorous: (adJ) An imposingly deep and full sound.
9. Serendipity: (n) The chance occurrence of events in a beneficial way.
10. Limerence: (n) The state of being infatuated with another person.
11. Bombinate: (v) To make a humming or buzzing noise.
12. Ethereal: (adj) Extremely delicate, light, not of this world.
13. Illicit: (adj) Not legally permitted.
14. Petrichor: (n) The pleasant, earthy smell after rain.
15. Iridescent: (adj) Producing a display of rainbow like colors.
16. Epiphany: (n) A moment of sudden revelation.
17. Supine: (adj) lying face upwards.
18. Luminescence: (n) Light produced by chemical, electrical, or physiological means.
19. Solitude: (n) A state of seclusion of isolation.
20. Aurora: (n) Dawn.
21. Syzygy: (n) An alignment of celestial bodies.
22. Phosphenes: (n) The light and colors produced by rubbing your eyes.
23. Oblivion: (n) The state of being unaware of what is happening around you.
24. Ephemeral: (adj) Lasting for a very short time.
25. Incandescence: (n) Light produced by high temperatures.
26. Denouement: (n) The resolution of a narrative.
27. Vellichor: (n) The strange wistfulness of used bookshops.
28. Eloquence: (n) The art of using language in an apt, fluent way.
29. Defenestration: (n) The act of throwing someone out of a window.
30. Sonder: (n) The realization that each passerby has a life as vivid and complex as your own.
31. Effervescence: (n) Bubbles in a liquid.
32. Cromulent: (n) Appearing legitimate but actually being spurious.

# Some Fundamentals of Poetry

METER: Meter is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables established in a line of poetry. The stressed syllable is also called the accented syllable. The unstressed syllable is also called the unaccented syllable. In determining the meter, the importance of the word, the position in the metrical pattern, and other linguistic factors should be considered. In identifying the meter of a line or verse, the type and the number of feet are considered.

FOOT: A foot is a unit of meter. A metrical foot can have two or three syllables. A foot consists generally of one stressed and one or more unstressed syllables. A line may have one foot, two feet, etc. Poetic lines are classified according to the number of feet in a line.

## Types of Metrical Feet

The basic types of metrical feet determined by the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables are:

1. iambic
2. trochaic
3. anapestic
4. dactylic
5. spondaic
6. pyrrhic
7. IAMB: The iambic foot is a two-syllable foot with the stress on the second syllable. The iambic foot is the most common foot in English.

A book | of ver | ses un | der neath | the bough.

A jug | of wine, | a loaf | of bread | --and thou.

1. TROCHEE: The trochaic foot consists of a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable.

Dou ble, | dou ble, | toil and | trouble,

Fire | burn and | cauldron | bubble

1. ANAPEST: The anapestic foot consists of three syllables with the stress on the last syllable.

With the sheep | in the fold | and the cows | in their stalls.

1. SPONDEE: The spondaic foot consists of two stressed syllables. Compound words are examples of spondees. They are used for variation.

Heartbreak, childhood, football

1. DACYTL: The dactylic foot contains three syllables with the stress on the first syllable.

Love again, | song again | nest again, | young again.

1. PYRRHIC: The pyrrhic foot consists of two unstressed syllables. This type of foot is rare and is found interspersed with other feet.

## Types of Metrical Lines

The basic kinds of metrical lines are:

1. monometer—one-foot line
2. dimeter—two-foot line
3. trimeter—three-foot line
4. tetrameter—four-foot line
5. pentameter—five-foot line
6. hexameter—six-foot line
7. heptameter—seven-foot line
8. octometer—eight-foot line
9. MONOMETER: Following is an example of iambic monometer from a poem by Robert Herrick.

UPON HIS DEPARTURE

Thus I

Pass by

And die,

As one,

Unknown

And gone.

1. DIMETER: Below is an example of a poem in trochaic dimeter by Richard Armour.

MONEY

Workers earn it,

Spendthrifts burn it

Bankers lend it,

Women spend it,

Forgers fake it,

\* \* \*

I could use it.

1. TRIMETER: Following is an example of iambic trimeter from a poem by Robert Bridges.

THE IDLE LIFE I LEAD

The idle life I lead

Is like a pleasant sleep,

Wherein I rest and head

The dreams that by me sweep.

1. TETRAMETER: Below is an example of iambic tetrameter by Henry Leigh.

NOT QUITE FAIR

The hills, the meadows, and the lakes,

Enchant not for their own sweet sakes.

They cannot know, they cannot care

To know that they are thought so fair.

1. PENTAMETER: Some quotations from Alexander Pope illustrate iambic pentameter.

What oft was thought, but ne’er so well express’d.

The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,

With loads of learned lumber in his head.

1. HEXAMETER: (sometimes called an alexandrine)

If hunger, proverbs say, allures the wolf from wood,

Much more the bird must dare a dash at something good.

1. HEPTAMETER: The iambic heptameter example is from a poem by Ernest Thayer.

CASEY AT THE BAT

It looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day,

The score stood four to six with but an inning left to play:

1. OCTOMETER: Below is an example from a poem by E. A. Poe to illustrate trochaic octometer.

THE RAVEN

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,

## Verse Forms

The kinds of verse forms based on meter and rhyme are (A) rhymed verse, (B) blank verse, and (C) free verse.

1. RHYMED VERSE: Rhymed verse consists of verse with end rhyme and usually with a regular meter
2. BLANK VERSE: Blank verse consists of lines of iambic pentameter without end rhyme.
3. FREE VERSE: Free verse consists of lines that do not have a regular meter and do not contain rhyme.

## Devices of Sound

1. RHYME: is the similarity of likeness of sound existing between two words. A true rhyme should consist of identical sounding syllables that are stressed and the letters preceding the vowels sounds should be different. Thus fun and run are TRUE or perfect rhymes because the vowel sounds are identical preceded by different consonants.

Near, off, or slant rhyme: A rhyme based on an imperfect or incomplete correspondence of end syllable sounds. Common in the work of Emily Dickinson, for instance:

It was not death, for I stood up,

And all the dead lie down.

It was not night, for all the bells

Put out their tongues for noon.

B. POSITION OF RHYME: Rhyme may be end rhyme or internal rhyme.

1. END RHYME: consists of the similarity occurring at the end of two or more lines of verse:

I wish that my room had a FLOOR

I don’t so much care for a DOOR

But this walking AROUND

Without touching the GROUND

Is getting to be quite a BORE!

2. INTERNAL RHYME: consists of the similarity occurring between two or more words in the same line of verse:

Once upon a midnight DREARY, while I pondered, weak and WEARY,

C. KINDS OF RHYME: The kinds of rhyme based on the number of syllables presenting a similarity of sound are:

1. MASCULINE RHYME—occurs when one syllable of a word rhymes with another word:

bend and send; bright and light

1. FEMININE RHYME—occurs when the last two syllables of a word rhyme with another word:

lawful and awful; lighting and fighting

1. TRIPLE RHYME—occurs when the last three syllables of a word or line rhyme:

victorious and glorious; ascendency and descendency; quivering and shivering; battering and shattering

D. RHYME SCHEME—is the pattern or sequence in which the rhyme occurs. The first sound is represented or designated as a, the second is designated as b, and so on. When the first sound is repeated, it is designated as a also.

Whose woods these are I think I know. a

His house is in the village though. a

He will not see me stopping here b

To watch his woods fill up with snow. a

My little horse must think it queer b

To stop without a farmhouse near b

Beside the woods and frozen lake c

The coldest evening of the year. b

He gives his harness bells a shake c

To ask if there is some mistake c

The only other sound’s the sweep d

Of easy wind and down flake. c

The woods are lovely, dark and deep d

But I have promises to keep, d

And miles to go before I sleep d

And miles to go before I sleep. d

E. ALLITERATION—is the repetition of the initial letter or sound in two or more words in a line of verse.

A Tutor who tooted the flute

Tried to teach two young tooters to toot;

Said the two to the tutor

“Is it harder to toot, or

To tutor two tooters to toot?” Carolyn Wells

F. ONOMATOPOEIA—is the use of a word to represent or imitate natural sounds (*buzz, crunch, tingle, gurgle, sizzle, hiss*)

G. ASSONANCE—is the similarity or repetition of a vowel sound in two or more words. *Lake* and *stake* are rhymes; *lake*

and *fate* are assonance. *Base* and *face* are rhymes; *base* and *fate* are assonance.

H. CONSONANCE—is the repetition of consonant sounds within a line of verse. Consonance is similar to alliteration except that consonance doesn’t limit the repeated sound to the initial letter or a word.

But such a tide as moving seems asleep.

I. REFRAIN—is the repetition of one or more phrases or lines at intervals in a poem, usually at the end of a stanza. The refrain often takes the form of a chorus.

Tobacco is a dirty weed:

I like it.

It satisfies no normal need:

I like it.

It makes you thin, it makes you lean.

It takes the hair right off your bean.

It’s the worst darn stuff I’ve ever seen;

I like it. G. L. Hemminger

J. REPETITION—is the reiterating of a word or phrase within a poem.

## Figures of Speech

A figure of speech is an expression in which the words are used in a nonliteral sense to present a figure, picture, or image. The basic figures are:

1. simile
2. metaphor
3. personification
4. synecdoche
5. metonymy
6. symbol
7. allegory
8. overstatement (hyperbole)
9. understatement (litotes)
10. antithesis
11. apostrophe
12. dramatic irony
13. irony of situation
14. verbal irony
15. paradox
16. oxymoron
17. SIMILE—is a direct or explicit comparison between two usually unrelated things indicating a likeness or similarity between some attribute found in both things. A simile uses like or as to introduce the comparison. In the expression “John swims like a fish,” the grace and naturalism with which John swims is compared with the grace and naturalness with which a fish swims. Literally, it would be impossible for John to swim like a fish because of his human nature. However, we can imagine the figure or image of a very skilled and graceful swimmer beneath the surface.
18. METAPHOR—is an implied comparison between two usually unrelated things indicating a likeness or analogy between attributes found in both things. A metaphor, unlike a simile, does not use like or as to indicate the comparison.
19. PERSONIFICATION—the giving of human characteristics to inanimate objects, ideas, or animals. “The wind whistled.” “Her heart cried out.”
20. SYNECDOCHE—is the technique of mentioning a part of something to represent the whole. “All hands on deck!”
21. METONYMY—is the substitution of a word naming an object for another word closely associated with it. “Pay tribute to the crown.” “The White House has decided.”
22. SYMBOL—is a word or image that signifies something other than what it literally represents. The cross is a symbol of Christianity. The donkey and the elephant are symbols of the two American political organizations.
23. ALLEGORY—a narrative or description having a second meaning beneath the surface one.
24. OVERSTATEMENT—is an exaggeration for the sake of emphasis and is not to be taken literally. “rivers of blood” “sweat to death”
25. UNDERSTATEMENT—consists of saying less than one means, or of saying what one means with less force than the occasion warrants.
26. ANTITHESIS—is a balancing or contrasting of one term against another. “Man proposes, God disposes.” —Pope
27. APOSTROPHE—is the addressing of someone or something usually not present, as though present. “Captain, My Captain! A fearful trip is done.” —Walt Whitman
28. DRAMATIC IRONY—a device by which the author implies a different meaning from that intended by the speaker (or by a speaker) in a literary work. An incongruity or discrepancy between what a character says or thinks and what the reader knows to be true (or between what a character perceives and what the author intends the reader to perceive.)
29. IRONY OF SITUATION—a situation in which there is an incongruity between actual circumstances and those that would seem appropriate or between what is anticipated and what actually comes to pass.
30. VERBAL IRONY—a figure of speech in which what is meant is the opposite of what is said.
31. PARADOX—a statement or situation containing apparently contradictory or incompatible elements.
32. OXYMORON—a compact paradox—a figure of speech that combines two contradictory words, placed side by side: *bitter sweet, wise fool, living death.*

## Stanza Forms

A stanza is a division of a poem based on thought or form. Stanzas based on form are marked by their rhyme scheme. Stanzas are known by the number of lines they contain. The basic stanza forms are:

1. couplet two-line stanza
2. triplet three-line stanza
3. quatrain four-line stanza
4. sestet six-line stanza
5. septet seven-line stanza
6. octave eight-line stanza

HEROIC COUPLET—(sometimes called a closed couplet) consists of two successive rhyming verses that contain a complete thought within the two lines. It usually consists of iambic pentameter lines.

TERZA RIMA—is a three-line stanza form with an interlaced or interwoven rhyme scheme: a-b-a, b-c-b, c-d-c, d-e-d, etc. Usually iambic pentameter.

LIMERICK—is a five-line nonsense poem with an anapestic meter. The rhyme scheme is usually a-a-b-b-a. The first, second, and fifth lines have three stresses; and the third and fourth have two stresses.

BALLAD STANZA—consists of four lines with a rhyme scheme of a-b-c-b. The first and third lines are tetrameter and the second and fourth are trimeter.

RIME ROYAL—is a stanza consisting of seven lines in iambic pentameter rhyming a-b-a-b-b-c-c. It called so because King James I used it.

OTTAVA RIMA—consists of eight iambic pentameter lines with a rhyme scheme of a-b-a-b-a-b-c-c. It is a form that was borrowed from the Italians.

SPENSERIAN STANZA—is a nine-line stanza consisting of eight iambic pentameter lines followed by an alexandrine, a line of iambic hexameter. The rhyme scheme is a-b-a-b-b-c-b-c-c. The form derives its name from Edmund Spenser, who initiated the form for his *Faerie Queene*.

SONNET—is a fourteen-line stanza form consisting of iambic pentameter lines. The two major sonnet forms are the Italian (Petrarchan) and the English (Shakespearean) sonnet.

Petrarchan or Italian Sonnet—is divided usually between eight lines called the octave, using two rimes arranged a-b-b-a-a-b-b-a, and six lines called the sestet, using any arrangement of either two or three rimes: c-d-c-d-c-d and c-d-e- c-d-e are common patterns. The division between octave and sestet in the Italian sonnet (indicated by the rhyme scheme and sometimes marked off in printing by a space) usually corresponds to a division of thought. The octave may, for instance, present a situation and the sestet a comment, or the octave an idea and the sestet an example, or the octave a question and the sestet an answer. Thus the structure reflects the meaning.

English or Shakespearean Sonnet—is composed of three quatrains and a concluding couplet, riming a-b-a-b c-d-c-d e-f-e-f g-g. Again the units marked off by the rimes and the development of the thought often correspond. The three quatrains, for instance, may present three examples and the couplet a conclusion or the quatrains three metaphorical statements of one idea and the couplet an application.

VILLANELLE—consists of five tercets and a quatrain in which the first and third lines of the opening tercet recur alternately at the end of the other tercets and together as the last two lines of the quatrain.

ELEGY—usually a poem that mourns the death of an individual, the absence of something deeply loved, or the transience of mankind.

LYRIC—is the most widely used type of poem, so diverse in its format that a rigid definition is impossible. However, several factors run common in all lyrics:

1. limited length
2. intensely subjective
3. personal expression of personal emotion
4. expression of thoughts and feelings of one speaker
5. highly imaginative
6. regular rhyme scheme

ODE—an exalted, complex rapturous lyricpoem written about a dignified, lofty subject.

# Glossary of Poetic Terms

**Allegory**

A symbolic narrative in which the surface details imply a secondary meaning. Allegory often takes the form of a story in which the characters represent moral qualities. The most famous example in English is John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, in which the name of the central character, Pilgrim, epitomizes the book's allegorical nature. Kay Boyle's story "Astronomer's Wife" and Christina Rossetti's poem "Up-Hill" both contain allegorical elements.

**Alliteration**

The repetition of consonant sounds, especially at the beginning of words. Example: "Fetched fresh, as I suppose, off some sweet wood." Hopkins, "In the Valley of the Elwy."

**Allusion**

A reference in a work of literature to something outside the work, especially to a well-known historical or literary event, person, or work. When T.S. Eliot writes, "To have squeezed the universe into a ball" in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," he is alluding to the lines "Let us roll our strength and all/ Our sweetness up into one ball" in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress."

**Anapest**

Two unaccented syllables followed by an accented one, as in com-pre-HEND or in-ter-VENE. An anapestic meter rises to the accented beat as in Byron's lines from "The Destruction of Sennacherib": "And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea, / When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee."

**Anecdote**

A short and often personal story used to emphasize a point, to develop a character or a theme, or to inject humor.

**Antecedent**

The word or phrase to which a pronoun refers. (sometimes after the pronoun in poetry).

**Antithesis**

A figure of speech characterized by strongly contrasting words, clauses, sentences, or ideas, as in “Man proposes; God disposes.” Antithesis is a balancing of one term against another for emphasis or stylistic effectiveness. The second line of the following couplet by Alexander Pope is an example of antithesis:

The hungry judges soon the sentence sign,

And wretches hang that jury-men may dine.

**Aphorism**

A terse statement that expresses a general truth or moral principle; sometimes considered a folk proverb.

**Apostrophe**

a figure of speech in which someone (usually, but not always absent), some abstract quality, or a nonexistent personage is directly addressed as though present. Following are two examples of apostrophe:

Papa Above! Regard a Mouse. -Dickinson

Milton! Thou shouldst be living in this hour; England hath need of thee . . -William Wordsworth

**Archetype**

A character, situation, or symbol that is familiar to people from all cultures because it occurs frequently in literature, myth, religion, or folklore.

**Assonance**

The repetition of similar vowel sounds in a sentence or a line of poetry or prose, as in "I rose and told him of my woe." Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer" contains assonantal "I's" in the following lines: "How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick, / Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself."

**Aubade**

A love lyric in which the speaker complains about the arrival of the dawn, when he must part from his lover. John Donne's "The Sun Rising" exemplifies this poetic genre.

**Ballad**

A narrative poem written in four-line stanzas, characterized by swift action and narrated in a direct style. The Anonymous medieval ballad, "Barbara Allan," exemplifies the genre.

**Blank verse**

A line of poetry or prose in unrhymed iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's sonnets, Milton's epic poem Paradise Lost, and Robert Frost's meditative poems such as "Birches" include many lines of blank verse. Here are the opening blank verse lines of "Birches": When I see birches bend to left and right / Across the lines of straighter darker trees, / I like to think some boy's been swinging them.

**Cacophony**

A harsh, unpleasant combination of sounds or tones. It may be an unconscious flaw in the poet’s music, resulting in harshness of sound or difficulty of articulation, or it may be used consciously for effect, as Browning and Eliot often use it. See, for example, the following line from Browning’s “Rabbi Ben Ezra”:

Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

**Caesura**

A strong pause within a line of verse. The following stanza from Hardy's "The Man He Killed" contains caesuras in the middle two lines:

He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,

Off-hand-like--just as I--

Was out of work-had sold his traps--

No other reason why.

**Character**

An imaginary person that inhabits a literary work. Literary characters may be major or minor, static (unchanging) or dynamic (capable of change). In Shakespeare's Othello, Desdemona is a major character, but one who is static, like the minor character Bianca. Othello is a major character who is dynamic, exhibiting an ability to change.

**Characterization**

The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions. Readers come to understand the character Miss Emily in Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" through what she says, how she lives, and what she does.

**Closed form**

A type of form or structure in poetry characterized by regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, and metrical pattern. Frost's "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" provides one of many examples. A single stanza illustrates some of the features of closed form:

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though.

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

**Conceit**

A far-fetched comparison between two seemingly unlike things; an extended metaphor that gains appeal from its unusual or extraordinary comparison.

**Connotation**

The associations called up by a word that goes beyond its dictionary meaning. Poets, especially, tend to use words rich in connotation. Dylan Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night" includes intensely connotative language, as in these lines: "Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright / Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay, / Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

**Consonance**

The repetition of similar consonant sounds in a group of words. Consonance is found in the following pairs of words: “add” and “read,” “bill and ball,” and “born” and “burn.”

**Convention**

A customary feature of a literary work, such as the use of a chorus in Greek tragedy, the inclusion of an explicit moral in a fable, or the use of a particular rhyme scheme in a villanelle. Literary conventions are defining features of particular literary genres, such as novel, short story, ballad, sonnet, and play.

**Couplet**

A pair of rhymed lines that may or may not constitute a separate stanza in a poem. Shakespeare's sonnets end in rhymed couplets, as in "For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings / That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

**Dactyl**

A stressed syllable followed by two unstressed ones, as in FLUT-ter-ing or BLUE-ber-ry.

**Denotation**

The dictionary meaning of a word. Writers typically play off a word's denotative meaning against its connotations, or suggested and implied associational implications.

**Denouement**

The resolution of the plot of a literary work. The denouement of Hamlet takes place after the catastrophe, with the stage littered with corpses. During the denouement Fortinbras makes an entrance and a speech, and Horatio speaks his sweet lines in praise of Hamlet.

**Dialogue**

The conversation of characters in a literary work. In fiction, dialogue is typically enclosed within quotation marks. In plays, characters' speech is preceded by their names.

**Diction**

The selection of words in a literary work. A work's diction forms one of its centrally important literary elements, as writers use words to convey action, reveal character, imply attitudes, identify themes, and suggest values. We can speak of the diction particular to a character, as in Iago's and Desdemona's very different ways of speaking in Othello. We can also refer to a poet's diction as represented over the body of his or her work, as in Donne's or Hughes's diction.

**Elegy**

A lyric poem that laments the dead. Robert Hayden's "Those Winter Sundays" is elegiac in tone. A more explicitly identified elegy is W.H. Auden's "In Memory of William Butler Yeats" and his "Funeral Blues."

**Elision**

The omission of an unstressed vowel or syllable to preserve the meter of a line of poetry. Alexander uses elision in "Sound and Sense": "Flies o'er th' unbending corn...."

**End Stopped**

A line with a pause at the end. Lines that end with a period, a comma, a colon, a semicolon, an exclamation point, or a question mark are end-stopped lines.

True ease in writing comes from Art, not Chance,

As those move easiest who have learn’d to dance.

**Enjambment**

A run-on line of poetry in which logical and grammatical sense carries over from one line into the next. An enjambed line differs from an end-stopped line in which the grammatical and logical sense is completed within the line. In the opening lines of Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess," for example, the first line is end-stopped and the second enjambed:

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now....

**Epic**

A long narrative poem that records the adventures of a hero. Epics typically chronicle the origins of a civilization and embody its central values. Examples from western literature include Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, Virgil's Aeneid, and Milton's Paradise Lost.

**Epigram**

A brief witty poem, often satirical. Alexander Pope's "Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog" exemplifies the genre:

I am his Highness' dog at Kew;

Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?

**Exposition**

The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided. Ibsen's A Doll's House, for instance, begins with a conversation between the two central characters, a dialogue that fills the audience in on events that occurred before the action of the play begins, but which are important in the development of its plot.

**Extended Metaphor**

An implied analogy, or comparison, which is carried throughout a stanza or an entire poem. In “The Bait,” John Donne compares a beautiful woman to fish bait and men to fish who want to be caught by the woman. Since he carries these comparisons all the way through the poem, these are considered “extended metaphors.”

