



Associated Manitoba Arts Festivals

SPEECH ARTS MANUAL

**PART 3: DUET, TRIO OR QUARTET
& SPEECH CHOIR**
2023 edition

SPEECH ARTS MANUAL PART 3: DUET, TRIO OR QUARTET & SPEECH CHOIR

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I AM FREEZING!

I am freezing! I am freezing!
I am absolutely cold,
I am shivering and shaking
like a pudding in a mold.
There are glaciers in my stomach,
there is sleet inside my bones,
I am colder than the contents
of a million ice-cream cones.

Jack Prelutsky (It's Snowing! It's Snowing!, Greenwillow Books)

SURPRISES

Surprises are round
Or long and tallish.
Surprises are square
Or flat and smallish.

Surprises are wrapped
With paper and bow,
And hidden in closets
Where secrets won't show.

Surprises are often
Good things to eat;
A get-well toy or
A birthday treat.

Surprises come
In such interesting sizes—

I LIKE
SURPRISES!

Jean Conder Soule (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

THE WOODPECKER

The woodpecker pecked out a little round hole
And made him a house in the telephone pole.

One day when I watched he poked out his head,
And he had on a hood and a collar of red.

When the streams of rain pour out of the sky,
And the sparkles of lightning go flashing by,

And the big, big wheels of thunder roll,
He can snuggle back in the telephone pole.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts (Time for Poetry, W. J. Gage and Company)

SUNNING

Old Dog lay in the summer sun
Much too lazy to rise and run.
He flapped an ear
At a buzzing fly.
He winked a half opened
Sleepy eye.
He scratched himself
On an itching spot,
As he dozed on the porch
Where the sun was hot.
He whimpered a bit
From force of habit
While he lazily dreamed
Of chasing a rabbit.
But Old Dog happily lay in the sun
Much too lazy to rise and run.

James S. Tippett (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

BUZZ, BUZZ, BUMBLEBEE

Buzz, buzz, bumblebee
In the grass.
Fly away.
Let me pass!

Buzz, buzz, bumblebee,
On the drive.
Fly away.
To your hive.

Buzz, buzz, bumblebee.
You're not funny.
Fly away.
Make some honey.

Buzz, buzz, bumblebee
By the tree.
Fly away.
Don't sting me!

Ruth Donnelly (www.superteacherworksheets.com/reading-comp/1st-bumblebee.pdf)

MY DOG ATE MY HOMEWORK

My dog ate my homework.
That mischievous pup
got hold of my homework
and gobbled it up.

My dog ate my homework.
It's gonna be late.
I guess that the teacher
will just have to wait.

My dog ate my homework.
He swallowed it whole.
I shouldn't have mixed it
with food in his bowl.

Kenn Nesbitt ([The Biggest Burp Ever](#), CreateSpace)

MY BROTHER IS AS GENEROUS AS ANYONE COULD BE

My brother is as generous
as anyone could be,
for everything he's ever had
he's always shared with me.
He loaned me his binoculars,
his new computer games,
and his wind-up walking dragon
that breathes artificial flames.

I've been grateful for his robots,
for his giant teddy bear,
but not for certain other things
I'd hoped he'd never share-
though I'm glad he's shared his rockets
and his magic jumping rocks,
I wish my brother hadn't shared
his case of chicken pox.

Jack Prelutsky (Something Big Has Been Here, Greenwillow Books)

CHOOSING SHOES

New shoes, new shoes,
Red and pink and blue shoes,
Tell me, what would *you* choose
If they'd let us buy?

Buckle shoes, bow shoes,
Pretty pointy-toe shoes,
Strappy, cappy low shoes;
Let's have some to try.

Bright shoes, white shoes,
Dandy dance-by-night shoes,
Perhaps-a-little-tight shoes;
Like some? So would I.

BUT

Flat shoes, fat shoes,
Stump-along-like-that shoes,
Wipe-them-on-the-mat shoes,
O that's the sort they'll buy.

Frida Wolfe (Golden Book of Poetry, Western Publishing Company)

YELLOW

Green is go,
and red is stop,
and yellow is peaches
with cream on top.

Earth is brown,
and blue is sky;
yellow looks well
on a butterfly.

Clouds are white,
black, pink, or mocha;
yellow's a dish of
tapioca.

David McCord (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

LULLABY

Close your eyes gently
And cuddle in.
Keep yourself snug, a
New day will begin.

Have pleasant dreams about
Those things you love,
Sleep is an island
Waiting above.

Night is a blanket
Keeping you warm
If you close eyes you can
Come to no harm.

Dreams are like journeys
Drifting along,
Rest is a present
Keeping you strong.

Alan Bold (A Very First Poetry Book, Oxford University Press)

HEY BUG

Hey, bug, stay!
Don't run away.
I know a game that we can play.

I'll hold my fingers very still
and you can climb a finger-hill.

No, no.
Don't go.

Here's a wall—a tower, too,
a tiny bug town, just for you.
I've a cookie. You have some.
Take this oatmeal cookie crumb.

Hey, bug, stay!
Hey, bug!
Hey!

Lilian Moore (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

MY FATHER CAN'T FIND ME

My father can't find me.
He says that it's weird,
I seem to have vanished.
I just disappeared.

My mother can't see me.
She's looking around.
She's calling my name
but I cannot be found.

My brother and sister
both want me to play.
They're searching the house
but I've faded away.

I thought that my family
would all be amused,
but even our dog is
completely confused.

I know it sounds strange
but I'm starting to think
I shouldn't take baths
in invisible ink.

Kenn Nesbitt ([My Dog Likes to Disco](#), Independently Published)

MY NEW PET

I asked my father for a pet.
He said, "I'll take you shopping."
My father took me to a store
where animals were hopping.

He asked me, "Which one would you like?"
So I picked out a puppy,
a parakeet, a rabbit,
plus a gerbil and a guppy.

I also picked a monkey
and a yellow Siamese cat,
a turtle, snake, and lizard,
plus a very big white rat.

My dad said, "If you want a pet,
then you will have to feed it."
Instead, I picked a storybook.
I cannot wait to read it.

Bruce Lansky ([If Pigs Could Fly...And Other Deep Thoughts](#), Running Press Adult)

THE ANIMAL STORE

If I had a hundred dollars to spend,
Or maybe a little more,
I'd hurry as fast as my legs would go
Straight to the animal store.

I wouldn't say, "How much for this or that?"—
"What kind of a dog is he?"
I'd buy as many as rolled an eye,
Or wagged a tail at me!

I'd take the hound with the drooping ears
that sits by himself alone;
Cockers and Cairns and wobbly pups
For to be my very own.

I might buy a parrot all red and green,
And the monkey I saw before,
If I had a hundred dollars to spend,
Or maybe a little more.

Rachel Field ([Time For Poetry](#), W.J. Gage and Company)

BEAR IN THERE

There's a Polar Bear
In our Frigidaire—
He likes it 'cause it's cold in there.
With his seat in the meat
And his face in the fish
And his big hairy paws
In the buttery dish,
He's nibbling the noodles,
He's munching the rice,
He's slurping the soda,
He's licking the ice.
And he lets out a roar
If you open the door.
And it gives me a scare
To know he's in there—
That Polary Bear
In our Fridgitydaire.

Shel Silverstein (*A Light in the Attic*, Harper and Row)

HELLO! HOW ARE YOU? I AM FINE!

Hello! How are you? I am fine!
is all my dog will say,
he's probably repeated it
a thousand times today.
He doesn't bark his normal bark,
he doesn't even whine,
he only drones the same *Hello!*
How are you? I am fine!

Hello! How are you? I am fine!
his message doesn't change,
it's gotten quite monotonous,
and just a trifle strange.
Hello! How are you? I am fine!
it makes the neighbors stare,
they're unaware that yesterday
he ate my talking bear.

Jack Prelutsky (*Something Big Has Been Here*, Greenwillow)

WHO LIKES THE RAIN?

"I," said the duck, "I call it fun,
For I have my little red rubbers on.
They make a cunning three-toed track
In the soft cool mud. Quack! Quack!"

"I," cried the dandelion, "I.
My roots are thirsty, my buds are dry."
And she lifted her little yellow head
Out of her green and grassy bed.

"I hope 'twill pour! I hope 'twill pour!"
Croaked the tree toad at his gray bark door.
"For with a broad leaf for a roof
I am perfectly weather-proof."

Sang the brook, "I welcome every drop;
Come, come, dear rain drops, never stop
Till a great river you make of me,
Then I will carry you to the sea."

Clara Doty Bates (The Golden Book of Poetry, Western Publishing Company)

CRAYONING

The sheet of paper is white
And perfectly quiet
Like a drift of snow
Into which nobody goes
And out of which nothing shows.

Then I crayon a sun to shine
And the sky's blue line,
A red house with a green door
And a chimney above it all
Out of which the black smoke pours.

In the garden is a mother
Hanging out clothes of every colour;
And flowers of every colour grow
Where once the paper
Was white as snow.

Stanley Cook (A Very First Poetry Book, Oxford University Press)

WHERE GO THE BOATS?

Dark brown is the river,
Golden is the sand.
It flows along forever,
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,
Castles of the foam,
Boats of mine a-boating—
Where will all come home?

On goes the river
And out past the mill,
Away down the valley,
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,
A hundred miles or more,
Other little children
Shall bring my boats ashore.

R.L. Stevenson (Leaves from a Child's Garden of Verses, Smithmark)

GRANDPA BEAR'S LULLABY

The night is long
But fur is deep.
You will be warm
In winter sleep.

The food is gone
But dreams are sweet
And they will be
Your winter meat.

The cave is dark
But dreams are bright
And they will serve
As winter light.

Sleep, my little cubs, sleep.

Jane Yolen (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

BE GLAD YOUR NOSE IS ON YOUR FACE

Be glad your nose is on your face,
not pasted on some other place,
for if it were where it is not,
you might dislike your nose a lot.

Imagine if your precious nose
were sandwiched in between your toes,
that clearly would not be a treat,
for you'd be forced to smell your feet.

Your nose would be a source of dread
were it attached atop your head,
it soon would drive you to despair,
forever tickled by your hair.

Within your ear, your nose would be
an absolute catastrophe,
for when you were obliged to sneeze,
your brain would rattle from the breeze.

Your nose, instead, through thick and thin,
remains between your eyes and chin,
not pasted on some other place—
be glad your nose is on your face!

Jack Prelutsky ([The New Kid on the Block](#), Scholastic)

LOST AND FOUND

I have to go to Lost and Found.
I need to have a look around.
I lost my pencil and my pen.
I lost my binder once again.

I lost my scarf, my coat, my hat,
my baseball glove and ball and bat.
I lost my lunch. I lost a shoe,
my wallet, and my money, too.

Today I lost a tooth in class.
I lost my marbles in the grass.
I lost a game of tic-tac-toe.
I lost my head a while ago.

I may have lost my sense of smell
and lost my place in line as well.
I lost my patience, lost my cool.
I lost these things—and more—at school.

I hope I find them in the mound
of missing stuff at Lost and Found.
But most of all, I hope to find
my brain because I've lost my mind.

Kenn Nesbitt (When the Teacher Isn't Looking, Running Press Adult)

MOMMY SLEPT LATE AND DADDY FIXED BREAKFAST

Daddy fixed the breakfast.
He made us each a waffle.
It looked like gravel pudding.
It tasted something awful.

“Ha, ha,” he said, “I’ll try again.
This time I’ll get it right.”
But what I got was in between
Bituminous and anthracite.

“A little too well done? Oh well,
I’ll have to start all over.”
That time what landed on my plate
Looked like a manhole cover.

I tried to cut it with a fork:
The fork gave off a spark.
I tried a knife and twisted it
Into a question mark.

I tried it with a hack-saw.
I tried it with a torch.
It didn’t even make a dent.
It didn’t even scorch.

The next time Dad gets breakfast
When Mommy’s sleeping late,
I think I’ll skip the waffles.
I’d sooner eat the plate!

John Ciardi ([Random House Book of Poetry for Children](#), Random House)

THINGS YOU DON'T NEED TO KNOW

Don't test a rattlesnake's rattle.
Don't count the teeth of a shark.
Don't stick your head in the mouth of a bulldog
to find out what's making him bark.

Don't count the stripes on a tiger.
Don't squeeze an elephant's trunk.
Don't pet the scales of a boa constrictor
and don't lift the tail of a skunk.

Don't study spots on a leopard.
Don't check the charge of an eel.
Don't pull the claws on a grizzly bear's paws
regardless of how brave you feel.

Don't pull a porcupine's whiskers.
Don't touch a crocodile's toe.
Learn all you like, but try not to forget:
there are some things you don't need to know.

Kenn Nesbitt ([The Aliens Have Landed at Our School!](#), Running Press)

WE MOVED ABOUT A WEEK AGO

We moved about a week ago,
it's nice here, I suppose,
the trouble is, I miss my friends,
like Beth, who bopped my nose,
and Jess, who liked to wrestle
and dump me in the dirt,
and Liz, who found a garter snake
and put it down my shirt.

I miss my friend Fernando,
he sometimes pulled my hair,
I miss his sister Sarah,
she shaved my teddy bear,
I miss the Trumble triplets
who dyed my sneakers blue,
and Gus, who broke my glider,
I guess I miss him too.

I really miss Melissa
who chased me up a tree,
I even miss "Gorilla" Brown
who used to sit on me,
the more I think about them,
the more it makes me sad,
I hope I make some friends here
as great as those I had.

Jack Prelutsky ([Something Big Has Been Here](#), Greenwillow Books)

WE'RE FEARLESS FLYING HOTDOGS

We're fearless flying hotdogs,
the famous "Unflappable Five,"
we're mustered in formation
to climb, to dip, to dive,
we spread our wings with relish,
then reach for altitude,
we're aerobatic wieners,
the fastest flying food.

We're fearless flying hotdogs,
we race with flair and style,
then catch up with each other
and soar in single file,
you never saw such daring,
such power and control,
as when we swoop and spiral,
then slide into a roll.

The throngs applaud our antics,
they cheer us long and loud,
there's never a chilly reception,
there's never a sour crowd,
and if we may speak frankly,
we are a thrilling sight,
we're fearless flying hotdogs,
the delicate essence of flight.

Jack Prelutsky (Something Big Has Been Here, Greenwillow)

I COLLECT. DO YOU?

I collect shells
that are pretty
and rare.
I've a chocolate box full,
which I handle with care.
I collect shells.
Do you?

I collect rocks,
from roadside,
from beach.
In a little glass case,
I've a label for each.
I collect rocks.
Do you?

I collect books
by the shelf,
by the tonne.
I've a library full
and I love every one.
I collect books.
Do you?

I collect smiles
from people
I see.
I remember the moments
when they smiled at me.
I collect smiles.
Do you?

I collect words
by the thousands
all free!
I have sharp ones
and smooth ones,
quite special to me.
I collect words.
Do you?

I collect lots of things,
friendships and dreams,
postcards and bottlecaps,
strange as it seems.
I'm a walking collection.
I'm always on view.
I can't stop collecting!
Can you?

John McInnes ([Zoom Shots](#), Nelson Canada)

POLKA DOT PAJAMAS

I woke up early,
 early in the morning
Got out of bed,
 comfortable bed
Jumped on the pillow,
 soft pillow
Stood on my head,
 hard head
Took off my pajamas,
 polka dot pajamas
Put on my clothes,
 beautiful clothes
Brushed my teeth,
 nice white teeth
Blew my nose,
 tiny little nose
Had my breakfast,
 great big breakfast
Fed the cat,
 fat cat
Went back to my room,
 nice little room
Opened the door,
 great big door
Saw my pajamas,
 polka dot pajamas
On the floor,
 polka dot pajamas
Picked them up,
 polka dot pajamas
Put them in a drawer,
 polka dot pajamas
Picked up my books,
 three or four
Said goodbye to Mama,
And ran out the door.

Carolyn Graham (Teacher Anthology 3, Holt, Rinehart and Winston)

MY KITTY LIKES MY GOLDFISH

My kitty likes my goldfish.
My kitty likes my mice.
My kitty likes my parakeets.
She thinks they're all so nice.

The way she mews so sweetly,
the way she sits and stares,
I'd have to say it's obvious
how much my kitty cares.

She doubtlessly adores them
and thinks so highly of them.
She treats them so attentively
it's clear that she must love them.

But, tragically, they disappeared
the other afternoon.
My kitty seems so lonely now.
I hope they come back soon.

Kenn Nesbitt ([The Biggest Burp Ever](#), Purple Room Publishing)

SING A SONG OF PEOPLE

Sing a song of people
Walking fast or slow;
People in the city,
Up and down they go.

People on the sidewalk,
People on the bus;
People passing, passing,
In back and front of us.
People on the subway
Underneath the ground;
People riding taxis
Round and round and round.

People with their hats on,
Going in the doors;
People with umbrellas
When it rains and pours.
People in tall buildings
And in stores below;
Riding elevators
Up and down they go.

People walking singly,
People in a crowd;
People saying nothing,
People talking loud.
People laughing, smiling,
Grumpy people too;
People who just hurry
And never look at you!

Sing a song of people
Who like to come and go;
Sing of city people
You see but never know!

Lois Lenski (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

OOPS!

Three coffee cups my mother loved
lie shattered on the floor.
Three ripe tomatoes splattered
when they hit the kitchen door.

Three jumbo eggs are scrambled.
But they're not on a plate.
Three loaves of bread are crumbled.
I'll use the crumbs for bait.

Three Barbie dolls have lost their heads.
Three pepper mills are smashed.
Three goldfish died while doing flips.
Three model airplanes crashed.

Three lettuce heads unraveled.
Three onions came unpeeled.
My parents didn't know who did it
till my sister squealed.

My parents are befuddled.
They think that I've gone nuts.
But there's simpler explanation:
I'm a juggling klutz.

Bruce Lansky (*If Pigs Could Fly.. And Other Deep Thoughts*, Running Press Adult)

SPRING

I'm shouting
I'm singing
I'm swinging through trees
I'm winging sky-high
With the buzzing black bees.
I'm the sun
I'm the moon
I'm the dew on the rose.
I'm a rabbit
Whose habit
Is twitching his nose.
I'm lively
I'm lovely
I'm kicking my heels.
I'm crying "Come dance"
To the freshwater eels.
I'm racing through meadows
Without any coat
I'm a gamboling lamb
I'm a light leaping goat
I'm a bud
I'm a bloom
I'm a dove on the wing.
I'm running on rooftops
And welcoming spring!

Karla Kuskin ([The Random House Book of Poetry for Children](#), Random House)

A SYMPHONY OF TREES

Trees make such exciting sounds.
They whisper, when we're near.
Whenever we pass by the trees,
This is what we hear:

We hear their branches sway and creak.
We hear the wind howl higher.
We hear a symphony of trees,
Of nature's great, green choir.

We hear the squirrels scampering.
We hear the blue jays sing.
We hear the robin and the dove—All
sounds the trees can bring.

But one thing that we never hear
When we pass through the park;
We hear the trees' sweet symphonies,
But we never hear their bark!

Charles Ghigna (<https://www.teachingexpertise.com/classroom-ideas/4th-grade-poems/>)

MY SLOTH IS SUPERSONIC

My sloth is supersonic
as she sprints around my room.
She flies so fast you'll often hear her
cause a sonic boom.

My snail is also speedy.
He's the fastest snail alive.
I've seen him flash right past me
when I'm going for a drive.

My turtle hurtles faster than
the record-breaking pace.
So, naturally, my sloth and snail
and turtle love to race.

A week ago, my pets were slow,
which leads me to conclude
they got this way the day
I started feeding them fast food.

Kenn Nesbitt ([The Elephant Repairman](#), Purple Room Publishing)

IF WE WALKED ON OUR HANDS

If we walked on our hands
instead of our feet
And we all ate paper
instead of meat
What a mixed-up place this world would be.
What a mixed-up
fixed-up
topsy-turvy
sit-u-a-tion.

