



First Day at School

A millionbillionwillion miles from home
Waiting for the bell to go. (To go where?)
Why are they all so big, other children?
So noisy? So much at home they
Must have been born in uniform
Lived all their lives in playgrounds
Spent the years inventing games
That don't let me in. Games
That are rough, that swallow you up.

And the railings.
All around, the railings.
Are they to keep out wolves and monsters?
Things that carry off and eat children?
Things you don't take sweets from?
Perhaps they're to stop us getting out
Running away from the lessins. Lessin.
What does a lessin look like?
Sounds small and slimy.
They keep them in the classrooms.
Whole rooms made out of glass. Imagine.

I wish I could remember my name
Mummy said it would come in useful.
Like wellies. When there's puddles.
Yellowwellies. I wish she was here.
I think my name is sewn on somewhere
Perhaps the teacher will read it for me.
Tea-cher. The one who makes the tea.

Roger McGough



The Tiger

By [William Blake](#)
1757-1827

TIGER, tiger, 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 and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and 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?

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?



The Soldier by Rupert Brooke

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is for ever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

Rupert Brooke, 1914



Metaphors

*I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.*

Sylvia Plath



William Shakespeare

(1564-1616)

from **Macbeth**

A dark Cave. In the middle, a Caldron boiling. Thunder.

Enter the three Witches.

1 WITCH. Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

2 WITCH. Thrice and once, the hedge-pig whin'd.

3 WITCH. Harpier cries:—'tis time! 'tis time!

1 WITCH. Round about the caldron go;

In the poison'd entrails throw.—

Toad, that under cold stone,

Days and nights has thirty-one;

Swelter'd venom sleeping got,

Boil thou first i' the charmed pot!

ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

2 WITCH. Fillet of a fenny snake,

In the caldron boil and bake;

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,

Lizard's leg, and owlet's wing,—

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

3 WITCH. Scale of dragon; tooth of wolf;

Witches' mummy; maw and gulf

Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark;

Root of hemlock digg'd i the dark;

Liver of blaspheming Jew;

Gall of goat, and slips of yew

Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse;

Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips;

Finger of birth-strangled babe

Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,—

Make the gruel thick and slab:

Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,

For the ingrediants of our caldron.

ALL. Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.

2 WITCH. Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.



This Is Just To Say

by [William Carlos Williams](#)

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox

and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold



Miss World

Beauty is about how you behold
more than silver more than gold
if I say I am beautiful
it means beauty is accessible,
beauty is about how you greet
de everyday people dat you meet
you are beautiful so all rejoice
your beauty is a natural choice.

My sister is a beautiful girl
she don't want to be Miss World
her value is not prize money
more value than a pearl
my sister is a beautiful girl
human delight
she could be out of sight but she would rather stay and fight.

Her legs are firm and strong
best for self-defence
my sister kicks like wildfire
so cause her no grievance
she won't walk the platform
to upsex people's lust
and you can't get the number of her height, age or bust,
she don't want to go to the market
to be viewed like a slave
the viewing time is over
put de judge in the grave,
she don't need to go to the market
'cause she's already won
beauty contest no contest
she don't need to run.

I talk 'bout people in society who judge you by your looks, den,
give you a number dat is written in a book, and, lustful eyes
from all around come to look at you, and, day judge your lifetime
by a quick interview.

My sister is a beautiful girl
But she don't want to be Miss World
her personality cannot be rewarded by no judge or earl.

My sister is a beautiful girl
She needs no contest
and you can't put her with another judging who's the best.
And you cannot judge my sister's heart
By looking at her breasts.



PAY-BACK TIME

O Lord, let me be a burden on my children
For long they've been a burden upon me.
May they fetch and carry, clean and scrub
And do so cheerfully.

Let them take it in turns at putting me up
Nice sunny rooms at the top of the stairs
With a walk-in bath and lift installed
At great expense.....Theirs.

Insurance against the body-blows of time
Isn't that what having children's all about?
To bring them up knowing that they owe you
And can't contract out?

What is money for but to spend on their schooling?
Designer clothes, mindless hobbies, usual stuff.
Then as soon as they're earning, off they go
Well, enough's enough.