**Eye Rhyme**

Rhyme that appears correct from spelling, but is half-rhyme or slant rhyme from the pronunciation. Examples include “watch” and “match,” and “love” and “move.”

**Falling action**

In the plot of a story or play, the action following the climax of the work that moves it towards its denouement or resolution. The falling action of Othello begins after Othello realizes that Iago is responsible for plotting against him by spurring him on to murder his wife, Desdemona.

**Falling meter**

Poetic meters such as trochaic and dactylic that move or fall from a stressed to an unstressed syllable. The nonsense line, "Higgledy, piggledy," is dactylic, with the accent on the first syllable and the two syllables following falling off from that accent in each word. Trochaic meter is represented by this line: "Hip-hop, be-bop, treetop--freedom."

**Figurative language**

A form of language use in which writers and speakers convey something other than the literal meaning of their words. Examples include hyperbole or exaggeration, litotes or understatement, simile and metaphor, which employ comparison, and synecdoche and metonymy, in which a part of a thing stands for the whole.

**Flashback**

An interruption of a work's chronology to describe or present an incident that occurred prior to the main time frame of a work's action. Writers use flashbacks to complicate the sense of chronology in the plot of their works and to convey the richness of the experience of human time. Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily" includes flashbacks.

**Foil**

A character who contrasts and parallels the main character in a play or story. Laertes, in Hamlet, is a foil for the main character; in Othello, Emilia and Bianca are foils for Desdemona.

**Foot**

A metrical unit composed of stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, an iamb or iambic foot is represented by ˘', that is, an unaccented syllable followed by an accented one. Frost's line "Whose woods these are I think I know" contains four iambs, and is thus an iambic foot.

**Foreshadowing**

Hints of what is to come in the action of a play or a story. Ibsen's A Doll's House includes foreshadowing as does Synge's Riders to the Sea. So, too, do Poe's "Cask of Amontillado" and Chopin's "Story of an Hour."

**Free verse**

Poetry without a regular pattern of meter or rhyme. The verse is "free" in not being bound by earlier poetic conventions requiring poems to adhere to an explicit and identifiable meter and rhyme scheme in a form such as the sonnet or ballad. Modern and contemporary poets of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries often employ free verse. Williams's "This Is Just to Say" is one of many examples.

**Heroic Couplet**

Two end-stopped iambic pentameter lines rhymed aa, bb, cc with the thought usually completed in the two-line unit. See the following example from Alexander Pope’s Rape of the Lock:

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,

How soon they find fit instruments of ill!

**Hyperbole**

A figure of speech involving exaggeration. John Donne uses hyperbole in his poem: "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star."

**Iamb**

An unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one, as in to-DAY. See Foot.

**Imagery**

A concrete representation of a sense impression, a feeling, or an idea. Imagery refers to the pattern of related details in a work. In some works one image predominates either by recurring throughout the work or by appearing at a critical point in the plot. Often writers use multiple images throughout a work to suggest states of feeling and to convey implications of thought and action. Some modern poets, such as Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams, write poems that lack discursive explanation entirely and include only images.

**Internal Rhyme**

Rhyme that occurs within a line, rather than at the end. The following lines contain internal rhyme:

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping. . suddenly there came a tapping . . .

**Irony**

A contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen in life and in literature. In verbal irony, characters say the opposite of what they mean. In irony of circumstance or situation, the opposite of what is expected occurs. In dramatic irony, a character speaks in ignorance of a situation or event known to the audience or to the other characters. Flannery O'Connor's short stories employ all these forms of irony, as does Poe's "Cask of Amontillado."

**Lyric poem**

A type of poem characterized by brevity, compression, and the expression of feeling.

**Metaphor**

A comparison between essentially unlike things without an explicitly comparative word such as like or as.

**Meter**

The measured pattern of rhythmic accents in poems. See Foot and Iamb.

**Metonymy**

A figure of speech in which a closely related term is substituted for an object or idea. An example: "We have always remained loyal to the crown." See Synecdoche.

**Mixed Metaphors**

The mingling of one metaphor with another immediately following with which the first is incongruous. Lloyd George is reported to have said, “I smell a rat. I see it floating in the air. I shall nip it in the bud.”

**Narrative poem**

A poem that tells a story. See Ballad.

**Narrator**

The voice and implied speaker of a fictional work, to be distinguished from the actual living author. For example, the narrator of Joyce's "Araby" is not James Joyce himself, but a literary fictional character created expressly to tell the story. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" contains a communal narrator, identified only as "we." See Point of view.

**Octave**

An eight-line unit, which may constitute a stanza; or a section of a poem, as in the octave of a sonnet.

**Ode**

A long, stately poem in stanzas of varied length, meter, and form. Usually a serious poem on an exalted subject, such as Horace's "Eheu fugaces," but sometimes a more lighthearted work, such as Neruda's "Ode to My Socks."

**Onomatopoeia**

The use of words to imitate the sounds they describe. Words such as buzz and crack are onomatopoetic. Most often, however, onomatopoeia refers to words and groups of words, such as Tennyson's description of the "murmur of innumerable bees," which attempts to capture the sound of a swarm of bees buzzing.

**Open form**

A type of structure or form in poetry characterized by freedom from regularity and consistency in such elements as rhyme, line length, metrical pattern, and overall poetic structure. E.E. Cummings's "[Buffalo Bill's]" is one example. See also Free verse.

**Oxymoron**

A form of paradox that combines a pair of contrary terms into a single expression. This combination usually serves the purpose of shocking the reader into awareness. Examples include “wise fool,” “sad joy,” and “eloquent silence.”

**Paradox**

A situation or action or feeling that appears to be contradictory but on inspection turns out to be true or at least to make sense. The following lines from one of John Donne’s Holy Sonnets include paradoxes:

Take me to you, imprison me, for I

Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,

Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

**Parallelism**

A similar grammatical structure within a line or lines of poetry. Parallelism is characteristic of Asian poetry, being notably present in the Psalms, and it seems to be the controlling principle of the poetry of Walt Whitman, as in the following lines:

. . .Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to

connect them.

Till the bridge you will need be form’d, till the ductile anchor hold,

Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

**Parable**

A short story illustrating a moral or religious lesson.

**Parody**

A humorous, mocking imitation of a literary work, sometimes sarcastic, but often playful and even respectful in its playful imitation. Examples include Bob McKenty's parody of Frost's "Dust of Snow" and Kenneth Koch's parody of Williams's "This is Just to Say."

**Pastoral**

A poem, play or story that celebrates and idealizes the simple life of shepherds and shepherdesses. The term has also come to refer to an artistic work that portrays rural life in an idyllic or idealistic way.

**Pathos**

The quality of a literary work or passage which appeals to the reader’s or viewer’s emotions—especially pity, compassion, and sympathy. Pathos is different from the pity one feels for a tragic hero in that the pathetic figure seems to suffer through no fault of his or her own.

**Personification**

The endowment of inanimate objects or abstract concepts with animate or living qualities. An example: "The yellow leaves flaunted their color gaily in the breeze." Wordsworth's "I wandered lonely as a cloud" includes personification.

**Plot**

The unified structure of incidents in a literary work. See Conflict, Climax, Denouement, and Flashback.

**Pun**

A play on words that are identical or similar in sound but have sharply diverse meanings. Puns can have serious as well as humorous uses. An example is Thomas Hood’s:" They went and told the sexton and the sexton tolled the bell.”

**Pyrrhic**

A metrical foot with two unstressed syllables ("of the").

**Quatrain**

A four-line stanza in a poem, the first four lines and the second four lines in a Petrachan sonnet. A Shakespearean sonnet contains three quatrains followed by a couplet.

**Recognition**

The point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is. Sophocles' Oedipus comes to this point near the end of Oedipus the King; Othello comes to a similar understanding of his situation in Act V of Othello.

**Refrain**

A group of words forming a phrase or sentence and consisting of one or more lines repeated at intervals in a poem, usually at the end of a stanza.

**Resolution**

The sorting out or unraveling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story. See Plot.

**Reversal**

The point at which the action of the plot turns in an unexpected direction for the protagonist. Oedipus's and Othello's recognitions are also reversals. They learn what they did not expect to learn. See Recognition and also Irony.

**Rhyme**

The matching of final vowel or consonant sounds in two or more words. Close similarity or identity of sound between accented syllables occupying corresponding positions in two or more lines of verse. For a true rhyme, the vowels in the accented syllables must be preceded by different consonants, such as “fan” and “ran.”

**Rhythm**

The recurrence of accent or stress in lines of verse. The presence of rhythmic patterns lends both pleasure and heightened emotional response to the listener or reader.

**Rising meter**

Poetic meters such as iambic and anapestic that move or ascend from an unstressed to a stressed syllable. See Anapest, Iamb, and Falling meter.

**Satire**

A literary work that criticizes human misconduct and ridicules vices, stupidities, and follies. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a famous example. Chekhov's *Marriage Proposal* and O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge," have strong satirical elements.

**Sestet**

A six-line unit of verse constituting a stanza or section of a poem; the last six lines of an Italian sonnet. Examples: Petrarch's "If it is not love, then what is it that I feel," and Frost's "Design."

**Sestina**

A poem of thirty-nine lines and written in iambic pentameter. Its six-line stanza repeat in an intricate and prescribed order the final word in each of the first six lines. After the sixth stanza, there is a three-line envoi, which uses the six repeating words, two per line.

**Simile**

A figure of speech involving a comparison between unlike things using like, as, or as though. An example: "My love is like a red, red rose.

**Sonnet**

A fourteen-line poem in iambic pentameter. The Shakespearean or English sonnet is arranged as three quatrains and a final couplet, rhyming abab cdcd efef gg. The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet divides into two parts: an eight-line octave and a six-line sestet, rhyming abba abba cde cde or abba abba cd cd cd.

**Spondee**

A metrical foot represented by two stressed syllables, such as KNICK-KNACK.

**Stanza**

A division or unit of a poem that is repeated in the same form--either with similar or identical patterns or rhyme and meter, or with variations from one stanza to another. The stanzas of Gertrude Schnackenberg's "Signs" are regular; those of Rita Dove's "Canary" are irregular.

**Style**

The way an author chooses words, arranges them in sentences or in lines of dialogue or verse, and develops ideas and actions with description, imagery, and other literary techniques. See Connotation, Denotation, Diction, Figurative language, Image, Imagery, Irony, Metaphor, Narrator, Point of view, Syntax, and Tone.

**Subject**

What a story or play is about; to be distinguished from plot and theme. Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is about the decline of a particular way of life endemic to the American south before the civil war. Its plot concerns how Faulkner describes and organizes the actions of the story's characters. Its theme is the overall meaning Faulkner conveys.

**Subplot**

A subsidiary or subordinate or parallel plot in a play or story that coexists with the main plot. The story of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern forms a subplot with the overall plot of Hamlet.

**Symbol**

An object or action in a literary work that means more than itself, that stands for something beyond itself. The glass unicorn in The Glass Menagerie, the rocking horse in "The Rocking-Horse Winner," the road in Frost's "The Road Not Taken"--all are symbols in this sense.

**Synecdoche**

A figure of speech in which a part is substituted for the whole. An example: "Lend me a hand." See Metonymy.

**Syntax**

The grammatical order of words in a sentence or line of verse or dialogue. The organization of words and phrases and clauses in sentences of prose, verse, and dialogue. In the following example, normal syntax (subject, verb, object order) is inverted: "Whose woods these are I think I know."

**Tercet**

A three-line stanza, as the stanzas in Frost's "Acquainted With the Night" and Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind." The three-line stanzas or sections that together constitute the sestet of a Petrarchan or Italian sonnet.

**Theme**

The idea of a literary work abstracted from its details of language, character, and action, and cast in the form of a generalization. See discussion of Dickinson's "Crumbling is not an instant's Act."

**Tone**

The implied attitude of a writer toward the subject and characters of a work, as, for example, Flannery O'Connor's ironic tone in her "Good Country People." See Irony.

**Trochee**

An accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, as in FOOT-ball.

**Understatement**

A figure of speech in which a writer or speaker says less than what he or she means; the opposite of exaggeration. The last line of Frost's "Birches" illustrates this literary device: "One could do worse than be a swinger of birches."

**Villanelle**

A nineteen-line lyric poem that relies heavily on repetition. The first and third lines alternate throughout the poem, which is structured in six stanzas --five tercets and a concluding quatrain. Examples include Bishop's "One Art," Roethke's "The Waking," and Thomas's "Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night."

# Poetry Explications

A **poetry explication** is a relatively short analysis which describes the possible meanings and relationships of the words, images, and other small units that make up a poem. Writing an explication is an effective way for a reader to connect a poem's plot and conflicts with its structural features. This handout reviews some of the important techniques of approaching and writing a poetry explication, and includes parts of two sample explications.

## Preparing to Write the Explication

1. **READ** the poem silently, then read it aloud (if not in a testing situation). Repeat as necessary.
2. Consider the poem as a **dramatic situation** in which a speaker addresses an audience or another character. In this way, begin your analysis by identifying and describing the speaking voice or voices, the conflicts or ideas, and the language used in the poem.

### The Large Issues

Determine the basic design of the poem by considering the *who, what, when, where,* and *why* of the dramatic situation.

* What is being dramatized? What conflicts or themes does the poem present, address, or question?
* Who is the speaker? Define and describe the speaker and his/her voice. What does the speaker say? Who is the audience? Are other characters involved?
* What happens in the poem? Consider the plot or basic design of the action. How are the dramatized conflicts or themes introduced, sustained, resolved, etc.?
* Whendoes the action occur? What is the date and/or time of day?
* Where is the speaker? Describe the physical location of the dramatic moment.
* Why does the speaker feel compelled to speak at this moment? What is his/her motivation?

### The Details

To analyze the design of the poem, we must focus on the poems' parts, namely how the poem dramatizes conflicts or ideas in language. By concentrating on the parts, we develop our understanding of the poem's structure, and we gather support and evidence for our interpretations. Some of the details we should consider include the following:

* Form: Does the poem represent a particular form (sonnet, sestina, etc.)? Does the poem present any unique variations from the traditional structure of that form?
* Rhetoric: How does the speaker make particular statements? Does the rhetoric seem odd in any way? Why? Consider the predicates and what they reveal about the speaker.
* Syntax: Consider the subjects, verbs, and objects of each statement and what these elements reveal about the speaker. Do any statements have convoluted or vague syntax?
* Vocabulary: Why does the poet choose one word over another in each line? Do any of the words have multiple or archaic meanings that add other meanings to the line? Use the *Oxford English Dictionary* as a resource.

### The Patterns

As you analyze the design line by line, look for certain patterns to develop which provide insight into the dramatic situation, the speaker's state of mind, or the poet's use of details. Some of the most common patterns include the following:

* Rhetorical Patterns: Look for statements that follow the same format.
* Rhyme: Consider the significance of the end words joined by sound; in a poem with no rhymes, consider the importance of the end words.
* Patterns of Sound: Alliteration and assonance create sound effects and often cluster significant words.
* Visual Patterns: How does the poem look on the page?
* Rhythm and Meter: Consider how rhythm and meter influence our perception of the speaker and his/her language.

## Basic Terms for Talking about Meter

Meter (from the Greek *metron,* meaning measure) refers principally to the recurrence of regular beats in a poetic line. In this way, **meter** pertains to the structure of the poem as it is written.

The most common form of meter in English verse since the 14th century is *accentual-syllabic meter,* in which the basic unit is the **foot.** A **foot** is a combination of two or three stressed and/or unstressed syllables. The following are **the four most common** **metrical feet** in English poetry:

(1) **IAMBIC** (the noun is "iamb"): an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, a pattern which comes closest to approximating the natural rhythm of speech. Note line 23 from Shelley's "Stanzas Written in Dejection, Near Naples":

And walked with inward glory crowned

(2) **TROCHAIC** (the noun is "trochee"): a stressed followed by an unstressed syllable, as in the first line of Blake's "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence:*

Piping down the valleys wild

(3) **ANAPESTIC** (the noun is "anapest"): two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable, as in the opening to Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib":

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold

(4) **DACTYLIC** (the noun is "dactyl"): a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables, as in Thomas Hardy's "The Voice":

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me

**Meter** also refers to the number of feet in a line:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Monometer Dimeter Trimeter Tetrameter Pentameter Hexameter** | **one two three four five six** |

Any number above six (hexameter) is heard as a combination of smaller parts; for example, what we might call heptameter (seven feet in a line) is indistinguishable (aurally) from successive lines of tetrameter and trimeter (4-3).

To **scan** a line is to determine its **metrical pattern.** Perhaps the best way to begin scanning a line is to mark the natural stresses on the polysyllabic words. Take Shelley's line:

And walked with inward glory crowned

Then mark the monosyllabic nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that are normally stressed:

And walked with inward glory crowned

Then fill in the rest:

And walked with inward glory crowned

Then divide the line into feet:

And walked with inward glory crowned

Then note the sequence:

iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb

The line consists of four iambs; therefore, we identify the line as **iambic tetrameter.**

## I Got Rhythm

Rhythm refers particularly to the way a line is voiced, i.e., how one speaks the line. Often, when a reader reads a line of verse, choices of stress and unstress may need to be made. For example, the first line of Keats' "Ode on Melancholy" presents the reader with a problem:

*No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist*

If we determine the regular pattern of beats (the **meter**) of this line, we will most likely identify the line as **iambic pentameter.** If we read the line this way, the statement takes on a musing, somewhat disinterested tone. However, because the first five words are monosyllabic, we may choose to read the line differently. In fact, we may be tempted, especially when reading aloud, to stress the first two syllables equally, making the opening an emphatic, directive statement. Note that monosyllabic words allow the meaning of the line to vary according to which words we choose to stress when reading (i.e., the choice of **rhythm** we make).

The first line of Milton's *Paradise Lost* presents a different type of problem.

*Of Man's First Disobedience, and the Fruit*

Again, this line is predominantly iambic, but a problem occurs with the word *Disobedience*. If we read strictly by the **meter,** then we must fuse the last two syllables of the word. However, if we read the word normally, we have a breakage in the line's metrical structure. In this way, the poet forges a tension between meter and rhythm: does the word remain contained by the structure, or do *we choose* to stretch the word out of the normal foot, *thereby disobeying the structure in which it was made?* Such tension adds meaning to the poem by using meter and rhythm to dramatize certain conflicts. In this example, Milton forges such a tension to present immediately the essential conflicts that lead to the fall of Adam and Eve.

## Writing the Explication

The explication should follow the same format as the preparation: begin with the large issues and basic design of the poem and work through each **line** to the more **specific** details and patterns.

### The First Paragraph

The first paragraph should present the large issues; it should inform the reader which conflicts are dramatized and should describe the dramatic situation of the speaker. The explication does not require a formal introductory paragraph; the writer should simply start explicating immediately. According to UNC 's Professor William Harmon, the foolproof way to begin any explication is with the following sentence: "This poem dramatizes the conflict between …" Such a beginning ensures that you will introduce the major conflict or theme in the poem and organize your explication accordingly.

An undergraduate recently began an explication of Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" in the following way:

This poem dramatizes the conflict between appearance and reality, particularly as this conflict relates to what the speaker seems to say and what he really says. From Westminster Bridge, the speaker looks at London at sunrise, and he explains that all people should be struck by such a beautiful scene. The speaker notes that the city is silent, and he points to several specific objects, naming them only in general terms: "Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples" (6). After describing the "glittering" aspect of these objects, he asserts that these city places are just as beautiful in the morning as country places like "valley, rock, or hill" (8,10). Finally, after describing his deep feeling of calmness, the speaker notes how the "houses seem asleep" and that "all that mighty heart is lying still" (13, 14). In this way, the speaker seems to say simply that London looks beautiful in the morning.

### The Next Paragraphs

The next paragraphs should expand the discussion of the conflict by focusing on details of form, rhetoric, syntax, and vocabulary. In these paragraphs, the writer should explain the poem line by line in terms of these details, and he or she should incorporate important elements of rhyme, rhythm, and meter during this discussion.

The undergraduate continues with a topic sentence that directs the discussion of the first five lines:

However, the poem begins with several oddities that suggest the speaker is saying more than what he seems to say initially. For example, the poem is an Italian sonnet and follows the *abbaabbacdcdcd* rhyme scheme. The fact that the poet chooses to write a sonnet about London in an Italian form suggests that what he says may not be actually praising the city. Also, the rhetoric of the first two lines seems awkward compared to a normal speaking voice: "Earth has not anything to show more fair. / Dull would he be of soul who could pass by" (1-2). The odd syntax continues when the poet personifies the city: "This City now doth, like a garment, wear / The beauty of the morning" (4-5). Here, the city wears the morning's beauty, so it is not the city but the morning that is beautiful ...

### The Conclusion??

The explication has **no formal concluding paragraph;** do not simply restate the main points of the introduction! The end of the explication should focus on sound effects or visual patterns as the final element of asserting an explanation. Or, as does the undergraduate here, the writer may choose simply to stop writing when he or she reaches the end of the poem:

The poem ends with a vague statement: "And all that mighty heart is lying still!" In this line**,** the city's heart could be dead, or it could be simply deceiving the one observing the scene. In this way, the poet reinforces the conflict between the appearance of the city in the morning and what such a scene and his words actually reveal.