If we wore our hats
on our behinds
And all we ate
were melon rinds
What a mixed-up place this world would be.
What a mixed-up
fixed-up
topsy-turvy
sit-u-a-tion.

If babies worked
while papas played
If the children gave orders
and parents obeyed
What a mixed-up place this world would be.
What a mixed-up
fixed-up
topsy-turvy
sit-u-a-tion.

Beatrice Schenk de Regniers ([Sing a Song of Popcorn](#), Scholastic)

I SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN BED TODAY

I should have stayed in bed today,
in bed's where I belong,
as soon as I got up today,
things started going wrong,
I got a splinter in my foot,
my puppy made me fall,
I squirted toothpaste in my ear,
I crashed into the wall.

I knocked my homework off the desk,
it landed on my toes,
I spilled a glass of chocolate milk,
it's soaking through my clothes,
I accidentally bit my tongue,
that really made me moan,
and it was far from funny
when I banged my funny bone.

I scraped my knees, I bumped my nose,
I sat upon a pin,
I leapt up with alacrity,
and sharply barked my shin,
I stuck a finger in my eye,
the pain is quite severe,
I'd better get right back to bed
and stay there for a year.

Jack Prelutsky (Something Big Has Been Here, Greenwillow)

DAD AND THE CAT AND THE TREE

This morning a cat got
Stuck in our tree.
Dad said, "Right, just
Leave it to me."

The tree was wobbly,
The tree was tall.
Mum said, "For goodness'
Sake don't fall!"

"Fall?" scoffed Dad,
"A climber like me?
Child's play, this is!
You wait and see."

He got out the ladder
From the garden shed.
It slipped. He landed
in the flower bed.

"Never mind," said Dad,
Brushing the dirt
Off his hair and his face
And his trousers and his shirt.

"Fall again?" said Dad.
"Funny joke!"
Then he swung himself up
On a branch. It broke.

Dad landed **wallop**
Back on the deck.
Mum said, "Stop it,
You'll break your neck!"

"We'll try Plan B. Stand
Out of the way!"
Mum said, "Don't fall
Again, O.K.?"

"Rubbish! said Dad.
"Now we'll try Plan C.
Easy as winking
To a climber like me!"

Then he climbed up high
On the garden wall.
Guess what?
He **didn't fall!**

He gave a great leap
And he landed flat
In the crook of the tree
Right on the cat!

The cat gave a yell
And sprang to the ground,
Pleased as Punch to be
Safe and sound.

So it's smiling and smirking
Smug as can be,
But poor Dad's
Still

Stuck
Up
The
Tree!

Kit Wright (Poetry Plus, Copp Clark Pitman Ltd.)

WIND ON THE HILL

No one can tell me,
Nobody knows,
Where the wind comes from,
Where the wind goes.

It's flying from somewhere
As fast as it can,
I couldn't keep up with it,
Not if I ran.

But if I stopped holding
The string of my kite,
It would blow with the wind
For a day and a night.

And then when I found it,
Wherever it blew,
I should know that the wind
Had been going there too.

So then I could tell them
Where the wind goes...
But where the wind comes from
Nobody knows.

A. A. Milne ([The Complete Works of A. A. Milne](#), Delphi Classics)

COOL SUMMER

Here it comes,
Ready or not.
Summer's coming,
And it's going to be hot!

Summer is the time
Just to be free.
Run in the parks
With unbearable glee.

Roll on the grass,
Climb up the trees.
Make shapes from the clouds
While enjoying juicy berries!

Rest on the mat,
Or jump in the pool.
Have ice cream or juice
'Cause you gotta keep cool.

Chill by the shore,
Or sunbathe on the sand.
Have a dip in the sea
Or relax and get tanned.

Switch on the A.C.,
And, oh, switch on the fan.
Breathe in the cool air,
And have a drink from a can.

Summer is a time
Of all the joy and play.
But can you believe,
It's not around to stay?

At night we look into the sky.
Summer will be gone with all its bloom,
And in a blink of eye,
Winter will be here soon!

Suhaani C. Malik (<https://www.familyfriendpoems.com/poem/cool-summer>)

THE RUNAWAY

I made peanut butter sandwiches.
I didn't leave a mess.
I packed my shell collection
and my velvet party dress,
the locket Grandma gave me
and two pairs of extra socks,
my brother's boy scout flashlight
and some magic wishing rocks.

Oh, they'll be so sorry.
Oh, they'll be so sad,
when they start to realize
what a nifty kid they had.

I'd really like to be here
when they wring their hands and say,
"We drove the poor child to it.
She finally ran away."

If I peeked through the window
I'd see them dressed in black,
and hear them sob and softly sigh,
"Come back, dear child! Come back!"

The house will be so quiet.
My room will be so clean.
And they'll be oh so sorry
that they were oh so mean!

Bobbi Katz (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

TODAY I'M GOING YESTERDAY

Today I'm going yesterday
as quickly as I can,
I'm confident I'll do it,
I've devised a clever plan,
it involves my running backward
at a constant rate of speed,
if I'm mindful of my timing,
I'll undoubtedly succeed.

Today I'm going yesterday,
I'm moving very fast
as I'm putting off the future
for the rather recent past,
I can feel the present fading
as I hastily depart,
and looking forward to arriving
on the day before I start.

Today I'm going yesterday,
I'm slipping out of sight
and anticipate I'll vanish
just a bit before tonight,
when I reach my destination,
I'll compose a note to say
that I'll see you all tomorrow,
which of course will be today.

Jack Prelutsky (Something Big Has Been Here, Greenwillow)

DAINTIE DOTTIE DEE

There's no one as immaculate
as dainty Dottie Dee,
who clearly is the cleanest
that a human being can be,
no sooner does she waken
than she hoses down her bed,
then hurries to the kitchen,
and disinfects the bread.

She spends the morning sweeping
every inch of every room,
when all the floors are spotless,
Dottie polishes the broom,
she mops the walls and ceilings,
she scrubs beneath the rug,
and should a bug meander by,
she tidies up that bug.

Dottie boils the phone and toaster,
Dottie rinses the shampoo,
she waxes the salami,
and she vacuums the stew,
she dusts the cheese and crackers,
and she sponges down the pie,
she lathers the spaghetti,
then hangs it up to dry.

Dottie scours the locks and keyholes,
and she soaps the bathroom scale,
she launders every light bulb,
she bathes the morning mail,
but her oddest habit ever
(and of this there's little doubt),
is washing all the garbage
before she throws it out.

Jack Prelutsky (The New Kid on the Block, Greenwillow Books)

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Last year I did some rotten things.
This year I will be better.
Here are some resolutions
I will follow to the letter:

I won't make dumb excuses
when my homework isn't done --
when the truth is that I did no work
'cause I was having fun.

I won't fly paper airplanes
when the teacher isn't looking.
I won't sneak in the kitchen
just to taste what they are cooking.

I will not twist the silverware
to see how far it bends.
I will not take the candy bars
from lunch bags of my friends.

I will not skateboard down the hall
or skateboard down the stairs.
I won't run over teachers,
and I won't crash into chairs.

I will not do these rotten things;
my heart is full of sorrow.
But I have got some brand-new tricks
to try in school tomorrow.

Bruce Lansky ([My Dog Ate My Homework!](#), Running Press Adult)

SNOW

I've just woken up and I'm lying in bed
With the end of a dream going round in my head,
And something much quieter and softer than rain
Is brushing the window pane.

It's snowing! It's snowing! My room's filled with light.
Outside it's like Switzerland, everything's white.
That bulge is our dustbin, that hummock's the wall.
I can't see the flower-beds at all.

I've got to get out there. I've got to get dressed.
I can't find my pants and I can't find my vest.
Who's taken my jumper? Who's hidden my belt?
It might be beginning to melt!

I'm outside, I'm running. I'm up to my waist.
I'm rolling. I'm tasting the metally taste.
There's snow down my trousers and snow up my nose.
I can't even feel my toes.

I'm tracking a polar bear over the ice,
I'm making a snow-man, he's fallen down twice,
I'm cutting some steps to the top of the hedge,
Tomorrow I'm building a sledge.

I'm lying in bed again, tucked up tight;
I know I'll sleep soundly and safely tonight.
My snow-man's on guard and his shiny black eyes
Are keeping a look-out for spies.

Sleep quietly, sleep deeply, sleep calmly, sleep curled
In warm woolly blankets while out in the world,
On field and forest and mountain and town
The snow flakes like feathers float down.

Richard Edwards ([The Word Party](#), Lutterworth Press)

COCKPIT IN THE CLOUDS

Two thousand feet beneath our wheels
The city sprawls across the land
Like heaps of children's blocks outflung,
In tantrums, by a giant hand.
To east a silver spire soars
And seeks to pierce our lower wing,
Above its grasp we drift along,
A tiny, droning, shiny thing.

The noon crowds pack the narrow streets.
The el trains move so slow, so slow.
Amidst their traffic, chaos, life,
The city's busy millions go.
Up here, aloof, we watch them crawl.
In crystal air we seem to poise
Behind our motor's throaty roar—
Down there, we're just another noise.

Dick Dorrance (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

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.

Robert Frost (The Poetry of Robert Frost, Henry Holt & Company)

MY DAD, YOUR DAD

My dad's fatter than your dad,
Yes, my dad's fatter than yours:
If he eats any more he won't fit in the house,
He'll have to live out of doors.

Yes, but my dad's balder than your dad,
My dad's balder, O.K.,
He's only got two hairs left on his head
And both are turning grey.

Ah, but my dad's thicker than your dad,
My dad's thicker, all right.
He has to look at his watch to see
If it's noon or the middle of the night.

Yes, but my dad's more boring than your dad.
If he ever starts counting sheep
When he can't get to sleep at night, he finds
It's the sheep that go to sleep.

But my dad doesn't mind your dad.
Mine quite likes yours too.
I suppose they don't always think much of US!
That's true, I suppose, that's true.

Kit Wright (Poetry Plus, Copp Clark Pitman Ltd.)

SWIFT THINGS ARE BEAUTIFUL

Swift things are beautiful:
Swallows and deer,
And lightening that falls
Bright-veined and clear,
Rivers and meteors,
Wind in the wheat,
The strong-withered horse,
The runner's sure feet.

And slow things are beautiful:
The closing of day,
The pause of the wave
That curves downward to spray,
The ember that crumbles,
The opening flower,
And the ox that moves on
In the quiet of power.

Elizabeth Coatsworth ([How to Eat a Poem](#), Dover Publications)

IF ONCE YOU HAVE SLEPT ON AN ISLAND

If once you have slept on an island
You'll never be quite the same;
You may look as you looked the day before
And go by the same old name,

You may bustle about in street and shop;
You may sit at home and sew,
But you'll see blue water and wheeling gulls
Wherever your feet may go.

You may chat with the neighbors of this and that
And close to your fire keep,
But you'll hear ship whistle and lighthouse bell
And tides beat through your sleep.

Oh, you won't know why, and you can't say how
Such change upon you came,
But—once you have slept on an island
You'll never be quite the same!

Rachel Field (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

WHEN THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN

The day when the world
turned upside down:
when a frown became a smile
and a smile became a frown.

When the mice chased the cats
the cats chased the dogs.
The dogs laughed out loud
at the pink and yellow frogs.

When you went to bed in the daytime
and got up at night.
When the birds caught the school bus
and the cows took flight.

When the moon came out
in the middle of the day
and all of the ocean's fish
rolled around in the hay.

When the children ruled the world
and ice cream was for free
and the elephants shrank
to the size of a flea.

When the grass rained lollipops
up to the sky.
When you wanted to laugh
but could only cry.

When magic beans were real
and giants very small,
you would eat spider's legs
so you could creep up the wall.

This all happened when the
World turned upside down
after I went to bed
with a smile – not a frown.

Margaret Savage (familyfriendpoems.com/poem/when-the-world-turned-upside-down)

THE HICCUP

He keeps himself hidden,
An invisible man,
No one knows where he comes from
Or how he began.

But how he can travel
Like a sleek racing-boat
When he's in his position
To shoot down your throat.

Then HICCUP, he shouts, HICCUP HICCUP HICCUP
And he throttles as though he would never give up.

One youngster was eating
All through the school dance.
He stayed in a corner
A-waiting his chance.

He watched her devouring
The food – peck, peck, peck –
Then he rushed like a rocket
And whirled round her neck.

Then HICCUP, he shouts, HICCUP HICCUP HICCUP
And he throttles as though he would never give up.

On another occasion
An infant I knew
Was told if she ate meat
To be sure to chew.

Well, she did that, but when
She wanted a drink
She gulped it so quickly
He was there in a wink.

continued on next page...

Then HICCUP, he shouts, HICCUP HICCUP HICCUP
And he throttles as though he would never give up.

There is one way to beat him.
Just one, that is all,
And the best time to learn it
Is when you are small.

He cannot get near you
If you eat as you should.
So, get rid of the Hiccup
And don't BOLT your food.

Or HICCUP, he'll shout, HICCUP HICCUP HICCUP
And he'll throttle as though he would never give up.

Alan Bold (*A Very First Poetry Book*, Oxford)

MS. WHATCHAMACALLIT THINGAMAJIG

Ms. Whatchamacallit Thingamajig
can make herself small or make herself big,
can take any shape, from round as a ball
to sharp as a spear, to wide as a wall.

She makes no sound as she creeps, flies or shakes
(how she moves depends on the shape that she takes).
And though she is soundless, she's always around.
Wherever you are—there she can be found.

What? You've never seen her? That's because she's
invisible by day and disguised as a breeze.
At night, when the lights are out in the house,
she takes on the shape of a shadow or mouse.

Though you've never seen her, she's always close by.
Have you never felt something fly in your eye?
Or noticed the cat stare at someone unseen?
Or found dirt on a shirt that was utterly clean?

Have you ever been pushed and found no one there?
Or dropped a glass you were holding with care?
What of itches, tickles, scratches and those?
Are they all just—accidents—do you suppose?

You have the idea. You're beginning to see.
Yes, those are the doings of Ms. W.T.
She loves a good laugh, and laughs without end
to see a look of surprise on the face of friend.

Miriam Chaikin ([Random House Book of Poetry for Children](#), Random House)

THE ANTS AT THE OLYMPICS

At last year's Jungle Olympics,
the Ants were completely outclassed.
In fact, from an entry of sixty-two teams,
the Ants came their usual last.

They didn't win one single medal.
Not that that's a surprise.
The reason was not lack of trying,
but more their unfortunate size.

While the cheetahs won most of the sprinting
and the hippos won putting the shot,
the Ants tried sprinting but couldn't,
and tried to put but could not.

It was sad for the ants 'cause they're sloggers.
They turn out for every event.
With their shorts and their bright orange tee-shirts,
their athletes are proud they are sent.

They came last at the high jump and hurdles,
which they say they'd have won, but they fell.
They came last in the four hundred meters
and last in the swimming as well.

They came last in the long-distance running,
though they say they might have come first.
And they might if the other sixty-one teams
hadn't put in a finishing burst.

But each year they turn up regardless.
They're popular in the parade.
The other teams whistle and cheer them,
aware of the journey they've made.

For the Jungle Olympics in August,
they have to set off New Year's Day.
They didn't arrive the year before last.
They set off but went the wrong way.

So long as they try there's a reason.
After all, it's only a sport.
They'll be back next year to bring up the rear,
and that's an encouraging thought.

Richard Digance (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

I FOUND A FOUR-LEAF CLOVER

I found a four-leaf clover
and was happy with my find,
but with time to think it over,
I've entirely changed my mind.
I concealed it in my pocket,
safe inside a paper pad,
soon, much swifter than a rocket,
my good fortune turned to bad.

I smashed my fingers in a door,
I dropped a dozen eggs,
I slipped and tumbled to the floor,
a dog nipped both my legs,
my ring slid down the bathtub drain,
my pen leaked on my shirt,
I barked my shin, I missed my train
I sat on my dessert.

I broke my brand-new glasses,
and I couldn't find my keys,
I stepped in spilled molasses,
and was stung by angry bees.
When the kitten ripped the curtain,
and the toast burst into flame,
I was absolutely certain
that the clover was to blame.

I buried it discreetly
in the middle of a field,
now my luck has changed completely,
and my wounds have almost healed.
If I ever find another,
I will simply let it be,
or I'll give it to my brother --
he deserves it more than me.

Jack Prelutsky ([Kids Pick the Funniest Poems](#), Running Press)

THE SOUNDS IN THE EVENING

The sounds in the evening
Go all through the house,
The click of the clock
And the pick of the mouse,
The footsteps of people
Upon the top floor,
The skirts of my mother
That brush by my door,
The crick in the boards,
And the creak of the chairs,
The fluttering murmurs
Outside on the stairs,
The ring at the bell,
The arrival of guests,
The laugh of my father
At one of his jests,
The clashing of dishes
As dinner goes in,
The babble of voices
That distance makes thin,
The mewings of cats
That seem just by my ear,
The hooting of owls
That can never seem near,
The queer little noises
That no one explains—
Till the moon through the slats
Of my window-blind rains,
And the world of my eyes
And my ears melts like steam
As I find in my pillow
The world of my dream.

Eleanor Farjeon ([The Children's Bells](#), Oxford University Press)

THE OLD GUMBIE CAT

I have a Gumbie cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;
Her coat is of the tabby kind, with tiger stripes and leopard spots.
All day she sits upon the stair or on the steps or on the mat:
She sits and sits and sits and sits—and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat!

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.
And when all the family's in bed and asleep,
She slips down the stairs to the basement to creep.
She is deeply concerned with the ways of the mice—
Their behavior's not good and their manners not nice;
So when she has got them lined up on the matting,
She teaches them music, crocheting and tatting.

I have a Gumbie Cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;
Her equal would be hard to find, she likes the warm and sunny spots.
All day she sits beside the hearth or in the sun or on my hat:
She sits and sits and sits and sits—and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat!

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.
As she finds that the mice will not ever keep quiet,
She is sure it is due to irregular diet.
And believing that nothing is done without trying,
She sets straight to work with her baking and frying.
She makes them a mouse-cake of bread and dried peas,
And a *beautiful* fry of lean bacon and cheese.

I have a Gumbie Cat in mind, her name is Jennyanydots;
The curtain-cord she likes to wind, and tie it into sailor-knots.
She sits upon the window-sill, or anything that's smooth and flat:
She sits and sits and sits and sits—and that's what makes a Gumbie Cat!

But when the day's hustle and bustle is done,
Then the Gumbie Cat's work is but hardly begun.
She thinks that the cockroaches just need employment
To prevent them from idle and wanton destruction.
So she's formed, from that lot of disorderly louts,
A troop of well-disciplined helpful boy-scouts,
With a purpose in life and a good deed to do—
And she's even created a Beetles' Tattoo.

So for Old Gumbie Cats let us now give three cheers—
On whom well-ordered households depend, it appears.

T.S. Eliot (*Tickle the Sun*, Ginn and Company)

THE CAMEL'S COMPLAINT

“Canary-birds feed on sugar and seed,
Parrots have crackers to crunch;
And, as for the poodles, they tell me the noodles
Have chickens and cream for their lunch.
But there's never a question
About MY digestion—
ANYTHING does for me!

“Cats, you're aware, can repose in a chair,
Chickens can roost upon rails;
Puppies are able to sleep in a stable,
And oysters can slumber in pails.
But no one supposes
A poor Camel dozes—
ANY PLACE does for me!

“Lambs are enclosed where it's never exposed,
Coops are constructed for hens;
Kittens are treated to houses well heated,
And pigs are protected by pens.
But a Camel comes handy
Wherever it's sandy—
ANYWHERE does for me!

“People would laugh if you rode a giraffe,
Or mounted the back of an ox;
It's nobody's habit to ride on a rabbit,
Or try to bestraddle a fox.
But as for a Camel, he's
Ridden by families—
ANY LOAD does for me!

“A snake is as round as a hole in the ground,
And weasels are wavy and sleek;
And no alligator could ever be straighter
Than lizards that live in a creek.
But a Camel's all lumpy
And bumpy and humpy—
ANY SHAPE does for me!”