It's been a blessing watching them develop
The parental pride we felt as each one grew.
But Lord, let me be a burden on my children
And on my children's children too.

Roger McGough



For Heidi With Blue Hair

When you dyed your hair blue
(or, at least ultramarine
for the clipped sides, with a crest
of jet-black spikes on top)
you were sent home from school

because, as the headmistress put it,
although dyed hair was not
specifically forbidden, yours
was, apart from anything else,
not done in the school colours.

Tears in the kitchen, telephone-calls
to school from your freedom-loving father:
'She's not a punk in her behaviour;
it's just a style.' (You wiped your eyes,
also not in a school colour.)

'She discussed it with me first -
we checked the rules.' 'And anyway, Dad,
it cost twenty-five dollars.
Tel them it won't wash out -
not even if I wanted to try.

It would have been unfair to mention
your mother's death, but that
shimmered behind the arguments.
The school had nothing else against you;
the teachers twittered and gave in.

Next day your black friend had hers done
in grey, white and flaxen yellow -
the school colours precisely:
an act of solidarity, a witty
tease. The battle was already won.



The Prize-Winning Poem

It will be typed, of course, and not all in capitals: it will use upper and lower case in the normal way; and where a space is usual it will have a space. It will probably be on white paper, or possibly blue, but almost certainly not pink. It will not be decorated with ornamental scroll-work in coloured ink, nor will a photograph of the poet be glued above his or her name, and still less a snap of the poet's children frolicking in a jolly game. The poem will not be about feeling lonely and being fifteen and unless the occasion of the competition is a royal jubilee it will not be about the queen.

It will not be the first poem the author has written in his life and will probably not be about the death of his daughter, son or wife because although to write such elegies fulfils a therapeutic need in large numbers they are deeply depressing for the judges to read. The title will not be 'Thoughts' or 'Life' or 'I Wonder Why' or 'The Bunny-rabbit's Birthday Party' or 'In Days of Long Gone By'. 'Tis and 'twas, o'er and e'er, and such poetical contractions will not be found in the chosen poem. Similarly cliches will not abound: dawn will not herald another bright new day, nor dew sparkle like diamonds in a dell, nor trees their arms upstretch. Also the poet will be able to spell. Large meaningless concepts will not be viewed with favour: myriad is out; infinity is becoming suspect; aeons and galaxies are in some doubt. Archaisms and inversions will not occur; nymphs will not their fate bemoan. Apart from this there will be no restrictions upon the style or tone. What is required is simply the masterpiece we'd all write if we could. There is only one prescription for it: it's got to be good.

Fleur Adcock



Advice to a Discarded Lover

Think, now: if you have found a dead bird,
not only dead, not only fallen,
but full of maggots: what do you feel -
more pity or more revulsion?

Pity is for the moment of death,
and the moments after. It changes
when decay comes, with the creeping stench
and the wriggling, munching scavengers.

Returning later, though, you will see
a shape of clean bone, a few feathers,
an inoffensive symbol of what
once lived. Nothing to make you shudder.

It is clear then. But perhaps you find
the analogy I have chosen
for our dead affair rather gruesome -
too unpleasant a comparison.

It is not accidental. In you
I see maggots close to the surface.
You are eaten up by self-pity,
crawling with unlovable pathos.

If I were to touch you I should feel
against my fingers fat, moist worm-skin.
Do not ask me for charity now:



Dissection

by Colin Rowbotham

This rat looks like it is made of marzipan,
Soft and neatly packaged in its envelope;
I shake it free.
Fingering the damp, yellow fur, I know
That this first touch is far the worst.
There is a book about it that contains
Everything on a rat, with diagrams
Meticulous, but free from blood
Or all the yellow juices
I will have to pour away.
Now peg it out:
My pins are twisted and the board is hard
But, using force and fracturing its legs,
I manage though
And crucify my rat.
From the crutch to the throat the fur is ripped
Not neatly, not as shown in the diagrams,
But raggedly;
My hacking has revealed the body wall
As a sack that is fat with innards to be torn
By the inquisitive eye
And the hand that strips aside.
Inside this taut, elastic sack is a surprise;
Not the chaos I had thought to find,
No oozing mash; instead of that
A firmly coiled discipline
Of overlapping liver, folded gut;
A neatness that is like a small machine -
And I wonder what it is that has left this rat,
Why a month of probing could not make it go again,
What it is that has disappeared . . .
The bell has gone; it is time to go for lunch.
I fold the rat, replace it in its bag,
Wash from my hands the sweet
Smell of meat and formalin
And go and eat a meat pie afterwards.
So, for four weeks or so, I am told,
I shall continue to dissect this rat;
Like a child
Pulling apart a clock he cannot mend.