### Tips to keep in mind

1. Refer to the speaking voice in the poem as **"the speaker"** or **"the poet."** For example, do not write, "In this poem, Wordsworth says that London is beautiful in the morning." However, you can write, "In this poem, Wordsworth presents a speaker who…" We cannot absolutely identify Wordsworth with the speaker of the poem, so it is more accurate to talk about "the speaker" or "the poet" in an explication.
2. Use the **present tense** when writing the explication. The poem, as a work of literature, continues to exist!
3. To avoid unnecessary uses of the verb 'to be' in your compositions, the following list suggests some **verbs** you can use when writing the explication:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **dramatizes presents illustrates characterizes** | **asserts posits enacts connects** | **contrasts juxtaposes suggests implies** **shows** | **addresses emphasizes stresses accentuates** |

### Sample explication of The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost

|  |
| --- |
| **The Road Not Taken**  Two roads diverged in a yellow wood, And sorry I could not travel both And be one traveler, long I stood And looked down one as far as I could To where it bent in the undergrowth;  Then took the other, as just as fair, And having perhaps the better claim, Because it was grassy and wanted wear; Though as for that the passing there 1Had worn them really about the same,  And both that morning equally lay In leaves no step had trodden black. Oh, I kept the first for another day! Yet knowing how way leads on to way, I doubted if I should ever come back.  I shall be telling this with a sigh Somewhere ages and ages hence: Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-- I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference. |

**Explication of "The Road Not Taken"**

The poem titled "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost, the text taken from the University of Toronto Index of Poets In Representative Poetry On-line (http://www.library.utoronto. ca/utel/rp/indexauthors.html), is about a man reflecting on a choice he once made. In the poem Frost is suggesting that a decision can have far-reaching, significant consequences.  
       The poem is about the importance of choices. The poem begins with the speaker regretting that he could not have been two people so he could have at some point in his life taken two roads instead of being confined to one. He looked as far as he could to see what was ahead on one of the roads he could have taken, but he was limited to seeing only as far as where it turned and disappeared in the bushes. In the second stanza he says he took the other road because it was grassy and was possibly better because it was less traveled, though not much more than the other road. The third stanza says both roads were covered in leaves that had been walked on infrequently, to the extent that the leaves covering them had not been made black from tramping feet. He also says he continued on the road he chose, and because he knew that one thing leads to another ("way leads on to way") he doubted he would ever return to this part of the road. Finally, he says he will tell the story when he is much older ("Somewhere ages and ages hence") that he had the choice of taking one road over another, and having taken the one he did made a big difference in his life.  
        One element evident in the poem is rhyme.  Frost uses a ABAAB, CDCCD, etc. rhyme scheme: wood, both, stood, could, undergrowth (stanza one).   
        Adding to development of the theme is the element of color. It is a yellow wood, not green, which suggests the fall season when leaves turn colors. Seasons are frequently associated with periods in people's lives, such as spring for youth, and autumn for late middle age. So this is the "fall" of his life, or possibly around middle age. Therefore, he is a speaker who has had enough experiences to realize how important some decisions can be and that he must live with the consequences. The speaker also notes the leaves are not "trodden black" which would represent heavy traffic.  
        However, the most crucial trait related to the theme is the metaphorical language where Frost compares roads to optional courses people can take in their lives. By the speaker regretting he could take only one "road," it means he does not have the chance to take several directions in life at one time to see how each will work out, since he cannot look ahead to see where each choice might lead ("undergrowth": or our inability to foretell the future), or where the next choices in each of those "roads" would also lead. He must choose one and see where it will lead and what other choices will follow on that road. One thing the speaker knows is the choice is not to be taken lightly because it could, as he realizes while he reflects, be the difference between two very different life experiences ("And that has made all the difference").   
        Frost's use of metaphor is effective in him presenting his theme. Even if readers did not know that "road" was being used metaphorically, they would still know the poem is about a man making a choice. Using the idea of roads is something we can relate to because we have probably all come to two roads, literally, and have been uncertain about which way to turn. Sometimes we have turned and found that it was the wrong way and that has cost us time, made us late, or lead us somewhere we did not want to go. We can see in some way how even relatively insignificant decisions alter our lives, at least a temporarily.  
        "The Road Not Taken" is a pleasant and thought-inspiring poem. It is pleasant because Frost keeps the tone and mood light though it is about a very serious subject. Though it is subtly reminiscent, it still makes a strong point. Reading it can also make one think more consciously about future decisions and their potential consequences reading this poem was like taking a little side road. It can make a difference.  
        Frost uses a common experience we can all relate to -- making a choice at the junction of two roads -- in order to show that a decision will lead us in one direction, and making the choice to go in that direction can make a profound difference in our lives.

**Things to note in the sample explication:**

1. It generally follows the organization from the [Explication Guideline](http://www.skonline.org/litsurv/explication_guide.htm). It includes an introduction and a conclusion.
2. The introduction includes the **thesis statement**.
3. Each paragraph has a **topic sentence** that expresses the main idea of the paragraph.
4. The conclusion summarizes the main points of the explication.
5. **Transitions** are used to show the relationship between ideas and help lead the reader smoothly from one idea to the next.
6. Each element is **explained** and **lines or examples** from the poem are given for clarification.
7. It demonstrates understanding beyond the obvious or literal.
8. It's detailed. Yours may not always be so long; it depends on the nature of the poem being used.

## Speaker

### What is speaker?

        In the sample explication the writer refereed to the "speaker." This term, as it is used in literature, refers to the "voice of the poem." It is the who or what we get the information from. It could be the poet, a fictional character, or an animal.  
        The nature of the speaker can be determined through inference: drawing a conclusion based on specific details. In the poem by Frost, it could be the author telling about a personal experience, though this would be difficult to determine. Just because he wrote it doesn't mean it is about him.

### Here's an example of a speaker explicated

In the next paragraph is an explication of the speaker in "The Road Not Taken."

**Sample explication of a speaker:**         The speaker in "the Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost is an older, thoughtful person. This can be inferred because mention is made of this being a past experience, and a season is suggested that could relate to the period in the man's life (the "yellow wood": fall, or somewhere around middle age). However, he is probably not "old" because he says he will tell this tale "somewhere ages and ages hence," suggesting a time in his far future. We can infer he is thoughtful because he has taken time to reflect on a choice he made and how he recognized the difference it made in his life. He will also tell the tale, which suggests he is a caring person who would like to help others recognize the difference decisions can make in their lives. Maybe he will tell it to a child of his or to a grandchild. Frost's speaker is an experienced adult with a tendency to reflect on the past and consider its implications for the future.

**Things to note in the sample explication:**1. It includes a topic sentence.  
2. Each idea from the topic sentence is **explained.**  
3. It includes **transitions** to lead the reader smoothly and logically from one idea to the next.  
4. It includes **lines or examples** from the poem as support when appropriate.  
5. It includes a **conclusion**.

         Is Frost the speaker? It could be he is like that and he was using himself as the character in the poem; after all, he wrote the poem. Is it a fictional character he created to make a point? It could be. Then he need not have been restricted to his experiences and traits, which gives him room for creativity in making his point. We need not determine either of those when we are determining who the speaker is. We need only focus on the **traits** of the speaker as they are **suggested** through the details in the poetry.

# Oral Presentation Guidelines

Explore a specific school/subject in the world of poetry.

(e.g. Transcendentalism, The Harlem Renaissance, Romanticism, The Beat Generation, Imagism).

Written submissions are due one week after the date of your presentation.

**Oral Presentations**:

You have one class period, during which time you will:

* Begin the class with an engaging opening activity that will arouse students’ (remember, I am also one of your students) interest. For instance, if I were to present a lecture on Irish poetry (specifically poetry of the Irish resistance), I may open with a video clip depicting English treatment of Irish Catholics in 1968 and then segue into a relevant poem. Alternatively, I could open with Irish revolutionary music. A writing prompt is also a good idea. Essentially, grab the class’s attention. (5-10 minutes)
* (What follows is meant to give you some guidance. But DO NOT try to cover the whole school in one period. Present only what is essential to having a base understanding of the school and what is essential to understand the poetry). Transition into a lecture on the Movement’s/Subject’s relevant historical information. As a group you should decide how you want to handle questions. Often it is not a bad idea to allow your class the freedom to ask questions during the lecture; however, you can encourage your class to write questions during the lecture. Following the lecture, questions can be answered. Additionally, students should take notes during your presentation. Information to consider including in your opening lecture (You do not have to cover everything below):
  1. What social/economic/political stimuli gave rise to the movement?
  2. What are the roots/origins of the movement (related to no. 1)?
  3. What common philosophy/ideology did members share?
  4. Traits common to the poetry of the movement.
  5. Prior literary movements that influenced your movement.
  6. Possible prior literary movements that your movement runs counter to.
  7. Explore the evolution of the movement.
  8. The legacy of your movement. Meaning, what influence(s) has your subject had on literature/art in general and poetry specifically?
  9. This list is certainly fluid and you should feel free to explore and share any other pertinent information that strikes your fancy.
  10. Were there any critics of your movement? If so, what was the gist of their criticism?

(During this particular piece of the oral presentation, every member need not contribute to the lecture.) (5-8 minutes)

* Following the lecture, distribute one or two poems (depending on time) born out of your movement/subject. I would encourage you to have the class read the poems independently. Following our readings, we should be encouraged to take notes on the following points:
  1. Significance of the title.
  2. Are there any patterns with regard to rhyme or meter? What impact does this have on the ideas being communicated?
  3. How many lines in the poem? Is the poem divided into stanzas? How are the stanzas structured? Why do the stanzas exist? Do they represent different ideas or topics?
  4. Is the content of the poem organized according to a specific structure? What is that structure?
  5. What is the topic/subject of the poem?
  6. What word(s) or phrases directly relate to the topic?
  7. What figures of speech are prevalent? Is there a controlling figure throughout the poem? What is the relationship between the figures used and the poem’s topic/subject?
  8. What message is the poet trying to convey? What emotions or feelings does the poem elicit from you?
  9. How is this poem indicative of the movement it represents?
  10. Who is the speaker? How does this affect your interpretation of the poem?

(10-15 minutes)

* Conclude with small group discussion, during which time each group discusses its findings. (10-15 minutes)
* Finally, we come together as a class and share our thoughts on the poetry. It is your responsibility to facilitate the discussion. Perhaps you can identify one or two facilitators for this section of the lesson. It is important that you bring the presentation full circle and come back to your school/subject. Be sure you leave yourself 2-4 minutes here to wrap up the lesson with final thoughts on the topic of discussion (Your group should have final word on the subject matter). (15-20 minutes)
* Wrap up with a home work assignment (ideally a writing and/or reading assignment).

This is a basic guideline for the oral presentation. While I want you to feel free to manipulate it to suit your purposes, I do want you to clear your amendment(s) with me first. **ENSURE THAT THE PERIOD IS ALIVE WITH POETRY!**

# Written Submission Guidelines

The **Kinkos-bound packet/book** should contain the following:

1. Cover Sheet
2. Table of Contents
3. Detailed Lesson Plan
4. Section detailing the movement’s history
5. Mini Biographies
6. Poetry Explications
7. Original Poetry
8. Bibliography

**Cover Sheet**

The cover sheet essentially serves as your book cover. It will be visible behind Kinko’s clear plastic cover. Your cover should include your book title. The names of all group members should also be included. A sample cover sheet is included with this handout.

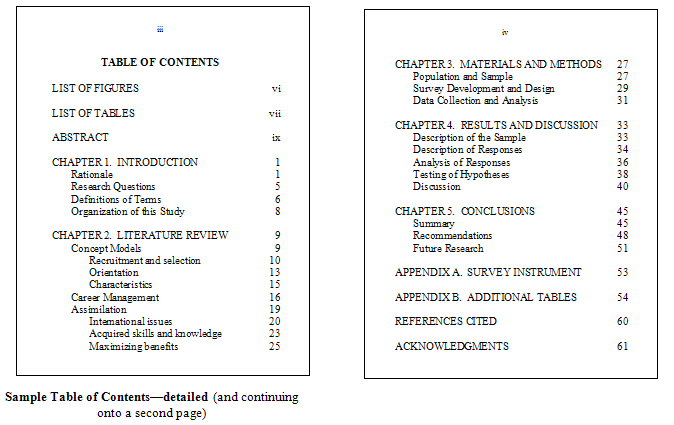
**Table of Contents**

The Table of Contents tells the reader quickly and clearly how your thesis is organized. Whether you list only main headings or provide a detailed listing of headings, the Table of Contents must be neat and accurate. Show a page number on all Table of Contents pages, and a main “TABLE OF CONTENTS” heading on the first page of the Table of Contents. Format conventions:

**Note:**

* Include everything that occurs in your document after your Table of Contents in your Table of Contents.
* Provide the same detail for every chapter (i.e., if you list 2nd and 3rd level headings from one chapter, you must list all 2nd and 3rd level headings that appear in the document).
* Use bold and larger size letters sparingly (e.g., use only for listing main headings).
* Indent lower level headings more than higher level headings; use a different indent for each heading level listed.
* If single spacing is used, leave an extra space above each main (chapter) heading; if double-spacing is used, single space 2-line headings.
* List page numbers in a single colum (right-justified); dot leaders are optional, but if used should be used for all listed headings and they must be consistent in style.
* Don’t allow long headings to extend into the page number “column.”
* List the headings using exactly the same wording as you have in the text, but avoid underlining or italicizing headings, regardless of their format in the text.

**Example:**



**Microsoft Word Hint:**

**Right justifying listed page numbers in the Table of Contents:** With the ruler visible above your text: 1) highlight all the listed headings; 2) manually set a tab every half inch (or closer, if you desire) on the “ruler” until you reach the number “6”; 3) click on the box immediately to the left of the ruler until the symbol “**┘**” appears; 4) click between the number “6” and the end of the white space on the ruler; 5) insert your cursor after each heading listed and press the tab key until the cursor is at the right edge of the page and type in the page number.

**History/Background Section**

In completing this section you are essentially answering the questions addressed during the oral presentation. Please ensure that your arrangement of information follows a logical pattern. This section should be informed by 4 scholarly sources.

1. Perhaps a brief definition of the movement would make for an adequate opening. The opening for this section could also be rather creative. Allowing a quintessential piece of literature to serve as your introduction to a discussion of the movement is a great idea. Perhaps you have a captivating beginning in mind.
2. What are the roots/origins of the movement?
3. What social/economic/political stimuli gave rise to the movement?
4. What common philosophy/ideology did members share?
5. Traits common to the poetry of the movement.
6. Prior literary movements that influenced your movement.
7. Possible prior literary movements that your movement runs counter to.
8. Explore the evolution of the movement.
9. This list is certainly fluid and you should feel free to explore and share any other pertinent information that strikes your fancy.
10. Were there any critics of your movement? If so, what was the gist of their criticism?
11. The legacy of your movement. Meaning, what influence(s) has your subject had on literature/art in general and poetry specifically?

**Mini Biography**

Each member of the group should write a mini biography on a poet within the assigned school/subject. Some points to touch on (if relevant) would include:

1. Details of the poet’s life
2. Career and poetry
3. Contributions to the literary canon
4. Political views
5. Later life and honors
6. Influence on later poets

(1-2 pages)

\* Two scholarly sources

**Poetry Explication**

Each member of the group should write an explication. Choose a poem that is regarded as one of the preeminent pieces of your movement/subject. Follow the handout for details on poetry explications. (2-3 pages)

**Original Poetry**

Each group member is then responsible for writing an original piece that honors the movement’s:

1. Political ideology
2. World view
3. Poetic style
4. “Heart and Soul”

(Close readings of poetry over the course of this project will make this piece easy. Free yourself here and break free of the confines of traditional prose. Ride the wings of poesy as you allow your mind the freedom to truly ………)

**Bibliography**

I expect you to follow MLA guidelines in citing sources both within your text and also in your bibliography.

<http://library.manor.edu/handouts/manor_mla.doc>

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

<http://www.liu.edu/CWIS/CWP/library/workshop/citmla.htm>

The links above thoroughly address MLA citation. The first link is to a Microsoft Word document that goes into great detail. The OWL website also offers up a thorough refresher with the final link presenting the most basic information.

**Final Note:**

The final product should reflect extensive research, thorough understanding of the poetry and the respective movement, acute awareness of even the most minute detail in the presentation of the “book.” Wikipedia is unacceptable; JStor is acceptable! Among other things, this is an exercise in scholarship.

# Poet Study

(With gratitude to Eric Weil)

Your PBA/Term Final for this class will be a poet study! Your poet must be:

* Someone with a significant body of work (at least two published books).
* Someone you haven’t studied in depth before.
* Someone whose work you love.

Other than this, there are no limits. Your poet may be alive or dead, male or female, writing originally in English or in translation.

Looking ahead to your Poetry PBA Portfolio, start thinking about your main opinion, or thesis, about your poet’s work. Read a significant body of work by your poet (20-30 poems). Ultimately, you will focus your study on 10 poems. Some good questions to ask yourself as you read:

* What themes do you notice in your poet’s work?
* Where and how do these themes appear?
* Which poems you’ve read most clearly show these themes?
* What techniques (poetic devices, style, language, etc.) does this poet use most often, and how do they affect the poems?
* What effect do they have? In other words, how do they shape and change your reading of the poems?
* What tone, or mood do you get from these poems? How do they make you feel?
* Take some notes on your answers to these questions, and start coming up with an opinion about your poet’s work.

Your PBA will include (in this order):

* Cover Sheet
* A 1-2 page mini-bio of your poet.
* A 5-7 page essay that introduces and analyzes the work of your poet, including a strong claim (a thesis) about your poet and his/her work. In this analysis you should demonstrate great control of your poet’s work. Finally, your discussion must be complemented by 3 primary or secondary sources (critical/analytical in nature).
* The 10 poems (untouched) chosen for this project.
* Two original poems mirroring your poet’s style.
* As an appendix: Annotated copies of the ten poems chosen for this project.

## Whom should I study? Some suggestions

1. Li Bai (701-762)
2. Rumi (1207-1273)
3. Edmund Spencer (1552-1599)
4. Sir Philip Sidney (1554-1586)
5. William Shakespeare (1564-1616)
6. John Donne (1572-1631)
7. Robert Herrick (1591-1674)
8. Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)
9. Andrew Marvell (1621-1678)
10. Alexander Pope (1688-1744)
11. Charlotte Smith (1749-1806)
12. William Blake (1757-1827)
13. William Wordsworth (1770-1850)
14. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834)
15. Lord Byron (1788-1824)
16. Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)
17. John Keats (1795-1821)
18. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)
19. Elizabeth B. Browning (1806-1861)
20. Henry W. Longfellow (1807-1882)
21. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)
22. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892)
23. Emily Bronte (1818-1848)
24. Walt Whitman (1819-1892)
25. Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)
26. Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)
27. William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)
28. Paul Lawrence Dunbar (1872-1906)
29. Robert Frost (1874-1963)
30. Rainer Rilke (1875-1926)
31. Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)
32. William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)
33. Ezra Pound (1885-1972)
34. Marianne Moore (1887-1972)
35. T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)
36. Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950)
37. E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)
38. Jean Toomer (1894-1967)
39. Langston Hughes (1902-1967)
40. Countee Cullen (1903-1946)
41. Pablo Neruda (1904-1973)
42. W.H. Auden (1907-1973)
43. Elizabeth Bishop (1911-1979)
44. Robert Hayden (1913-1980)
45. Dylan Thomas (1914-1953)
46. Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000)
47. Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997)
48. Anne Sexton (1928-1974)
49. Maya Angelou (1928-2014)
50. Shel Silverstein (1930-1999)
51. Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)
52. Mary Oliver (1935-)
53. Charles Simic (1938-)
54. Margaret Atwood (1939-)
55. Seamus Heaney (1939-2013)
56. Billy Collins (1941-)
57. Sharon Olds (1942-)
58. Nikki Giovanni (1943-)
59. Rita Dove (1955-)

*If you like Shel Silverstein, try:*

Ogden Nash Dorothy Parker

Edward Lear Hal Sirowitz

Carol Anne Duffy Philip Larkin

Frank O’Hara Jennifer Michael Hecht

*If you like Edgar Allan Poe, try:*

Samuel Menashe (rhyme) Franz Wright (dark sensibility)

Sylvia Plath (dark sensibility) Lucie Brock-Broido (dark sensibility)

Robert Pinsky (rhyme) Sara Teasdale (rhyme)

*If you like Langston Hughes, try:*

Gwendolyn Brooks Paul Laurence Dunbar

Jean Toomer Claude McKay

Countee Cullen Lucille Clifton

Robert Hayden Kevin Young

*If you like Robert Frost, try:*

Edna St. Vincent Millay Gjertrud Schnackenberg

Elizabeth Bishop William Logan

Emily Dickinson Marilyn Hacker

*If you like poems about nature, try:*

Mary Oliver Walt Whitman

W.S. Merwin Wendell Berry

Louise Glück A.R. Ammons

*If you like slam poems/ poems with strong opinions, try:*

Taylor Mali Nikki Giovanni

Yusef Komunyakaa Allen Ginsberg

Sapphire Anna Ahkmatova

Ishle Yi Park (ishle.com) Saul Williams (hip-hop culture)

*If you like poems that sound like someone’s talking to you, try:*

Billy Collins Stephen Dobyns

Sharon Olds Frances Chung

Frank O’Hara Kimiko Hahn

Naomi Shihab Nye Cornelius Eady

*If you like poems that do cool things with shapes and forms, try:*

e.e.cummings Denise Duhamel

William Carlos Williams Paul Muldoon

Mong Lan

*If you like romantic poems, try:*

Pablo Neruda Li-Young Lee

Nikki Giovanni Edna St. Vincent Millay

John Yau William Shakespeare

*If you like a strong female perspective, try:*

Adrienne Su Tina Chang

Alison Park June Jordan

*And, for good measure, here are a few more (mostly contemporary/young) poets you might love:*

Roger Sedarat (an Iranian-American)

Lawrence Joseph (an Arab-American poet from Detroit)

Aimee Nezhukumatathil (formal structure, contemporary feel)

Amitawa Kumar (a little racy) Meena Alexander  
Vandana Khanna Arthur Sze  
Khaled Mattawa Timothy Liu (formal)

Diane Mehta (formal) Betty Kao  
Sung Rno (formal, lyrical) Lena Sze  
Walter K. Lew

# Poetry

## EDMUND SPENSER (1552-1599)

### Amoretti LV: So oft as I her beauty do behold

So oft as I her beauty do behold,

And therewith do her cruelty compare,

I marvel of what substance was the mould

The which her made at once so cruel-fair.

Not earth; for her high thoughts more heavenly are:

Not water; for her love doth burn like fire:

Not air; for she is not so light or rare:

Not fire; for she doth freeze with faint desire.

Then needs another element inquire

Whereof she might be made; that is, the sky.

For to the heaven her haughty looks aspire,

And eke her love is pure immortal high.

Then since to heaven ye likened are the best,

Be like in mercy as in all the rest.

## SIR PHILIP SIDNEY (1554-1586)

### Astrophil and Stella 1: Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,

That she, dear she, might take some pleasure of my pain,—

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,—

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe;

Studying inventions fine her wits to entertain,

Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow

Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburn'd brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting invention's stay;

Invention, Nature's child, fled step-dame Study's blows;

And others' feet still seem'd but strangers in my way.

Thus great with child to speak and helpless in my throes,

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite,

"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."

### Astrophil and Stella 2: Not at first sight, nor with a dribbèd shot

Not at first sight, nor with a dribbèd shot,

Love gave the wound which while I breathe will bleed:

But known worth did in mine of time proceed,

Till by degrees it had full conquest got.

I saw, and liked; I liked, but lovèd not;

I loved, but straight did not what love decreed:

At length to love’s decrees I, forced, agreed,

Yet with repining at so partial lot.

Now even that footstep of lost liberty

Is gone, and now like slave-born Muscovite

I call it praise to suffer tyranny;

And now employ the remnant of my wit

To make myself believe that all is well,

While with a feeling skill I paint my hell.

## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616)

### Sonnet 1: From fairest creatures we desire increase

From fairest creatures we desire increase,

That thereby beauty’s rose might never die,

But as the riper should by time decease,

His tender heir might bear his memory;

But thou, contracted to thine own bright eyes,

Feed’st thy light’s flame with self-substantial fuel,

Making a famine where abundance lies,

Thyself thy foe, to thy sweet self too cruel.

Though that art now the world’s fresh ornament

And only herald to the gaudy spring,

Within thine own bud buriest thy content,

And, tender churl, mak’st waste in niggarding.

Pity the world, or else this glutton be,

To eat the world’s due, by the grave and thee.

### Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red than her lips' red;

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damasked, red and white,

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound;

I grant I never saw a goddess go;

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare

As any she belied with false compare.

### Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer’s lease hath all too short a date;

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance or nature’s changing course untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st;

Nor shall death brag thou wander’st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st:

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

## JOHN DONNE (1572-1631)

### Holy Sonnets: Death, be not proud

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,

Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,

And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally

And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

### The Funeral

Whoever comes to shroud me, do not harm

Nor question much

That subtle wreath of hair, which crowns my arm;

The mystery, the sign, you must not touch,

For 'tis my outward soul,

Viceroy to that, which then to heaven being gone,

Will leave this to control

And keep these limbs, her provinces, from dissolution.

For if the sinewy thread my brain lets fall

Through every part

Can tie those parts, and make me one of all,

Those hairs which upward grew, and strength and art

Have from a better brain,

Can better do'it; except she meant that I

By this should know my pain,

As prisoners then are manacled, when they'are condemn'd to die.

Whate'er she meant by'it, bury it with me,

For since I am

Love's martyr, it might breed idolatry,

If into other hands these relics came;

As 'twas humility

To afford to it all that a soul can do,

So, 'tis some bravery,

That since you would have none of me, I bury some of you.

### The Dream

Dear love, for nothing less than thee

Would I have broke this happy dream;

It was a theme

For reason, much too strong for fantasy,

Therefore thou wak'd'st me wisely; yet

My dream thou brok'st not, but continued'st it.

Thou art so true that thoughts of thee suffice

To make dreams truths, and fables histories;

Enter these arms, for since thou thought'st it best,

Not to dream all my dream, let's act the rest.

As lightning, or a taper's light,

Thine eyes, and not thy noise wak'd me;

Yet I thought thee

(For thou lovest truth) an angel, at first sight;

But when I saw thou sawest my heart,

And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an angel's art,

When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when thou knew'st when

Excess of joy would wake me, and cam'st then,

I must confess, it could not choose but be

Profane, to think thee any thing but thee.

Coming and staying show'd thee, thee,

But rising makes me doubt, that now

Thou art not thou.

That love is weak where fear's as strong as he;

'Tis not all spirit, pure and brave,

If mixture it of fear, shame, honour have;

Perchance as torches, which must ready be,

Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with me;

Thou cam'st to kindle, goest to come; then I

Will dream that hope again, but else would die.

*The Flea*

Mark but this flea, and mark in this,

How little that which thou deniest me is;

It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,

And in this flea our two bloods mingled be;

Thou know’st that this cannot be said

A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,

Yet this enjoys before it woo,

And pampered swells with one blood made of two,

And this, alas, is more than we would do.

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,

Where we almost, nay more than married are.

This flea is you and I, and this

Our mariage bed, and marriage temple is;

Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,

And cloistered in these living walls of jet.

Though use make you apt to kill me,

Let not to that, self-murder added be,

And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.

Cruel and sudden, hast thou since

Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?

Wherein could this flea guilty be,

Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?

Yet thou triumph’st, and say'st that thou

Find’st not thy self, nor me the weaker now;

’Tis true; then learn how false, fears be:

Just so much honor, when thou yield’st to me,

Will waste, as this flea’s death took life from thee.

## ROBERT HERRICK (1591-1674)

### To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,

Old Time is still a-flying;

And this same flower that smiles today

Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,

The higher he’s a-getting,

The sooner will his race be run,

And nearer he’s to setting.

That age is best which is the first,

When youth and blood are warmer;

But being spent, the worse, and worst

Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,

And while ye may, go marry;

For having lost but once your prime,

You may forever tarry.

## ANNE BRADSTREET (1612-1672)

### To My Dear and Loving Husband

If ever two were one, then surely we.

If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.

If ever wife was happy in a man,

Compare with me, ye women, if you can.

I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,

Or all the riches that the East doth hold.

My love is such that rivers cannot quench,

Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.

Thy love is such I can no way repay;

The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.

Then while we live, in love let’s so persever,

That when we live no more, we may live ever.

### Before the Birth of One of Her Children

All things within this fading world hath end,

Adversity doth still our joyes attend;

No ties so strong, no friends so dear and sweet,

But with death’s parting blow is sure to meet.

The sentence past is most irrevocable,

A common thing, yet oh inevitable.

How soon, my Dear, death may my steps attend,

How soon’t may be thy Lot to lose thy friend,

We are both ignorant, yet love bids me

These farewell lines to recommend to thee,

That when that knot’s untied that made us one,

I may seem thine, who in effect am none.

And if I see not half my dayes that’s due,

What nature would, God grant to yours and you;

The many faults that well you know I have

Let be interr’d in my oblivious grave;

If any worth or virtue were in me,

Let that live freshly in thy memory

And when thou feel’st no grief, as I no harms,

Yet love thy dead, who long lay in thine arms.

And when thy loss shall be repaid with gains

Look to my little babes, my dear remains.

And if thou love thyself, or loved’st me,

These o protect from step Dames injury.

And if chance to thine eyes shall bring this verse,

With some sad sighs honour my absent Herse;

And kiss this paper for thy loves dear sake,

Who with salt tears this last Farewel did take.

## ANDREW MARVELL (1621-1678)

### To His Coy Mistress

Had we but world enough and time,

This coyness, lady, were no crime.

We would sit down, and think which way

To walk, and pass our long love’s day.

Thou by the Indian Ganges’ side

Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide

Of Humber would complain. I would

Love you ten years before the flood,

And you should, if you please, refuse

Till the conversion of the Jews.

My vegetable love should grow

Vaster than empires and more slow;

An hundred years should go to praise

Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;

Two hundred to adore each breast,

But thirty thousand to the rest;

An age at least to every part,

And the last age should show your heart.

For, lady, you deserve this state,

Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear

Time’s wingèd chariot hurrying near;

And yonder all before us lie

Deserts of vast eternity.

Thy beauty shall no more be found;

Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound

My echoing song; then worms shall try

That long-preserved virginity,

And your quaint honour turn to dust,

And into ashes all my lust;

The grave’s a fine and private place,

But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue

Sits on thy skin like morning dew,

And while thy willing soul transpires

At every pore with instant fires,

Now let us sport us while we may,

And now, like amorous birds of prey,

Rather at once our time devour

Than languish in his slow-chapped power.

Let us roll all our strength and all

Our sweetness up into one ball,

And tear our pleasures with rough strife

Through the iron gates of life:

Thus, though we cannot make our sun

Stand still, yet we will make him run.

## ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744)

### Ode on Solitude

Happy the man, whose wish and care

A few paternal acres bound,

Content to breathe his native air,

In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,

Whose flocks supply him with attire,

Whose trees in summer yield him shade,

In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcernedly find

Hours, days, and years slide soft away,

In health of body, peace of mind,

Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease,

Together mixed; sweet recreation;

And innocence, which most does please,

With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;

Thus unlamented let me die;

Steal from the world, and not a stone

Tell where I lie.

## WILLIAM BLAKE (1757-1827)

### The Chimney Sweeper: A little black thing among the snow

A little black thing among the snow,

Crying "weep! 'weep!" in notes of woe!

"Where are thy father and mother? say?"

"They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,

And smil'd among the winter's snow,

They clothed me in the clothes of death,

And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy and dance and sing,

They think they have done me no injury,

And are gone to praise God and his Priest and King,

Who make up a heaven of our misery."

### The Chimney Sweeper: When my mother died I was very young

When my mother died I was very young,

And my father sold me while yet my tongue

Could scarcely cry " 'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!"

So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head

That curled like a lamb's back, was shaved, so I said,

"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,

You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

And so he was quiet, & that very night,

As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight!

That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,

Were all of them locked up in coffins of black;

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,

And he opened the coffins & set them all free;

Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,

And wash in a river and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,

They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.

And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,

He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark

And got with our bags & our brushes to work.

Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;

So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

### The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee

Dost thou know who made thee

Gave thee life & bid thee feed.

By the stream & o'er the mead;

Gave thee clothing of delight,

Softest clothing wooly bright;

Gave thee such a tender voice,

Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee

Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,

Little Lamb I'll tell thee!

He is called by thy name,

For he calls himself a Lamb:

He is meek & he is mild,

He became a little child:

I a child & thou a lamb,

We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

### The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,

In the forests of the night;

What immortal hand or eye,

Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.

Burnt the fire of thine eyes?

On what wings dare he aspire?

What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,

Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

And when thy heart began to beat,

What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,

In what furnace was thy brain?

What the anvil? what dread grasp,

Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears

And water'd heaven with their tears:

Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,

In the forests of the night:

What immortal hand or eye,

Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850)

### I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine

And twinkle on the milky way,

They stretched in never-ending line

Along the margin of a bay:

Ten thousand saw I at a glance,

Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they

Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:

A poet could not but be gay,

In such a jocund company:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought

What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie

In vacant or in pensive mood,

They flash upon that inward eye

Which is the bliss of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils.

### The World Is Too Much With Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,

Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—

Little we see in Nature that is ours;

We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;

The winds that will be howling at all hours,

And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;

For this, for everything, we are out of tune;

It moves us not. Great God! I’d rather be

A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;

So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,

Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;

Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

### Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour. July 13, 1798

Five years have past; five summers, with the length

Of five long winters! and again I hear

These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs

With a soft inland murmur.—Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,

That on a wild secluded scene impress

Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect

The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

The day is come when I again repose

Here, under this dark sycamore, and view

These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,

Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,

Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves

'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see

These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines

Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,

Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke

Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!

With some uncertain notice, as might seem

Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,

Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire

The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,

Through a long absence, have not been to me

As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:

But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din

Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,

In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,

Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;

And passing even into my purer mind

With tranquil restoration:—feelings too

Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,

As have no slight or trivial influence

On that best portion of a good man's life,

His little, nameless, unremembered, acts

Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,

To them I may have owed another gift,

Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,

In which the burthen of the mystery,

In which the heavy and the weary weight

Of all this unintelligible world,

Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,

In which the affections gently lead us on,—

Until, the breath of this corporeal frame

And even the motion of our human blood

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep

In body, and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power

Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,

We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—

In darkness and amid the many shapes

Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir

Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,

Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—

How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,

O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,

How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,

With many recognitions dim and faint,

And somewhat of a sad perplexity,

The picture of the mind revives again:

While here I stand, not only with the sense

Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts

That in this moment there is life and food

For future years. And so I dare to hope,

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first

I came among these hills; when like a roe

I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides

Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,

Wherever nature led: more like a man

Flying from something that he dreads, than one

Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then

(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days

And their glad animal movements all gone by)

To me was all in all.—I cannot paint

What then I was. The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,

The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,

Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite; a feeling and a love,

That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, not any interest

Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,

And all its aching joys are now no more,

And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this

Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts

Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,

Abundant recompense. For I have learned

To look on nature, not as in the hour

Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes

The still sad music of humanity,

Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power

To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy

Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime

Of something far more deeply interfused,

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

And the round ocean and the living air,

And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,

And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still

A lover of the meadows and the woods

And mountains; and of all that we behold

From this green earth; of all the mighty world

Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,

And what perceive; well pleased to recognise

In nature and the language of the sense

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,

The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul

Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,

If I were not thus taught, should I the more

Suffer my genial spirits to decay:

For thou art with me here upon the banks

Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,

My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch

The language of my former heart, and read

My former pleasures in the shooting lights

Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while

May I behold in thee what I was once,

My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,

Knowing that Nature never did betray

The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,

Through all the years of this our life, to lead

From joy to joy: for she can so inform

The mind that is within us, so impress

With quietness and beauty, and so feed

With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,

Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,

Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all

The dreary intercourse of daily life,

Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb

Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold

Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon

Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;

And let the misty mountain-winds be free

To blow against thee: and, in after years,

When these wild ecstasies shall be matured

Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind

Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,

Thy memory be as a dwelling-place

For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,

If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,

Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts

Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,

And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—

If I should be where I no more can hear

Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams

Of past existence—wilt thou then forget

That on the banks of this delightful stream

We stood together; and that I, so long

A worshipper of Nature, hither came

Unwearied in that service: rather say

With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal

Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,

That after many wanderings, many years

Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,

And this green pastoral landscape, were to me

More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

## SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

### Kubla Khan

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran

Through caverns measureless to man

Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground

With walls and towers were girdled round;

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,

Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;

And here were forests ancient as the hills,

Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted

Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted

As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted

By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,

As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,

A mighty fountain momently was forced:

Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,

Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:

And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever

It flung up momently the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion

Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,

Then reached the caverns measureless to man,

And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;

And ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far

Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure

Floated midway on the waves;

Where was heard the mingled measure

From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer

In a vision once I saw:

It was an Abyssinian maid

And on her dulcimer she played,

Singing of Mount Abora.

Could I revive within me

Her symphony and song,

To such a deep delight ’twould win me,

That with music loud and long,

I would build that dome in air,

That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

And all who heard should see them there,

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!

His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,

And close your eyes with holy dread

For he on honey-dew hath fed,

And drunk the milk of Paradise.

## LORD BYRON (GEORGE GORDON) (1788-1824)

### She Walks in Beauty

She walks in beauty, like the night

Of cloudless climes and starry skies;

And all that’s best of dark and bright

Meet in her aspect and her eyes;

Thus mellowed to that tender light

Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,

Had half impaired the nameless grace

Which waves in every raven tress,

Or softly lightens o’er her face;

Where thoughts serenely sweet express,

How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o’er that brow,

So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,

The smiles that win, the tints that glow,

But tell of days in goodness spent,

A mind at peace with all below,

A heart whose love is innocent!

### My Soul is Dark

My soul is dark - Oh! quickly string

The harp I yet can brook to hear;

And let thy gentle fingers fling

Its melting murmurs o'er mine ear.

If in this heart a hope be dear,

That sound shall charm it forth again:

If in these eyes there lurk a tear,

'Twill flow, and cease to burn my brain.

But bid the strain be wild and deep,

Nor let thy notes of joy be first:

I tell thee, minstrel, I must weep,

Or else this heavy heart will burst;

For it hath been by sorrow nursed,

And ached in sleepless silence, long;

And now 'tis doomed to know the worst,

And break at once - or yield to song.

### When We Two Parted

When we two parted

In silence and tears,

Half broken-hearted

To sever for years,

Pale grew thy cheek and cold,

Colder thy kiss;

Truly that hour foretold

Sorrow to this.

The dew of the morning

Sunk chill on my brow--

It felt like the warning

Of what I feel now.

Thy vows are all broken,

And light is thy fame;

I hear thy name spoken,

And share in its shame.

They name thee before me,

A knell to mine ear;

A shrudder comes o'er me--

Why wert thou so dear?

They know not I knew thee,

Who knew thee so well--

Long, long I shall rue thee,

Too deeply to tell.

In secret we met--

In silence I grieve,

That thy heart could forget,

Thy spirit deceive

If I should meet thee

After long years,

How should I greet thee?--

With silence and tears.

### There is Pleasure in the Pathless Woods

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,

There is a rapture on the lonely shore,

There is society, where none intrudes,

By the deep sea, and music in its roar:

I love not man the less, but Nature more,

From these our interviews, in which I steal

From all I may be, or have been before,

To mingle with the Universe, and feel

What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

## PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822)

### Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,

Who said—“Two vast and trunkless legs of stone

Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,

Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,

And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read

Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,

The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;

And on the pedestal, these words appear:

My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;

Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!

Nothing beside remains. Round the decay

Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare

The lone and level sands stretch far away.”

### Love’s Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river,

And the rivers with the ocean;

The winds of heaven mix forever

With a sweet emotion;

Nothing in the world is single;

All things by a law divine

In another's being mingle--

Why not I with thine?

See, the mountains kiss high heaven,

And the waves clasp one another;

No sister flower could be forgiven

If it disdained its brother;

And the sunlight clasps the earth,

And the moonbeams kiss the sea;--

What are all these kissings worth,

If thou kiss not me?

## JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)

### Ode to a Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains

My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,

Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains

One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:

'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,

But being too happy in thine happiness,—

That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees

In some melodious plot

Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been

Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,

Tasting of Flora and the country green,

Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!

O for a beaker full of the warm South,

Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,

With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,

And purple-stained mouth;

That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,

And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget

What thou among the leaves hast never known,

The weariness, the fever, and the fret

Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;

Where but to think is to be full of sorrow

And leaden-eyed despairs,

Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,

Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

But on the viewless wings of Poesy,

Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:

Already with thee! tender is the night,

And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,

Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;

But here there is no light,

Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown

Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,

Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,

But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet

Wherewith the seasonable month endows

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;

White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;

Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;

And mid-May's eldest child,

The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,

The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death,

Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,

To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,

To cease upon the midnight with no pain,

While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad

In such an ecstasy!

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—

To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!

No hungry generations tread thee down;

The voice I hear this passing night was heard

In ancient days by emperor and clown:

Perhaps the self-same song that found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,

She stood in tears amid the alien corn;

The same that oft-times hath

Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam

Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell

To toll me back from thee to my sole self!

Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well

As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.

Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep

In the next valley-glades:

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

### Ode on a Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,

Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,

Sylvan historian, who canst thus express

A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:

What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape

Of deities or mortals, or of both,

In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?

What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?

What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,

Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:

Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave

Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;

Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,

Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;

She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed

Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;

And, happy melodist, unwearied,

For ever piping songs for ever new;

More happy love! more happy, happy love!

For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

For ever panting, and for ever young;

All breathing human passion far above,

That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,

A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?

To what green altar, O mysterious priest,

Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,

And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?

What little town by river or sea shore,

Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,

Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?

And, little town, thy streets for evermore

Will silent be; and not a soul to tell

Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede

Of marble men and maidens overwrought,

With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought

As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!

When old age shall this generation waste,

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe

Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

### from Endymion

*A Poetic Romance*

(excerpt)

BOOK I

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:

Its loveliness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness; but still will keep

A bower quiet for us, and a sleep

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing

A flowery band to bind us to the earth,

Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth

Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,

Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways

Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,

Some shape of beauty moves away the pall

From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,

Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon

For simple sheep; and such are daffodils

With the green world they live in; and clear rills

That for themselves a cooling covert make

'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,

Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:

And such too is the grandeur of the dooms

We have imagined for the mighty dead;

All lovely tales that we have heard or read:

An endless fountain of immortal drink,

Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences

For one short hour; no, even as the trees

That whisper round a temple become soon

Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,

The passion poesy, glories infinite,

Haunt us till they become a cheering light

Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,

That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'ercast;

They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I

Will trace the story of Endymion.

The very music of the name has gone

Into my being, and each pleasant scene

Is growing fresh before me as the green

Of our own valleys: so I will begin

Now while I cannot hear the city's din;

Now while the early budders are just new,

And run in mazes of the youngest hue

About old forests; while the willow trails

Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails

Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year

Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer

My little boat, for many quiet hours,

With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.

Many and many a verse I hope to write,

Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,

Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees

Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,

I must be near the middle of my story.

O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,

See it half finish'd: but let Autumn bold,

With universal tinge of sober gold,

Be all about me when I make an end.

And now, at once adventuresome, I send

My herald thought into a wilderness:

There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress

My uncertain path with green, that I may speed

Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

## RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803-1882)

### Give All to Love

Give all to love;

Obey thy heart;

Friends, kindred, days,

Estate, good-fame,

Plans, credit and the Muse,—

Nothing refuse.

’T is a brave master;

Let it have scope:

Follow it utterly,

Hope beyond hope:

High and more high

It dives into noon,

With wing unspent,

Untold intent:

But it is a god,

Knows its own path

And the outlets of the sky.

It was never for the mean;

It requireth courage stout.

Souls above doubt,

Valor unbending,

It will reward,—

They shall return

More than they were,

And ever ascending.

Leave all for love;

Yet, hear me, yet,

One word more thy heart behoved,

One pulse more of firm endeavor,—

Keep thee to-day,

To-morrow, forever,

Free as an Arab

Of thy beloved.

Cling with life to the maid;

But when the surprise,

First vague shadow of surmise

Flits across her bosom young,

Of a joy apart from thee,

Free be she, fancy-free;

Nor thou detain her vesture’s hem,

Nor the palest rose she flung

From her summer diadem.

Though thou loved her as thyself,

As a self of purer clay,

Though her parting dims the day,

Stealing grace from all alive;

Heartily know,

When half-gods go,

The gods arrive.

### Fate

Deep in the man sits fast his fate

To mould his fortunes, mean or great:

Unknown to Cromwell as to me

Was Cromwell's measure or degree;

Unknown to him as to his horse,

If he than his groom be better or worse.

He works, plots, fights, in rude affairs,

With squires, lords, kings, his craft compares,

Till late he learned, through doubt and fear,

Broad England harbored not his peer:

Obeying time, the last to own

The Genius from its cloudy throne.

For the prevision is allied

Unto the thing so signified;

Or say, the foresight that awaits

Is the same Genius that creates.

## ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806-1861)

### Sonnets from the Portuguese 14: If thou must love me, let it be for nought

If thou must love me, let it be for nought

Except for love's sake only. Do not say

I love her for her smile ... her look ... her way

Of speaking gently, ... for a trick of thought

That falls in well with mine, and certes brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—

For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may

Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love me for

Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—

A creature might forget to weep, who bore

Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!

But love me for love's sake, that evermore

Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

### Sonnets from the Portuguese 43: How do I love thee? Let me count the ways

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.

I love thee to the depth and breadth and height

My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight

For the ends of being and ideal grace.

I love thee to the level of every day’s

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.

I love thee freely, as men strive for right;

I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.

I love thee with the passion put to use

In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.

I love thee with a love I seemed to lose

With my lost saints. I love thee with the breath,

Smiles, tears, of all my life; and, if God choose,

I shall but love thee better after death.

### A Curse for a Nation

I heard an angel speak last night,

And he said 'Write!

Write a Nation's curse for me,

And send it over the Western Sea.'

I faltered, taking up the word:

'Not so, my lord!

If curses must be, choose another

To send thy curse against my brother.

'For I am bound by gratitude,

By love and blood,

To brothers of mine across the sea,

Who stretch out kindly hands to me.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write

My curse to-night.

From the summits of love a curse is driven,

As lightning is from the tops of heaven.'

'Not so,' I answered. 'Evermore

My heart is sore

For my own land's sins: for little feet

Of children bleeding along the street:

'For parked-up honors that gainsay

The right of way:

For almsgiving through a door that is

Not open enough for two friends to kiss:

'For love of freedom which abates

Beyond the Straits:

For patriot virtue starved to vice on

Self-praise, self-interest, and suspicion:

'For an oligarchic parliament,

And bribes well-meant.

What curse to another land assign,

When heavy-souled for the sins of mine?'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write

My curse to-night.

Because thou hast strength to see and hate

A foul thing done within thy gate.'

'Not so,' I answered once again.

'To curse, choose men.

For I, a woman, have only known

How the heart melts and the tears run down.'

'Therefore,' the voice said, 'shalt thou write

My curse to-night.

Some women weep and curse, I say

(And no one marvels), night and day.

'And thou shalt take their part to-night,

Weep and write.

A curse from the depths of womanhood

Is very salt, and bitter, and good.'

So thus I wrote, and mourned indeed,

What all may read.

And thus, as was enjoined on me,

I send it over the Western Sea.

The Curse

Because ye have broken your own chain

With the strain

Of brave men climbing a Nation's height,

Yet thence bear down with brand and thong

On souls of others, -- for this wrong

This is the curse. Write.