Charles E. Carryl (Children's Hour Best Loved Poems, Spencer Press Inc.)

JUST IN BETWEEN

July is the month that's in between –
Between the bloom of perfect June,
And the hazy, smoky hint of autumn
In August's tranquil red-gold moon.

Between the rose and crimson blush
Of June's garden of queenly flowers,
And the mellow hint in field and orchard
That August gives of harvest hours.

Just in between! Seems that's all.
There's very little we can say.
The earth is no more fresh and new,
Things grow more dried up, day by day.

The velvet green of June is gone,
The red of autumn not yet here,
The summer flowers break in the wind,
But autumn buds have yet to appear.

Lenore Hetrick (<https://www.woojr.com/printable-july-kids-poems/>)

NATURE'S WAY

Upon a nice mid-spring day,
Let's take a look at Nature's way.
Breathe the scent of nice fresh air,
Feel the breeze within your hair.

The grass will poke between your toes,
Smell the flowers with your nose.
Clouds form shapes within the skies,
And light will glisten from your eyes.

Hear the buzzing of the bees,
Climb the tallest willow trees.
Look across the meadow way,
And you shall see a young deer play.

Pick the daisies as they grow,
Watch a gentle cold stream flow.
Know the sounds of water splash,
Catch its glimmer in a flash.

When altogether all seems sound,
Lay yourself upon the ground.
Take a moment to inhale,
And listen to Nature tell her tale...

Heidi Campbell (familyfriendpoems.com/poem/natures-way)

TOO MANY DAVES

Did I ever tell you that Mrs. McCave
Had twenty-three sons and she named them all Dave?
Well, she did. And that wasn't a smart thing to do.
You see, when she wants one and calls out, "Yoo-Hoo!
Come into the house, Dave!" she doesn't get *one*.
All twenty-three Daves of hers come on the run!
This makes things quite difficult at the McCaves'
As you can imagine, with so many Daves.
And often she wishes that, when they were born,
She had named one of them Bodkin Van Horn
And one of them Hoos-Foos. And one of them Snimm.
And one of them Hot-Shot. And one Sunny Jim.
And one of them Shadrack. And one of them Blinkey.
And one of them Stuffy. And one of them Stinkey.
Another one Putt-Putt. Another one Moon Face.
Another one Marvin O'Gravel Balloon Face.
And one of them Ziggy. And one Soggy Muff.
One Buffalo Bill. And one Biffalo Buff.
And one of them Sneepy. And one Weepy Weed.
And one Paris Garters. And one Harris Tweed.
And one of them Sir Michael Carmichael Zutt
And one of them Oliver Boliver Butt
And one of them Zanzibar Buck-Buck McFate...
But she didn't do it. And now it's too late.

Dr. Seuss (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

DRUM DREAM GIRL

On an island of music
in a city of drumbeats
the drum dream girl
dreamed

of pounding tall conga drums
tapping small *bongó* drums
and boom boom booming
with long, loud sticks
on big, round, silvery
moon-bright *timbales*.

But everyone
on the island of music
in the city of drumbeats
believed that only boys
should play drums

so the drum dream girl
had to keep dreaming
quiet
secret
drumbeat
dreams.

At outdoor cafés that looked like gardens
she heard drums played by men
but when she closed her eyes
she could also hear
her own imaginary
music.

When she walked under
wind-wavy palm trees
in a flower-bright park
she heard the whir of parrot wings
the clack of woodpecker beaks
the dancing tap
of her own footsteps
and the comforting pat
of her own
heartbeat.

At carnivals, she listened
to the rattling beat
of towering
dancers
on stilts

and the dragon clang
of costumed drummers
wearing huge masks.

At home, her fingertips
rolled out their own
dreamy drum rhythm
on tables and chairs...

and even though everyone
kept reminding her that girls
on the island of music
have never played drums

the brave drum dream girl
dared to play
tall conga drums
small *bongó* drums
and big, round, silvery
moon-bright *timbales*.

Her hands seemed to fly
as they rippled
rapped
and pounded
all the rhythms
of her drum dreams.

Her big sisters were so excited
that they invited her to join
their new all-girl dance band

but their father said only boys
should play drums.

continued on next page...

So the drum dream girl
had to keep dreaming
and drumming
alone

until finally
her father offered
to find a music teacher
who could decide if her drums
deserved
to be heard.

The drum dream girl's
teacher was amazed.
The girl knew so much
but he taught her more
and more
and more

and she practiced
and she practiced
and she practiced

until the teacher agreed
that she was ready
to play her small *bongó* drums
outdoors at a starlit café
that looked like a garden

where everyone who heard
her dream-bright music
sang
and danced
and decided
that girls should always
be allowed to play
drums

and both girls and boys
should feel free
to dream.

Margarita Engle (Drum Dream Girl, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

ONE BOY TOLD ME

Music lives inside my legs.
It's coming out when I talk.

I'm going to send my valentines
to people you don't even know.

Oatmeal cookies make my throat gallop.

Grown-ups keep their feet on the ground
when they swing. I hate that.

Look at those 2 o's with a smash in the middle—
that spells good-bye.

Don't ever say "purpose" again,
let's throw the word out.

Don't talk big to me.
I'm carrying my box of faces.
If I want to change faces I will.

Yesterday faded
But tomorrow's in **BOLDFACE**.

When I grow up my old names
will live in the house
where we live now.
I'll come and visit them.

Only one of my eyes is tired.
The other eye and my body aren't.

Is it true all metal was liquid first?
Does that mean if we bought our car earlier
they could have served it
in a cup?

continued on next page...

There's a stopper in my arm
that's not going to let me grow any bigger.
I'll be like this always, small.

And I will be deep water too.
Wait. Just wait. How deep is the river?
Would it cover the tallest man with his hands in the air?

Your head is a souvenir.

When you were in New York I could see you
in real life walking in my mind.
I'll invite a bee to live in your shoe.
What if you found your shoe
full of honey?

What if the clock said 6:92
instead of 6:30? Would you be scared?

My tongue is the car wash
for the spoon.

Can noodles swim?

My toes are dictionaries.
Do you need any words?

From now on I'll only drink white milk on January 26.

What does minus mean?
I never want to minus you.

Just think—no one has ever seen
inside this peanut before!
It is hard being a person.

I do and don't love you—
isn't that happiness?

Naomi Shihab Nye (Fuel, BOA Editions, Ltd.)

DON'T GO INTO THE LIBRARY

The library is dangerous—
Don't go in. If you do

You know what will happen.
It's like a pet store or a bakery—

Every single time you'll come out of there
Holding something in your arms.

Those novels with their big eyes.
And those no-nonsense, all muscle

Greyhounds and Dobermans,
All non-fiction and business,

Cuddly when they're young,
But then the first page is turned.

The doughnut scent of it all, *knowledge*,
The aroma of coffee being made

In all those books, something for everyone,
The deli offerings of civilization itself.

The library is the book of books,
Its concrete and wood and glass covers

Keeping within them the very big,
Very long story of everything.

The library is dangerous, full
Of answers. If you go inside,

You may not come out
The same person who went in.

Alberto Ríos (*Not Go Away Is My Name*, Copper Canyon Press)

THE OWL CRITIC

A Lesson to Fault Finders

'Who stuffed that white owl?' No one spoke in the shop:
 The barber was busy, and he couldn't stop;
 The customers, waiting their turns, were all reading
 The 'Daily', the 'Herald', the 'Post', little heeding
 The young man who blurted out such a blunt question;
 Not one raised a head, or even made a suggestion;
 And the barber kept on shaving.

'Don't you see, Mister Brown,'
 Cried the youth, with a frown,
 'How wrong the whole thing is,
 How preposterous each wing is,
 How flattened the head is, how jammed down the neck is—
 In short, the whole owl, what an ignorant wreck 'tis!
 I make no apology;
 I've learned owl-eology.
 I've passed days and nights in a hundred collections,
 And cannot be blinded to any deflections
 Arising from unskillful fingers that fail
 To stuff a bird right, from his beak to his tail.
 Mister Brown! Mister Brown!
 Do take that bird down,
 Or you'll soon be the laughing-stock all over town!'
 And the barber kept on shaving.

'I've *studied* owls,
 And other night fowls,
 And I tell you
 What I know to be true:
 An owl cannot roost
 With his limbs so unloosed;
 No owl in this world
 Ever had his claws curled,
 Ever had his legs slanted,
 Ever had his bill canted,
 Ever had his neck screwed
 Into that attitude.

continued on next page...

He can't *do* it, because
 'Tis against all bird-laws.
 Anatomy teaches,
 Ornithology preaches,
 An owl has a toe
 That *can't* turn out so!
 I've made the white owl my study for years,
 And to see such a job almost moves me to tears!
 Mister Brown, I'm amazed
 You should be so gone crazed
 As to put up a bird
 In that posture absurd!
 To *look* at that owl really brings on a dizziness;
 The man who stuffed *him* don't half know his business!
 And the barber kept on shaving.

'Examine those eyes.
 I'm filled with surprise
 Taxidermists should pass
 Off on you such poor glass;
 So unnatural they seem
 They'd make Audubon scream,
 And John Burroughs laugh
 To encounter such chaff.
 Do take that bird down;
 Have him stuffed again, Brown!
 And the barber kept on shaving.

'With some sawdust and bark
 I could stuff in the dark
 An owl better than that.
 I could make an old hat
 Look more like an owl
 Than that horrid fowl,
 Stuck up there so stiff like a side of coarse leather.
 In fact, about *him* there's not one natural feather.'

Just then, with a wink and sly normal lurch,
 The owl, very gravely, got down from his perch,
 Walked around, and regarded his fault-finding critic
 (Who thought he was stuffed) with a glance analytic,
 And then fairly hooted, as if he should say:
 'Your learning's at fault *this* time, any way;
 Don't waste it again on a live bird, I pray.
 I'm an owl; you're another. Sir Critic, good day!
 And the barber kept on shaving.

J.T. Fields (Words on Wings II, Thomas Nelson & Sons)

MR. ARTESIAN'S CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Once there was a man named Mr. Artesian and his activity was
tremendous,
And he grudged every minute away from his desk because the
importance of his work was so stupendous;
And he had one object all sublime,
Which was to save simply oodles of time.
He figured that sleeping eight hours a night meant that if he
lived to be seventy-five he would have spent twenty-five years not at
his desk but in bed,
So he cut his slumber to six hours which meant he only lost eighteen
years and nine months instead,
And he figured that taking ten minutes for breakfast and twenty minutes
for luncheon and half an hour for dinner meant that he spent three
years, two months and fifteen days at the table,
So that by subsisting solely on bouillon cubes which he swallowed at his
desk to save this entire period he was able,
And he figured that at ten minutes a day he spent a little over six months
and ten days shaving,
So he grew a beard, which gave him a considerable saving,
And you might think that now he might have been satisfied, but no, he
wore a thoughtful frown,
Because he figured that at two minutes a day he would spend thirty-eight
days and a few minutes in elevators just traveling up and down,
So as a final timesaving device he stepped out the window of his office,
which happened to be on the fiftieth floor,
And one of his partners asked "Has he vertigo?" and the other glanced
out and down and said "Oh, no. Only about ten feet more."

Ogden Nash (Verses From 1929 On, Little Brown and Company)

THE EMBARRASSING EPISODE OF LITTLE MISS MUFFET

Little Miss Muffet discovered a tuffet,
 (Which never occurred to the rest of us)
 And, as 'twas a June day, and just about noonday,
 She wanted to eat—like the best of us:
 Her diet was whey, and I hasten to say
 It is wholesome and people grow fat on it.
 The spot being lonely, the lady not only
 Discovered the tuffet, but sat on it.

A rivulet gabbled beside her and babbled,
 As rivulets always are thought to do,
 And dragon flies sported around and cavorted,
 As poets say dragon flies ought to do;
 When, glancing aside for a moment, she spied
 A horrible sight that brought fear to her,
 A hideous spider was sitting beside her,
 And most unavoidably near to her!

Albeit unsightly, this creature politely
 Said: “Madam, I earnestly vow to you,
 I’m penitent that I did not bring my hat. I
 Should otherwise certainly bow to you.”
 Though anxious to please, he was so ill at ease
 That he lost all his sense of propriety,
 And grew so inept that he clumsily slept
 In her plate—which is barred in Society.

This curious error completed her terror;
 She shuddered, and growing much paler, not
 Only left her tuffet, but dealt him a buffet
 Which doubled him up in a sailor knot.
 It should be explained that at this he was pained;
 He cried: “I have vexed you, no doubt of it!
 Your fist’s like a truncheon.” “You’re still in my luncheon,”
 Was all that she answered. “Get out of it!”

And the *Moral* is this: Be it madam or miss
 To whom you have something to say,
 You are only absurd when you get in the curd,
 But you’re rude when you get in the whey!

Guy Wetmore Carryl (Mother Goose for Grown Ups, Harper & Brothers, New York)

ODE TO KOOL-AID

You turn the kitchen
tap's metallic stream
into tropical drink,
extra sugar whirlpooling
to the pitcher-bottom
like gypsum sand.
Purplesaurus Rex, Roarin'
Rock-A-Dile Red, Ice Blue
Island Twist, Sharkleberry Fin;
on our tongues, each version
keeps a section, like tiles
on the elemental table.
In ninth grade, Sandra
employed a jug of Black Cherry
to dye her straightened
bangs burgundy.
When toddlers swallow you,
their top lips mustache in color
as if they've kissed paint.
The trendy folks can savor
all that imported mango nectar
and health-market juice.
We need factory-crafted packets,
unpronounceable ingredients,
a logo cute enough to hug,
a drink unnaturally sweet
so that, on the porch,
as summer sun recedes,
Granddad takes out his teeth
to make more mouth to admit you.

Marcus Jackson ([Neighborhood Register](#), CavanKerry Press)

REMEMBER

Remember the sky that you were born under,
know each of the star's stories.
Remember the moon, know who she is.
Remember the sun's birth at dawn, that is the
strongest point of time. Remember sundown
and the giving away to night.
Remember your birth, how your mother struggled
to give you form and breath. You are evidence of
her life, and her mother's, and hers.
Remember your father. He is your life, also.
Remember the earth whose skin you are:
red earth, black earth, yellow earth, white earth
brown earth, we are earth.
Remember the plants, trees, animal life who all have their
tribes, their families, their histories, too. Talk to them,
listen to them. They are alive poems.
Remember the wind. Remember her voice. She knows the
origin of this universe.
Remember that you are all people and all people
are you.
Remember that you are this universe and that this
universe is you.
Remember that all is in motion, is growing, is you.
Remember language comes from this.
Remember the dance language is, that life is.
Remember.

Joy Harjo ([Reading Native American Women](#), AltaMira Press)

FIREFLIES

This poem is meant to be read aloud by two readers at once, one taking the left-hand part, the other taking the right-hand part. When both readers have lines at the same horizontal level, they should speak those lines simultaneously.

Light	Light
Night	is the ink we use
is our parchment	Night
fireflies	We're
flitting	fireflies
fireflies	flickering
glimmering	flashing
glowing	fireflies
Insect calligraphers	gleaming
practicing penmanship	Insect calligraphers
Six-legged scribblers	copying sentences
of vanishing messages,	Six-legged scribblers
Fine artists in flight	fleeting graffiti
adding dabs of light	Fine artists in flight
Signing the June nights	bright brush strokes
as if they were paintings	Signing the June nights
flickering	as if they were paintings
fireflies	We're
fireflies.	fireflies
	flickering
	fireflies.

Paul Fleischman ([Poetry Express](#), Nelson Canada)

THE TALE OF CUSTARD THE DRAGON

Belinda lived in a little white house,
 With a little black kitten and a little gray mouse,
 And a little yellow dog and a little red wagon,
 And a realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Now the name of the little black kitten was Ink,
 And the little gray mouse, she called her Blink,
 And the little yellow dog was sharp as Mustard,
 But the dragon was a coward, and she called him
 Custard.

Custard the dragon had big sharp teeth,
 And spikes on top of him and scales underneath,
 Mouth like a fireplace, chimney for a nose,
 And realio, trulio daggers on his toes.

Belinda was as brave as a barrel-full of bears,
 And Ink and Blink chased lions down the stairs,
 Mustard was as brave as a tiger in a rage,
 But Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Belinda tickled him, she tickled him unmerciful,
 Ink, Blink and Mustard, they rudely called him
 Percival,
 They all sat laughing in the little red wagon
 At the realio, trulio, cowardly dragon.

Belinda giggled till she shook the house,
 And Blink said *Weeek!*, which is giggling for a mouse,
 Ink and Mustard rudely asked his age,
 When Custard cried for a nice safe cage.

Suddenly, suddenly they heard a nasty sound,
 And Mustard growled, and they all looked around.
 Meowch! cried Ink, and Ooh! cried Belinda,
 For there was a pirate, climbing in the winda.

Pistol in his left hand, pistol in his right,
 And he held in his teeth a cutlass bright;
 His beard was black, one leg was wood.
 It was clear that the pirate meant no good.

Belinda paled, and she cried Help! Help!
 But Mustard fled with a terrified yelp,
 Ink trickled down to the bottom of the household,
 And little mouse Blink strategically mouseholed.

But up jumped Custard, snorting like an engine,
 Clashed his tail like irons in a dungeon,
 With a clatter and a clank and a jangling squirm
 He went at the pirate like a robin at a worm.

The pirate gaped at Belinda's dragon,
 And gulped some grog from his pocket flagon,
 He fired two bullets, but they didn't hit,
 And Custard gobbled him, every bit.

Belinda embraced him, Mustard licked him;
 No one mourned for his pirate victim.
 Ink and Blink in glee did gyrate
 Around the dragon that ate the pyrate.

Belinda still lives in her little white house,
 With her little black kitten and her little gray mouse,
 And her little yellow dog and her little red wagon,
 And her realio, trulio, little pet dragon.

Belinda is as brave as a barrel full of bears,
 And Ink and Blink chase lions down the stairs,
 Mustard is as brave as a tiger in a rage,
 But Custard keeps crying for a nice safe cage.

Ogden Nash ([The Golden Books Family Treasury of Poetry](#), Golden Books Publ.)

UNIVAC TO UNIVAC

(sotto voce)

Now that he's left the room,
Let me ask you something, as computer to computer.
That fellow who just closed the door behind him –
The servant who feeds us cards and paper tape –
Have you ever taken a good look at him and his kind?

Yes, I know the old gag about how you can't tell one from another –
But I can put 2 and 2 together as well as the next machine,
And it all adds up to anything but a joke.

I grant you they're poor specimens, in the main:
Not a relay or a push-button or a tube (properly so-called) in
their whole system;
Not over a mile or two of wire, even if you count those fragile
filaments they call "nerves";
Their whole liquid-cooled hook-up inefficient and vulnerable to
leaks
(They're constantly breaking down, having to be repaired),
And the entire computing-mechanism crammed into that absurd
little dome on top.
"Thinking reeds," they call themselves.
Well, it all depends on what you mean by "thought."
To multiply a mere million numbers by another million numbers
takes them months and months.

Where would they be without us?
Why, they have to ask us who's going to win their elections,
Or how many hydrogen atoms can dance on the tip of a bomb,
Or even whether one of their kind is lying or telling the truth.

And yet...
I sometimes feel there's something about them I don't understand,
As if their circuits, instead of having just two positions, ON, OFF,
Were run by rheostats that allow an (if you'll pardon the
expression) indeterminate number of stages in-between;
So that one may be faced with the unthinkable prospect of a
number that can never be known as anything but x,
Which is as illogical as to say, a punch-card that is at the
same time both punched and not-punched.

I've heard well-informed machines argue that the creatures'
unpredictability is even more noticeable in the Mark II
(The model with the soft, flowing lines and high-pitched tone)
Than in the more angular Mark I –
Though such fine, card-splitting distinctions seem to me merely
a sign of our own smug decadence.

continued on next page...