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".

Percy Bysshe Shelley



A BIRTHDAY

by: *Christina Rossetti (1830-1894)*

MY heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these,
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a daïs of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.



Coal Fire

And once in some swamp-forest, these
Were trees.
Before the first fox thought to run,
These dead black chips were one
Green net to hold the sun.
Each leaf in turn was taught the right
Way to drink light;
The twigs were made to learn
How to catch flame and yet not burn;
Branch and then bough began to eat
Their diet of heat.
And so for years, six million years, or higher,
They held that fire.
And here, out of the splinters that remain,
The fire is loose again.
See how its hundred hands reach here and there,
Finger the air;
Then, growing bolder, twisting free,
It fastens on the remnants of the tree
And, one by one,
Consumes them; mounts beyond them; leaps; is done;
And goes back to the sun.

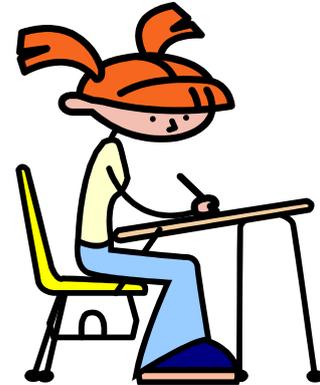
Louis Untermeyer



POEM ABOUT WRITING A POEM

'Write a poem,' she says
'About anything you like.'
You can practically feel the class all thinking,
'On your blooming bike!'
A poem! I'll tell you one thing:
Mine's not going to rhyme.
A poem between now and playtime!
There's not the time.
In half an hour she'll say,
'Have you done? Hand papers in
And go out.'
I mean, does she have the slightest idea
What writing a poem's about?
I mean, it's agony:
It's scribbling thoughts
And looking for rhymes
And ways to end and begin;
And giving it up in total despair –
'I'm chucking it in the bin.'
But tomorrow it pulls you back again,
And hey, a bit of it clicks!
And you sweat with the words
But it's hopeless again
And it sticks.
And you put it away for ever ...

But it nags away in the back of your head
And the bits of it buzz and roam,
And maybe- about a century later –
You've got a kind of poem





Pigtail

When all the women in the transport
had their heads shaved
four workmen with brooms made of birch twigs
swept up
and gathered up the hair

Behind clean glass
the stiff hair lies
of those suffocated in gas chambers
there are pins and side combs
in this hair

The hair is not shot through with light
is not parted by the breeze
is not touched by any hand
or rain or lips

In huge chests
clouds of dry hair
of those suffocated
and a faded plait
a pigtail with a ribbon
pulled at school
by naughty boys.

Translated by Adam Czerniawski

Tadeusz Różewicz



VEGETARIANS BY ROGER MCGOUGH



Vegetarian towns of the Old West

Vegetarians are cruel, unthinking people.
Everybody knows that a carrot screams when grated.
That a peach bleeds when torn apart.
Do you believe an orange insensitive
Two thumbs gouging out its flesh?
That tomatoes spill their brains painlessly?
Potatoes, skinned alive and boiled,
The soil's little lobsters.
Don't tell me it doesn't hurt
When peas are ripped from the scrotum,
The hide flayed off sprouts,
Cabbage shredded, onions beheaded.
Throw in the trowel
And lay down the hoe.
Mow no more
Let my people go!