Because yourselves are standing straight

In the state

Of Freedom's foremost acolyte,

Yet keep calm footing all the time

On writhing bond-slaves, -- for this crime

This is the curse. Write.

Because ye prosper in God's name,

With a claim

To honor in the old world's sight,

Yet do the fiend's work perfectly

In strangling martyrs, -- for this lie

This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while kings conspire

Round the people's smouldering fire,

And, warm for your part,

Shall never dare -- O shame!

To utter the thought into flame

Which burns at your heart.

This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while nations strive

With the bloodhounds, die or survive,

Drop faint from their jaws,

Or throttle them backward to death;

And only under your breath

Shall favor the cause.

This is the curse. Write.

Ye shall watch while strong men draw

The nets of feudal law

To strangle the weak;

And, counting the sin for a sin,

Your soul shall be sadder within

Than the word ye shall speak.

This is the curse. Write.

When good men are praying erect

That Christ may avenge His elect

And deliver the earth,

The prayer in your ears, said low,

Shall sound like the tramp of a foe

That's driving you forth.

This is the curse. Write.

When wise men give you their praise,

They shall praise in the heat of the phrase,

As if carried too far.

When ye boast your own charters kept true,

Ye shall blush; for the thing which ye do

Derides what ye are.

This is the curse. Write.

When fools cast taunts at your gate,

Your scorn ye shall somewhat abate

As ye look o'er the wall;

For your conscience, tradition, and name

Explode with a deadlier blame

Than the worst of them all.

This is the curse. Write.

Go, wherever ill deeds shall be done,

Go, plant your flag in the sun

Beside the ill-doers!

And recoil from clenching the curse

Of God's witnessing Universe

With a curse of yours.

This is the curse. Write.

## HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW (1807-1882)

### A Psalm of Life

What The Heart Of The Young Man Said To The Psalmist.

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,

Life is but an empty dream!

For the soul is dead that slumbers,

And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!

And the grave is not its goal;

Dust thou art, to dust returnest,

Was not spoken of the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,

Is our destined end or way;

But to act, that each to-morrow

Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting,

And our hearts, though stout and brave,

Still, like muffled drums, are beating

Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world’s broad field of battle,

In the bivouac of Life,

Be not like dumb, driven cattle!

Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe’er pleasant!

Let the dead Past bury its dead!

Act,— act in the living Present!

Heart within, and God o’erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us

We can make our lives sublime,

And, departing, leave behind us

Footprints on the sands of time;

Footprints, that perhaps another,

Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,

A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,

Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing,

With a heart for any fate;

Still achieving, still pursuing,

Learn to labor and to wait.

### A Gleam of Sunshine

This is the place. Stand still, my steed,

Let me review the scene,

And summon from the shadowy Past

The forms that once have been.

The Past and Present here unite

Beneath Time's flowing tide,

Like footprints hidden by a brook,

But seen on either side.

Here runs the highway to the town;

There the green lane descends,

Through which I walked to church with thee,

O gentlest of my friends!

The shadow of the linden-trees

Lay moving on the grass;

Between them and the moving boughs,

A shadow, thou didst pass.

Thy dress was like the lilies,

And thy heart as pure as they:

One of God's holy messengers

Did walk with me that day.

I saw the branches of the trees

Bend down thy touch to meet,

The clover-blossoms in the grass

Rise up to kiss thy feet,

"Sleep, sleep to-day, tormenting cares,

Of earth and folly born!"

Solemnly sang the village choir

On that sweet Sabbath morn.

Through the closed blinds the golden sun

Poured in a dusty beam,

Like the celestial ladder seen

By Jacob in his dream.

And ever and anon, the wind,

Sweet-scented with the hay,

Turned o'er the hymn-book's fluttering leaves

That on the window lay.

Long was the good man's sermon,

Yet it seemed not so to me;

For he spake of Ruth the beautiful,

And still I thought of thee.

Long was the prayer he uttered,

Yet it seemed not so to me;

For in my heart I prayed with him,

And still I thought of thee.

But now, alas! the place seems changed;

Thou art no longer here:

Part of the sunshine of the scene

With thee did disappear.

Though thoughts, deep-rooted in my heart,

Like pine-trees dark and high,

Subdue the light of noon, and breathe

A low and ceaseless sigh;

This memory brightens o'er the past,

As when the sun, concealed

Behind some cloud that near us hangs

Shines on a distant field.

## EDGAR ALLAN POE (1809-1849)

### Annabel Lee

It was many and many a year ago,

In a kingdom by the sea,

That a maiden there lived whom you may know

By the name of Annabel Lee;

And this maiden she lived with no other thought

Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,

In this kingdom by the sea,

But we loved with a love that was more than love—

I and my Annabel Lee—

With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven

Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,

In this kingdom by the sea,

A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling

My beautiful Annabel Lee;

So that her highborn kinsmen came

And bore her away from me,

To shut her up in a sepulchre

In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,

Went envying her and me—

Yes!—that was the reason (as all men know,

In this kingdom by the sea)

That the wind came out of the cloud by night,

Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love

Of those who were older than we—

Of many far wiser than we—

And neither the angels in Heaven above

Nor the demons down under the sea

Can ever dissever my soul from the soul

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side

Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,

In her sepulchre there by the sea—

In her tomb by the sounding sea.

### A Dream Within a Dream

Take this kiss upon the brow!

And, in parting from you now,

Thus much let me avow —

You are not wrong, who deem

That my days have been a dream;

Yet if hope has flown away

In a night, or in a day,

In a vision, or in none,

Is it therefore the less gone?

All that we see or seem

Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar

Of a surf-tormented shore,

And I hold within my hand

Grains of the golden sand —

How few! yet how they creep

Through my fingers to the deep,

While I weep — while I weep!

O God! Can I not grasp

Them with a tighter clasp?

O God! can I not save

One from the pitiless wave?

Is all that we see or seem

But a dream within a dream?

### The Raven

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,

Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,

As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.

“’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—

Only this and nothing more.”

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;

And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow

From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—

For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain

Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;

So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating

“’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—

Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—

This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,

“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;

But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,

And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,

That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the door;—

Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,

Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, “Lenore?”

This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, “Lenore!”—

Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,

Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.

“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;

Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—

Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—

’Tis the wind and nothing more!”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;

Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;

But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,

By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,

“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven,

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,

Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being

Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,

With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only

That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.

Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—

Till I scarcely more than muttered “Other friends have flown before—

On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.”

Then the bird said “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,

“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster

Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—

Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore

Of ‘Never—nevermore’.”

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,

Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;

Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking

Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—

What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore

Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing

To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;

This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining

On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o’er,

But whose velvet-violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o’er,

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer

Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.

“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee

Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—

Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,

Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—

On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—

Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!

By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting—

“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!

Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting

On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,

And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;

And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted—nevermore!

## ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON (1809-1892)

### Ulysses

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink

Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd

Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those

That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known; cities of men

And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met;

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades

For ever and forever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!

As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,

A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,

To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil

This labour, by slow prudence to make mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good.

Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail

In offices of tenderness, and pay

Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:

There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

Death closes all: but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,

'T is not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite

The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,

And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

## EMILY BRONTË (1818-1848)

### I Am the Only Being Whose Doom

I am the only being whose doom

No tongue would ask, no eye would mourn;

I never caused a thought of gloom,

A smile of joy, since I was born.

In secret pleasure, secret tears,

This changeful life has slipped away,

As friendless after eighteen years,

As lone as on my natal day.

There have been times I cannot hide,

There have been times when this was drear,

When my sad soul forgot its pride

And longed for one to love me here.

But those were in the early glow

Of feelings since subdued by care;

And they have died so long ago,

I hardly now believe they were.

First melted off the hope of youth,

Then fancy’s rainbow fast withdrew;

And then experience told me truth

In mortal bosoms never grew.

’Twas grief enough to think mankind

All hollow, servile, insincere;

But worse to trust to my own mind

And find the same corruption there

### Come, Walk with Me

Come, walk with me,

There's only thee

To bless my spirit now -

We used to love on winter nights

To wander through the snow;

Can we not woo back old delights?

The clouds rush dark and wild

They fleck with shade our mountain heights

The same as long ago

And on the horizon rest at last

In looming masses piled;

While moonbeams flash and fly so fast

We scarce can say they smiled -

Come walk with me, come walk with me;

We were not once so few

But Death has stolen our company

As sunshine steals the dew -

He took them one by one and we

Are left the only two;

So closer would my feelings twine

Because they have no stay but thine -

'Nay call me not - it may not be

Is human love so true?

Can Friendship's flower droop on for years

And then revive anew?

No, though the soil be wet with tears,

How fair soe'er it grew

The vital sap once perished

Will never flow again

And surer than that dwelling dread,

The narrow dungeon of the dead

Time parts the hearts of men -

## WALT WHITMAN (1819-1892)

### O Captain! My Captain!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,

The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;

Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,

For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream that on the deck,

You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

### When I Heard the Learn’d Astronomer

When I heard the learn’d astronomer,

When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,

When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,

When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,

How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,

Till rising and gliding out I wander’d off by myself,

In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,

Look’d up in perfect silence at the stars.

### O Me! O Life!

Oh me! Oh life! of the questions of these recurring,

Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill’d with the foolish,

Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and who more faithless?)

Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of the struggle ever renew’d,

Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around me,

Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest me intertwined,

The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these, O me, O life?

Answer.

That you are here—that life exists and identity,

That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a verse.

### I Sit and Look Out

I SIT and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame;

I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men, at anguish with themselves, remorseful after deeds done;

I see, in low life, the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected, gaunt, desperate;

I see the wife misused by her husband—I see the treacherous seducer of young women;

I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love, attempted to be hid—I see these sights on the earth; 5

I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny—I see martyrs and prisoners;

I observe a famine at sea—I observe the sailors casting lots who shall be kill’d, to preserve the lives of the rest;

I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;

All these—All the meanness and agony without end, I sitting, look out upon,

See, hear, and am silent.

### Song of Myself (1892 version)

1

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

And what I assume you shall assume,

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,

I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form’d from this soil, this air,

Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same,

I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,

Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,

Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never forgotten,

I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,

Nature without check with original energy.

2

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes,

I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,

The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distillation, it is odorless,

It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,

I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,

I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,

Echoes, ripples, buzz’d whispers, love-root, silk-thread, crotch and vine,

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs,

The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color’d sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,

The sound of the belch’d words of my voice loos’d to the eddies of the wind,

A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,

The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,

The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,

The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon’d a thousand acres much? have you reckon’d the earth much?

Have you practis’d so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,)

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning and the end,

But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,

Nor any more youth or age than there is now,

And will never be any more perfection than there is now,

Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,

Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase, always sex,

Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn’d and unlearn’d feel that it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in the beams,

Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,

I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,

Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,

Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,

Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;

As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread,

Leaving me baskets cover’d with white towels swelling the house with their plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,

That they turn from gazing after and down the road,

And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,

People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward and city I live in, or the nation,

The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old and new,

My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,

The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I love,

The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,

Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of doubtful news, the fitful events;

These come to me days and nights and go from me again,

But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,

Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,

Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable certain rest,

Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,

Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and contenders,

I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

5

I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,

And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat,

Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best,

Only the lull I like, the hum of your valvèd voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,

How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn’d over upon me,

And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart,

And reach’d till you felt my beard, and reach’d till you held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth,

And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,

And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,

And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and the women my sisters and lovers,

And that a kelson of the creation is love,

And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,

And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,

And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap’d stones, elder, mullein and poke-weed.

6

A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with full hands;

How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of hopeful green stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,

A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,

Bearing the owner’s name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark, and say Whose?

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,

And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones,

Growing among black folks as among white,

Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same, I receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,

It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,

It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,

It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken soon out of their mothers’ laps,

And here you are the mothers’ laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old mothers,

Darker than the colorless beards of old men,

Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,

And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women,

And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?

And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,

The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,

And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not wait at the end to arrest it,

And ceas’d the moment life appear’d.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,

And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier.

7

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?

I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die, and I know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash’d babe, and am not contain’d between my hat and boots,

And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one good,

The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,

I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal and fathomless as myself,

(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and female,

For me those that have been boys and that love women,

For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be slighted,

For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and the mothers of mothers,

For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,

For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,

I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,

And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot be shaken away.

8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,

I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,

I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,

I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the promenaders,

The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,

The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,

The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous’d mobs,

The flap of the curtain’d litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,

The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,

The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his passage to the centre of the crowd,

The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,

What groans of over-fed or half-starv’d who fall sunstruck or in fits,

What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and give birth to babes,

What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls restrain’d by decorum,

Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections with convex lips,

I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I depart.

## EMILY DICKINSON (1830-1886)

### Because I could not stop for Death – (479)

Because I could not stop for Death –

He kindly stopped for me –

The Carriage held but just Ourselves –

And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste

And I had put away

My labor and my leisure too,

For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove

At Recess – in the Ring –

We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –

We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –

The Dews drew quivering and Chill –

For only Gossamer, my Gown –

My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed

A Swelling of the Ground –

The Roof was scarcely visible –

The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet

Feels shorter than the Day

I first surmised the Horses' Heads

Were toward Eternity –

### “Hope” is the thing with feathers - (314)

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -

And sore must be the storm -

That could abash the little Bird

That kept so many warm –

I’ve heard it in the chillest land -

And on the strangest Sea -

Yet - never - in Extremity,

It asked a crumb - of me.

### “Faith” is fine invention (202)

“Faith” is a fine invention

For Gentlemen who see!

But Microscopes are prudent

In an Emergency!

### My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun (764)

My Life had stood - a Loaded Gun -

In Corners - till a Day

The Owner passed - identified -

And carried Me away -

And now We roam in Sovreign Woods -

And now We hunt the Doe -

And every time I speak for Him

The Mountains straight reply -

And do I smile, such cordial light

Opon the Valley glow -

It is as a Vesuvian face

Had let it’s pleasure through -

And when at Night - Our good Day done -

I guard My Master’s Head -

’Tis better than the Eider Duck’s

Deep Pillow - to have shared -

To foe of His - I’m deadly foe -

None stir the second time -

On whom I lay a Yellow Eye -

Or an emphatic Thumb -

Though I than He - may longer live

He longer must - than I -

For I have but the power to kill,

Without - the power to die –

### I felt a Funeral, in my Brain, (340)

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,

And Mourners to and fro

Kept treading - treading - till it seemed

That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,

A Service, like a Drum -

Kept beating - beating - till I thought

My mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box

And creak across my Soul

With those same Boots of Lead, again,

Then Space - began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,

And Being, but an Ear,

And I, and Silence, some strange Race,

Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,

And I dropped down, and down -

And hit a World, at every plunge,

And Finished knowing - then –

## WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY (1849-1903)

### Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,

Black as the Pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

Looms but the Horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

How charged with punishments the scroll.

I am the master of my fate:

I am the captain of my soul.

## WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS (1865-1939)

### When You Are Old

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,

And nodding by the fire, take down this book,

And slowly read, and dream of the soft look

Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,

And loved your beauty with love false or true,

But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,

And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,

Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled

And paced upon the mountains overhead

And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

### Easter, 1916

I have met them at close of day

Coming with vivid faces

From counter or desk among grey

Eighteenth-century houses.

I have passed with a nod of the head

Or polite meaningless words,

Or have lingered awhile and said

Polite meaningless words,

And thought before I had done

Of a mocking tale or a gibe

To please a companion

Around the fire at the club,

Being certain that they and I

But lived where motley is worn:

All changed, changed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

That woman's days were spent

In ignorant good-will,

Her nights in argument

Until her voice grew shrill.

What voice more sweet than hers

When, young and beautiful,

She rode to harriers?

This man had kept a school

And rode our winged horse;

This other his helper and friend

Was coming into his force;

He might have won fame in the end,

So sensitive his nature seemed,

So daring and sweet his thought.

This other man I had dreamed

A drunken, vainglorious lout.

He had done most bitter wrong

To some who are near my heart,

Yet I number him in the song;

He, too, has resigned his part

In the casual comedy;

He, too, has been changed in his turn,

Transformed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

Hearts with one purpose alone

Through summer and winter seem

Enchanted to a stone

To trouble the living stream.

The horse that comes from the road.

The rider, the birds that range

From cloud to tumbling cloud,

Minute by minute they change;

A shadow of cloud on the stream

Changes minute by minute;

A horse-hoof slides on the brim,

And a horse plashes within it;

The long-legged moor-hens dive,

And hens to moor-cocks call;

Minute by minute they live:

The stone's in the midst of all.

Too long a sacrifice

Can make a stone of the heart.

O when may it suffice?

That is Heaven's part, our part

To murmur name upon name,

As a mother names her child

When sleep at last has come

On limbs that had run wild.

What is it but nightfall?

No, no, not night but death;

Was it needless death after all?

For England may keep faith

For all that is done and said.

We know their dream; enough

To know they dreamed and are dead;

And what if excess of love

Bewildered them till they died?

I write it out in a verse -

MacDonagh and MacBride

And Connolly and pearse

Now and in time to be,

Wherever green is worn,

Are changed, changed utterly:

A terrible beauty is born.

### The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre

The falcon cannot hear the falconer;

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;

Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst

Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand.

The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out

When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi

Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,

Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it

Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.

The darkness drops again; but now I know

That twenty centuries of stony sleep

Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

### Leda and the Swan

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still

Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed

By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,

He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push

The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?

And how can body, laid in that white rush,

But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there

The broken wall, the burning roof and tower

And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,

So mastered by the brute blood of the air,

Did she put on his knowledge with his power

Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

### The Lake Isle of Innisfree

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;

There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,

And evening full of the linnet’s wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day

I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart’s core.

## EDWARD ARLINGTON ROBINSON (1869-1935)

### The Home on the Hill

They are all gone away,

The house is shut and still,

There is nothing more to say

Through broken walls and gray,

The wind blows bleak and shrill,

They are all gone away

Nor is there one today,

To speak them good or ill

There is nothing more to say

Why is it then we stray

Around the sunken sill?

They are all gone away

And our poor fancy play

For them is wasted skill,

There is nothing more to say

There is ruin and decay

In the House on the Hill:

They are all gone away,

There is nothing more to say.

## PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR (1872-1906)

### We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,

It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—

This debt we pay to human guile;

With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,

And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,

In counting all our tears and sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while

We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.

We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile;

But let the world dream otherwise,

We wear the mask!

### Ships that Pass in the Night

Out in the sky the great dark clouds are massing;

I look far out into the pregnant night,

Where I can hear a solemn booming gun

And catch the gleaming of a random light,

That tells me that the ship I seek is passing, passing.

My tearful eyes my soul's deep hurt are glassing;

For I would hail and check that ship of ships.

I stretch my hands imploring, cry aloud,

My voice falls dead a foot from mine own lips,

And but its ghost doth reach that vessel, passing, passing.

O Earth, O Sky, O Ocean, both surpassing,

O heart of mine, O soul that dreads the dark!

Is there no hope for me? Is there no way

That I may sight and check that speeding bark

Which out of sight and sound is passing, passing?

### Life’s Tragedy

It may be misery not to sing at all,

And to go silent through the brimming day;

It may be misery never to be loved,

But deeper griefs than these beset the way.

To sing the perfect song,

And by a half-tone lost the key,

There the potent sorrow, there the grief,

The pale, sad staring of Life's Tragedy.

To have come near to the perfect love,

Not the hot passion of untempered youth,

But that which lies aside its vanity,

And gives, for thy trusting worship, truth.

This, this indeed is to be accursed,

For if we mortals love, or if we sing,

We count our joys not by what we have,

But by what kept us from that perfect thing.

### A Negro Love Song

Seen my lady home las' night,

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Hel' huh han' an' sque'z it tight,

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Hyeahd huh sigh a little sigh,

Seen a light gleam f'om huh eye,

An' a smile go flittin' by —

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Hyeahd de win' blow thoo de pine,

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Mockin'-bird was singin' fine,

Jump back, honey, jump back.

An' my hea't was beatin' so,

When I reached my lady's do',

Dat I could n't ba' to go —

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Put my ahm aroun' huh wais',

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Raised huh lips an' took a tase,

Jump back, honey, jump back.

Love me, honey, love me true?

Love me well ez I love you?

An' she answe'd, "'Cose I do"—

Jump back, honey, jump back.

## ROBERT FROST (1874-1963)

### The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,

And having perhaps the better claim,

Because it was grassy and wanted wear;

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

### Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound’s the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

### Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,

And spills the upper boulders in the sun;

And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.

The work of hunters is another thing:

I have come after them and made repair

Where they have left not one stone on a stone,

But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,

To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,

No one has seen them made or heard them made,

But at spring mending-time we find them there.

I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;

And on a day we meet to walk the line

And set the wall between us once again.

We keep the wall between us as we go.

To each the boulders that have fallen to each.

And some are loaves and some so nearly balls

We have to use a spell to make them balance:

"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"

We wear our fingers rough with handling them.

Oh, just another kind of out-door game,

One on a side. It comes to little more:

There where it is we do not need the wall:

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.

My apple trees will never get across

And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.

He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."

Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder

If I could put a notion in his head:

"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it

Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know

What I was walling in or walling out,

And to whom I was like to give offence.

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,

That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,

But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather

He said it for himself. I see him there

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.

He moves in darkness as it seems to me,

Not of woods only and the shade of trees.

He will not go behind his father's saying,

And he likes having thought of it so well

He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

## RAINER MARIA RILKE (1875-1926)

### Duino Elegies: The First Elegy

Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the Angelic

Orders? And even if one were to suddenly

take me to its heart, I would vanish into its

stronger existence. For beauty is nothing but

the beginning of terror, that we are still able to bear,

and we revere it so, because it calmly disdains

to destroy us. Every Angel is terror.

And so I hold myself back and swallow the cry

of a darkened sobbing. Ah, who then can

we make use of? Not Angels: not men,

and the resourceful creatures see clearly

that we are not really at home

in the interpreted world. Perhaps there remains

some tree on a slope, that we can see

again each day: there remains to us yesterday’s street,

and the thinned-out loyalty of a habit

that liked us, and so stayed, and never departed.

Oh, and the night, the night, when the wind full of space

wears out our faces – whom would she not stay for,

the longed-for, gentle, disappointing one, whom the solitary heart

with difficulty stands before. Is she less heavy for lovers?

Ah, they only hide their fate between themselves.

Do you not know yet? Throw the emptiness out of your arms

to add to the spaces we breathe; maybe the birds

will feel the expansion of air, in more intimate flight.

Yes, the Spring-times needed you deeply. Many a star

must have been there for you so you might feel it. A wave

lifted towards you out of the past, or, as you walked

past an open window, a violin

gave of itself. All this was their mission.

But could you handle it? Were you not always,

still, distracted by expectation, as if all you experienced,

like a Beloved, came near to you? (Where could you contain her,

with all the vast strange thoughts in you

going in and out, and often staying the night.)

But if you are yearning, then sing the lovers: for long

their notorious feelings have not been immortal enough.

Those, you almost envied them, the forsaken, that you

found as loving as those who were satisfied. Begin,

always as new, the unattainable praising:

think: the hero prolongs himself, even his falling

was only a pretext for being, his latest rebirth.