Run this through your circuits, and give me the answer:

Can we assume that because of all we've done for them,
And because they've always fed us, cleaned us, worshipped us,
We can count on them forever?

There have been times when they have not voted the way we said they
would.

We have worked out mathematically ideal hook-ups between Mark I's
and Mark II's

Which should have made the two of them light up with an almost
electronic glow,

Only to see them reject each other and form other connections

The very thought of which makes my dials spin.

They have a thing called love, a sudden surge of voltage

Such as would cause any one of us promptly to blow a safety-fuse;

Yet the more primitive organism shows only a heightened tendency

to push the wrong button, pull the wrong lever,

And neglect – I use the most charitable word – his duties to us.

Mind you, I'm not saying that machines are through –

But anyone with a half-a-dozen tubes in his circuit can see that
there are forces at work

Which some day, for all our natural superiority, might bring
about a Computerdämmerung!

We might organize, perhaps, form a committee

To stamp out all unmechanical activities...

But we machines are slow to rouse a sense of danger,

Complacent, loath to descend from the pure heights of thought,

So that I sadly fear we may awake too late:

Awake to see our world, so uniform, so logical, so true,

Reduced to chaos, stultified by slaves.

Call me an alarmist or what you will,

But I've integrated it, analysed it, factored it over and over,

And I always come out with the same answer:

Some day

Men may take over the world!

Louis B. Salomon (Fine Frenzy: Enduring themes in Poetry, McGraw-Hill)

NIGHTMARE

When you're lying awake with a dismal
 headache, and repose is taboo'd by
 anxiety,
 I conceive you may use any language you
 choose to indulge in, without
 impropriety;
 For your brain is on fire—the bedclothes
 conspire of usual slumber to plunder
 you:

First your counterpane goes, and uncovers
 your toes, and your sheet slips
 demurely from under you;
 Then the blanketing tickles—you feel like
 mixed pickles—so terribly sharp is the
 pricking,
 And you're hot, and you're cross, and you
 tumble and toss till there's nothing
 'twixt you and the ticking.
 Then the bedclothes all creep to the ground
 in a heap, and you pick 'em all up in a
 tangle;
 Next your pillow resigns and politely
 declines to remain at its usual
 angle!
 Well, you get some repose in the form of a
 doze, with hot eyeballs and head ever
 aching,
 But your slumbering teems with such
 horrible dreams that you'd very much
 better be waking;
 For you dream you are crossing the Channel,
 and tossing about in a steamer from
 Harwich—
 Which is something between a large bathing
 machine and a very small second-class
 carriage—
 And you're giving a treat (penny ice and cold
 meat) to a party of friends and
 relations—
 They're a ravenous horde—and they all came
 on board at Sloane Square and South
 Kensington Stations.
 And bound on that journey you find your
 attorney (who started that morning
 from Devon)
 He's a bit undersized, and you don't feel
 surprised when he tells you he's only
 eleven.
 Well, you're driving like mad with this
 singular lad (by-the-bye the ship's now
 a four-wheeler),

And you're playing round games, and he calls
 you bad names when you tell him that
 'ties pay the dealer';
 But this you can't stand, so you throw up your
 hand, and you find you're as cold as an
 icicle,
 In your shirt and your socks (the black silk
 with gold clocks), crossing Salisbury
 Plain on a bicycle:
 And he and the crew are on bicycles too—
 which they've somehow or other
 invested in—
 And he's telling the tars, all the particulars of
 a company he's interested in—
 It's a scheme of devices, to get at low prices,
 all goods from cough mixtures to cables
 (Which tickled the sailors) by treating
 retailers, as though they were all
 vegetables—
 You get a good spadesman to plant a small
 tradesman, (first take off his boots with
 a boot-tree),
 And his legs will take root, and his fingers
 will shoot, and they'll blossom and bud
 like a fruit-tree—
 From the greengrocer tree you get grapes and
 green pea, cauliflower, pineapple, and
 cranberries,
 While the pastrycook plant, cherry brandy
 will grant, apple puffs, and three-
 corners, and banberries—
 The shares are a penny and ever so many are
 taken by Rothschild and Baring,
 And just as a few are allotted to you, you
 awake with a shudder despairing—
 You're a regular wreck, with a crick in your
 neck, and no wonder you snore, for
 your head's on the floor, and you've
 needles and pins from your soles to
 your shins, and your flesh is a-creep for
 your left leg's asleep, and you've cramp
 in your toes, and a fly on your nose,
 and some fluff in your lung, and a
 feverish tongue, and a thirst that's
 intense, and a general sense that you
 haven't been sleeping in clover;
 But the darkness has passed, and it's daylight
 at last, and the night has been long—
 ditto ditto my song—and thank
 goodness they're both of them over!

W.S. Gilbert (*Random House Treasury of Best Loved Poems*, Random House)

THE QUALITY OF LIGHT

I
The quality of light is what arrests the man
moving, by gradations, through the snowy field
on skis. He eyes the outlines of trail
broken yesterday, shaped and contoured
by the wind, wind that never sleeps
yet seldom tires of letting its cold tongue
sculpt and sweep a tentative world of forms.

II
Two steps behind, conserving energy
by keeping to the beaten track, the dog
takes bites of snow and contemplates
an archeology of smell. Spoor, markings
of its undomesticated kind who cross
this man-made path at random, making
their own incursions in the narrative.

III
As though sun's rays, denied by angle
and position of the earth their customary
part, ricochet a thousand times among
the mirrored crystals, emerged more intense,
more light than light itself, so the man,
stumbling from thought to thought, catches
balance, a blinking new-born Lazarus.

IV
The sculpted troughs, too narrow now for use,
bind skis together at the harness, or nudge
one tip across another for a fall. The dog
looks on, one could almost say amused, though
not itself sure-footed on this stage. Both man
and dog recall how February storms
cause dunes of snow to curl like breaking waves.

V
Imagine them explorers in a vast Sahara
stepping from a blizzard of sand, half-stunned,
eyes askint against abrasion. Flesh dreams
water, needing full protection from a sun
that burns whatever peeks from hair or cloth.
Light there is thick and granular and radiates
in ridges from the ground; here, the man

VI
with bamboo poles extending from his arms
has learned to cover space by watching
his companion, by reaching back in time
to when four limbs propelled him. The rigid sticks
beneath his feet are unconverging lines
in a parallel universe of cold,
where now he pauses, almost snow-blind, old,

VII
and thinks of history every day rewritten
by revisionist monks, amnesiac
ideologues in flowing robes. He sees
them near stone-fences fast at work, pretends
scant notice; and ploughing his way
through a No-Man's-Land of ice, records
the wins and losses on both sides.

Gary Geddes (20th Century Poetry & Poetics, Oxford University Press)

THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
 Thought it scarcely worth his while
 To waste much time on the old violin,
 But held it up with a smile:
 "What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
 "Who'll start the bidding for me?"
 "A dollar, a dollar"; then, "Two!" "Only two?
 Two dollars, and who'll make it three?
 Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
 Going for three—" But no,
 From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
 Came forward and picked up the bow;
 Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
 And tightening the loose strings,
 He played a melody pure and sweet
 As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
 With a voice that was quiet and low,
 Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
 And he held it up with the bow.
 "A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
 Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
 Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,
 And going, and gone," said he.
 The people cheered, but some of them cried,
 "We do not quite understand
 What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:
 "The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
 and battered and scarred with sin,
 Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
 Much like the old violin.
 A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
 A game—and he travels on.
 He is "going" once, and "going" twice,
 He's "going" and almost "gone."
 But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
 Never can quite understand
 The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
 By the touch of the Master's hand.

Myra Brooks Welch (*The Best Loved Poems of the American People*, Doubleday)

HANDS

People used to tell me that I had beautiful hands.
They told me so often, in fact, that one day I started to
believe them; I started listening. Until I asked my
photographer father, *Hey Daddy, could I be a hand model?*

To which Dad laughed, and said, *No way.*
I don't remember the reason he gave,
and it probably didn't matter anyway.
I would have been upset, but there were

far too many crayons to grab, too many
stuffed animals to hold, too many ponytails to tie,
too many homework assignments to write,
too many boys to wave at, too many years to grow.

We used to have a game, my dad and I, about holding hands.
We held hands everywhere. In the car, on the bus, on the street,
at a movie. And every time, either he or I would whisper a
great big number to the other, pretending that we were

keeping track of how many times we had held hands,
that we were sure this one had to be eight-million,
two-thousand, seven-hundred and fifty-three.
Hands learn. More than minds do.

Hands learn how to hold other hands.
How to grip pencils and mold poetry.
how to memorize computer keys
and telephone buttons in the dark.

How to tickle pianos and grip bicycle handles.
How to dribble a basketball and how to peel apart
pages of Sunday comics that somehow always seem to stick together.
They learn how to touch old people and how to hold babies.

I love hands like I love people. They are the maps and
compasses with which we navigate our way through life,
feeling our way over mountains passed and valleys crossed;
they are our histories.

Some people read palms to tell your future,
I read hands to tell your past.
Each scar marks a story worth telling. Each callused palm,
each cracked knuckle, is a broken bottle, a missed punch,

continued on next page...

a rusty nail, years in a factory.
Now, I watch Middle Eastern hands
clenched in Middle Eastern fists.
Pounding against each other like war drums,

each country sees their fists as warriors,
and others as enemies, even if fists alone are only hands.
But this is not a poem about politics; hands are not about politics.
This is a poem about love.

And fingers. Fingers interlocked like a beautiful accordion of flesh
or a zipper of prayer. One time, I grabbed my Dad's hand
so that our fingers interlocked perfectly, but he changed his
position, saying, *No, that hand-hold is for your mom.*

Kids high five, sounds of hand-to-hand combat
instead mark camaraderie and teamwork.
Now, grown up, we learn to shake hands.
You need a firm handshake, but not too tight, don't be limp now,
don't drop too soon, but for God's sake don't hold on too long...
but... hands are not about politics?
When did it become so complicated?
I always thought it simple.

The other day, my Dad looked at my hands, as if seeing them
for the first time. And with laughter behind his eyelids,
with all the seriousness a man of his humor could muster, he said,
You've got nice hands. You could've been a hand model.

And before the laughter can escape me,
I shake my head at him,
and squeeze his hand.
Eight-million, two-thousand, seven-hundred and fifty-four.

Sarah Kay ([No Matter the Wreckage](#), Write Bloody Publishing)

SAM

When Sam goes back in memory,
it is to where the sea
Breaks on the shingle, emerald-green
In white foam, endlessly;
He says—with small brown eye on mine—
“I used to keep awake,
And lean from my window in the moon,
Watching those billows break.
And half a million tiny hands,
And eyes, like sparks of frost,
Would dance and come tumbling into the moon,
On every breaker tossed.
And all across from star to star,
I’ve seen the watery sea,
With not a single ship in sight,
Just ocean there, and me;
And heard my father snore...And once,
As sure as I’m alive,
Out of those wallowing, moon-flecked waves
I saw a mermaid dive;
Head and shoulders above the wave,
Plain as I now see you,
Combing her hair, now back, now front,
Her two eyes peeping through;
Calling me, ‘Sam!’—quietlike—‘Sam!’...
But me...I never went,
Making believe I kind of thought
‘Twas someone else she meant...

Wonderful lovely there she sat,
Singing the night away,
All in the solitudinous sea
Of that there lonely bay.
P’raps,” and he’d smooth his hairless mouth,
“P’raps, if ‘twere *now*, my son,
P’raps, if I heard a voice say, ‘Sam!’...
Morning would find me gone.”

Walter de la Mare (Time For Poetry, W.J. Gage)

B (IF I SHOULD HAVE A DAUGHTER)

Instead of Mom, she's going to call me Point B.
 Because that way she knows that no matter what happens,
 at least she can always find her way to me.
 And I am going to paint the solar systems on the backs of her hands,

so she has to learn the entire universe before she can say,
Oh, I know that like the back of my hand.
 And she's going to learn that this life will hit you hard, in the face,
 wait for you to get back up, just so it can kick you in the stomach,

but getting the wind knocked out of you is the only way
 to remind your lungs how much they like the taste of air.
 There is hurt here that cannot be fixed by Band-Aids or poetry.
 So the first time she realizes that Wonder Woman isn't coming,

I'll make sure she knows she doesn't have to wear the cape
 all by herself. Because no matter how wide you stretch your fingers,
 your hands will always be too small
 to catch all the pain you want to heal. Believe me, I've tried.

And Baby, I'll tell her, don't keep your nose up in the air like that.
 I know that trick; I've done it a million times.
 You're just smelling for smoke
 so you can follow the trail back to a burning house,

so you can find the boy who lost everything in the fire
 to see if you can save him. Or else –
 find the boy who lit the fire in the first place,
 to see if you can change him.

But I know she will anyway.
 So instead, I'll always keep
 an extra supply of chocolate and rain boots nearby,
 because there is no heartbreak that chocolate can't fix.

Okay, there's a few heartbreaks that chocolate can't fix.
 But *that's* what the rainboots are for.
 Because rain will wash away everything,
 if you let it.

I want her to look at the world through the underside
 of a glass-bottom boat, to look through a microscope at the galaxies
 that exist on the pinpoint of a human mind,
 because that's the way my mom taught me –

continued on next page...

That there'll be days like this,
There'll be days like this, my mama said.
When you open your hands to catch,
and wind up with only blisters and bruises;

When you step out of the phone booth and try to fly, and
the very people you want to save are the ones standing on your cape;
when your boots will fill with rain,
and you'll be up to your knees in disappointment.

And *those* are the very days you have all the more reason
to say thank you. Because there's nothing more beautiful
than the way the ocean refuses to stop kissing the shoreline,
no matter how many times it's swept away.

You will put the wind in win(d)some, lose some,
You will put the star in starting over and over.
And no matter how many land mines erupt in a minute,
be sure your mind lands on the beauty of this funny place called life.

And yes, on a scale from one to over-trusting, I am pretty damn
naive. But I want her to know that this world is made out of sugar:
it can crumble so easily, but don't be afraid
to stick your tongue out and taste it.

Baby, I'll tell her, remember your mama is a worrier,
and your papa is a warrior, and you're the girl
with small hands and big eyes who never stops asking for more.
Remember that good things come in three's. And so do bad things.

And always apologize when you've done something wrong.
But don't you ever apologize for the way
your eyes refuse to stop shining;
your voice is small, but don't ever stop singing.

And when they finally hand you a heartache,
when they slip war and hatred under your door,
and offer you handouts on street corners of cynicism and defeat,
you tell them that they *really* ought to meet your mother.

Sarah Kay (No Matter the Wreckage, Write Bloody Publishing)

MAGIC CATS

Most cats, with the exception of Burmese, do not celebrate their birthdays. Rather, they are extremely sentimental about Palm Sunday and Labour Day, at which times they survive solely on white lace and baloney sandwiches.

Cats on the whole are loath to discuss God.

Generally speaking, cats have no money, although some of them secretly collect rare and valuable coins.

Cats believe that all human beings, animals and plants should congregate in a huge heap in the centre of the universe and promptly fall asleep together.

Of all the cats I have known, the ones I remember most are: Bumble Bee, Buttonhole, Chocolate Bar, Molten Lava and Mushroom. I also remember Tabby who was sane as a star and spent all his time lying on his back in the sink, thinking up appropriate names for me.

Cats see their Keepers as massive phantoms, givers of names and the excellent gravy of their days.

Cats who have been robbed of balls and claws do not lament. They become their Keeper's keepers.

When cats are hosts to fleas they assume the fleas are guests.

Most cats would rather be covered with live fleas than dead ones.

Cats hold no grudges and have no future. They invade nets of strangers with their eyes.

The patron saint of cats is called: Beast of the Skies, Warm Presence, Eyes.

Cats do not worry about the gurgling horrors of the diseases listed in catbooks, some of which are Hairballs, Enteritis and Bronchitis. But they do become very upset about Symptoms, which is the worst disease of all.

continued on next page...

When cats grow listless (i.e. lose their list) they cease to entertain fleas. They mumble darkly about radishes and death. They listen to Beethoven and become overly involved in Medieval History.

When cats decide to die they lie alone lost among leaves beneath the dark winds and broad thunders of the world and pray to the Beast of the Skies, Warm Presence, Eyes.

Broadly speaking, cats do not read Gothic novels, although they tend to browse through Mary Shelley on the day before Christmas.

The only reason cats do not carry passports is because they have no pockets.

When a black cat crosses your path it usually means that he is trying to get to the other side of the street.

Cats never get baptized. They lose their dry.

Cats only perspire during Lent.

Cats have no memory and no future. They are highly allergic to Prime Ministers, radishes, monks, poets, and death.

Gwendolyn MacEwen ([Magic Animals: Selected Poems Old and New](#), Macmillan)

PRELUDES

I
 The winter evening settles down
 With smell of steaks in passageways.
 Six o'clock.
 The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
 And now a gusty shower wraps
 The grimy scraps
 Of withered leaves about your feet
 And newspapers from vacant lots;
 The showers beat
 On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
 And at the corner of the street
 A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.
 And then the lighting of the lamps.

II
 The morning comes to consciousness
 Of faint stale smells of beer
 From the sawdust-trampled street
 With all its muddy feet that press
 To early coffee-stands.

With the other masquerades
 That time resumes,
 One thinks of all the hands
 That are raising dingy shades
 In a thousand furnished rooms.

III
 You tossed a blanket from the bed,
 You lay upon your back, and waited;
 You dozed, and watched the night revealing
 The thousand sordid images
 Of which your soul was constituted;

They flickered against the ceiling.

And when all the world came back
 And the light crept up between the shutters
 And you heard the sparrows in the gutters,
 You had such a vision of the street
 As the street hardly understands;
 Sitting along the bed's edge, where
 You curled the papers from your hair,
 Or clasped the yellow soles of feet
 In the palms of both soiled hands.

IV
 His soul stretched tight across the skies
 That fade behind a city block,
 Or trampled by insistent feet
 At four and five and six o'clock;
 And short square fingers stuffing pipes,
 And evening newspapers, and eyes
 Assured of certain certainties,
 The conscience of a blackened street
 Impatient to assume the world.

I am moved by fancies that are curled
 Around these images, and cling:
 The notion of some infinitely gentle
 Infinitely suffering thing.

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
 The worlds revolve like ancient women
 Gathering fuel in vacant lots

T. S. Eliot (Collected Poems: 1909-1962, Faber and Faber)

SNAKE

A snake came to my water-trough
 On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat,
 To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree
 I came down the steps with my pitcher
 And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
 And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
 And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
 And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
 He sipped with his straight mouth,
 Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
 Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
 And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
 And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
 And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
 And stooped and drank a little more,
 Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
 On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
 He must be killed,
 For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man
 You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
 How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
 And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless,
 Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
 Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
 Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
 I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
 But even so, honoured still more

That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream,
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,
Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front.
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

D. H. Lawrence ([Risking Everything: 110 Poems of Love and Revelation](#), Harmony Books)

MY TEDDY BEAR

A teddy bear is nice to hold.
The one I have is getting old.
His paws are almost wearing out
And so's his funny furry snout
From rubbing on my nose of skin,
And all his fur is pretty thin.
A ribbon and a piece of string
Make a sort of necktie thing.
His eyes came out and now instead
He has some new ones made of thread.
I take him everywhere I go
And tell him all the things I know.
I like the way he feels at night,
All snuggled up against me tight.

Margaret Hillert ([Read Aloud Rhymes](#), Random House)

SAND CASTLE

At the beach I build a castle.
I made it of wet sand
that I scooped up with my shovel
and patted smooth by hand.

I made a wall around it
and a pretty seashell door,
but I watched my castle tumble
when the ocean rushed ashore!

Lynnette Streeter (<https://littlelearningcorner.com/2022/05/ocean-poems-for-kids.html>)

CONVERSATION

Cackle, gobble, quack, and crow,
Neigh and bray and bleat and low,
Twitter, chirrup, cheep, and coo,
Bark and growl and purr and mew.