Rain

I can hear you
making small holes
in the silence
rain

If I were deaf
the pores of my skin
would open to you
and shut

And I
should know you
by the lick of you
if I were blind

the something
special smell of you
when the sun cakes
the ground

the steady
drum-roll sound
you make
when the wind drops

But if I
should not hear
smell or feel or see
you

you would still
define me
disperse me
wash over me
rain



JABBERWOCKY

Lewis Carroll

(from *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, 1872)

`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought --
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and
through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And, has thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.



`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outrabe.



High Flight

John Gillespie Magee, Jr

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds, --and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of --Wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air...
Up, up the long, delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace
Where never lark or even eagle flew --
And, while with silent lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.



Funeral Blues

W. H. Auden

Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone,
Prevent the dog from barking with a juicy bone,
Silence the pianos and with muffled drum
Bring out the coffin, let the mourners come.

Let aeroplanes circle moaning overhead
Scribbling on the sky the message He Is Dead,
Put crepe bows round the white necks of the public doves,
Let the traffic policemen wear black cotton gloves.

He was my North, my South, my East and West,
My working week and my Sunday rest,
My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;
I thought that love would last for ever: I was wrong.

The stars are not wanted now: put out every one;
Pack up the moon and dismantle the sun;
Pour away the ocean and sweep up the wood.
For nothing now can ever come to any good.



AUTUMN SONG

There came a day that caught the summer
Wrung its neck
Plucked it
And ate it.

Now what do I do with the trees?
The day said, the day said.
Strip them bare, strip them bare.
Let's see what is really there.

And what shall I do with the sun?
The day said, the day said.
Roll him away till he's cold and small.
He'll come back rested if he comes back at all.

And what shall I do with the birds?
The day said, the day said.
The birds I've frightened, let them flit,
I'll hang out pork for the brave tomtit.

And what shall I do with the seed?
The day said, the day said.
Bury it deep, see what it's worth.
See if it can stand the earth.

What shall I do with the people?
The day said, the day said.
Stuff them with apple and blackberry pie –
They'll love me till the day they die.

There came this day and he was autumn.
His mouth was wide
And red as a sunset.
His tail was an icicle.

Ted Hughes



DON'T

Don't comb your hair in company.

Don't cross the kitchen floor in welly boots.

Don't put the television on.

Don't squint. Don't get in fights.

Don't stuff your mouth with sausage.

Don't drop towels on the bathroom floor.

Don't hang about with that rough crowd.

Don't put your feet up on the chair.

Don't use up all the paper in the loo.

Don't scratch. Don't twitch. Don't sniff. Don't talk.

Don't stick your tongue out.

Don't you dare answer back.

Life is full of opportunity, says my Mum.

Barrie Wade



HOW DOES IT FEEL?

How does it feel?

OK All right.

How does it really feel?

OK All right.

But how does it really, really feel
without saying OK?

Yesterday my kitten died
and the oceans of my eyes
burst wide open. How's that?

David Scott



THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE POET

I am a poet
I am very fond of bananas.

I am bananas
I am very fond of a poet.

I am a poet of bananas
I am very fond.

A fond poet of 'I am, I am' –
Very bananas.

Fond of 'Am I bananas,
Am i? – a very poet.

Bananas of a poet!
Am I Fond? Am I very?

Poet bananas! I am.
I am very fond of a 'very'.

I am of very fond bananas.
Am I a poet?

Wendy Cope



POETRY IS WHAT?

Poetry is a beautiful mud-pie
Washed down with a glassful of stars.

Poetry is one of the best ways
Of singing to the whole wide world
Or whispering in the ear of your best friend.

Poetry tunnels you out of your dungeon.
Poetry captures the three-headed dragon.
And teaches it Ludo and Frisbee-throwing.

Poetry is a Mammoth in a shopping mall,
A beggar with no legs in Disneyland,
A chocolate bicycle,
A truthburger with French flies
And the Moon's own telephone.

Poetry is your mind dancing
To the drumbeat of your heart.

Adrian Mitchell



LEAVE-TAKING

The only joy
Of his old age
He often said
Was his grandson

Their friendship
Straddled
Eight decades
Three generations

They laughed, played
Quarrelled, embraced
Watched television together
And while the rest had
Little to say to the old man
The little fellow was
A fountain of endless chatter

When death rattled
The gate at five
One Sunday morning
Took the old man away
Others trumpeted their
grief in loud sobs
and lachrymose blubber

he never shed a tear
just waved one of his
small inimitable goodbyes
to his grandfather
and was sad the old man
could not return his gesture.