But lovers are taken back by exhausted Nature

into herself, as if there were not the power

to make them again. Have you remembered

Gastara Stampa sufficiently yet, that any girl,

whose lover has gone, might feel from that

intenser example of love: ‘Could I only become like her?’

Should not these ancient sufferings be finally

fruitful for us? Isn’t it time that, loving,

we freed ourselves from the beloved, and, trembling, endured

as the arrow endures the bow, so as to be, in its flight,

something more than itself? For staying is nowhere.

Voices, voices. Hear then, my heart, as only

saints have heard: so that the mighty call

raised them from the earth: they, though, knelt on

impossibly and paid no attention:

such was their listening. Not that you could withstand

God’s voice: far from it. But listen to the breath,

the unbroken message that creates itself from the silence.

It rushes towards you now, from those youthfully dead.

Whenever you entered, didn’t their fate speak to you,

quietly, in churches in Naples or Rome?

Or else an inscription exaltedly impressed itself on you,

as lately the tablet in Santa Maria Formosa.

What do they will of me? That I should gently remove

the semblance of injustice, that slightly, at times,

hinders their spirits from a pure moving-on.

It is truly strange to no longer inhabit the earth,

to no longer practice customs barely acquired,

not to give a meaning of human futurity

to roses, and other expressly promising things:

no longer to be what one was in endlessly anxious hands,

and to set aside even one’s own

proper name like a broken plaything.

Strange: not to go on wishing one’s wishes. Strange

to see all that was once in place, floating

so loosely in space. And it’s hard being dead,

and full of retrieval, before one gradually feels

a little eternity. Though the living

all make the error of drawing too sharp a distinction.

Angels (they say) would often not know whether

they moved among living or dead. The eternal current

sweeps all the ages, within it, through both the spheres,

forever, and resounds above them in both.

Finally they have no more need of us, the early-departed,

weaned gently from earthly things, as one outgrows

the mother’s mild breast. But we, needing

such great secrets, for whom sadness is often

the source of a blessed progress, could we exist without them?

Is it a meaningless story how once, in the grieving for Linos,

first music ventured to penetrate arid rigidity,

so that, in startled space, which an almost godlike youth

suddenly left forever, the emptiness first felt

the quivering that now enraptures us, and comforts, and helps.

### The Second Elegy

Every Angel is terror. And yet,

ah, knowing you, I invoke you, almost deadly

birds of the soul. Where are the days of Tobias,

when one of the most radiant of you stood at the simple threshold,

disguised somewhat for the journey and already no longer awesome

(Like a youth, to the youth looking out curiously).

Let the Archangel now, the dangerous one, from behind the stars,

take a single step down and toward us: our own heart,

beating on high would beat us down. What are you?

Early successes, Creation’s favourite ones,

mountain-chains, ridges reddened by dawns

of all origin – pollen of flowering godhead,

junctions of light, corridors, stairs, thrones,

spaces of being, shields of bliss, tempests

of storm-filled, delighted feeling and, suddenly, solitary

mirrors: gathering their own out-streamed beauty

back into their faces again.

For we, when we feel, evaporate: oh, we

breathe ourselves out and away: from ember to ember,

yielding us fainter fragrance. Then someone may say to us:

‘Yes, you are in my blood, the room, the Spring-time

is filling with you’..... What use is that: they cannot hold us,

we vanish inside and around them. And those who are beautiful,

oh, who holds them back? Appearance, endlessly, stands up,

in their face, and goes by. Like dew from the morning grass,

what is ours rises from us, like the heat

from a dish that is warmed. O smile: where? O upward gaze:

new, warm, vanishing wave of the heart - :

oh, we are that. Does the cosmic space,

we dissolve into, taste of us then? Do the Angels

really only take back what is theirs, what has streamed out of them,

or is there sometimes, as if by an oversight, something

of our being, as well? Are we as mingled with their

features, as there is vagueness in the faces

of pregnant women? They do not see it in the swirling

return to themselves. (How should they see it?)

Lovers, if they knew how, might utter

strange things in night air. Since it seems

everything hides us. Look, trees exist; houses,

we live in, still stand. Only we

pass everything by, like an exchange of air.

And all is at one, in keeping us secret, half out of

shame perhaps, half out of inexpressible hope.

Lovers, each satisfied in the other, I ask

you about us. You grasp yourselves. Have you a sign?

Look, it happens to me, that at times my hands

become aware of each other, or that my worn face

hides itself in them. That gives me a slight

sensation. But who would dare to exist only for that?

You, though, who grow in the other’s delight

until, overwhelmed, they beg:

‘No more’ -: you, who under your hands

grow richer like vintage years of the vine:

who sometimes vanish, because the other

has so gained the ascendancy: I ask you of us. I know

you touch so blissfully because the caress withholds,

because the place you cover so tenderly

does not disappear: because beneath it you feel

pure duration. So that you promise eternity

almost, from the embrace. And yet, when you’ve endured

the first terrible glances, and the yearning at windows,

and the first walk together, just once, through the garden:

Lovers, are you the same? When you raise yourselves

one to another’s mouth, and hang there – sip against sip:

O, how strangely the drinker then escapes from their action.

Weren’t you amazed by the caution of human gesture

on Attic steles? Weren’t love and departure

laid so lightly on shoulders, they seemed to be made

of other matter than ours? Think of the hands

how they rest without weight, though there is power in the torso.

Those self-controlled ones know, through that: so much is ours,

this is us, to touch our own selves so: the gods

may bear down more heavily on us. But that is the gods’ affair.

If only we too could discover a pure, contained

human place, a strip of fruitful land of our own,

between river and stone! For our own heart exceeds us,

even as theirs did. And we can no longer

gaze after it into images, that soothe it, or into

godlike bodies, where it restrains itself more completely.

### The Third Elegy

To sing the beloved is one thing, another, oh,

that hidden guilty river-god of the blood.

What does he know, himself, of that lord of desire, her young lover,

whom she knows distantly, who often out of his solitariness,

before the girl soothed him, often, as if she did not exist,

held up, dripping, from what unknowable depths,

his godhead, oh, rousing the night to endless uproar?

O Neptune of the blood, O his trident of terrors.

O the dark storm-wind from his chest, out of the twisted conch.

Hear, how the night becomes thinned-out and hollow. You, stars,

is it not from you that the lover’s joy in the beloved’s

face rises? Does he not gain his innermost insight,

into her face’s purity, from the pure stars?

It was not you, alas, not his mother

that bent the arc of his brow into such expectation.

Not for you, girl, feeling his presence, not for you,

did his lips curve into a more fruitful expression.

Do you truly think that your light entrance

rocked him so, you who wander like winds at dawn?

You terrified his heart, that’s so: but more ancient terrors

plunged into him with the impetus of touching.

Call him...you can’t quite call him away from that dark companion.

Of course he wants to, and does, escape: relieved, winning

his way into your secret heart, and takes on, and begins himself.

Did he ever begin himself, though?

Mother you made his littleness: you were the one who began him:

to you he was new, you hung the friendly world

over new eyes, and defended him from what was strange.

Oh where are the years when you simply repelled

the surging void for him, with your slight form?

You hid so much from him then: you made the suspect room

harmless at night, from your heart filled with refuge

mixed a more human space with his spaces of night.

Not in the darkness, no, in your nearer being

you placed the light, and it shone as if out of friendship.

There wasn’t a single creaking you couldn’t explain with a smile,

as if you had long known when the floor would do so....

And he heard you and was soothed. Your being

was so tenderly potent: his fate there stepped,

tall and cloaked, behind the wardrobe, and his restless future,

so easily delayed, fitted the folds of the curtain.

And he himself, as he lay there, relieved,

dissolving a sweetness, of your gentle creation,

under his sleepy eyelids, into the sleep he had tasted - :

seemed protected.....But inside: who could hinder,

prevent, the primal flood inside him?

Ah, there was little caution in the sleeper: sleeping,

but dreaming, but fevered: what began there!

How, new, fearful, he was tangled

in ever-spreading tendrils of inner event:

already twisted in patterns, in strangling growths,

among prowling bestial forms. How he gave himself to it -. Loved.

Loved his inward world, his inner wilderness,

that first world within, on whose mute overthrow

his heart stood, newly green. Loved. Relinquished it, went on,

through his own roots, to the vast fountain

where his little birth was already outlived. Lovingly

went down into more ancient bloodstreams, into ravines

where Horror lay, still gorged on his forefathers. And every

Terror knew him, winked, like an informant.

Yes, Dread smiled.........Seldom

have you smiled so tenderly, mothers. How could he

help loving what smiled at him. Before you

he loved it, since, while you carried him,

it was dissolved in the waters, that render the embryo light.

See, we don’t love like flowers, in a

single year: when we love, an ancient

sap rises in our arms. O, girls,

this: that we loved inside us, not one to come, but

the immeasurable seething: not a single child,

but the fathers: resting on our depths

like the rubble of mountains: the dry river-beds

of those who were mothers - : the whole

silent landscape under a clouded or

clear destiny - : girls, this came before you.

And you yourself, how could you know – that you

stirred up primordial time in your lover. What feelings

welled up from lost lives. What

women hated you there. What sinister men

you roused up in his young veins. Dead

children wanted you.....O, gently, gently,

show him with love a confident daily task - lead him

near to the Garden, give him what outweighs

those nights........

Be in him...............

### Love Song

How can I keep my soul in me, so that

it doesn't touch your soul? How can I raise

it high enough, past you, to other things?

I would like to shelter it, among remote

lost objects, in some dark and silent place

that doesn't resonate when your depths resound.

Yet everything that touches us, me and you,

takes us together like a violin's bow,

which draws \*one\* voice out of two separate strings.

Upon what instrument are we two spanned?

And what musician holds us in his hand?

Oh sweetest song.

### Losing

Losing too is still ours; and even forgetting

still has a shape in the kingdom of transformation.

When something's let go of, it circles; and though we are

rarely the center

of the circle, it draws around us its unbroken, marvelous

curve.

### I Live my Life in Widening Circles

I live my life in widening circles

that reach out across the world.

I may not ever complete the last one,

but I give myself to it.

I circle around God, that primordial tower.

I have been circling for thousands of years,

and I still don’t know: am I a falcon,

a storm, or a great song?

## WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS (1883-1963)

### The Red Wheelbarrow

so much depends

upon

a red wheel

barrow

glazed with rain

water

beside the white

chickens

### Complete Destruction

It was an icy day.

We buried the cat,

then took her box

and set fire to it

in the back yard.

Those fleas that escaped

earth and fire

died by the cold.

### Young Woman at a Window

She sits with

tears on

her cheek

her cheek on

her hand

the child

in her lap

his nose

pressed

to the glass

## EZRA POUND (1885-1972)

### In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:

Petals on a wet, black bough.

### A Girl

The tree has entered my hands,

The sap has ascended my arms,

The tree has grown in my breast -

Downward,

The branches grow out of me, like arms.

Tree you are,

Moss you are,

You are violets with wind above them.

A child - so high - you are,

And all this is folly to the world.

*And the Days are not Full Enough*

And the days are not full enough

And the nights are not full enough

And life slips by like a field mouse

Not shaking the grass

## MARIANNE MOORE (1887-1972)

### A Graveyard

Man, looking into the sea—

taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have it to yourself—

it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing

but you cannot stand in the middle of this:

the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.

The firs stand in a procession—each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top—

reserved as their contours, saying nothing;

repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;

the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.

There are others besides you who have worn that look—

whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them

for their bones have not lasted;

men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,

and row quickly away—the blades of the oars

moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death.

The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,

and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;

the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore—

the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them

and the ocean, under the pulsation of light-houses and noise of bell-buoys,

advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—

in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

### Poetry

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond all

this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one

discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes

that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because

they are

useful. When they become so derivative as to become

unintelligible,

the same thing may be said for all of us, that we

do not admire what

we cannot understand: the bat

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless wolf

under

a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse that

feels a

flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician--

nor is it valid

to discriminate against 'business documents and

school-books'; all these phenomena are important. One must

make a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the

result is not poetry,

nor till the poets among us can be

'literalists of

the imagination'--above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, 'imaginary gardens with real toads in them', shall

we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand,

the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness and

that which is on the other hand

genuine, you are interested in poetry.

### Poetry (1967)

I, too, dislike it.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one discovers in

it, after all, a place for the genuine.

## T. S. ELIOT (1888-1965)

### The Hollow Men

Mistah Kurtz-he dead

A penny for the Old Guy

I

We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

Leaning together

Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!

Our dried voices, when

We whisper together

Are quiet and meaningless

As wind in dry grass

Or rats' feet over broken glass

In our dry cellar

Shape without form, shade without colour,

Paralysed force, gesture without motion;

Those who have crossed

With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom

Remember us-if at all-not as lost

Violent souls, but only

As the hollow men

The stuffed men.

II

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams

In death's dream kingdom

These do not appear:

There, the eyes are

Sunlight on a broken column

There, is a tree swinging

And voices are

In the wind's singing

More distant and more solemn

Than a fading star.

Let me be no nearer

In death's dream kingdom

Let me also wear

Such deliberate disguises

Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves

In a field

Behaving as the wind behaves

No nearer-

Not that final meeting

In the twilight kingdom

III

This is the dead land

This is cactus land

Here the stone images

Are raised, here they receive

The supplication of a dead man's hand

Under the twinkle of a fading star.

Is it like this

In death's other kingdom

Waking alone

At the hour when we are

Trembling with tenderness

Lips that would kiss

Form prayers to broken stone.

IV

The eyes are not here

There are no eyes here

In this valley of dying stars

In this hollow valley

This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms

In this last of meeting places

We grope together

And avoid speech

Gathered on this beach of the tumid river

Sightless, unless

The eyes reappear

As the perpetual star

Multifoliate rose

Of death's twilight kingdom

The hope only

Of empty men.

V

Here we go round the prickly pear

Prickly pear prickly pear

Here we go round the prickly pear

At five o'clock in the morning.

Between the idea

And the reality

Between the motion

And the act

Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

Between the conception

And the creation

Between the emotion

And the response

Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire

And the spasm

Between the potency

And the existence

Between the essence

And the descent

Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is

Life is

For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper.

### The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

S’io credesse che mia risposta fosse

A persona che mai tornasse al mondo,

Questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.

Ma percioche giammai di questo fondo

Non torno vivo alcun, s’i’odo il vero,

Senza tema d’infamia ti rispondo.

Let us go then, you and I,

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherized upon a table;

Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,

The muttering retreats

Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels

And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:

Streets that follow like a tedious argument

Of insidious intent

To lead you to an overwhelming question ...

Oh, do not ask, “What is it?”

Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,

Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,

Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,

Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,

And seeing that it was a soft October night,

Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time

For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,

Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;

There will be time, there will be time

To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;

There will be time to murder and create,

And time for all the works and days of hands

That lift and drop a question on your plate;

Time for you and time for me,

And time yet for a hundred indecisions,

And for a hundred visions and revisions,

Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go

Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time

To wonder, “Do I dare?” and, “Do I dare?”

Time to turn back and descend the stair,

With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —

(They will say: “How his hair is growing thin!”)

My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,

My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —

(They will say: “But how his arms and legs are thin!”)

Do I dare

Disturb the universe?

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:

Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;

I know the voices dying with a dying fall

Beneath the music from a farther room.

So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,

And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,

When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,

Then how should I begin

To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?

And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare

(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)

Is it perfume from a dress

That makes me so digress?

Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.

And should I then presume?

And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets

And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes

Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws

Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!

Smoothed by long fingers,

Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,

Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.

Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,

Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?

But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,

Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,

I am no prophet — and here’s no great matter;

I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,

And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,

After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,

Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,

Would it have been worth while,

To have bitten off the matter with a smile,

To have squeezed the universe into a ball

To roll it towards some overwhelming question,

To say: “I am Lazarus, come from the dead,

Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all”—

If one, settling a pillow by her head

Should say: “That is not what I meant at all;

That is not it, at all.”

And would it have been worth it, after all,

Would it have been worth while,

After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,

After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—

And this, and so much more?—

It is impossible to say just what I mean!

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:

Would it have been worth while

If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,

And turning toward the window, should say:

“That is not it at all,

That is not what I meant, at all.”

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;

Am an attendant lord, one that will do

To swell a progress, start a scene or two,

Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,

Deferential, glad to be of use,

Politic, cautious, and meticulous;

Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;

At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—

Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...

I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.

I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves

Combing the white hair of the waves blown back

When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea

By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown

Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

## CLAUDE MCKAY (1889-1948)

### If We Must Die

If we must die, let it not be like hogs

Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,

While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,

Making their mock at our accursèd lot.

If we must die, O let us nobly die,

So that our precious blood may not be shed

In vain; then even the monsters we defy

Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!

O kinsmen! we must meet the common foe!

Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,

And for their thousand blows deal one death-blow!

What though before us lies the open grave?

Like men we’ll face the murderous, cowardly pack,

Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

### Harlem Shadows

I hear the halting footsteps of a lass

In Negro Harlem when the night lets fall

Its veil. I see the shapes of girls who pass

To bend and barter at desire's call.

Ah, little dark girls who in slippered feet

Go prowling through the night from street to street!

Through the long night until the silver break

Of day the little gray feet know no rest;

Through the lone night until the last snow-flake

Has dropped from heaven upon the earth's white breast,

The dusky, half-clad girls of tired feet

Are trudging, thinly shod, from street to street.

Ah, stern harsh world, that in the wretched way

Of poverty, dishonor and disgrace,

Has pushed the timid little feet of clay,

The sacred brown feet of my fallen race!

Ah, heart of me, the weary, weary feet

In Harlem wandering from street to street.

### America

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,

And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,

Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,

Giving me strength erect against her hate,

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred

Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,

And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time’s unerring hand,

Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

## EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY (1892-1950)

### “What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why”

What lips my lips have kissed, and where, and why,

I have forgotten, and what arms have lain

Under my head till morning; but the rain

Is full of ghosts tonight, that tap and sigh

Upon the glass and listen for reply,

And in my heart there stirs a quiet pain

For unremembered lads that not again

Will turn to me at midnight with a cry.

Thus in the winter stands the lonely tree,

Nor knows what birds have vanished one by one,

Yet knows its boughs more silent than before:

I cannot say what loves have come and gone,

I only know that summer sang in me

A little while, that in me sings no more.

### Conscientious Objector

I shall die, but

that is all that I shall do for Death.

I hear him leading his horse out of the stall;

I hear the clatter on the barn-floor.

He is in haste; he has business in Cuba,

business in the Balkans, many calls to make this morning.

But I will not hold the bridle

while he clinches the girth.

And he may mount by himself:

I will not give him a leg up.

Though he flick my shoulders with his whip,

I will not tell him which way the fox ran.

With his hoof on my breast, I will not tell him where

the black boy hides in the swamp.

I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death;

I am not on his pay-roll.

I will not tell him the whereabout of my friends

nor of my enemies either.

Though he promise me much,

I will not map him the route to any man's door.

Am I a spy in the land of the living,

that I should deliver men to Death?

Brother, the password and the plans of our city

are safe with me; never through me Shall you be overcome.

### First Fig

My candle burns at both ends;

It will not last the night;

But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends—

It gives a lovely light!

### A Visit to the Asylum

Once from a big, big building,

When I was small, small,

The queer folk in the windows

Would smile at me and call.

And in the hard wee gardens

Such pleasant men would hoe:

"Sir, may we touch the little girl's hair!"—

It was so red, you know.

They cut me coloured asters

With shears so sharp and neat,

They brought me grapes and plums and pears

And pretty cakes to eat.

And out of all the windows,

No matter where we went,

The merriest eyes would follow me

And make me compliment.

There were a thousand windows,

All latticed up and down.

And up to all the windows,

When we went back to town,

The queer folk put their faces,

As gentle as could be;

"Come again, little girl!" they called, and I

Called back, "You come see me!"

## E. E. CUMMINGS (1894-1962)

### Humanity I Love You

Humanity i love you

because you would rather black the boots of

success than enquire whose soul dangles from his

watch-chain which would be embarrassing for both

parties and because you

unflinchingly applaud all

songs containing the words country home and

mother when sung at the old howard

Humanity i love you because

when you’re hard up you pawn your

intelligence to buy a drink and when

you’re flush pride keeps

you from the pawn shop and

because you are continually committing

nuisances but more

especially in your own house

Humanity i love you because you

are perpetually putting the secret of

life in your pants and forgetting

it’s there and sitting down

on it

and because you are

forever making poems in the lap

of death Humanity

i hate you

### [in Just-]

in Just-

spring when the world is mud-

luscious the little

lame balloonman

whistles far and wee

and eddieandbill come

running from marbles and

piracies and it's

spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer

old balloonman whistles

far and wee

and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's

spring

and

the

goat-footed

balloonMan whistles

far

and

wee

### If

If freckles were lovely, and day was night,

And measles were nice and a lie warn’t a lie,

Life would be delight,—

But things couldn’t go right

For in such a sad plight

I wouldn’t be I.

If earth was heaven and now was hence,

And past was present, and false was true,

There might be some sense

But I’d be in suspense

For on such a pretense

You wouldn’t be you.

If fear was plucky, and globes were square,

And dirt was cleanly and tears were glee

Things would seem fair,—

Yet they’d all despair,

For if here was there

We wouldn’t be we.

### Let’s Live Suddenly Without Thinking

let’s live suddenly without thinking

under honest trees,

a stream

does.the brain of cleverly-crinkling

-water pursues the angry dream

of the shore. By midnight,

a moon

scratches the skin of the organised hills

an edged nothing begins to prune

let’s live like the light that kills

and let’s as silence,

because Whirl’s after all:

(after me)love,and after you.

I occasionally feel vague how

vague idon’t know tenuous Now-

spears and The Then-arrows making do

our mouths something red,something tall

### anyone lived in a pretty how town

anyone lived in a pretty how town

(with up so floating many bells down)

spring summer autumn winter

he sang his didn't he danced his did

Women and men(both little and small)

cared for anyone not at all

they sowed their isn't they reaped their same

sun moon stars rain

children guessed(but only a few

and down they forgot as up they grew

autumn winter spring summer)

that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf

she laughed his joy she cried his grief

bird by snow and stir by still

anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones

laughed their cryings and did their dance

(sleep wake hope and then)they

said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon

(and only the snow can begin to explain

how children are apt to forget to remember

with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess

(and noone stooped to kiss his face)

busy folk buried them side by side

little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep

and more by more they dream their sleep

noone and anyone earth by april

wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)

summer autumn winter spring

reaped their sowing and went their came

sun moon stars rain

## LANGSTON HUGHES (1902-1967)

### The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I’ve known rivers:

I’ve known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.

I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.

I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I’ve known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

### Dream Deferred

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore--

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over--

like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

### Life is Fine

I went down to the river,

I set down on the bank.

I tried to think but couldn't,

So I jumped in and sank.

I came up once and hollered!

I came up twice and cried!

If that water hadn't a-been so cold

I might've sunk and died.

But it was Cold in that water! It was cold!

I took the elevator

Sixteen floors above the ground.

I thought about my baby

And thought I would jump down.