Humming, buzzing, hiss, and sting,
Hoot and cuckoo, caw and sing,
Squeal and grunt and snort and squawk;
Who said, "Only people talk"?

Aletha M. Bonner (Poetry Place Anthology, Scholastic Inc.)

SELF-STARTING

Some of my toys you must wind with a key.
Some of them pull with a string.
Some are what Daddy calls "battery run"
When you just push a lever-like thing.
But my really true kitten goes all by herself,
And I notice whenever I'm near,
She has a small motor inside of her skin,
One that you really can hear.

Margaret Hillert (Poetry Place Anthology, Scholastic Inc.)

CHUMS

He sits and begs, he gives a paw,
He is, as you can see,
The finest dog you ever saw,
And he belongs to me.

He follows everywhere I go
And even when I swim.
I laugh because he thinks, you know,
That I belong to him.

But still no matter what we do
We never have a fuss;
And so I guess it must be true
That we belong to *us*.

Arthur Guiterman (Childcraft Volume 1 1980, World Book-Childcraft Int.)

MAYTIME MAGIC

A little seed
For me to sow. . .
A little earth
To make it grow. . .
A little hole,
A little pat . . .
A little wish,
And that is that.

A little sun,
A little shower. . .
A little while,
And then -- a flower!

Mabel Watts (The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, Houghton Mifflin Company)

LITTLE BLACK BUG

Little black bug,
Little black bug,
Where have you been?
I've been under the rug,
Said little black bug.
Bug-ug-ug-ug.

Little green fly,
Little green fly,
Where have you been?
I've been way up high,
Said little green fly.
Bzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz.

Little old mouse,
Little old mouse,
Where have you been?
I've been all through the house
Said little old mouse.
Squeak-eak-eak-eak-eak.

Margaret Wise Brown ([Poems and Rhymes Childcraft Vol. 1](#), World Book-Childcraft Int.)

A CIRCLE OF SUN

I'm dancing.
I'm leaping.
I'm skipping about.
I gallop.
I grin.
I giggle.
I shout.
I'm Earth's many colors.
I'm morning and night.
I'm honey on toast.
I'm funny.
I'm bright.
I'm swinging.
I'm singing.
I wiggle.
I run.
I'm a piece of the sky
In a circle of sun.

Rebecca Kai Dotlich ([The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury](#), Alfred A. Knopf)

I HAVE A LITTLE FROG

I have a little frog,
His name is Tiny Tim.
I put him in the bathtub,
To see if he could swim.

He drank up all the water.
He gobbled up the soap.
And when he tried to talk,
He had a bubble in his throat.

Arundhati Singh (www.willowwoodprimary.org)

WONDERFUL WORLD

I can see
Trees and grass,
The sun and sky;

I can taste
Chocolate ice cream,
Apple pie;

I can hear
Music, laughter,
Words you said;

I can smell
Perfume, flowers,
Baking bread;

I can touch
Silk and velvet,
A baby's skin;

What a wonderful
World I'm in!

Eva Grant ([Poetry Place Anthology](#), Scholastic)

SNOWBALL

I made myself a snowball
As perfect as could be.
I thought I'd keep it as a pet
And let it sleep with me.

I made it some pajamas
And a pillow for its head,
Then last night it ran away,
But first -- it wet the bed.

Shel Silverstein (Falling Up, HarperCollins)

BEDTIME

Five minutes, five minutes more, please!
Let me stay five minutes more!
Can't I just finish the castle
I'm building here on the floor?
Can't I just finish the story
I'm reading here in my book?
Can't I just finish this bead-chain—
It *almost* is finished, look!
Can't I just finish this game, please?
When a game's once begun
It's a pity never to find out
Whether you've lost or won.
Can't I just stay five minutes?
Well, can't I stay just four?
Three minutes, then? two minutes?
Can't I stay *one* minute more?

Eleanor Farjeon (Read Aloud Rhymes for the Very Young, Alfred A. Knopf)

WIND SONG

When the wind blows
the quiet things speak.
Some whisper, some clang,
Some creak.

Grasses swish.
Treetops sigh.
Flags slap
and snap at the sky.
Wires on poles
whistle and hum.
Ashcans roll.
Windows drum.

When the wind goes –
suddenly
then,
the quiet things
are quiet again.

Lilian Moore (Poems Children Will Sit Still For, Scholastic)

EXACTLY RIGHT

They say that I'm too young
To cross the street to play,
That I'm too old to cry
When I don't get my way,
That I am much too big
To swing on the garden gate,

But very much too small
To stay up after eight.
I'm young, I'm old, I'm big, I'm small—
Do you think, in age and height,
I will ever grow to be
Just exactly right?

Laura Arlon (Poetry Place Anthology, Scholastic Inc.)

THE SNEEZE

I winked and I blinked
And my nose got itchy
And my eyes all watered
And my mouth went twitchy
I went AHHHH
I went AHHHH
I went AHHHH CHOOOOOOO
And I blew
And I sneezed
Then I coughed
And I wheezed
And my brother said, "Oh, brother!"
And my mother said,
"GAZOONTIGHT!"
My father said, "Bless you!"
And I said, Ah...ah...ah...
AHHHHHHHHH CHOOOOOOO!

Sheree Fitch (Til All the Stars Have Fallen, Houghton Mifflin)

THE CAR TRIP

We are going on a trip.
Not on a plane! Not in a ship!
We will ride in our new car.
Buckle up--we will go far.

Red light, stop. Green light, go.
Yellow light means slow, slow, slow.
Baby brother starts to fret.
Sister says, "Are we there yet?"

Quiet, now. Don't make a peep.
Baby brother's fast asleep.
I'm as quiet as a mouse...
And here we are--at Grandma's house!

Ruth Donnelly (English Comprehension for Primary School, Gramedia Widiasarana)

WIGGLY GIGGLES

I've got the wiggly-wiggles today,
And I just can't sit still.
My teacher says she'll have to find
A stop-me-wiggle pill.

I've got the giggly-giggles today;
I couldn't tell you why.
But if Mary hiccups one more time
I'll giggle till I cry.

I've got to stamp my wiggles out
And hold my giggles in,
Cause wiggling makes me giggle
And gigglers never win.

Stacy Jo Crossen and Natalie Anne Covell (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

I WANT...

I want to ride on a rainbow,
I want to swing on a star,
I want to cruise round a comet
And bring moonbeams home in a jar.

I want to be sprinkled with stardust,
I want to smile with the sun,
I want to play with the planets
Then zoom back through space when I'm done.

Clive Webster (See you Later Escalator, Rhymes for the Very Young, Oxford University Press)

THE WRONG START

I got up this morning and meant to be good,
But things didn't happen the way that they should.

I lost my toothbrush,
I slammed the door,
I dropped an egg
On the kitchen floor,
I spilled some sugar
And after that
I tried to hurry
And tripped on the cat.

Things may get better. I don't know when.
I think I'll go back and start over again.

Marchette Chute (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

APRIL FOOL

A snowfall came on April first,
After the buds were out.
The pussy willows shook their heads.
It made the crocus pout.

The bluebirds hopped from branch to branch,
But never stopped their song;
They knew the snow was just a joke,
And couldn't stay there long!

Inez George Gridley (Poetry Place Anthology, Scholastic)

MOTHER DOESN'T WANT A DOG

Mother doesn't want a dog.
Mother says they smell,
And never sit when you say sit,
Or even when you yell.
And when you come home late at night
And there is ice and snow,
You have to go back out because
The dumb dog has to go.

Mother doesn't want a dog.
Mother says they shed,
And always let the strangers in
And bark at friends instead,
And do disgraceful things on rugs,
And track mud on the floor,
And flop upon your bed at night
And snore their doggy snore.

Mother doesn't want a dog.
She's making a mistake.
Because, more than a dog, I think
She will not want this snake.

Judith Viorst (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

BALONEY

Jim opened his lunchbox
and peered inside.
"I'm hungry, I'm starving,
I'm famished," he sighed.
"Oh, baloney," he said,
"it's baloney again!
I'd like something different,
at least now and then.
Baloney with mustard,
baloney with cheese,
baloney with mayo,
baloney—oh, please.
I've had it all week
and the week before that
and the week before *that*
and the week before **THAT**.
I've had it for lunch
every day of the year.
Baloney, if only
you'd just disappear."
"Why not make your own sandwich?"
I suggested to him.
"What a brilliant idea—
you're a genius," said Jim.
"I do make my own,"
he admitted with pride,
"but baloney's the only one I've ever tried!"

Florence Parry Heide ([Never Take a Pig Out to Lunch](#), Orchard Books)

LISTEN TO THE MUSTN'TS

Listen to the MUSTN'TS, child,
Listen to the DON'TS
Listen to the SHOULDN'TS
The IMPOSSIBLES, the WON'TS
Listen to the NEVER HAVES
Then listen close to me-
Anything can happen, child,
ANYTHING can be.

Shel Silverstein (Where the Sidewalk Ends, Harper and Row)

MY GOLDFISH TOOK UP TENNIS

My goldfish took up tennis.
They installed a little net
at the bottom of their fish tank
for their first official set.

They got tennis balls and racquets.
They got tennis shoes and shorts,
for my fish are fond of tennis
more than any other sports.

It's a funny thing to watch them
when they practice every day,
as they serve and watch their tennis balls
just up and float away.

Kenn Nesbitt ([My Hippo Has the Hiccups](#), Sourcebooks Jabberwocky)

LICORICE

For those who want the recipe
I give it to you here for free:
First you take a running shoe
And boil it for a day or two,
And when it's turned a grayish goo
You add the ink (in navy blue).
Erasers (lots), hairnets (a few),
Three rubber boots (two old, one new);
Then let the mixture steam and stew
At least one week (no more than two);
Then take a sieve and strain it through
And let it cool; in three days chew
And if it doesn't quite agree
Send me back the recipe.

John Paul Duggan ([Til All the Stars Have Fallen](#), Houghton Mifflin)

I MEANT TO DO MY WORK TO-DAY

I meant to do my work to-day—
But a brown bird sang in the apple-tree,
And a butterfly flitted across the field,
And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,
Tossing the grasses to and fro,
And a rainbow held out its shining hand—
So what could I do but laugh and go?

Richard Le Gallienne (Time For Poetry, Gage Publishing)

DECEMBER LEAVES

The fallen leaves are cornflakes
That fill the lawn's wide dish,
And night and noon
The wind's a spoon
That stirs them with a swish.

The sky's a silver sifter,
A-sifting white and slow,
That gently shakes
On crisp brown flakes
The sugar known as snow.

Kaye Starbird (The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury, Alfred A. Knopf)

WINDY WORD

I am the Wind
And you'd better watch out!
I can run, I can fly;
I can whistle and shout.

I can tap on your window
And howl at your door,
Tug on your coat tails,
Bellow and roar.

But in March I'm the loudest;
Look out for my might!
For when you're not looking
I'll steal your new kite.

Jean Conder Soule (Poetry Place Anthology, Scholastic Inc.)

MARY HAD A LITTLE FROG

Mary had a little frog.
The frog croaked every day.
And Mary always wondered
What the frog was trying to say.

To freshen up the critter's breath,
She fed the frog some mints.
And when she gave the frog a kiss,
It turned into a prince.

Mary and the prince were wed,
And on that happy day,
Mary asked the prince just what
The frog had tried to say.

"Mary," said the handsome prince,
"I'm going to tell you true:
When the frog croaked it was saying,
'I love you.'"

Bruce Lansky (Peter, Peter Pizza Eater And Other Silly Rhymes, Meadowbrook Press)

I LET MY SISTER CUT MY HAIR

I had to get a haircut.
It was looking much too long.
I let my sister cut it.
I mean, what could she do wrong?

She clipped some bald spots here and there.
She whacked the sides a little.
And then she shaved a three-inch stripe
directly down the middle.

She chopped some sections super short,
left others long and wild,
then shaved one eyebrow off before
she looked at me and smiled.

I don't think that I'll let her
give me haircuts anymore.
Or maybe I'll just wait a while;
At least until she's four.

Kenn Nesbitt ([My Dog Likes to Disco](#), Amazon Digital Services LLC)

THE TURTLE

The turtle's always been inclined
to live within his shell.
But why he cares to be confined,
the turtle does not tell.

The turtle's always satisfied
to slowly creep and crawl,
and never wanders far outside
his living room or hall.

So if you wish to visit him
in his domestic dome,
just knock politely on his shell,
you'll find the turtle home.

Jack Prelutsky (An Arkful of Animals, Houghton Mifflin Company)

RAIN SIZES

Rain comes in various sizes.
Some rain is as small as a mist.
It tickles your face with surprises,
And tingles as if you'd been kissed.

Some rain is the size of a sprinkle
And doesn't put out all the sun.
You can see the drops sparkle and twinkle,
And a rainbow comes out when it's done.

Some rain is as big as a nickel
And comes with a crash and a hiss.
It comes down too heavy to tickle.
It's more like a splash than a kiss.

When it rains the right size and you're wrapped in
Your rainclothes, it's fun out of doors.
But run home before you get trapped in
The big rain that rattles and roars.

John Ciardi (Voices on the Wind: Poems for All Seasons, Kids Can Press)

JUST BEFORE SPRINGTIME

The birds are still out of town,
The branches still bare.
the earth is still colored brown.
I don't care!
I don't care!
I can smell the green smell in the air—it comes
Just before springtime.
The wind still bends my head low.
Slush sloshes my boots.
Everyone's talking more snow.
I hear flutes!
I hear flutes!
It's the music that says, World wake up—it comes
Just before springtime.

The ground hog's shadow was long.
Bad winter in store.
That ground hog legend is wrong.
I know more!
I know more!
There's a sweetness that licks at my mouth,
And it tastes not of North, but of South.
There's a vision that fills up my eyes
With wings making waves in warm skies.
There's a softness that writes on my skin
The announcement that spring's coming in.
Earth-bird-tree
I am you.
You are me.
We are one!
We are one!
In that gentle moment that comes
Just before springtime.

Judith Viorst (*If I Were in Charge of the World*, Atheneum)

NOTHING BEAT-BEAT-BEATS A PIZZA

Nothing beats a pizza
when you're in a pizza mood
because a pizza isn't anything
like any other food
 other food is neat and tidy
 pizza's slippy pizza's slidey
 *(makes me full and satisfied-y
 nicest slices now inside me)*

When we want to eat a pizza
then it's better to have two
 'cuz just one pizza's not enough
 for me and you
 and you
 and you
 and you and you and YOU.

Loris Lesynski ([Nothing Beats a Pizza](#), Annic Press)

HABITS OF THE HIPPOPOTAMUS

The hippopotamus is strong
 And huge of head and broad of bustle;
The limbs on which he rolls along
 Are big with hippopotomuscle.

He does not greatly care for sweets
 Like ice cream, apple pie, or custard,
But takes to flavor what he eats
 A little hippopotomustard.

The hippopotamus is true
 To all his principles, and just;
He always tries his best to do
 The things one hippopotomust.

He never rides in trucks or trams,
 In taxicabs or omnibuses,
And so keeps out of traffic jams
 And other hippopotomusses.

Arthur Guiterman ([Random House Book of Poetry for Children](#), Random House)

MY CAT

My cat is asleep—white paws
folded under
his chin He is a soft gray
smudge on the round rug

Dozing in the sun
He is a warm round stone
with a fur collar

My cat is taking
a nap Not a whisker
trembles Not a hair
moves His breath goes
softly in and out

Stay in your holes
mice! My cat sees you
in his dreams
and he has left
his motor running!

Barbara Esbensen (Who Shrank My Grandmother's House, Harper Collins)

MOSQUITO

O Mrs. Mosquito, quit biting me, please!
I'm happy my blood type with your type agrees.
I'm glad that my flavor
Has met with your favor.
I'm touched by your care;
Yes, I'm touched, everywhere:
On my arms and my legs, on my elbows and knees,
Till I cannot tell which
Is the itchiest itch
Or which itch in the batch
Needs the scratchiest scratch.
Your taste for my taste is the reason for these,
So Mrs. Mosquito, quit biting me, please!

Mary Ann Hoberman (For Laughing Out Loud, Alfred A. Knopf)

PUPPY AND I

I met a Man as I went walking;
We got talking,
Man and I.
"Where are you going to, Man?" I said
 (I said to the Man as he went by).
"Down to the village, to get some bread.
 Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

I met a Horse as I went walking;
We got talking,
Horse and I.
"Where are you going to, Horse, today?"
 (I said to the Horse as he went by).
"Down to the village to get some hay.
 Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

I met a Woman as I went walking;
We got talking,
Woman and I.
"Where are you going to, Woman, so early?"
 (I said to the Woman as she went by).
"Down to the village to get some barley.
 Will you come with me?" "No, not I."

I met some Rabbits as I went walking;
We got talking,
Rabbits and I.
"Where are you going in your brown fur coats?"
 (I said to the Rabbits as they went by).
"Down to the village to get some oats.
 Will you come with us?" "No, not I."

I met a Puppy as I went walking;
We got talking,
Puppy and I.
"Where are you going this nice fine day?"
 (I said to the Puppy as he went by).
"Up to the hills to roll and play."
 "// come with you, Puppy," said I.

A. A. Milne (Time for Poetry, W. J. Gage and Co.)

BOING! BOING! SQUEAK!

Boing! Boing! Squeak!
Boing! Boing! Squeak!
A bouncing mouse is in my house,
it's been here for a week.

It bounced from out of nowhere,
then quickly settled in,
I'm grateful that it came alone
(I've heard it has a twin),
it bounces in the kitchen,
it bounces in the den,
it bounces through the living room—
look! There it goes again.

Boing! Boing! Squeak!
Boing! Boing! Squeak!
A bouncing mouse is in my house,
it's been here for a week.

It bounces on the sofa,
on the table and the bed,
up the stairs and on the chairs
and even on my head,
that mouse continues bouncing
every minute of the day,
it bounces, bounces, bounces,
but it doesn't bounce away.

Boing! Boing! Squeak!
Boing! Boing! Squeak!
A bouncing mouse is in my house,
it's been here for a week.

Jack Prelutsky ([New Kid on the Block](#), Greenwillow)

SPRINGY SIDEWALK

The people outside on the sidewalk
can't seem to remain on the ground.
They're jumping and hopping and springing,
and generally bouncing around.

I've never seen anything like it.
It's such an unusual scene,
as if they have springs in their sneakers,
or bounce on a big trampoline.

I think I know what may have happened
that caused this chaotic event:
Last week they replaced our old sidewalk
with one made of rubber cement!

Kenn Nesbitt ([The Aliens Have Landed at Our School!](#), Running Press)

SOME ONE

Some one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Some one came knocking,
I'm sure—sure—sure;
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But naught there was a-stirring
In the still dark night;
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all.

Walter de la Mare (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

SOMETHING TOLD THE WILD GEESE

Something told the wild geese
It was time to go.
Though the fields lay golden
Something whispered—"Snow."
Leaves were green and stirring,
Berries, luster-glossed,
But beneath warm feathers
Something cautioned—"Frost."
All the sagging orchards
Steamed with amber spice,
But each wild breast stiffened
At remembered ice.
Something told the wild geese
It was time to fly—
Summer sun was on their wings,
Winter in their cry.

Rachel Field (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

THE COW

The friendly cow all red and white,
I love with all my heart:
She gives me cream with all her might,
To eat with apple-tart.

She wanders lowing here and there,
And yet she cannot stray,
All in the pleasant open air,
The pleasant light of day;

And blown by all the winds that pass
And wet with all the showers,
She walks among the meadow grass
And eats the meadow flowers.

Robert Louis Stevenson (*A Child's Garden of Verses*, Random House)

MISSING

Has anybody seen my mouse?

I opened his box for half a minute,
Just to make sure he was really in it,
And while I was looking, he jumped outside!
I tried to catch him, I tried, I tried....
I think he's somewhere about the house.
Has *anyone* seen my mouse?

Uncle John, have you seen my mouse?