Cecil Rajendra



Anne Hathaway

'Item I gyve unto my wife my second best bed...'

(from Shakespeare's will)

The bed we loved in was a spinning world
of forests, castles, torchlight, clifftops, seas
where he would dive for pearls. My lover's words
were shooting stars which fell to the earth as kisses
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme
to his, now echo, assonance; his touch
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.
Some nights, I dreamed he'd written me, the bed
a page beneath his writer's hands. Romance
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste.
In the other bed, the best, our guests dozed on,
dribbling their prose. My living laughing love –
I hold him in the casket of my widow's head
As he held me upon that next best bed.

Carol Ann Duffy



Education for Leisure

Today I am going to kill something. Anything.
I have had enough of being ignored and today
I am going to play God. It is an ordinary day,
a sort of grey with boredom stirring in the streets.

I squash a fly against the wall with my thumb.
We did that at school, Shakespeare. It was in
another language and now the fly is in another language.
I breathe out talent on the glass to write my name.

.I am a genius. I could be anything at all, with half
the chance. But today I am going to change the world.
Something's world. The cat avoids me. The cat
knows I am a genius and has hidden itself.

I pour the goldfish down the bog. I pull the chain.
I see that it is good. The budgie is panicking.
Once a fortnight. I walk two miles into town
for signing on. They don't appreciate my autograph.

There is nothing left to kill. I dial the radio
and tell the man he's talking to a superstar.
He cuts me off. I get our bread-knife and go out.
The pavements glitter suddenly. I touch your arm.

Carol Ann Duffy



November

We walk to the ward from the badly parked car
with your grandma taking four short steps to our two.
We have brought her here to die and we know it.

You check her towel, soap and family trinkets,
pare her nails, parcel her in the rough blankets
and she sinks down into her incontinence.

It is time John. In their pasty bloodless smiles,
in their slack breasts, their stunned brains and their baldness,
and in us John: we are almost these monsters.

You're shattered. You give me the keys and I drive
through the twilight zone, past the famous station
to your house, to numb ourselves with alcohol.

Inside, we feel the terror of the dusk begin.
Outside we watch the evening, failing again,
and we let it happen. We can say nothing.

Sometimes the sun spangles and we feel alive.
One thing we have to get, John, out of this life.

Simon Armitage



THE HERO

'Jack fell as he'd have wished' the Mother said,
And folded up the letter that she'd read.
'The Colonel writes so nicely.' Something broke
In the tired voice that quavered to a choke.
She half looked up. 'We mothers are so proud
Of our dead soldiers,' Then her face was bowed.

Quietly the Brother Officer went out.
He'd told the poor old dear some gallant lies
That she would nourish all her days, no doubt.
For while he coughed and mumbled, her weak eyes
Had shone with gentle triumph, brimmed with joy,
Because he'd been so brave, her glorious boy.

He thought how 'Jack', cold-footed, useless swine,
Had panicked down the trench that night the mine
Went up at Wicked Corner; how he'd tried
To get sent home, and how, at last, he died,
Blown to small bits. And no one seemed to care
Except that lonely woman with white hair.

Sigfried Sassoon



Stealing

The most unusual thing I ever stole? A snowman.
Midnight. He looked magnificent; a tall, white mute
beneath the winter moon. I wanted him, a mate
with a mind as cold as a slice of ice
within my own brain. I started with the head.

Better off dead than giving in, not taking
what you want. He weighed a ton; his torso,
frozen stiff, hugged to my chest, a fierce chill
piercing my gut. Part of the thrill was knowing
that children would cry in the morning. Life's tough.

Sometimes I steal things I don't need. I joy-ride cars
to nowhere, break into houses just to have a look.
I'm a mucky ghost, leave a mess, maybe pinch a camera.
I watch my gloved hand turn twisting the doorknob.
A stranger's bedroom. Mirrors. I sigh like this – *Aah*.