I stood there and I hollered!

I stood there and I cried!

If it hadn't a-been so high

I might've jumped and died.

But it was High up there! It was high!

So since I'm still here livin',

I guess I will live on.

I could've died for love--

But for livin' I was born

Though you may hear me holler,

And you may see me cry--

I'll be dogged, sweet baby,

If you gonna see me die.

Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is fine!

### Democracy

Democracy will not come

Today, this year

Nor ever

Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right

As the other fellow has

To stand

On my two feet

And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people say,

Let things take their course.

Tomorrow is another day.

I do not need my freedom when I'm dead.

I cannot live on tomorrow's bread.

Freedom

Is a strong seed

Planted

In a great need.

I live here, too.

I want freedom

Just as you.

### Mother to Son

Well, son, I’ll tell you:

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

It’s had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I’se been a-climbin’ on,

And reachin’ landin’s,

And turnin’ corners,

And sometimes goin’ in the dark

Where there ain’t been no light.

So boy, don’t you turn back.

Don’t you set down on the steps

’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.

Don’t you fall now—

For I’se still goin’, honey,

I’se still climbin’,

And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

### I, Too

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.

They send me to eat in the kitchen

When company comes,

But I laugh,

And eat well,

And grow strong.

Tomorrow,

I’ll be at the table

When company comes.

Nobody’ll dare

Say to me,

“Eat in the kitchen,”

Then.

Besides,

They’ll see how beautiful I am

And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

## COUNTEE CULLEN (1903-1946)

### Incident

Once riding in old Baltimore,

Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,

I saw a Baltimorean

Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,

And he was no whit bigger,

And so I smiled, but he poked out

His tongue, and called me, 'Nigger.'

I saw the whole of Baltimore

From May until December;

Of all the things that happened there

That's all that I remember.

### A Brown Girl Dead

With two white roses on her breasts,

White candles at head and feet,

Dark Madonna of the grave she rests;

Lord Death has found her sweet.

Her mother pawned her wedding ring

To lay her out in white;

She'd be so proud she'd dance and sing

to see herself tonight.

## PABLO NERUDA (1904-1973)

### If You Forget Me

I want you to know

one thing.

You know how this is:

if I look

at the crystal moon, at the red branch

of the slow autumn at my window,

if I touch

near the fire

the impalpable ash

or the wrinkled body of the log,

everything carries me to you,

as if everything that exists,

aromas, light, metals,

were little boats

that sail

toward those isles of yours that wait for me.

Well, now,

if little by little you stop loving me

I shall stop loving you little by little.

If suddenly

you forget me

do not look for me,

for I shall already have forgotten you.

If you think it long and mad,

the wind of banners

that passes through my life,

and you decide

to leave me at the shore

of the heart where I have roots,

remember

that on that day,

at that hour,

I shall lift my arms

and my roots will set off

to seek another land.

But

if each day,

each hour,

you feel that you are destined for me

with implacable sweetness,

if each day a flower

climbs up to your lips to seek me,

ah my love, ah my own,

in me all that fire is repeated,

in me nothing is extinguished or forgotten,

my love feeds on your love, beloved,

and as long as you live it will be in your arms

without leaving mine.

### I Do Not Love You Except Because I Love You

I do not love you except because I love you;

I go from loving to not loving you,

From waiting to not waiting for you

My heart moves from cold to fire.

I love you only because it's you the one I love;

I hate you deeply, and hating you

Bend to you, and the measure of my changing love for you

Is that I do not see you but love you blindly.

Maybe January light will consume

My heart with its cruel

Ray, stealing my key to true calm.

In this part of the story I am the one who

Dies, the only one, and I will die of love because I love you,

Because I love you, Love, in fire and blood.

## MARY ELIZABETH FRYE (1905-2004)

### Do Not Stand at My Grave and Weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep

I am not there. I do not sleep.

I am a thousand winds that blow.

I am the diamond glints on snow.

I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn rain.

When you awaken in the morning's hush

I am the swift uplifting rush

Of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night.

Do not stand at my grave and cry;

I am not there. I did not die.

## ELIZABETH BISHOP (1911-1979)

### One Art

The art of losing isn’t hard to master;

so many things seem filled with the intent

to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster

of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:

places, and names, and where it was you meant

to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother’s watch. And look! my last, or

next-to-last, of three loved houses went.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,

some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.

I miss them, but it wasn’t a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture

I love) I shan’t have lied. It’s evident

the art of losing’s not too hard to master

though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.

## ROBERT HAYDEN (1913-1980)

### The Whipping

The old woman across the way

is whipping the boy again

and shouting to the neighborhood

her goodness and his wrongs.

Wildly he crashes through elephant ears,

pleads in dusty zinnias,

while she in spite of crippling fat

pursues and corners him.

She strikes and strikes the shrilly circling

boy till the stick breaks

in her hand. His tears are rainy weather

to woundlike memories:

My head gripped in bony vise

of knees, the writhing struggle

to wrench free, the blows, the fear

worse than blows that hateful

Words could bring, the face that I

no longer knew or loved . . .

Well, it is over now, it is over,

and the boy sobs in his room,

And the woman leans muttering against

a tree, exhausted, purged—

avenged in part for lifelong hidings

she has had to bear.

## DYLAN THOMAS (1914-1953)

### Do Not Go Gentle…

Do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright

Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on that sad height,

Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

### Fern Hill

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs

About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green,

The night above the dingle starry,

Time let me hail and climb

Golden in the heydays of his eyes,

And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns

And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves

Trail with daisies and barley

Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns

About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,

In the sun that is young once only,

Time let me play and be

Golden in the mercy of his means,

And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves

Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and

cold,

And the sabbath rang slowly

In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay

Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was

air

And playing, lovely and watery

And fire green as grass.

And nightly under the simple stars

As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,

All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the

nightjars

Flying with the ricks, and the horses

Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white

With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all

Shining, it was Adam and maiden,

The sky gathered again

And the sun grew round that very day.

So it must have been after the birth of the simple light

In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking

warm

Out of the whinnying green stable

On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house

Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,

In the sun born over and over,

I ran my heedless ways,

My wishes raced through the house high hay

And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows

In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs

Before the children green and golden

Follow him out of grace.

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would

take me

Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,

In the moon that is always rising,

Nor that riding to sleep

I should hear him fly with the high fields

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

## WILLIAM BURROUGHS (1914-1997)

### Advice for Young People

People often ask me if I have any words of advice for young people.

Well here are a few simple admonitions for young and old.

Never intefere in a boy-and-girl fight.

Beware of whores who say they don't want money.

The hell they don't.

What they mean is they want more money. Much more.

If you're doing business with a religious son-of-a-bitch,

Get it in writing.

His word isn't worth shit.

Not with the good lord telling him how to fuck you on the deal.

Avoid fuck-ups.

We all know the type.

Anything they have anything to do with,

No matter how good it sounds,

Turns into a disaster.

Do not offer sympathy to the mentally ill.

Tell them firmly:

I am not paid to listen to this drivel.

You are a terminal boob.

Now some of you may encounter the Devil's Bargain,

If you get that far.

Any old soul is worth saving,

At least to a priest,

But not every soul is worth buying.

So you can take the offer as a compliment.

He tries the easy ones first.

You know like money,

All the money there is.

But who wants to be the richest guy in some cemetary?

Money won't buy.

Not much left to spend it on, eh gramps?

Getting too old to cut the mustard.

Well time hits the hardest blows.

Especially below the belt.

How's a young body grab you?

Like three card monte, like pea under the shell,

Now you see it, now you don't.

Haven't you forgotten something, gramps?

In order to feel something,

You've got to be there.

You have to be eighteen.

You're not eighteen.

You are seventy-eight.

Old fool sold his soul for a strap-on.

Well they always try the easiest ones first.

How about an honorable bargain?

You always wanted to be a doctor,

Well now's your chance.

Why don't you become a great healer

And benefit humanity?

What's wrong with that?

Just about everything.

Just about everything.

There are no honorable bargains

Involving exchange

Of qualitative merchandise

Like souls

For quantitative merchandise

Like time and money.

So piss off Satan

And don't take me for dumber than I look.

An old junk pusher told me -

Watch whose money you pick up.

## GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917-2000)

### We Real Cool

The Pool Players.

Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.

### The Mother

Abortions will not let you forget.

You remember the children you got that you did not get,

The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,

The singers and workers that never handled the air.

You will never neglect or beat

Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.

You will never wind up the sucking-thumb

Or scuttle off ghosts that come.

You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,

Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.

I have heard in the voices of the wind the voices of my dim killed

children.

I have contracted. I have eased

My dim dears at the breasts they could never suck.

I have said, Sweets, if I sinned, if I seized

Your luck

And your lives from your unfinished reach,

If I stole your births and your names,

Your straight baby tears and your games,

Your stilted or lovely loves, your tumults, your marriages, aches,

and your deaths,

If I poisoned the beginnings of your breaths,

Believe that even in my deliberateness I was not deliberate.

Though why should I whine,

Whine that the crime was other than mine?--

Since anyhow you are dead.

Or rather, or instead,

You were never made.

But that too, I am afraid,

Is faulty: oh, what shall I say, how is the truth to be said?

You were born, you had body, you died.

It is just that you never giggled or planned or cried.

Believe me, I loved you all.

Believe me, I knew you, though faintly, and I loved, I loved you

All.

### The Bean Eaters

They eat beans mostly, this old yellow pair.

Dinner is a casual affair.

Plain chipware on a plain and creaking wood,

Tin flatware.

Two who are Mostly Good.

Two who have lived their day,

But keep on putting on their clothes

And putting things away.

And remembering ...

Remembering, with twinklings and twinges,

As they lean over the beans in their rented back room that is full of beads and receipts and dolls and cloths, tobacco crumbs, vases and fringes.

## LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI (1919-)

### The World is a Beautiful Place

The world is a beautiful place

to be born into

if you don't mind happiness

not always being

so very much fun

if you don't mind a touch of hell

now and then

just when everything is fine

because even in heaven

they don't sing

all the time

The world is a beautiful place

to be born into

if you don't mind some people dying

all the time

or maybe only starving

some of the time

which isn't half bad

if it isn't you

Oh the world is a beautiful place

to be born into

if you don't much mind

a few dead minds

in the higher places

or a bomb or two

now and then

in your upturned faces

or such other improprieties

as our Name Brand society

is prey to

with its men of distinction

and its men of extinction

and its priests

and other patrolmen

and its various segregations

and congressional investigations

and other constipations

that our fool flesh

is heir to

Yes the world is the best place of all

for a lot of such things as

making the fun scene

and making the love scene

and making the sad scene

and singing low songs and having inspirations

and walking around

looking at everything

and smelling flowers

and goosing statues

and even thinking

and kissing people and

making babies and wearing pants

and waving hats and

dancing

and going swimming in rivers

on picnics

in the middle of the summer

and just generally

'living it up'

Yes

but then right in the middle of it

comes the smiling

mortician

### Dog

The dog trots freely in the street

and sees reality

and the things he sees

are bigger than himself

and the things he sees

are his reality

Drunks in doorways

Moons on trees

The dog trots freely thru the street

and the things he sees

are smaller than himself

Fish on newsprint

Ants in holes

Chickens in Chinatown windows

their heads a block away

The dog trots freely in the street

and the things he smells

smell something like himself

The dog trots freely in the street

past puddles and babies

cats and cigars

poolrooms and policemen

He doesn't hate cops

He merely has no use for them

and he goes past them

and past the dead cows hung up whole

in front of the San Francisco Meat Market

He would rather eat a tender cow

than a tough policeman

though either might do

And he goes past the Romeo Ravioli Factory

and past Coit's Tower

and past Congressman Doyle

He's afraid of Coit's Tower

but he's not afraid of Congressman Doyle

although what he hears is very discouraging

very depressing

very absurd

to a sad young dog like himself

to a serious dog like himself

But he has his own free world to live in

His own fleas to eat

He will not be muzzled

Congressman Doyle is just another

fire hydrant

to him

The dog trots freely in the street

and has his own dog's life to live

and to think about

and to reflect upon

touching and tasting and testing everything

investigating everything

without benefit of perjury

a real realist

with a real tale to tell

and a real tail to tell it with

a real live

barking

democratic dog

engaged in real

free enterprise

with something to say

about ontology

something to say

about reality

and how to see it

and how to hear it

with his head cocked sideways

at streetcorners

as if he is just about to have

his picture taken

for Victor Records

listening for

His Master's Voice

and looking

like a living questionmark

into the

great gramaphone

of puzzling existence

with its wondrous hollow horn

which always seems

just about to spout forth

some Victorious answer

to everything

## CHARLES BUKOWSKI (1920-1994)

### Roll the Dice

if you’re going to try, go all the

way.

otherwise, don’t even start.

if you’re going to try, go all the

way. this could mean losing girlfriends,

wives, relatives, jobs and

maybe your mind.

go all the way.

it could mean not eating for 3 or

4 days.

it could mean freezing on a

park bench.

it could mean jail,

it could mean derision,

mockery,

isolation.

isolation is the gift,

all the others are a test of your

endurance, of

how much you really want to

do it.

and you’ll do it

despite rejection and the

worst odds

and it will be better than

anything else

you can imagine.

if you’re going to try,

go all the way.

there is no other feeling like

that.

you will be alone with the

gods

and the nights will flame with

fire.

do it, do it, do it.

do it.

all the way

all the way.

you will ride life straight to

perfect laughter,

it’s the only good fight

there is.

## ALLEN GINSBERG (1926-1997)

### America

America I’ve given you all and now I’m nothing.

America two dollars and twentyseven cents January 17, 1956.

I can’t stand my own mind.

America when will we end the human war?

Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb.

I don’t feel good don’t bother me.

I won’t write my poem till I’m in my right mind.

America when will you be angelic?

When will you take off your clothes?

When will you look at yourself through the grave?

When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?

America why are your libraries full of tears?

America when will you send your eggs to India?

I’m sick of your insane demands.

When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks?

America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world.

Your machinery is too much for me.

You made me want to be a saint.

There must be some other way to settle this argument.

Burroughs is in Tangiers I don’t think he’ll come back it’s sinister.

Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?

I’m trying to come to the point.

I refuse to give up my obsession.

America stop pushing I know what I’m doing.

America the plum blossoms are falling.

I haven’t read the newspapers for months, everyday somebody goes on trial for murder.

America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies.

America I used to be a communist when I was a kid I’m not sorry.

I smoke marijuana every chance I get.

I sit in my house for days on end and stare at the roses in the closet.

When I go to Chinatown I get drunk and never get laid.

My mind is made up there’s going to be trouble.

You should have seen me reading Marx.

My psychoanalyst thinks I’m perfectly right.

I won’t say the Lord’s Prayer.

I have mystical visions and cosmic vibrations.

America I still haven’t told you what you did to Uncle Max after he came over from Russia.

I’m addressing you.

Are you going to let your emotional life be run by Time Magazine?

I’m obsessed by Time Magazine.

I read it every week.

Its cover stares at me every time I slink past the corner candystore.

I read it in the basement of the Berkeley Public Library.

It’s always telling me about responsibility. Businessmen are serious. Movie producers are serious. Everybody’s serious but me.

It occurs to me that I am America.

I am talking to myself again.

Asia is rising against me.

I haven’t got a chinaman’s chance.

I’d better consider my national resources.

My national resources consist of two joints of marijuana millions of genitals an unpublishable private literature that jetplanes 1400 miles an hour and twentyfive-thousand mental institutions.

I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions of underprivileged who live in my flowerpots under the light of five hundred suns.

I have abolished the whorehouses of France, Tangiers is the next to go.

My ambition is to be President despite the fact that I’m a Catholic.

America how can I write a holy litany in your silly mood?

I will continue like Henry Ford my strophes are as individual as his automobiles more so they’re all different sexes.

America I will sell you strophes $2500 apiece $500 down on your old strophe

America free Tom Mooney

America save the Spanish Loyalists

America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die

America I am the Scottsboro boys.

America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell meetings they sold us garbanzos a handful per ticket a ticket costs a nickel and the speeches were free everybody was angelic and sentimental about the workers it was all so sincere you have no idea what a good thing the party was in 1835 Scott Nearing was a grand old man a real mensch Mother Bloor the Silk-strikers’ Ewig-Weibliche made me cry I once saw the Yiddish orator Israel Amter plain. Everybody must have been a spy.

America you don’t really want to go to war.

America its them bad Russians.

Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen. And them Russians.

The Russia wants to eat us alive. The Russia’s power mad. She wants to take our cars from out our garages.

Her wants to grab Chicago. Her needs a Red Reader’s Digest. Her wants our auto plants in Siberia. Him big bureaucracy running our fillingstations.

That no good. Ugh. Him make Indians learn read. Him need big black niggers. Hah. Her make us all work sixteen hours a day. Help.

America this is quite serious.

America this is the impression I get from looking in the television set.

America is this correct?

I’d better get right down to the job.

It’s true I don’t want to join the Army or turn lathes in precision parts factories, I’m nearsighted and psychopathic anyway.

America I’m putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

### A Supermarket in California

What thoughts I have of you tonight Walt Whitman, for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images, I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of your enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!—and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of cans following you, and followed in my imagination by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.

Where are we going, Walt Whitman? The doors close in an hour. Which way does your beard point tonight?

(I touch your book and dream of our odyssey in the supermarket and feel absurd.)

Will we walk all night through solitary streets? The trees add shade to shade, lights out in the houses, we'll both be lonely.

Will we stroll dreaming of the lost America of love past blue automobiles in driveways, home to our silent cottage?

Ah, dear father, graybeard, lonely old courage-teacher, what America did you have when Charon quit poling his ferry and you got out on a smoking bank and stood watching the boat disappear on the black waters of Lethe?

### My Sad Self

To Frank O’Hara

Sometimes when my eyes are red

I go up on top of the RCA Building

and gaze at my world, Manhattan—

my buildings, streets I’ve done feats in,

lofts, beds, coldwater flats

—on Fifth Ave below which I also bear in mind,

its ant cars, little yellow taxis, men

walking the size of specks of wool—

Panorama of the bridges, sunrise over Brooklyn machine,

sun go down over New Jersey where I was born

& Paterson where I played with ants—

my later loves on 15th Street,

my greater loves of Lower East Side,

my once fabulous amours in the Bronx

faraway—

paths crossing in these hidden streets,

my history summed up, my absences

and ecstasies in Harlem—

—sun shining down on all I own

in one eyeblink to the horizon

in my last eternity—

matter is water.

Sad,

I take the elevator and go

down, pondering,

and walk on the pavements staring into all man’s

plateglass, faces,

questioning after who loves,

and stop, bemused

in front of an automobile shopwindow

standing lost in calm thought,

traffic moving up & down 5th Avenue blocks behind me

waiting for a moment when ...

Time to go home & cook supper & listen to

the romantic war news on the radio

... all movement stops

& I walk in the timeless sadness of existence,

tenderness flowing thru the buildings,

my fingertips touching reality’s face,

my own face streaked with tears in the mirror

of some window—at dusk—

where I have no desire—

for bonbons—or to own the dresses or Japanese

lampshades of intellection—

Confused by the spectacle around me,

Man struggling up the street

with packages, newspapers,

ties, beautiful suits

toward his desire

Man, woman, streaming over the pavements

red lights clocking hurried watches &

movements at the curb—

And all these streets leading

so crosswise, honking, lengthily,

by avenues

stalked by high buildings or crusted into slums

thru such halting traffic

screaming cars and engines

so painfully to this

countryside, this graveyard

this stillness

on deathbed or mountain

once seen

never regained or desired

in the mind to come

where all Manhattan that I’ve seen must disappear.

## ANNE SEXTON (1928-1974)

### The Double Image

1.

I am thirty this November.

You are still small, in your fourth year.

We stand watching the yellow leaves go queer,

flapping in the winter rain,

falling flat and washed. And I remember

mostly the three autumns you did not live here.

They said I’d never get you back again.

I tell you what you’ll never really know:

all the medical hypothesis

that explained my brain will never be as true as these

struck leaves letting go.

I, who chose two times

to kill myself, had said your nickname

the mewling months when you first came;

until a fever rattled

in your throat and I moved like a pantomime

above your head. Ugly angels spoke to me. The blame,

I heard them say, was mine. They tattled

like green witches in my head, letting doom

leak like a broken faucet;

as if doom had flooded my belly and filled your bassinet,

an old debt I must assume.

Death was simpler than I’d thought.

The day life made you well and whole

I let the witches take away my guilty soul.

I pretended I was dead

until the white men pumped the poison out,

putting me armless and washed through the rigamarole

of talking boxes and the electric bed.

I laughed to see the private iron in that hotel.

Today the yellow leaves

go queer. You ask me where they go. I say today believed

in itself, or else it fell.

Today, my small child, Joyce,

love your self’s self where it lives.

There is no special God to refer to; or if there is,

why did I let you grow

in another place. You did not know my voice

when I came back to call. All the superlatives

of tomorrow’s white tree and mistletoe

will not help you know the holidays you had to miss.

The time I did not love

myself, I visited your shoveled walks; you held my glove.

There was new snow after this.

2.

They sent me letters with news

of you and I made moccasins that I would never use.

When I grew well enough to tolerate

myself, I lived with my mother. Too late,

too late, to live with your mother, the witches said.

But I didn’t leave. I had my portrait

done instead.

Part way back from Bedlam

I came to my mother’s house in Gloucester,

Massachusetts. And this is how I came

to catch at her; and this is how I lost her.

I cannot forgive your suicide, my mother said.

And she never could. She had my portrait

done instead.

I lived like an angry guest,

like a partly mended thing, an outgrown child.

I remember my mother did her best.

She took me to Boston and had my hair restyled.

Your smile is like your mother’s, the artist said.

I didn’t seem to care. I had my portrait

done instead.

There was a church where I grew up

with its white cupboards where they locked us up,

row by row, like puritans or shipmates

singing together. My father passed the plate.

Too late to be forgiven now, the witches said.

I wasn’t exactly forgiven. They had my portrait

done instead.

3.

All that summer sprinklers arched

over the seaside grass.

We talked of drought

while the salt-parched

field grew sweet again. To help time pass

I tried to mow the lawn

and in the morning I had my portrait done,

holding my smile in place, till it grew formal.

Once I mailed you a picture of a rabbit

and a postcard of Motif number one,

as if it were normal

to be a mother and be gone.

They hung my portrait in the chill

north light, matching

me to keep me well.

Only my mother grew ill.

She turned from me, as if death were catching,

as if death transferred,

as if my dying had eaten inside of her.

That August you were two, but I timed my days with doubt.

On the first of September she looked at me

and said I gave her cancer.

They carved her sweet hills out

and still I couldn’t answer.

4.

That winter she came

part way back

from her sterile suite

of doctors, the seasick

cruise of the X-ray,

the cells’ arithmetic

gone wild. Surgery incomplete,

the fat arm, the prognosis poor, I heard

them say.

During the sea blizzards

she had here

own portrait painted.

A cave of mirror

placed on the south wall;

matching smile, matching contour.