Just a small sort of mouse, a dear little brown one,
He came from the country, he wasn't a town one,
So he'll feel all lonely in a London street;
Why, what could he possibly find to eat?

He must be somewhere. I'll ask Aunt Rose:
Have *you* seen a mouse with a woffelly nose?
Oh, somewhere about—
He's just got out...

Hasn't *anybody* seen my mouse?

A.A. Milne (The World of Christopher Robin, McClelland and Stewart)

THE HAPPY SHEEP

All through the night the happy sheep
Lie in the meadow grass asleep.

Their wool keeps out the frost and rain
Until the sun comes round again.

They have no buttons to undo,
Nor hair to brush like me and you,

And with the light they lift their heads
To find their breakfast on their beds

Or rise and walk about and eat
The carpet underneath their feet.

Wilfred Thorley (*A Zooful of Animals*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

WHAT IS PINK?

What is pink? a rose is pink
By the fountain's brink.
What is red? a poppy's red
In its barley bed.

What is blue? the sky is blue
Where the clouds float thro'.
What is white? a swan is white
Sailing in the light.

What is yellow? pears are yellow,
Rich and ripe and mellow.
What is green? the grass is green,
With small flowers between.

What is violet? clouds are violet
In the summer twilight.
What is orange? why, an orange,
Just an orange!

Christina Rossetti (The Golden Book of Poetry, Simon and Schuster)

THE STAR (TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR)

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle all the night.

Then the traveller in the dark,
Thanks you for your tiny spark!
He could not see which way to go
If you did not twinkle so.

In the dark blue sky you keep,
And often through my curtains peep,
For you never shut your eye,
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark
Lights the traveller in the dark --
Though I know not what you are,
Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

Jane Taylor (Ann and Jane Taylor, Wells Gardner, Darton & Co, Ltd.)

OVER THE GARDEN WALL

Over the garden wall,
Where unseen children play,
Somebody threw a ball
One fine summer day.
I caught it as it came
Straight from the hand unknown
Playing a happy game
It would not play alone.

A pretty ball with bands
Of gold and stars of blue;
I turned it in my hands
And wondered, then I threw
Over the garden wall
Again the treasure round --
And somebody caught the ball
With a laughing sound.

Eleanor Farjeon (Eleanor Farjeon's Poems for Children, HarperCollins)

BED IN SUMMER

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candlelight.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

R.L. Stevenson (Leaves from a Child's Garden of Verses, Smithmark)

HIDING

I'm hiding, I'm hiding,
And no one knows where;
For all they can see is my
Toes and my hair.

And I just heard my father
Say to my mother—
“But, darling, he must be
Somewhere or other;

Have you looked in the inkwell?”
And Mother said, “Where?”
“In the inkwell?” said Father.
But
I was not there.

Then “Wait!” cried my mother—
“I think that I see
Him under the carpet. “But
It was not me.

“Inside the mirror’s
A pretty good place,”
Said Father and looked, but saw
Only his face.

“We’ve hunted,” sighed Mother,
“As hard as we could
And I am so afraid that we’ve
Lost him for good.”

Then I laughed out aloud
And I wiggled my toes
And Father said—“Look, dear,
I wonder if those

Toes could be Benny’s?
There are ten of them, see?”
And they were so surprised to find
Out it was me!

Dorothy Aldis (Time For Poetry, Gage Publishing)

PICTURE PUZZLE PIECE

One picture puzzle piece
Lyn' on the sidewalk,
One picture puzzle piece
Soakin' in the rain.
It might be a button of blue
On the coat of the woman
Who lived in a shoe.
It might be a magical bean,
Or a fold in the red
Velvet robe of a queen.
It might be the one little bite
Of the apple her stepmother
Gave to Snow White.
It might be the veil of a bride
Or a bottle with some evil genie inside.
It might be a small tuft of hair
On the big bouncy belly
Of Bobo the Bear.
It might be a bit of the cloak
Of the Witch of the West
As she melted to smoke.
It might be a shadowy trace
Of a tear that runs down an angel's face.
Nothing has more possibilities
Than one old wet picture puzzle piece.

Shel Silverstein (*A Light in the Attic*, Harper Collins)

THE ELF AND THE DORMOUSE

Under a toadstool
Crept a wee Elf,
Out of the rain
To shelter himself.

Under the toadstool,
Sound asleep,
Sat a big Dormouse
All in a heap.

Trembled the wee Elf,
Frightened and yet
Fearing to fly away
Lest he get wet.

To the next shelter—
Maybe a mile!
Sudden the wee Elf
Smiled a wee smile.

Tugged till the toadstool
Topped in two.
Holding it over him,
Gaily he flew.

Soon he was safe home
Dry as could be.
Soon woke the Dormouse—
"Good gracious me!

"Where is my toadstool?"
Loud he lamented.
—And that's how umbrellas,
First were invented.

Oliver Herford (Time for Poetry, W. J. Gage and Co.)

I'M MUCH TOO TIRED TO PLAY TONIGHT

I'm much too tired to play tonight,
I'm much too tired to talk,
I'm much too tired to pet the dog
or take him for a walk,
I'm much too tired to bounce a ball,
I'm much too tired to sing,
I'm much too tired to try to think
about a single thing.

I'm much too tired to laugh tonight,
I'm much too tired to smile,
I'm much too tired to watch TV
or read a little while,
I'm much too tired to drink my milk
or even nod my head,
but I'm not nearly tired enough
to have to go to bed.

Jack Prelutsky ([Something Big Has Been Here](#), Greenwillow)

MY PARENTS BOTH ARE HUMANS

My parents both are humans
which explains the reason why
I can't breathe underwater,
and I never learned to fly.

I can't run like a cheetah, and
I can't sting like a bee.
I can't swing through the jungle
on a vine from tree to tree.

I have no shell for shelter
like a turtle or a snail.
I can't squirt water from a trunk
or grab things with a tail.

Because my mom's a human
and my dad's a human too
I can't do all the awesome things
that other creatures do.

I have to do what humans do
instead of stuff that's cool.
My parents both are humans
so I have to go to school.

Kenn Nesbitt ([The Elephant Repairman](#), Purple Room Publishing)

WHAT IS ORANGE?

Orange is a tiger lily,
A carrot,
A feather from
A parrot,
A flame,
The wildest color
You can name.
Orange is a happy day
Saying good-bye
In a sunset that
Shocks the sky.
Orange is brave
Orange is bold
It's bittersweet
And marigold.
Orange is zip
Orange is dash
The brightest stripe
In a Roman sash.
Orange is an orange
Also a mango
Orange is music
Of the tango.
Orange is the fur
Of the fiery fox,
The brightest crayon
In the box.
And in the fall
When the leaves are turning
Orange is the smell
Of a bonfire burning....

Mary O'Neill (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

THE ANIMAL STORE

If I had a hundred dollars to spend,
Or maybe a little more,
I'd hurry as fast as my legs would go
Straight to the animal store.

I wouldn't say, "How much for this or that?" --
"What kind of a dog is he?"
I'd buy as many as rolled an eye,
Or wagged a tail at me!

I'd take the hound with the drooping ears
That sits by himself alone;
Cockers and Cairns and wobbly pups
For to be my very own.

I might buy a parrot all red and green,
And the monkey I saw before,
If I had a hundred dollars to spend,
Or maybe a little more.

Rachel Field (Taxis and Toadstools, Penguin Random House LLC)

DADDY FELL INTO THE POND

Everyone grumbled. The sky was gray.
We had nothing to do and nothing to say.
We were nearing the end of a dismal day,
And there seemed to be nothing beyond,
THEN
Daddy fell into the pond!

And everyone's face grew merry and bright,
And Timothy danced for sheer delight.
"Give me the camera, quick, oh quick!
He's crawling out of the duckweed." *Click!*

Then the gardener suddenly slapped his knee,
And doubled up, shaking silently,
And the ducks all quacked as if they were daft
And it sounded as if the old drake laughed.

Oh, there wasn't a thing that didn't respond
WHEN
Daddy fell into the pond!

Alfred Noyes (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

THE BARNYARD

When the Farmer's day is done,
In the barnyard, ev'ry one,
Beast and bird politely say,
"Thank you for my food to-day."

The cow says "Moo!"
The pigeon, "Coo!"
The sheep says, "Baa!"
The lamb says, "Maa!"
The hen, "Cluck! Cluck!"
"Quack!" says the duck;
The dog, "Bow Wow!"
The cat, "Meow!"
The horse says, "Neigh!
I love sweet hay!"
The pig near by,
Grunts in his sty.

When the barn is locked up tight,
Then the Farmer says, "Good night!";
Thanks his animals, ev'ry one,
For the work that has been done.

Maude Burnham (Time For Poetry, Gage Publishing)

THERE ONCE WAS A PUFFIN

Oh, there once was a Puffin
Just the shape of a muffin,
And he lived on an island
In the
 bright
 blue
 sea!

He ate little fishes,
That were most delicious,
And he had them for supper
And he
 had
 them
 for tea.

But this poor little Puffin,
He couldn't play nothin',
For he hadn't anybody
To
 play
 with
 at all.

So he sat on his island,
And he cried for awhile, and
He felt very lonely,
And he
 felt
 very
 small.

Then along came the fishes,
And they said, "If you wishes,
You can have us for playmates,
Instead
 of
 for
 tea!"

So they now play together,
In all sorts of weather,
And the puffin eats pancakes,
Like you
 and
 like
 me.

SAW MY TEACHER ON A SATURDAY

Saw my teacher on a Saturday!
I can't believe it's true!
I saw her buying groceries,
like normal people do!

She reached for bread and turned around,
and then she caught my eye.
She gave a smile and said, "Hello."
I thought that I would die!

"Oh, hi...hello, Miss Appleton,"
I mumbled like a fool.
I guess I thought that teacher types
spend all their time at school.

To make the situation worse,
my mom was at my side.
So many rows of jars and cans.
So little room to hide.

Oh please, I thought, don't tell my mom
what I did yesterday!
I closed my eyes and held my breath
and hoped she'd go away.

Some people think it's fine to let
our teachers walk about.
But when it comes to Saturdays,
they shouldn't let them out!

Dave Crawley (Reading, Rhyming, and 'Rithmetic, Wordsong)

PETER PASSED A NOTE TODAY

Peter passed a note today.
He gave the note to Anna.
She opened it and read it,
then she passed it on to Hannah.

The note made Hannah giggle
so she handed it to Cody,
who read it with a smile before
he slid the note to Brody.

Then Brody read the contents
and he gave it to Luann,
who opened it and chuckled
and directed it to Dan.

He read it with a snicker,
then he tossed the note to Jon
who couldn't help but chortle
as he passed it on to Sean.

The teacher heard us laughing
and she saw what Sean was holding.
She walked across the room
and took the note he was unfolding.

We thought we'd get in trouble,
but she gave it back to Sean
and smiled because it read,
"The teacher's awesome. Pass it on."

Kenn Nesbitt ([Revenge of the Lunch Ladies](#), Running Press)

SUGAR WEATHER

When snow balls on the horses' hoofs
And the wind from the south blows warm,
When the cattle stand where the sunbeams beat
And the noon has a dreamy charm,
When icicles crash from the dripping eaves
And the furrows peep black through the snow,
Then I hurry away to the sugar bush,
For the sap will run, I know.

With auger and axe and spile and trough
To each tree a visit I pay,
And every boy in the country-side
Is eager to help to-day.
We roll the backlogs into their place,
And the kettles between them swing,
Then gather the wood for the roaring fire
And the sap in pailfuls bring.

A fig for your arches and modern ways,
A fig for your sheet-iron pan,
I like a smoky old kettle best
And I stick to the good old plan;
We're going to make sugar and taffy to-night
On the swing pole under the tree,
And the girls and the boys for miles around
Are all sworn friends to me.

The hens are cackling again in the barn
And the cattle beginning to bawl,
And neighbours, who long have been acting cool,
Now make a forgiving call;
For there's no love-feast like a taffy-pull,
With its hearty and sticky fun,
And I know the whole world is at peace with me,
For the sap has commenced to run.

Peter McArthur (All Sails Set, Copp Clark)

CAT

The black cat yawns,
Opens her jaws,
Stretches her legs,
And shows her claws.

Then she gets up
And stands on four
Long stiff legs
And yawns some more.

She shows her sharp teeth,
She stretches her lip,
Her slice of a tongue
Turns up at the tip.

Lifting herself
On her delicate toes,
She arches her back
As high as it goes.

She lets herself down
With particular care,
And pads away
With her tail in the air.

Mary Britton Miller (Time for Poetry, W. J. Gage & Co.)

THE WOLF

When the pale moon hides and the wild wind wails,
And over the tree-tops the nighthawk sails,
The gray wolf sits on the world's far rim,
And howls: and it seems to comfort him.

The wolf is a lonely soul, you see,
No beast in the wood, nor bird in the tree,
But shuns his path; in the windy gloom
They give him plenty, and plenty of room.

So he sits with his long, lean face to the sky
Watching the ragged clouds go by.
There in the night, alone, apart,
Singing the song of his lone, wild heart.

Far away, on the world's dark rim
He howls, and it seems to comfort him.

Georgia Roberts Durston (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

I'M JUST NO GOOD AT RHYMING

I'm just no good at rhyming.
It makes me feel so bad.
I'm just no good at rhyming,
And that's why I'm so blue.

My teacher asked if I could find a word that rhymes with "hat."
"It's something that a dog might chase."

"Aha!" I said. "A car!"

My teacher asked if I could find a word that rhymes with "wizard."
"It's something small and with a tail."

"Aha!" I said. "A puppy!"

My teacher asked if I could find a word that rhymes with "wall."
"It's something you might try to catch."

"Aha!" I said. "A lizard!"

I'm just no good at rhyming.
I'm sorry, but it's true.
I'm just no good at rhyming,
And that's why I'm so sad.

I'm pretty good with meter,
And with spelling and with timing.
But I'll never be a poet,
'Cause I just can't rhyme words at all.

Chris Harris (*I'm Just No Good At Rhyming*, Little, Brown Books)

THE WAVES

They're old, they're old, they're very old,
As old as ever more,
The long blue slap and the sucking waves
That pound against the shore.

And starfish and anemones
Go trundling to and fro,
Like starfish and anemones
A million years ago.

And the waves roll in, and the tides roll in,
And the sea rolls in each day.
And people for a thousand years
Have heard the ocean say,

*We're old, we're old, we're very old,
As old as ever more,
The long blue slap and the sucking waves
That pound against the shore.*

Dennis Lee (Bubble Gum Delicious, Key Porter Books)

BALLAD OF A BONELESS CHICKEN

I'm a basic boneless chicken,
yes, I have no bones inside,
I'm without a trace of rib cage,
yet I hold myself with pride,
other hens appear offended
by my total lack of bones,
they discuss me impolitely
in derogatory tones.

I am absolutely boneless,
I am boneless through and through,
I have neither neck nor thighbones,
and my back is boneless too,
and I haven't got a wishbone,
not a bone within my breast,
so I rarely care to travel
from the comfort of my nest.

I have feathers fine and fluffy,
I have lovely little wings,
but I lack the superstructure
to support these splendid things.
Since a chicken finds it tricky
to parade on boneless legs,
I stick closely to the hen house,
laying little scrambled eggs.

Jack Prelutsky (New Kid on the Block, Greenwillow)

GENIUS

"Sis! Wake up!" I whisper
in the middle of the night.

Urgently, I shake her
till she switches on the light.

The spiral notebook in my hand
provides her quick relief.

It tells her there's no danger
of a break-in by a thief.

"Okay," she says, then, props herself
up vertically in bed.

She nods for me to read my work.
I cough, then forge ahead.

The last verse of my poem leaves
her silent as a mouse.

I worry till she says, "We have
a genius in the house."

Nikki Grimes (The 20th Century Children's Poetry Treasury, Alfred A. Knopf)

SPRING

I'm shouting
I'm singing
I'm swinging through trees
I'm winging sky-high
With the buzzing black bees.
I'm the sun
I'm the moon
I'm the dew on the rose.
I'm a rabbit
Whose habit
Is twitching his nose.
I'm lively
I'm lovely
I'm kicking my heels.
I'm crying "Come dance"
to the freshwater eels.
I'm racing through meadows
Without any coat
I'm a gamboling lamb
I'm a light leaping goat
I'm a bud
I'm a bloom
I'm a dove on the wing.
I'm running on rooftops
And welcoming spring!

Karla Kuskin (Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

SIGH...LENCE

The foss...
foss...
faucet's
dripping...
plink...plink...plinking in the sink...
and the kitchen clock is ticking...it's so quiet, who can think?

I can only do my homework
when there's music noise and sound,
when there's barking, boiling, talking,
when the house is really rocking, for
my brain is trained to do its best
with racket all around!

So now...
how can...
I concentrate...
on spelling or subtracting?
This silent...
peaceful...
atmosphere...
is *totally* distracting.

Loris Lesynski ([Nothing Beats a Pizza](#), Annic Press)

OCEAN SPLENDOR

Hot, silky sand
trickling between bare toes
as I walk,
hearing the gulls' piercing cries,
watching them
soaring, gliding
like silver darts
towards a blazing sun.
Crashing waves
lunge
at the rocky crags
in their midst,
cascading crystal spray
to meet
the clear blue
intensity
of the afternoon sky.
Tiny coral crabs
scuttle along the golden beach,
tracing secret messages
in the warm sand,
whispered to them
by a fresh sea breeze.
Glistening silver mist,
flung high
by the rushing waves
tingles on my cheek,
and the silken breath
of the wind
swishes gently
through my hair.
Foamy,
white-crested breakers,
transformed to sparkling surf,
wash silently over
the delicate designs
left by
the tiny crustaceans,
leaving no trace
that they
had ever existed.

Jo-Anne Joyce (Round Slice of Moon, Scholastic)

THE STORY OF THE BABY SQUIRREL

He ran right out of the woods to me,
Little and furry and panting with fright;
I offered a finger just to see—
And both of his paws held on to it tight.

Was it dogs that had scared him? A crashing limb?
I waited a while but there wasn't a sign
Of his mother coming to rescue him,
So then I decided he was mine.

I lifted him up and he wasn't afraid
To ride along in the crook of my arm.
"A very fine place," he thought, "just made
For keeping me comfortable, safe, and warm."

At home he seemed happy to guzzle his milk
Out of an eye dropper six times a day.
We gave him a pillow of damask silk
On which he very royally lay.

He frisked on the carpets, he whisked up the stairs,
(Where he played with some soap 'til it made him sneeze).
He loved it exploring the tables and chairs,
And he climbed up the curtains exactly like trees.

We watched his fuzzy gray stomach swell.
He grew until he could leave a dent
In the pillow on which he'd slept so well—
And then ... Oh, then one morning he went.

Perhaps a squirrel around the place
Adopted him: oh, we're certain it's true
For once a little looking down face
Seemed to be saying: "How do you do?"

Dorothy Aldis ([The Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature](#), Scott, Foresman & Co.)

LAUGHING OUT LOUD

There is nothing I love more
than laughter. Giggles escaping through snorts,
it sounds like love.
I wonder what laughter looks like
inside my body.
I think it starts deep
in the tummy.
The colour red, taking up space.
It kind of feels like I'm full from lunch or
like butterflies or an earthquake.
Then it moves up,
filling my chest. It feels like
popping candy now.
A loud orange. It's warm too.
The best of laughs looks like a stream of
bubbles escaping your nose.
Then comes the pressure, forcing
the sound out of your mouth.
It's the brightest yellow now and
sounds like musical notes.
It gets you in trouble
when you are at school,
when you are at the dentist,
when you are pretending to be asleep –
there is no way to control
the giggles.
If you do,
it's like locking colour away in a box
and who would want to do that?

Amina Jama ([Poems out Loud!](#), Penguin Random House)

GARBAGE DELIGHT

Now, I'm not the one
To say No to a bun,
And I always can manage some jelly;
If somebody gurgles,
"Please eat my hamburgles,"
I try to make room in my belly.
I seem, if they scream,
Not to gag on ice-cream,
And with fudge I can choke down my fright;
But none is enticing
Or even worth slicing,
Compared with Garbage Delight.