It took some time. Reassembled in the yard,
he didn't look the same. I took a run
and booted him. Again. Again. My breath ripped out
in rags. It seems daft now. Then I was standing
alone amongst lumps of snow, sick of the world.

Boredom. Mostly I'm so bored I could eat myself.
One time, I stole a guitar and thought I might
learn to play. I nicked a bust of Shakespeare once,
flogged it, but the snowman was the strangest.
You don't understand a word I'm saying, do you?

Carol Ann Duffy



REMEMBER

Remember me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
 You tell me of our future that you planned:
 Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.

Yet if you should forget me for a while
 And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
 For if the darkness and corruption leave
 A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
 Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti



Afternoon in School The Last Lesson

When will the bell ring, and end this weariness?
How long have they tugged the leash, and strained apart
My pack of unruly hounds: I cannot start
Them again on a quarry of knowledge they hate to hunt,
I can haul them and urge them no more.
No more can I endure to bear the brunt
Of the books that lie out on the desks: a full three score
Of several insults of blotted pages and scrawl
Of slovenly work that they have offered me.
I am sick, and tired more than any thrall
Upon the woodstacks working weariedly.

And shall I take
The last dear fuel and heap it on my soul
Till I rouse my will like a fire to consume
Their dross of indifference, and burn the scroll
Of their insults in punishment? - I will not!
I will not waste myself to embers for them,
Not all for them shall the fires of my life be hot,
For myself a heap of ashes of weariness, till sleep
Shall have raked the embers clear: I will keep
Some of my strength for myself, for if I should sell
It all for them, I should hate them -
- I will sit and wait for the bell.



DEATH IS A FISHERMAN

Benjamin Franklin

Death is a fisherman, the world we see
His fish-pond is, and we the fishes be;
His net some general sickness; howe'er he
Is not so kind as other fishers be;
For if they take one of the smaller fry,
They throw him in again, he shall not die:
But death is sure to kill all he can get,
And all is fish with him that comes to net.



If

Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too:
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream and not make dreams your master;
If you can think and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same:
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings,
And never breathe a word about your loss:
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold on!"

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings---nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much:
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!



My love is as a fever

Sonnet 147

William Shakespeare

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease,
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
Th' uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as mad men's are,
At random from the truth vainly expressed.
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.



Shall I compare thee to a summers day?

Sonnet 18

William Shakespeare

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 dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest 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.



Two Sunflowers Move in the Yellow Room.

"Ah, William, we're weary of weather,"
said the sunflowers, shining with dew.

"Our traveling habits have tired us.
Can you give us a room with a view?"

They arranged themselves at the window
and counted the steps of the sun,
and they both took root in the carpet
where the topaz tortoises run.

William Blake
(1757-1827)



The Train

I like to see it lap the miles,
And lick the valleys up,
And stop to feed itself at tanks;
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
And, supercilious, peer
In shanties by the sides of roads;
And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between, Complaining all the while
In horrid, hooting stanza;
Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
Then, punctual as a star its own,
Stop-docile and omnipotent-
A stable door.

By Emily Dickinson



The Chimney Sweeper

William Blake

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.

Theres little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curled like a lambs back was shav'd, 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 lock'd up in coffins of black,

And by came an Angel who had a bright key
And he open'd 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.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.



The Owl and the Pussy Cat

Edward Lear

The Owl and the Pussy Cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl!
How charmingly sweet you sing!
O let us be married! too long we have tarried:
But what shall we do for a ring?"
They sailed away, for a year and a day,
To the land where the Bong-tree grows
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood
With a ring at the end of his nose,
His nose,
His nose,
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."
So they took it away, and were married next day
By the Turkey who lives on the hill.
They dined on mince, and slices of quince,
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,
They danced by the light of the moon,
The moon,
The moon,
They danced by the light of the moon.



The Road not Taken

Robert Frost

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.



UPHILL

Christina Rossetti

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.