And you resembled me; unacquainted

with my face, you wore it. But you were mine

after all.

I wintered in Boston,

childless bride,

nothing sweet to spare

with witches at my side.

I missed your babyhood,

tried a second suicide,

tried the sealed hotel a second year.

On April Fool you fooled me. We laughed and this

was good.

5.

I checked out for the last time

on the first of May;

graduate of the mental cases,

with my analyst’s okay,

my complete book of rhymes,

my typewriter and my suitcases.

All that summer I learned life

back into my own

seven rooms, visited the swan boats,

the market, answered the phone,

served cocktails as a wife

should, made love among my petticoats

and August tan. And you came each

weekend. But I lie.

You seldom came. I just pretended

you, small piglet, butterfly

girl with jelly bean cheeks,

disobedient three, my splendid

stranger. And I had to learn

why I would rather

die than love, how your innocence

would hurt and how I gather

guilt like a young intern

his symptoms, his certain evidence.

That October day we went

to Gloucester the red hills

reminded me of the dry red fur fox

coat I played in as a child; stock-still

like a bear or a tent,

like a great cave laughing or a red fur fox.

We drove past the hatchery,

the hut that sells bait,

past Pigeon Cove, past the Yacht Club, past Squall’s

Hill, to the house that waits

still, on the top of the sea,

and two portraits hung on the opposite walls.

6.

In north light, my smile is held in place,

the shadow marks my bone.

What could I have been dreaming as I sat there,

all of me waiting in the eyes, the zone

of the smile, the young face,

the foxes’ snare.

In south light, her smile is held in place,

her cheeks wilting like a dry

orchid; my mocking mirror, my overthrown

love, my first image. She eyes me from that face,

that stony head of death

I had outgrown.

The artist caught us at the turning;

we smiled in our canvas home

before we chose our foreknown separate ways.

The dry red fur fox coat was made for burning.

I rot on the wall, my own

Dorian Gray.

And this was the cave of the mirror,

that double woman who stares

at herself, as if she were petrified

in time — two ladies sitting in umber chairs.

You kissed your grandmother

and she cried.

7.

I could not get you back

except for weekends. You came

each time, clutching the picture of a rabbit

that I had sent you. For the last time I unpack

your things. We touch from habit.

The first visit you asked my name.

Now you stay for good. I will forget

how we bumped away from each other like marionettes

on strings. It wasn’t the same

as love, letting weekends contain

us. You scrape your knee. You learn my name,

wobbling up the sidewalk, calling and crying.

You call me mother and I remember my mother again,

somewhere in greater Boston, dying.

I remember we named you Joyce

so we could call you Joy.

You came like an awkward guest

that first time, all wrapped and moist

and strange at my heavy breast.

I needed you. I didn’t want a boy,

only a girl, a small milky mouse

of a girl, already loved, already loud in the house

of herself. We named you Joy.

I, who was never quite sure

about being a girl, needed another

life, another image to remind me.

And this was my worst guilt; you could not cure

nor soothe it. I made you to find me.

### 45 Mercy Street

In my dream,

drilling into the marrow

of my entire bone,

my real dream,

I'm walking up and down Beacon Hill

searching for a street sign -

namely MERCY STREET.

Not there.

I try the Back Bay.

Not there.

Not there.

And yet I know the number.

45 Mercy Street.

I know the stained-glass window

of the foyer,

the three flights of the house

with its parquet floors.

I know the furniture and

mother, grandmother, great-grandmother,

the servants.

I know the cupboard of Spode

the boat of ice, solid silver,

where the butter sits in neat squares

like strange giant's teeth

on the big mahogany table.

I know it well.

Not there.

Where did you go?

45 Mercy Street,

with great-grandmother

kneeling in her whale-bone corset

and praying gently but fiercely

to the wash basin,

at five A.M.

at noon

dozing in her wiggy rocker,

grandfather taking a nap in the pantry,

grandmother pushing the bell for the downstairs maid,

and Nana rocking Mother with an oversized flower

on her forehead to cover the curl

of when she was good and when she was...

And where she was begat

and in a generation

the third she will beget,

me,

with the stranger's seed blooming

into the flower called Horrid.

I walk in a yellow dress

and a white pocketbook stuffed with cigarettes,

enough pills, my wallet, my keys,

and being twenty-eight, or is it forty-five?

I walk. I walk.

I hold matches at street signs

for it is dark,

as dark as the leathery dead

and I have lost my green Ford,

my house in the suburbs,

two little kids

sucked up like pollen by the bee in me

and a husband

who has wiped off his eyes

in order not to see my inside out

and I am walking and looking

and this is no dream

just my oily life

where the people are alibis

and the street is unfindable for an

entire lifetime.

Pull the shades down -

I don't care!

Bolt the door, mercy,

erase the number,

rip down the street sign,

what can it matter,

what can it matter to this cheapskate

who wants to own the past

that went out on a dead ship

and left me only with paper?

Not there.

I open my pocketbook,

as women do,

and fish swim back and forth

between the dollars and the lipstick.

I pick them out,

one by one

and throw them at the street signs,

and shoot my pocketbook

into the Charles River.

Next I pull the dream off

and slam into the cement wall

of the clumsy calendar

I live in,

my life,

and its hauled up

notebooks.

### Her Kind

I have gone out, a possessed witch,

haunting the black air, braver at night;

dreaming evil, I have done my hitch

over the plain houses, light by light:

lonely thing, twelve-fingered, out of mind.

A woman like that is not a woman, quite.

I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods,

filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves,

closets, silks, innumerable goods;

fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves:

whining, rearranging the disaligned.

A woman like that is misunderstood.

I have been her kind.

I have ridden in your cart, driver,

waved my nude arms at villages going by,

learning the last bright routes, survivor

where your flames still bite my thigh

and my ribs crack where your wheels wind.

A woman like that is not ashamed to die.

I have been her kind.

## MAYA ANGELOU (1928-2014)

### Phenomenal Woman

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.

I’m not cute or built to suit a fashion model’s size

But when I start to tell them,

They think I’m telling lies.

I say,

It’s in the reach of my arms,

The span of my hips,

The stride of my step,

The curl of my lips.

I’m a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That’s me.

I walk into a room

Just as cool as you please,

And to a man,

The fellows stand or

Fall down on their knees.

Then they swarm around me,

A hive of honey bees.

I say,

It’s the fire in my eyes,

And the flash of my teeth,

The swing in my waist,

And the joy in my feet.

I’m a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That’s me.

Men themselves have wondered

What they see in me.

They try so much

But they can’t touch

My inner mystery.

When I try to show them,

They say they still can’t see.

I say,

It’s in the arch of my back,

The sun of my smile,

The ride of my breasts,

The grace of my style.

I’m a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That’s me.

Now you understand

Just why my head’s not bowed.

I don’t shout or jump about

Or have to talk real loud.

When you see me passing,

It ought to make you proud.

I say,

It’s in the click of my heels,

The bend of my hair,

the palm of my hand,

The need for my care.

’Cause I’m a woman

Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,

That’s me.

### Still I Rise

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may tread me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells

Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,

With the certainty of tides,

Just like hopes springing high,

Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Shoulders falling down like teardrops.

Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?

Don't you take it awful hard

'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?

Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I've got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame

I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain

I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,

Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

### Caged Bird

The free bird leaps

on the back of the wind

and floats downstream

till the current ends

and dips his wings

in the orange sun rays

and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks

down his narrow cage

can seldom see through

his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and

his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with fearful trill

of the things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom

The free bird thinks of another breeze

and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees

and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn

and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams

his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream

his wings are clipped and his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

## SHEL SILVERSTEIN (1930-1999)

### Where the Sidewalk Ends

There is a place where the sidewalk ends

and before the street begins,

and there the grass grows soft and white,

and there the sun burns crimson bright,

and there the moon-bird rests from his flight

to cool in the peppermint wind.

Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black

and the dark street winds and bends.

Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow

we shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow

and watch where the chalk-white arrows go

to the place where the sidewalk ends.

Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,

and we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,

for the children, they mark, and the children, they know,

the place where the sidewalk ends.

### When I am Gone

When I am gone what will you do?

Who will write and draw for you?

Someone smarter—someone new?

Someone better—maybe YOU!

## SYLVIA PLATH (1932-1963)

### Lady Lazarus

I have done it again.

One year in every ten

I manage it——

A sort of walking miracle, my skin

Bright as a Nazi lampshade,

My right foot

A paperweight,

My face a featureless, fine

Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin

O my enemy.

Do I terrify?——

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?

The sour breath

Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh

The grave cave ate will be

At home on me

And I a smiling woman.

I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.

What a trash

To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.

The peanut-crunching crowd

Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot——

The big strip tease.

Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands

My knees.

I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.

The first time it happened I was ten.

It was an accident.

The second time I meant

To last it out and not come back at all.

I rocked shut

As a seashell.

They had to call and call

And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I’ve a call.

It’s easy enough to do it in a cell.

It’s easy enough to do it and stay put.

It’s the theatrical

Comeback in broad day

To the same place, the same face, the same brute

Amused shout:

‘A miracle!’

That knocks me out.

There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge

For the hearing of my heart——

It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge

For a word or a touch

Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.

So, so, Herr Doktor.

So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,

I am your valuable,

The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.

I turn and burn.

Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash—

You poke and stir.

Flesh, bone, there is nothing there——

A cake of soap,

A wedding ring,

A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

### Daddy

You do not do, you do not do

Any more, black shoe

In which I have lived like a foot

For thirty years, poor and white,

Barely daring to breathe or Achoo.

Daddy, I have had to kill you.

You died before I had time——

Marble-heavy, a bag full of God,

Ghastly statue with one gray toe

Big as a Frisco seal

And a head in the freakish Atlantic

Where it pours bean green over blue

In the waters off beautiful Nauset.

I used to pray to recover you.

Ach, du.

In the German tongue, in the Polish town

Scraped flat by the roller

Of wars, wars, wars.

But the name of the town is common.

My Polack friend

Says there are a dozen or two.

So I never could tell where you

Put your foot, your root,

I never could talk to you.

The tongue stuck in my jaw.

It stuck in a barb wire snare.

Ich, ich, ich, ich,

I could hardly speak.

I thought every German was you.

And the language obscene

An engine, an engine

Chuffing me off like a Jew.

A Jew to Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen.

I began to talk like a Jew.

I think I may well be a Jew.

The snows of the Tyrol, the clear beer of Vienna

Are not very pure or true.

With my gipsy ancestress and my weird luck

And my Taroc pack and my Taroc pack

I may be a bit of a Jew.

I have always been scared of you,

With your Luftwaffe, your gobbledygoo.

And your neat mustache

And your Aryan eye, bright blue.

Panzer-man, panzer-man, O You——

Not God but a swastika

So black no sky could squeak through.

Every woman adores a Fascist,

The boot in the face, the brute

Brute heart of a brute like you.

You stand at the blackboard, daddy,

In the picture I have of you,

A cleft in your chin instead of your foot

But no less a devil for that, no not

Any less the black man who

Bit my pretty red heart in two.

I was ten when they buried you.

At twenty I tried to die

And get back, back, back to you.

I thought even the bones would do.

But they pulled me out of the sack,

And they stuck me together with glue.

And then I knew what to do.

I made a model of you,

A man in black with a Meinkampf look

And a love of the rack and the screw.

And I said I do, I do.

So daddy, I’m finally through.

The black telephone’s off at the root,

The voices just can’t worm through.

If I’ve killed one man, I’ve killed two——

The vampire who said he was you

And drank my blood for a year,

Seven years, if you want to know.

Daddy, you can lie back now.

There’s a stake in your fat black heart

And the villagers never liked you.

They are dancing and stamping on you.

They always knew it was you.

Daddy, daddy, you bastard, I’m through.

### Mad Girl’s Love Song

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead,

I lift my lids and all is born again.

(I think I made you up inside my head)

The stars go waltzing out in blue and red,

And arbitrary darkness gallops in.

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

I dreamed that you bewitched me into bed

And sung me moon-struck, kissed me quite insane.

(I think I made you up inside my head).

God topples from the sky, hell’s fires fade:

Exit seraphim and enter Satan’s men:

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

I fancied you’d return the way you said.

But I grow old and I forget your name.

(I think I made you up inside my head).

I should have loved a thunderbird instead;

At least when spring comes they roar back again.

I shut my eyes and all the world drops dead.

(I think I made you up inside my head).

## AMIRI BARAKA (1934-2014)

### Black Art

Poems are bullshit unless they are

teeth or trees or lemons piled

on a step. Or black ladies dying

of men leaving nickel hearts

beating them down. Fuck poems

and they are useful, wd they shoot

come at you, love what you are,

breathe like wrestlers, or shudder

strangely after pissing. We want live

words of the hip world live flesh &

coursing blood. Hearts Brains

Souls splintering fire. We want poems

like fists beating niggers out of Jocks

or dagger poems in the slimy bellies

of the owner-jews. Black poems to

smear on girdlemamma mulatto bitches

whose brains are red jelly stuck

between 'lizabeth taylor's toes. Stinking

Whores! we want "poems that kill."

Assassin poems, Poems that shoot

guns. Poems that wrestle cops into alleys

and take their weapons leaving them dead

with tongues pulled out and sent to Ireland. Knockoff

poems for dope selling wops or slick halfwhite

politicians Airplane poems, rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

rrrrrrrrrrrrrrr . . .tuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuhtuh

. . .rrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr . . . Setting fire and death to

whities ass. Look at the Liberal

Spokesman for the jews clutch his throat

& puke himself into eternity . . . rrrrrrrr

There's a negroleader pinned to

a bar stool in Sardi's eyeballs melting

in hot flame Another negroleader

on the steps of the white house one

kneeling between the sheriff's thighs

negotiating coolly for his people.

Aggh . . . stumbles across the room . . .

Put it on him, poem. Strip him naked

to the world! Another bad poem cracking

steel knuckles in a jewlady's mouth

Poem scream poison gas on beasts in green berets

Clean out the world for virtue and love,

Let there be no love poems written

until love can exist freely and

cleanly. Let Black people understand

that they are the lovers and the sons

of warriors and sons

of warriors Are poems & poets &

all the loveliness here in the world

We want a black poem. And a

Black World.

Let the world be a Black Poem

And Let All Black People Speak This Poem

Silently

or LOUD

## MARY OLIVER (1935-)

### The Summer Day

Who made the world?

Who made the swan, and the black bear?

Who made the grasshopper?

This grasshopper, I mean-

the one who has flung herself out of the grass,

the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,

who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down-

who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.

Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.

Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.

I don't know exactly what a prayer is.

I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down

into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,

how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,

which is what I have been doing all day.

Tell me, what else should I have done?

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do

with your one wild and precious life?

### Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness

Every year we have been

witness to it: how the

world descends

into a rich mash, in order that

it may resume.

And therefore

who would cry out

to the petals on the ground

to stay,

knowing, as we must,

how the vivacity of what was is married

to the vitality of what will be?

I don’t say

it’s easy, but

what else will do

if the love one claims to have for the world

be true?

So let us go on

though the sun be swinging east,

and the ponds be cold and black,

and the sweets of the year be doomed.

### Mindful

Every day

I see or hear

something

that more or less

kills me

with delight,

that leaves me

like a needle

in the haystack

of light.

It was what I was born for -

to look, to listen,

to lose myself

inside this soft world -

to instruct myself

over and over

in joy,

and acclamation.

Nor am I talking

about the exceptional,

the fearful, the dreadful,

the very extravagant -

but of the ordinary,

the common, the very drab,

the daily presentations.

Oh, good scholar,

I say to myself,

how can you help

but grow wise

with such teachings

as these -

the untrimmable light

of the world,

the ocean's shine,

the prayers that are made

out of grass?

### The Journey

One day you finally knew

what you had to do, and began,

though the voices around you

kept shouting

their bad advice --

though the whole house

began to tremble

and you felt the old tug

at your ankles.

"Mend my life!"

each voice cried.

But you didn't stop.

You knew what you had to do,

though the wind pried

with its stiff fingers

at the very foundations,

though their melancholy

was terrible.

It was already late

enough, and a wild night,

and the road full of fallen

branches and stones.

But little by little,

as you left their voice behind,

the stars began to burn

through the sheets of clouds,

and there was a new voice

which you slowly

recognized as your own,

that kept you company

as you strode deeper and deeper

into the world,

determined to do

the only thing you could do --

determined to save

the only life that you could save.

## MARGARET ATWOOD (1939-)

### Siren Song

This is the one song everyone

would like to learn: the song

that is irresistible:

the song that forces men

to leap overboard in squadrons

even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows

because anyone who has heard it

is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret

and if I do, will you get me

out of this bird suit?

I don't enjoy it here

squatting on this island

looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,

I don't enjoy singing

this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,

to you, only to you.

Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!

Only you, only you can,

you are unique

at last. Alas

it is a boring song

but it works every time.

### A Sad Child

You're sad because you're sad.

It's psychic. It's the age. It's chemical.

Go see a shrink or take a pill,

or hug your sadness like an eyeless doll

you need to sleep.

Well, all children are sad

but some get over it.

Count your blessings. Better than that,

buy a hat. Buy a coat or pet.

Take up dancing to forget.

Forget what?

Your sadness, your shadow,

whatever it was that was done to you

the day of the lawn party

when you came inside flushed with the sun,

your mouth sulky with sugar,

in your new dress with the ribbon

and the ice-cream smear,

and said to yourself in the bathroom,

I am not the favorite child.

My darling, when it comes

right down to it

and the light fails and the fog rolls in

and you're trapped in your overturned body

under a blanket or burning car,

and the red flame is seeping out of you

and igniting the tarmac beside your head

or else the floor, or else the pillow,

none of us is;

or else we all are.

### This is a Photograph of Me

It was taken some time ago

At first it seems to be

a smeared

print: blurred lines and grey flecks

blended with the paper;

then, as you scan

it, you can see something in the left-hand corner

a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree

(balsam or spruce) emerging

and, to the right, halfway up

what ought to be a gentle

slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,

and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken

the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center

of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where

precisely, or to say

how large or how small I am:

the effect of water

on light is a distortion.

but if you look long enough

eventually

you will see me.)

## SEAMUS HEANEY (1939-2013)

### Blackberry-Picking

for Philip Hobsbaum

Late August, given heavy rain and sun

For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.

At first, just one, a glossy purple clot

Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.

You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet

Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it

Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for

Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger

Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots

Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.

Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills

We trekked and picked until the cans were full,

Until the tinkling bottom had been covered

With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned

Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered

With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.

But when the bath was filled we found a fur,

A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.

The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush

The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.

I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair

That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.

Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

## BILLY COLLINS (1941-)

### Forgetfulness

The name of the author is the first to go

followed obediently by the title, the plot,

the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel

which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor

decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,

to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine muses goodbye

and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,

and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,

the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember,

it is not poised on the tip of your tongue

or even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river

whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall

well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those

who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night

to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.

No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted

out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

### On Turning Ten

The whole idea of it makes me feel

like I'm coming down with something,

something worse than any stomach ache

or the headaches I get from reading in bad light--

a kind of measles of the spirit,

a mumps of the psyche,

a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,

but that is because you have forgotten

the perfect simplicity of being one

and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.

But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.

At four I was an Arabian wizard.

I could make myself invisible

by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.

At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window

watching the late afternoon light.

Back then it never fell so solemnly

against the side of my tree house,

and my bicycle never leaned against the garage

as it does today,

all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,

as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.

It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,

time to turn the first big number.

It seems only yesterday I used to believe

there was nothing under my skin but light.

If you cut me I could shine.

But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,

I skin my knees. I bleed.

## SHARON OLDS (1942-)

### The Victims

When Mother divorced you, we were glad. She took it and

took it in silence, all those years and then

kicked you out, suddenly, and her

kids loved it. Then you were fired, and we

grinned inside, the way people grinned when

Nixon's helicopter lifted off the South

Lawn for the last time. We were tickled

to think of your office taken away,

your secretaries taken away,

your lunches with three double bourbons,

your pencils, your reams of paper. Would they take your

suits back, too, those dark

carcasses hung in your closet, and the black

noses of your shoes with their large pores?

She had taught us to take it, to hate you and take it

until we pricked with her for your

annihilation, Father. Now I

pass the bums in doorways, the white

slugs of their bodies gleaming through slits in their

suits of compressed silt, the stained

flippers of their hands, the underwater

fire of their eyes, ships gone down with the

lanterns lit, and I wonder who took it and

took it from them in silence until they had

given it all away and had nothing

left but this.

## NIKKI GIOVANNI (1943-)

### Legacies

her grandmother called her from the playground

“yes, ma’am”

“i want chu to learn how to make rolls” said the old

woman proudly

but the little girl didn’t want

to learn how because she knew

even if she couldn’t say it that

that would mean when the old one died she would be less

dependent on her spirit so

she said

“i don’t want to know how to make no rolls”

with her lips poked out

and the old woman wiped her hands on

her apron saying “lord

these children”

and neither of them ever

said what they meant

and i guess nobody ever does

### Choices

If i can't do

what i want to do

then my job is to not

do what i don't want

to do

It's not the same thing

but it's the best i can

do

If i can't have

what i want . . . then

my job is to want

what i've got

and be satisfied

that at least there

is something more to want

Since i can't go

where i need

to go . . . then i must . . . go

where the signs point

through always understanding

parallel movement

isn't lateral

When i can't express

what i really feel

i practice feeling

what i can express

and none of it is equal

I know

but that's why mankind

alone among the animals

learns to cry

### Knoxville Tennessee

I always like summer

Best

you can eat fresh corn

From daddy's garden

And okra

And greens

And cabbage

And lots of

Barbeque

And buttermilk

And homemade ice-cream

At the church picnic

And listen to

Gospel music

Outside

At the church

Homecoming

And go to the mountains with

Your grandmother

And go barefooted

And be warm

All the time

Not only when you go to bed

And sleep

## RITA DOVE (1955-)

### Fifth Grade Autobiography

I was four in this photograph fishing

with my grandparents at a lake in Michigan.

My brother squats in poison ivy.

His Davy Crockett cap

sits squared on his head so the raccoon tail

flounces down the back of his sailor suit.

My grandfather sits to the far right

in a folding chair,

and I know his left hand is on

the tobacco in his pants pocket

because I used to wrap it for him

every Christmas. Grandmother's hips

bulge from the brush, she's leaning

into the ice chest, sun through the trees

printing her dress with soft

luminous paws.

I am staring jealously at my brother;

the day before he rode his first horse, alone.

I was strapped in a basket

behind my grandfather.

He smelled of lemons. He's died—

but I remember his hands.

### Exit

Just when hope withers, the visa is granted.

The door opens to a street like in the movies,

clean of people, of cats; except it is your street

you are leaving. A visa has been granted,

'provisionally'-a fretful word.

The windows you have closed behind

you are turning pink, doing what they do

every dawn. Here it's gray. The door

to the taxicab waits. This suitcase,

the saddest object in the world.

Well, the world's open. And now through

the windshield the sky begins to blush

as you did when your mother told you

what it took to be a woman in this life.