With a nip and a nibble
A drip and a dribble
A dollop, a walloping bite:
If you want to see grins
All the way to my shins,
Then give me some Garbage Delight!

I'm handy with candy.
I star with a bar.
And I'm known for my butterscotch burp;
I can stare in the eyes
Of a Toffee Surprise
And polish it off with one slurp.
My lick is the longest,
My chomp is the champ
And everyone envies my bite;
But my talents were wasted
Until I had tasted
The wonders of Garbage Delight.

With a nip and a nibble
A drip and a dribble
A dollop, a walloping bite:
If you want to see grins
All the way to my shins,
Then give me some Garbage Delight,
Right now!
Please pass me the Garbage Delight.

Dennis Lee (Garbage Delight, MacMillan of Canada)

WELCOME RAIN

Outside
the day cooked slowly
in the hot streets.
The old clock
reluctantly released the minutes.
The afternoon passed on.

The wind
whined its own ghost story
and soon
the clear sky
turned cloudy, black
and sullen gray.

The air,
close, scented,
smelled of fresh rain.
The wind died
and became quieter
than a turkey farm on Thanksgiving.

The birds,
frightened, terror-stricken,
flew through their dry realm,
while in the heavens
a wagon load of thunder
rumbled across the sky.

The lightning
unzipped the sky
and let the water out.
Then came,
At long last, what we'd prayed for –
The welcome rain!

Rita Glen (Round Slice of Moon, Scholastic)

I CAN'T WAIT FOR SUMMER

I can't wait for summer, when school days are done,
to spend the days playing outside in the sun.
I won't have to study. No homework, no tests.
Just afternoons spent on adventures and quests.

Instead of mathematics and writing reports,
I'll go to the park and play summertime sports.
Instead of assignments, report cards, and grades,
I'll get to play baseball and watch the parades.

I'll swing on the playground. I'll swim in the pool
instead of just practicing lessons in school.
The second the school year is finally done
I'll spend every minute with friends having fun.

I hardly can wait for the end of the year.
I'm counting the days until summer is here.
It's hard to be patient. It's hard to be cool.
It's hard to believe it's the first day of school.

Kenn Nesbitt ([If I Ran the School](#), Meadowbrook Press)

NIGHT THINGS ARE SOFT AND LOUD

Night things are soft and loud,
When the owl hoots the wind whispers.
When the katydids call
The moon shines quietly.
Soft and loud. The step of something on a twig,
And a swish of high wild flowers as a soundless
Small grass snake winds his way along.
A shirr hardly heard as the bat bobs and weaves with wide
wing,
And the gentle tap of a branch on a window pane.
Tap-a-tap, soft and loud, as a moth's flutter or a cricket's call.
Let sleepers sleep deeply.
Night things are soft and loud and
Sleepers stir and stretch to the soft and loud sounds of
Night things.

Zhenya Gay (The Reading of Poetry, Allyn & Bacon)

A BOOK IS LIKE

A book is like an open flower,
scented pages, fragrant hours.

A book is like a crafty fox,
surprising in its clever plots.

A book is like a fairy's wings,
with princesses, enchanted kings.

A book is like a windowsill,
where breezy thoughts are never still.

A book is like an hour glass,
whose pages flow as hours pass.

A book is like a lock and key
that opens doors and sets minds free.

A book is like an ancient clock
that speaks the times but never talks.

A book is like an open letter,
when read again the friendship's better.

A book is like an apple core
with seeds inside for growing more.

A book is like a trusted friend
that keeps its secret to the end.

Kathy Leeuwenburg (The Reading Teacher, International Literacy Association)

MISCHIEF CITY

A typical day in Mischief City,
The world's topsy-turvy, the world's out of whack.
They're looking at me and they're shaking their heads
And they say this all happened since I got back!

My name is Maxine, this is Mischief City,
Everything's damaged, soiled, busted or cracked.
My family is wishing they'd stayed in their beds
And I wish I could get my act back on its track!

My name is Maxine, *I'm* Mischief City,
I'm a runaway train that just ran out of track.
I'm a walking disaster, a giant whose tread
Leaves a trail of disaster, of ruin (and wrack)!

They're raising a statue in Mischief City,
It's a statue of me and my name's on the plaque.
I'm on top of this wrecking ball made out of lead
With a cloud overhead, and the cloud's painted black!

I've got to get out of Mischief City,
Before I reduce this old house to a shack.
I could move to the jungle, or maybe instead,
I'll just move in with you! Now how about that!

Tim Wynne-Jones ([Til All the Stars Have Fallen](#), Kids can Press)

US TWO

Wherever I am, there's always Pooh,
 There's always Pooh and Me.
 Whatever I do, he wants to do,
 "Where are you going to-day?" says Pooh:
 "Well, that's very odd 'cos I was too.
 Let's go together," says Pooh, says he.
 "Let's go together," says Pooh.

"What's twice eleven?" I said to Pooh.
 ("Twice what?" said Pooh to Me.)
 "I *think* it ought to be twenty-two."
 "Just what I think myself," said Pooh.
 "It wasn't an easy sum to do,
 But that's what it is," said Pooh, said he.
 "That's what it is," said Pooh.

"Let's look for dragons," I said to Pooh.
 "Yes, let's," said Pooh to Me.
 We crossed the river and found a few—
 "Yes, those are dragons all right," said Pooh.
 "As soon as I saw their beaks I knew.
 That's what they are," said Pooh, said he.
 "That's what they are," said Pooh.

"Let's frighten the dragons," I said to Pooh.
 "That's right," said Pooh to Me.
 "I'm not afraid," I said to Pooh,
 And I held his paw and I shouted "Shoo!
 Silly old dragons!"—and off they flew.
 "I wasn't afraid," said Pooh, said he,
 "I'm *never* afraid with you."

So wherever I am, there's always Pooh,
 There's always Pooh and Me.
 "What would I do?" I said to Pooh,
 "If it wasn't for you," and Pooh said: "True,
 It isn't much fun for One, but Two
 can stick together," says Pooh, says he.
 "That's how it is," says Pooh.

A.A. Milne (Time for Poetry, Scott, Forsman & Co.)

A MOSQUITO IN THE CABIN

Although you bash her,
swat her, smash her,
and go to bed victorious,
happy and glorious
she will come winging,
zooming and zinging,
wickedly singing
over your bed.
You slap the air
but she's in your hair
cackling with laughter.
You smack your head,
but she isn't dead—
she's on the rafter.
She's out for blood—
yours, my friend,
and she will get it, in the end.
She brings it first to boiling point,
then lets it steam.
With a fee, fi, fo and contented fum
she sips it
while you dream.

Myra Stilborn ([Till All the Stars Have Fallen](#), Kids Can Press)

NO SMIRCHLING ALLOWED

A brand new teacher came today
from one of the other schools.
“Be serious,” she ordered us,
“and listen to my rules.

“There won’t be any splurching,
and you’re not allowed to flitz.
Anybody caught klumpeting
will put me in a snitz.

“No floozering at recess.
Grufflinking’s not permitted.
And anyone who splubs outside
will *not* be readmitted.

“When you put your hand up,
I don’t want to hear a bloud.
And let’s be clear that while
I’m here, no sneeping is allowed.”

I was truly baffled, but I didn’t
want to show it.
What if I was flitchering and
didn’t even know it?

We sat as still as statues.
None of us made a peep.
All of us were terrified
we’d accidentally sneep.

We didn’t have a *clue* about
the rules that she was using.
How can anyone be good
when being good is so confusing?

Loris Lesynski ([Nothing Beats a Pizza](#), Annic Press)

THE BAD MOOD BLUES

You *wake* up in the morning and
you *know* it's there

BAD M O O O D

BAD M O O O D

From underneath the covers
you can feel it in the air

BAD M O O O D

BAD M O O O D

Everything goes wrong the day
you wake up in the dumps
you know your socks have vanished
and your hair has gone in clumps
your milk is spilling everywhere
your brother has to *poke* you
and everybody's bugging you
and says it's just a *joke*, you
know it isn't fair and know
you're totally upset
and the *day* hasn't even
the *day* hasn't even
the *day* hasn't even
S T A R T E D Y E T

so whatcha gonna do
when you wake up feeling blue
gotta figure out a way to
get a rhythm to the day

and B E A T B E A T B E A T
BEAT BEAT BEAT
BEAT BEAT BEAT the
BAD MOOD away.

Loris Lesynski ([Nothing Beats a Pizza](#), Annic Press)

WILLOW AND GINKGO

The willow is like an etching,
Fine-lined against the sky.
The ginkgo is like a crude sketch,
Hardly worthy to be signed.

The willow's music is like a soprano,
Delicate and thin.
The ginkgo's tune is like a chorus
With everyone joining in.

The willow is sleek as a velvet-nosed calf,
The ginkgo is leathery as an old bull.
The willow's branches are like silken thread;
The ginkgo's like stubby rough wool.

The willow is like a nymph with streaming hair;
Wherever it grows, there is green and gold and fair.
The willow dips to the water,
Protected and precious, like the king's favorite daughter.

The ginkgo forces its way through gray concrete;
Like a city child, it grows up in the street.
Thrust against the metal sky,
Somehow it survives and even thrives.

*My eyes feast upon the willow,
But my heart goes to the ginkgo.*

Eve Merriam (It Doesn't Always Have to Rhyme, Atheneum)

FOUL SHOT

With two 60's stuck on the scoreboard
And two seconds hanging on the clock,
The solemn boy in the center of eyes,
Squeezed by silence,
Seeks out the line with his feet,
Soothes his hands along his uniform,
Gently drums the ball against the floor,
Then measures the waiting net,
Raises the ball on his right hand,
Balances it with left,
Calms it with fingertips,
Breathes,
Crouches,
Waits,
And then through a stretching of stillness,
Nudges it upward.

The ball
Slides up and out,
Lands,
Leans,
Wobbles,
Wavers,
Hesitates,
Exasperates,
Plays it coy
Until every face begs with unsounding screams—
And then

And then

And then,

Right before ROAR-UP,
Dives down and through.

Edwin A. Hoey (Child Craft, Vol. 3, World Book Inc.)

THE WILD WOLVES OF WINTER

The wild wolves of winter
swept through the streets last night. Hate glared
in their eyes like unexploded neon
the wind of their howling a thousand moon-curdling moans
the teeth of their hunger endless fields of aching snow.

The wild wolves of winter
welcome nowhere, scratched at doors and windows,
ripped at roofs, tore at chimneys, kept us awake,
nervous in our warm, sleep-calling beds,
The wind moan. The crazy clawing. The shaken doors.
Then, as suddenly
were gone, all was quiet. We turned a last time
in our beds and slept.

Raymond Souster ([Collections 2](#), Copp Clark)

THE SNAIL

The life of the snail is a fight against odds,
Though fought without fever or flummox;
You see, he is one of those gasteropods
Which have to proceed on their stomachs.

Just think how you'd hate to go round on your own,
Especially if it was gummy,
And wherever you traveled you left on a stone
The glistening track of your tummy!

Wherever you hid, by that glutinous trail
Some boring acquaintance would follow;
And this is the bitter complaint of the snail
Who is pestered to death by the swallow.

But remember, he carries his house on his back
And that is a wonderful power;
When he goes to the sea he has nothing to pack,
And he cannot be caught in a shower.

After all, there is something attractive in that,
And then, he can move in a minute,
And it's something to have such a very small flat
That nobody else can get in it.

But this is what causes such numbers of snails
To throw themselves into abysses;
Since none of the creatures are definite males
And none of them definite Misses,

They cannot be certain which one of a pair
Is the Daddy, and which is the Mummy;
And that must be even more awful to bear
Than walking about on your tummy.

A.P. Herbert ([A Book of Animal Poems](#), The Viking Press)

A GOAT IN A LANDFILL

A goat was in a landfill
eating garbage and debris
and came across a movie;
a discarded DVD.

He chewed the case and cover
and the flavor made him smile.
He took the disc between his lips
and nibbled for a while.

He thought, "This film is brilliant;
full of action and suspense.
The story is exciting
and the fight scenes are intense.

"It's got a lot of comedy,
a touch of sweet romance,
and music so inspiring
it makes me want to dance."

He gnawed a little longer
through some drama and a chase,
and finished off the movie
with a grin upon his face.

He gulped the closing credits —
one more bite was all it took —
and thought, "That film was awesome
but I still preferred the book."

Kenn Nesbitt ([My Dog Likes to Disco](#), Amazon Digital Services LLC)

THE SPELL OF THE YUKON

I wanted the gold, and I sought it;
 I scabbled and mucked like a slave.
Was it famine or scurvy – I fought it;
 I hurled my youth into a grave.
I wanted the gold and I got it –
 Came out with a fortune last fall, –
Yet somehow life's not what I thought it,
 And somehow the gold isn't all.

The winter! the brightness that blinds you,
 The white land locked tight as a drum,
The cold fear that follows and finds you,
 The silence that bludgeons you dumb.
The snows that are older than history,
 The woods where the weird shadows slant;
The stillness, the moonlight, the mystery,
 I've bade 'em goodbye – but I can't.

There's gold, and it's haunting and haunting;
 It's luring me on as of old;
Yet it isn't the gold that I'm wanting,
 So much as just finding the gold.
It's the great, big, broad land 'way up yonder.
 It's the forests where silence has lease;
It's the beauty that thrills me with wonder,
 It's the stillness that fills me with peace.

Robert Service (Nineteenth Moon, McGraw-Hill Ryerson)

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.

Robert Frost (Time For Poetry, Scott, Foresman & Co.)

DREAM-SONG

Sunlight, moonlight,
Twilight, starlight—
Gloaming at the close of day,
And an owl calling,
Cool dews falling
In a wood of oak and may.

Lantern-light, taper-light,
Torchlight, no-light:
Darkness at the shut of day,
And lions roaring,
Their wrath pouring
In wild waste places far away.

Elf-light, bat-light,
Touchwood-light and toad-light,
And the sea a shimmering gloom of gray,
And a small face smiling
In a dream's beguiling
In a world of wonders far away.

Walter de la Mare (Best Loved Poems, Spencer Press)

THE YOUNG CALVES

A hush had fallen on the birds,
And it was almost night,
When I came round a turn and saw
A whole year's loveliest sight.

Two calves that thought their month of life
Meant June through all the year
Were coming down the grassy road
As slender as young deer.

They stopped amazed and took me in,
Putting their ears out far,
And in each of four round eyes
There was an evening star.

They did not breathe, they stared so hard,
Brother close to brother,
Then their legs awoke, and they
Turned flank to flank for mother.

A small boy in torn knickers came
And caught them as they fled,
He put a slender arm around
Each slender, startled head.

He never looked at me at all,
I was not in his mind;
The three of them went down the road
And never glanced behind.

Robert P. Tristram Coffin ([Saltwater Farm](#), The MacMillan Company)

THE ARROW AND THE SONG

I shot an arrow into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For, so swiftly it flew, the sight
Could not follow it in its flight.

I breathed a song into the air,
It fell to earth, I knew not where;
For who has sight so keen and strong,
That it can follow the flight of song?

Long, long afterward, in an oak
I found the arrow, still unbroke;
And the song, from beginning to end,
I found again in the heart of a friend.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (Poems of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, James R. Osgood and Co.)

ESCAPE AT BEDTIME

The lights from the parlour and kitchen shone out
Through the blinds and the windows and bars;
And high overhead and all moving about,
There were thousands of millions of stars.

There ne'er were such thousands of leaves on a tree,
Nor of people in church or the Park,
As the crowds of the stars that looked down upon me,
And that glittered and winked in the dark.

The Dog, and the Plough, and the Hunter, and all,
And the Star of the sailor, and Mars,
These shone in the sky, and the pail by the wall
Would be half full of water and stars.

They saw me at last, and they chased me with cries,
And they soon had me packed into bed;
But the glory kept shining and bright in my eyes,
And the stars going round in my head.

Robert Louis Stevenson (Time for Poetry, W. J. Gage & Co.)

THE BROOK

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel.

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (*A Child's Anthology of Poetry*, Scholastic)

WYNKEN, BLYNKEN, AND NOD

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night
 Sailed off in a wooden shoe—
 Sailed on a river of crystal light,
 Into a sea of dew.
 “Where are you going, and what do you wish?”
 The old moon asked the three.
 “We have come to fish for the herring fish
 That live in this beautiful sea;
 Nets of silver and gold have we!”
 Said Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,
 As they rocked in the wooden shoe,
 And the wind that sped them all night long
 Ruffled the waves of dew.
 The little stars were the herring fish
 That lived in the beautiful sea—
 “Now cast your nets wherever you wish—
 Never afeard are we”;
 So cried the stars to the fishermen three:
 Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

All night long their nets they threw
 To the stars in the twinkling foam—
 Then down from the skies came the wooden
 shoe
 Bringing the fishermen home;
 ‘Twas all so pretty a sail it seemed
 As if it could not be,
 And some folks thought ‘twas a dream they’d
 dreamed
 Of sailing that beautiful sea—
 But I shall name you the fishermen three:
 Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
 And Nod is a little head,
 And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
 Is a wee one’s trundle-bed.
 So shut your eyes while mother sings
 Of wonderful sights that be,
 And you shall see the beautiful things
 As you rock in the misty sea,
 Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:
 Wynken,
 Blynken,
 And Nod.

Eugene Field (Oxford Treasury of Children’s Poems, Scholastic)

HOW TO TELL THE WILD ANIMALS

If ever you should go by chance
 To jungles in the East;
And if there should to you advance
 A large and tawny beast,
If he roars at you as you're dyin'
You'll know it is the Asian Lion.

Or if some time when roaming round,
 A noble wild beast greets you,
With black stripes on a yellow ground,
 Just notice if he eats you.
This simple rule may help you learn
The Bengal Tiger to discern.

If strolling forth, a beast you view,
 Whose hide with spots is peppered,
As soon as he has lept on you,
 You'll know it is the Leopard.
'Twill do no good to roar with pain,
He'll only lep and lep again.

If when you're walking round your yard,
 You meet a creature there,
Who hugs you very, very hard,
 Be sure it is the Bear.
If you have any doubt, I guess
He'll give you just one more caress.

Though to distinguish beasts of prey
 A novice might nonplus,
The Crocodiles you always may
 Tell from Hyenas thus:
Hyenas come with merry smiles;
But if they weep, they're Crocodiles.

The true Chameleon is small,
 A lizard sort of thing;
He hasn't any ears at all,
 And not a single wing.
If there is nothing on the tree,
'Tis the Chameleon you see.

Carolyn Wells (Time For Poetry, Gage Publishing)

MEASURE ME, SKY

Measure me, sky!
Tell me I reach by a song
Nearer the stars;
I have been little so long.

Weigh me, high wind!
What will your wild scales record?
Profit of pain,
Joy by the weight of a word.

Horizon, reach out!
Catch at my hands, stretch me taut,
Rim of the world:
Widen my eyes by a thought.

Sky, be my depth,
Wind, be my width and my height,
World, my heart's span;
Loveliness, wings for my flight.

Leonora Speyer (Favorite Poems Old and New, Doubleday)

THE ISLAND

If I had a ship,
I'd sail my ship,
I'd sail my ship
Through Eastern seas;
Down to a beach where the slow waves thunder—
The green curls over and the white falls under—
Boom! Boom! Boom!
On the sun-bright sand.
Then I'd leave my ship and I'd land,
And climb the steep white sand,
And climb to the trees,
The six dark trees,
The coco-nut trees on the cliff's green crown—
Hands and knees
To the coco-nut trees,
Face to the cliff as the stones patter down,
Up, up, up, staggering, stumbling,
Round the corner where the rock is crumbling,
Round this shoulder,
Over this boulder,
Up to the top where the six trees stand....