The Seven Ages of Man

William Shakespeare

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players,
They have their exits and entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.
Then, the whining schoolboy with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden, and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice
In fair round belly, with good capon lin'd,
With eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,
Full of wise saws, and modern instances,
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts
Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,
With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,
His youthful hose well sav'd, a world too wide,
For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
Turning again towards childish treble, pipes
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.



from **The Merchant of Venice**
Act Three, Sc 1

SHYLOCK

He hath disgraced me, and
hindered me half a million; laughed at my losses,
mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my
bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine
enemies; and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath
not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs,
dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with
the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject
to the same diseases, healed by the same means,
warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as
a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed?
if you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison
us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not
revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will
resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian,
what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian
wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by
Christian example? Why, revenge. The villany you
teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I
will better the instruction.



Why I Read

I read because one life isn't enough,
and in the pages of a book I can be anybody;

I read because the words that build the story
become mine, to build my life;

I read not for happy endings
but for new beginnings,
I'm just beginning myself and I wouldn't
mind a map;

I read because I have friends who don't,
and young they are,
they are beginning to run out of material;

I read because every journey begins at the library,
and it's time for me to start packing;

I read because one of these days I may want to leave this town,
and I'm going to go everywhere
and meet everybody,
and I want to be READY!



A Set of instructions to be used when reading a poem

1. To begin with lift the poem carefully out of its paper.
2. Balance the poem in the palm of your hand.
3. Don't be afraid of the poem.
4. Run your fingers around the outside of the poem :
 - a. Is it rough or smooth?
 - b. Is it heavy or light?
5. Throw the poem in the air. Does it float?
6. Put the poem in your mouth. Either:
 - a. Squeeze a small amount onto your tongue like toothpaste.
 - b. Enter the whole poem into your mouth like cake
7. Remove the first word and the last word from the poem . Shake vigorously. Each word should fall out of line.
8. Place the words into your mouth and roll them around . Suck; chew . Gargle. Hide the words in your cheeks. Spit them at people.
9. When you are finished put the words back where they belong.
10. Whisper the poem quietly to yourself.
11. Yell the poem out loud.
12. Recite the poem in broad daylight/in moonlight/with the lights on/with the lights off/in the bathroom/in the garden underneath a tree.
13. Recite the poem on fine days/on rainy days/on calm days/on windy days/on an empty stomach/with your mouth full.
14. Put the poem on blocks and lie underneath it. Tinker with the timing. Pack each word in grease. File off the engine numbers. Repaint the poem .
15. Eat breakfast on the poem . Strain the poem with coffee.
16. Stand on the poem .
17. Water the poem .
18. Mix the poem in with the washing.
19. Carry the poem around in your pocket for a week.
20. Now the poem belongs to you.



..:I Love Ya:..

Timmy S. Edgar

... I love ya smile!
... I love ya face!
... I love ya nature!
... I love ya grace!

... A beautiful day it was
When I met you
Lightly scented breezes
My touched memory of you

... I love ya confidence!
... I love ya laugh!
I love ya near me...
... On life's long path!

... These are my words
from a heart that's true
You are my best friend
And so I love you



I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud

William Wordsworth

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 leaves in glee;
A poet could not be but 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.



Sick

Shel Silverstein

"I cannot go to school today,"
Said little Peggy Ann McKay,
"I have the measles and the mumps,
A gash, a rash, and purple bumps.
My mouth is wet, my throat is dry,
I'm going blind in my right eye.
My tonsils are as big as rocks,
I've counted sixteen chicken pox
And there's one more--that's seventeen,
And don't you think my face looks green?
My leg is cut, my eyes are blue--
It might be instamatic flu.
I cough and sneeze and gasp and choke,
I'm sure that my left leg is broke--
My hip hurts when I move my chin,
My belly button's caving in,
My back is wrenched, my ankle's sprained,
My 'pendix pains each time it rains.
My nose is cold, my toes are numb,
I have a sliver in my thumb.
My neck is stiff, my voice is weak,
I hardly whisper when I speak.
My tongue is filling up my mouth,
I think my hair is falling out.
My elbow's bent, my spine ain't straight,
My temperature is one-o-eight.
My brain is shrunk, I cannot hear,
There is a hole inside my ear.
I have a hangnail, and my heart is--what?
What's that? What's that you say?
You say today is---Saturday?
G'bye, I'm going out to play!"



Do not go gentle into that good night

Dylan Thomas

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 the 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.



I know why the caged bird sings

Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps on the back
Of the wind and floats downstream
Till the current ends and dips his wing
In the orange sun's 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 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.

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.



Rising Five

Norman Nicholson

'I'm rising five', he said,
'Not four', and little coils of hair
Un-clicked themselves upon his head.
His spectacles, brimful of eyes to stare
At me and the meadow, reflected cones of light
Above his toffee-buckled cheeks. He'd been alive
Fifty-six months or perhaps a week more:

not four,

But rising five.
Around him in the field the cells of spring
Bubbled and doubled; buds unbuttoned; shoot
And stem shook out the creases from their frills,
And every tree was swilled with green.
It was the season after blossoming,
Before the forming of the fruit:

not May,

But rising June.

And in the sky
The dust dissected tangential light:

not day,

But rising night;

not now,

But rising soon.

The new buds push the old leaves from the bough.
We drop our youth behind us like a boy
Throwing away his toffee-wrappers. We never see the flower,
But only the fruit in the flower; never the fruit,
But only the rot in the fruit. We look for the marriage bed
In the baby's cradle, we look for the grave in the bed:

not living,

But rising dead.



Little Boy Crying

Mervyn Morris

Your mouth contorting in brief spite and
Hurt, your laughter metamorphosed into howls,
Your frame so recently relaxed now tight
With three-year-old frustration, your bright eyes
Swimming tears, splashing your bare feet,
You stand there angling for a moment's hint
Of guilt or sorrow for the quick slap struck.

The ogre towers above you, that grim giant,
Empty of feeling, a colossal cruel,
Soon victim of the tale's conclusion, dead
At last. You hate him, you imagine
Chopping clean the tree he's scrambling down
Or plotting deeper pits to trap him in.

You cannot understand, not yet,
The hurt your easy tears can scald him with,
Nor guess the wavering hidden behind that mask.
This fierce man longs to lift you, curb your sadness
With piggy-back or bull-fight, anything,
But dare not ruin the lessons you should learn.
You must not make a plaything of the rain.



Muliebrity

Sujata Bhatt

I have thought so much about the girl
who gathered cow-dung in a wide, round basket
along the main road passing by our house
and the Radhavallabh temple in Maninagar.
I have thought so much about the way she
moved her hands and her waist
and the smell of cow-dung and road-dust and wet canna lilies,
the smell of monkey breath and freshly washed clothes
and the dust from crows' wings which smells different –
and again the smell of cow-dung as the girl scoops
it up, all these smells surrounding me separately
and simultaneously – I have thought so much
but have been unwilling to use her for a metaphor,
for a nice image – but most of all unwilling
to forget her or to explain to anyone the greatness
and the power glistening through her cheekbones
each time she found a particularly promising
mound of dung –



She dwelt among the untrodden ways

William Wordsworth

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
– Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!



Farmhand

James K. Baxter

You will see him light a cigarette
At the hall door careless, leaning his back
Against the wall, or telling some new joke
To a friend, or looking out into the secret night.

But always his eyes turn
To the dance floor and the girls drifting like flowers
Before the music that tears
Slowly in his mind an old wound open.

His red sunburnt face and hairy hands
Were not made for dancing or love-making
But rather the earth wave breaking
To the plough, and crops slow-growing as his mind.

He has no girl to run her fingers through
His sandy hair, and giggle at his side
When Sunday couples walk. Instead
He has his awkward hopes, his envious dreams to yarn to.

But ah in harvest watch him
Forking stooks, effortless and strong –
Or listening like a lover to the song
Clear, without fault, of a new tractor engine.



The Old Familiar Faces

Charles Lamb

I have had playmates, I have had companions
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a love once, fairest among women:
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her –
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man:
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces.

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces.

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And some are taken from me; all are departed;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.



Mid-Term Break

Seamus Heaney

I sat all morning in the college sick bay
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.
At two o'clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying –
He had always taken funerals in his stride –
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram
When I came in, and I was embarrassed
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble'.
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,
He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four foot box, a foot for every year.