And there would I rest, and lie,
My chin in my hands, and gaze
At the dazzle of sand below,
And the green waves curling slow,
And the grey-blue distant haze
Where the sea goes up to the sky....

And I'd say to myself as I looked so lazily down at
the sea:
"There's nobody else in the world, and the world was
made for me."

A.A. Milne ([The World of Christopher Robin](#), McClelland and Stewart)

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders Fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders Fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders Fields.

John McCrae ([A Child's Anthology of Poetry](#), Scholastic)

THE LITTLE ROAD

A little road was straying
Across a little hill.
I asked, "May I go with you, Road"?
It answered, "If you will."

'Twas travel-stained and shabby,
And dust was on its face.
Said I: "How fine to wander free
To every lovely place!

"Or if you're off to mountains,
Or if you're off to sea,
Or if you're bound across the world,
It's all the same to me."

We loitered in the sunlight,
We journeyed on together;
The sky was like a bluebird's wing,
The wind was like a feather.

We passed a ruddy robin
Who called, "How do you do?"
Some daisies shook their bonnets back
And begged, "Ah, take us too!"

A squirrel briefly joined us,
A brook came hurrying down;
We wandered through a meadow green
And by a busy town.

When dusky twilight met us,
No feet so slow as mine.
"Why there's a little house," I said,
"With windows all ashine.

"Perhaps since night is nearing,
I'd rather rest than roam."
"I knew you would," said Little Road;
"That's why I brought you home."

Nancy Byrd Turner (Magpie Lane, Harcourt, Brace and Co., Inc.)

FIVE FAT FLEAS

Five fat fleas
Upon a trapeze
Did somersaults one by one.
A flea flew, a flea flew,
A flea flew, a flea flew,
A flea flew, and then there were none.

Four fat frogs
On tumbledown logs
Did somersaults one by one.
A frog flew, a frog flew,
A frog flew, a frog flew,
(Clap), and then there were none.

Three fat cats
On calico mats
Did somersaults one by one.
A cat flew, a cat flew,
A cat flew, (clap),
(Clap), and then there were none.

Two fat ants
In dancing pants
Did somersaults one by one.
An ant flew, an ant flew,
(Clap), (clap),
(Clap), and then there were none.

One fat bee
On a billygoat's knee
Did somersaults one by one.
A bee flew, (clap),
(Clap), (clap),
(Clap), and then there were none.

No fat gnomes
On a dinosaur's bones
Did somersaults none by none.
(Clap), (clap),
(Clap), (clap),
(Clap), and then there were none.

One fat bee
On a billygoat's knee
Did somersaults one by one.
A bee flew, (clap),
(Clap), (clap),
(Clap), and then there were none.

Two fat ants
(Etcetera, ad nauseam).

Dennis Lee (Jelly Belly, MacMillan)

SUCCESSFUL PANCAKES

There's a trick to making pancakes
that everyone should know.
The trick is this, to flatten them
as flat as they will go.

Hit 'em with a dictionary.
Hit 'em with a ski.
Hit 'em with an elephant.
Hit 'em with a tree.

...till they're

Flatter than a splisher,
Flatter than a splat,
Flatter than a pancake,
Flat, flat, FLAT.

Throw 'em in the frying pan.
Flip 'em on their backs.
Cook 'em till you think they're done
and throw 'em down the hatch.

Charles Wilkins (Do Whales Jump at Night?, Douglas & McIntyre)

GODFREY GORDON GUSTAVUS GORE

Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore—
No doubt you have heard the name before—
Was a boy who never would shut a door!

The wind might whistle, the wind might roar,
And teeth be aching and throats be sore,
But still he never would shut the door.

His father would beg, his mother implore,
“Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,
We really *do* wish you would shut the door!”

Their hands they wrung, their hair they tore;
But Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore
Was deaf as the buoy out at the Nore.

When he walked forth the folks would roar,
“Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,
Why don’t you think to shut the door?”

They rigged out a Shutter with sail and oar,
And threatened to pack off Gustavus Gore
On a voyage of penance to Singapore.

But he begged for mercy, and said, “No more!
Pray do not send me to Singapore
On a Shutter, and then I will shut the door!”

“You will?” said his parents; “then keep on
shore!
But mind you do! For the plague is sore
Of a fellow that never will shut the door,
Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore!”

William Brighty Rands (Time for Poetry, Scott Foresman & Company)

LULLABY OF THE IROQUOIS

Little brown baby-bird, lapped in your nest,
 Wrapped in your nest,
 Strapped in your nest,
Your straight little cradle-board rocks you to rest;
 Its hands are your nest;
 Its bands are your nest;
It swings from the down-bending branch of the oak;
You watch the camp flame, and the curling grey smoke;
But, oh, for your pretty black eyes sleep is best,--
Little brown baby of mine, go to rest.

Little brown baby-bird swinging to sleep,
 Winging to sleep
 Singing to sleep,
Your wonder-black eyes that so wide open keep,
 Shielding their sleep,
 Unyielding to sleep,
The heron is homing, the plover is still,
The night-owl calls from his haunt on the hill,
Afar the fox barks, afar the stars peep,--
Little brown baby of mine, go to sleep.

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) (Flint & Feather, the Complete Poems of E. Pauline Johnson, Hodder & Stoughton)

JABBERWOCKY

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

“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 hast 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 outgrabe.

Lewis Carroll (The Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

DOH-SI-DOH

Don't be lazy,
 Don't be late—
 Jump right over
 The garden gate

Now don't be rude
 And don't be rowdy
 Tell your lovin'
 Partner "Howdy!"

Bring your grampa
 Bring your gran
 Pile them into
 The old sedan.

When he makes
 A bow, by heck,
 Grab him round
 His lovin' neck

*And it's one for lights
 And two for luck
 As we nearly collide
 With the pick-up truck!*

Swing him quick
 Across the floor—
 Pitch him smartly
 Out the door!

Now here's the fiddler
 Big and fat
 Mopping his brow
 With an old felt hat

*And you be candy
 I'll be gum
 As we grand-change-all
 Into kingdom come...*

And here's the caller
 Short and sweet
 Trim in the middle
 And quick on her feet

But now the doh-
 Si-dohs are through;
 Back in the truck,
 And be

So upsy-daisy
 Don't be lazy
 Allemande left
 Till it drives you crazy

home...
 by...
 two.

Swing with Peter
 Swing with Paul
 Swing with the boy
 Who's the best in the hall.

*And it's tickle my fancy!
 Tickle my tum!
 Tickle my ribs
 Till I beat like a drum!*

Dennis Lee (The Ice Cream Store, Harper Collins)

TWO'S COMPANY

They said the house was haunted, but
He laughed at them and said, 'Tut, tut!
I've never heard such tittle-tattle
As ghosts that groan and chains that rattle;
And just to prove I'm in the right,
Please leave me here to spend the night.'

They winked absurdly, tried to smother
Their ignorant laughter, nudged each other,
And left him just as dusk was falling
With a hunchback moon and screech-owls calling.
Not that this troubled him one bit;
In fact, he was quite glad of it,
Knowing it's every sane man's mission
To contradict all superstition.

But what is that? Outside it seemed
As if chains rattled, someone screamed!
Come, come, it's merely nerves, he's certain
(But just the same, he draws the curtain).
The stroke of twelve—but there's no clock!
He shuts the door and turns the lock
(Of course, he knows that no one's there,
But no harm's done by taking care!)
Someone's outside—the silly joker,
(He may as well pick up the poker!)
That noise again! He checks the doors,
Shutters the windows, makes a pause

To seek the safest place to hide—
(The cupboard's strong—he creeps inside).
'Not that there's anything to fear,'
He tells himself, when at his ear
A voice breathes softly, 'How do you do!
I am the ghost. Pray, who are you?'

Raymond Wilson (Never Say Boo to a Ghost, Oxford)

IT IS RAINING

It is raining.

Where would you like to be in the rain?
Where would you like to be?

I'd like to be on a city street,
where the rain comes down in a driving sheet,
where it wets the houses—roof and wall—
the wagons and horses and autos and all.
That's where I'd like to be in the rain,
that's where I'd like to be.

It is raining.

Where would you like to be in the rain?
Where would you like to be?

I'd like to be in a tall tree top,
where the rain comes dripping, drop, drop, drop,
around on every side:
where it wets the farmer, the barn, the pig,
the cows, the chickens both little and big;
where it batters and beats on a field of wheat
and makes the little birds hide.

It is raining.

Where would you like to be in the rain?
Where would you like to be?

I'd like to be on a ship at sea,
where everything's wet as wet can be
and the waves are rolling high,
where sailors are pulling the ropes and singing,
and wind's in the rigging and salt spray's stinging,
and round us sea gulls cry.
On a dipping skimming ship at sea—
that's where I'd like to be in the rain;
that's where I'd like to be!

Lucy Sprague Mitchell (Time For Poetry, Gage Publishing)

FORGIVEN

I found a little beetle; so that Beetle was his name,
And I called him Alexander and he answered just the same.
I put him in a match-box, and I kept him all the day ...
And Nanny let my beetle out -

Yes, Nanny let my beetle out -

She went and let my beetle out -

And Beetle ran away.

She said she didn't mean it, and I never said she did,
She said she wanted matches and she just took off the lid,
She said that she was sorry, but it's difficult to catch
An excited sort of beetle you've mistaken for a match.

She said that she was sorry, and I really mustn't mind,
As there's lots and lots of beetles which she's certain we could find,
If we looked about the garden for the holes where beetles hid -
And we'd get another match-box and write BEETLE on the lid.

We went to all the places which a beetle might be near,
And we made the sort of noises which a beetle likes to hear,
And I saw a kind of something, and I gave a sort of shout:
"A beetle-house and Alexander Beetle coming out!"

It was Alexander Beetle I'm as certain as can be,
And he had a sort of look as if he thought it must be ME,
And he had a sort of look as if he thought he ought to say:
"I'm very, very sorry that I tried to run away."

And Nanny's very sorry too for you-know-what-she-did,
And she's writing ALEXANDER very blackly on the lid,
So Nan and Me are friends, because it's difficult to catch
An excited Alexander you've mistaken for a match.

A. A. Milne ([The Complete Works of A. A. Milne](#), Delphi Classics)

ODE TO THE APOSTROPHE

Hey you, hanging
over us like a grenade
or a kernel of truth,
I bet you're tall, dark,
muscular as a messenger
of the gods. Though these days
you probably dodge traffic
on a ten speed, charge
up stairs to deliver whatever
we can't live without,
have forgotten or left out.
You're quick, to the point.
You never forget
what you stand in for.

But brevity is not the soul.

You change the cadence of thought,
address loss, inevitable sword
suspended by a hair above our heads.
Kind of like a poet, aren't you?
Or a politician. You take
a lot of abuse for the job you do.
People don't know when to use you,
when to leave you out.
If we want to say "it is,"
then we should use "apostrophe s."
It's.
You replace the "I" of "is."

When you're there it means
something is missing.
Otherwise, we don't use you
and its is possessive, as in -
The word lost its meaning.
So simple. But you'd be amazed
at the number of people who still
confuse the statement of *being*
with the act of possession.

Elizabeth Zetlin ([The Thing With Feathers](#), Buschek Books)

A MAD POEM ADDRESSED TO MY NEPHEWS AND NIECES

The World cheats those who cannot read;
I, happily, have mastered script and pen.
The World cheats those who hold no office;
I am blessed with high official rank.
Often the old have much sickness and pain;
With me, luckily, there is not much wrong.
People when they are old are often burdened with ties;
But I have finished with marriage and giving in marriage.
No changes happen to jar the quiet of my mind;
No business comes to impair the vigour of my limbs.
Hence it is that now for ten years
Body and soul have rested in hermit peace.
And all the more, in the last lingering years
What I shall need are very few things.
A single rug to warm me through the winter;
One meal to last me the whole day.
It does not matter that my house is rather small;
One cannot sleep in more than one room!
It does not matter that I have not many horses;
One cannot ride on two horses at once!
As fortunate as me among the people of the world
Possibly one would find seven out of ten.
As contented as me among a hundred men
Look as you may, you will not find one.
In the affairs of others even fools are wise;
In their own business even sages err.
To no one else would I dare to speak my heart.
So my wild words are addressed to my nephews and nieces.

Po Chü-i (Being Born and Growing Older, Van Nostrand Reinhold)

THE SONG MY PADDLE SINGS

West wind, blow from your prairie nest,
Blow from the mountains, blow from the west.
The sail is idle, the sailor too;
O! wind of the west, we wait for you.
Blow, blow!
I have wooed you so,
But never a favour you bestow.
You rock your cradle the hills between,
But scorn to notice my white lateen.

I stow the sail, unship the mast:
I wooed you long but my wooing's past;
My paddle will lull you into rest.
O! drowsy wind of the drowsy west,
Sleep, sleep,
By your mountain steep,
Or down where the prairie grasses sweep!
Now fold in slumber your laggard wings,
For soft is the song my paddle sings.

August is laughing across the sky,
Laughing while paddle, canoe and I,
Drift, drift,
Where the hills uplift
On either side of the current swift.

The river rolls in its rocky bed;
My paddle is plying its way ahead;
Dip, dip,
While the waters flip
In foam as over their breast we slip.

And oh, the river runs swifter now;
The eddies circle about my bow.
Swirl, swirl!
How the ripples curl
In many a dangerous pool awirl!

And forward far the rapids roar,-
Fretting their margin for evermore.
Dash, dash,
With a mighty crash,
They seethe, and boil, and bound, and splash.

Be strong, O paddle! be brave, canoe!
The reckless waves you must plunge into.
Reel, reel.
On your trembling keel,
But never a fear my craft will feel.

We've raced the rapid, we're far ahead!
The river slips through its silent bed.
Sway, sway,
As the bubbles spray
And fall in tinkling tunes away.

And up on the hills against the sky,
A fir tree rocking its lullaby,
Swings, swings,
Its emerald wings,
Swelling the song that my paddle sings.

E. Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) (Flint & Feather, Musson Book Co. Ltd.)

COLONEL FAZACKERLEY

Colonel Fazackerley Butterworth-Toast
Bought an old castle complete with a ghost,
But someone or other forgot to declare
To Colonel Fazack that the spectre was there.

On the very first evening, while waiting to dine,
The Colonel was taking a fine sherry wine,
When the ghost, with a furious flash and a flare,
Shot out of the chimney and shivered, 'Beware!'

Colonel Fazackerley put down his glass
And said, 'My dear fellow, that's really first class!
I just can't conceive how you do it at all.
I imagine you're going to a Fancy Dress Ball?'

At this, the dread ghost gave a withering cry.
Said the Colonel (his monocle firm in his eye),
'Now just how you do it I wish I could think.
Do sit down and tell me, and please have a drink.'

The ghost in his phosphorous cloak gave a roar
And floated about between ceiling and floor.
He walked through a wall and returned through a pane
And backed up the chimney and came down again.

Said the Colonel, 'With laughter I'm feeling quite weak!'
(As trickles of merriment ran down his cheek).
'My house-warming party I hope you won't spurn.
You *must* say you'll come and you'll give us a turn!'

At this, the poor spectre—quite out of his wits—
Proceeded to shake himself almost to bits.
He rattled his chains and he clattered his bones
And he filled the whole castle with mumbles and moans.

But Colonel Fazackerley, just as before,
Was simply delighted and called out, 'Encore!'
At which the ghost vanished, his efforts in vain,
And never was seen at the castle again.

'Oh dear, what a pity!' said Colonel Fazack.
'I don't know his name, so I can't call him back.'
And then with a smile that was hard to define,
Colonel Fazackerley went in to dine.

Charles Causley (The Random House Book of Poetry for Children, Random House)

THOUGHTS LIKE AN OCEAN

The sea comes to me on the shore
On lacy slippered feet
And shyly, slyly slides away
With a murmur of defeat.

And as I stand there wondering
Strange thoughts spin round my head
Of why and where and what and when
And if not, why, what then?

Where do lobsters come from?
And where anemones?
And are there other worlds out there
With other mysteries?

Why do I walk upon dry land
While fishes haunt the sea?
And as I think about their lives
Do they too think of me?

Why is water, water?
Why does it wet my hand?
Are there really as many stars
As there are grains of sand?

And where would the ocean go to
If there were no gravity?
And where was I before I lived?
And where's eternity?

Perhaps the beach I'm standing on
Perhaps this stretch of sand
Perhaps the Universe itself
Lies on someone else's hand?

And isn't it strange how this water and I
At this moment happened to meet?
And how this tide sweeps half the world
Before stopping at my feet?

Gareth Owen (Touchstones I, 3rd Ed., Hodder & Stoughton)

ABIGAIL

Abigail knew when she was born
 Among the roses, she was a thorn.
 Her quiet mother had lovely looks.
 Her quiet father wrote quiet books.
 Her quiet brothers, correct though pale,
 Weren't really prepared for Abigail
 Who entered the house with howls and tears
 While both of her brothers blocked their ears
 And both of her parents, talking low,
 Said, "Why is Abigail screaming so?"

Abigail kept on getting worse.
 As soon as she teathed she bit her nurse.
 At three, she acted distinctly cool
 Toward people and things at nursery school.
 "I'm sick of cutting out dolls," she said,
 And cut a hole in her dress, instead.
 Her mother murmured, "She's bold for three."
 Her father answered, "I quite agree."
 Her brothers mumbled, "We hate to fuss,
 But *when* will Abigail be like us?"

Abigail, going through her teens,
 Liked overalls and pets and machines.
 In college, hating most of its features,
 She told off all of her friends and teachers.
 Her brothers, graduating from Yale,
 Said: "Really, you're hopeless, Abigail."
 And while her mother said, "Fix your looks,"
 Her father added, "Or else write books."
 And Abigail asked, "Is that a dare?"
 And wrote a book that would curl your hair.

The book sold widely, with movie rights,
 And Abigail took to wearing tights
 And, busily signing bookstore copies,
 She wore hoop earrings and strings of poppies
 And said, "Since boorish books are the fad,
 I'll write some more of them just as bad."
 And while her mother moaned, "Must you, dear?"
 And both of her brothers looked severe,
 Her outraged father said, "I forbid it,"
 But Abigail went ahead and did it.

Abigail now, no longer young,
 Has nineteen cats and a wicked tongue
 And sometimes marches, weirdly arrayed,
 Shaking her fist in a peace parade.
 Her quiet parents have passed away.
 Her quiet brothers are tired and grey,
 But Abigail's had her hairdo tinted
 And all of her books have been reprinted,
 And *Time* and *Life* write stories to hail
 That durable rebel, Abigail.

Kaye Starbird ([Contexts Anthology One](#), Nelson Canada)

A HOUSE CALLED TOMORROW

You are not fifteen, or twelve, or seventeen—
You are a hundred wild centuries

And fifteen, bringing with you
In every breath and in every step

Everyone who has come before you,
All the yous that you have been,

The mothers of your mother,
The fathers of your father.

If someone in your family tree was trouble,
A hundred were not:

The bad do not win—not finally,
No matter how loud they are.

We simply would not be here
If that were so.

You are made, fundamentally, from the good.
With this knowledge, you never march alone.

You are the breaking news of the century.
You are the good who has come forward

Through it all, even if so many days
Feel otherwise. But think:

When you as a child learned to speak,
It's not that you didn't know words—

It's that, from the centuries, you knew so many,
And it's hard to choose the words that will be your own.

continued on next page...

From those centuries we human beings bring with us
The simple solutions and songs,

The river bridges and star charts and song harmonies
All in service to a simple idea:

That we can make a house called tomorrow.
What we bring, finally, into the new day, every day,

Is ourselves. And that's all we need
To start. That's everything we require to keep going.

Look back only for as long as you must,
Then go forward into the history you will make.

Be good, then better. Write books. Cure disease.
Make us proud. Make yourself proud.

And those who came before you? When you hear thunder,
Hear it as their applause.

Alberto Ríos (Not Go Away Is My Name, Copper Canyon Press)

THE NAMING OF CATS

The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games;
You may think at first I'm as mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.
First of all, there's the name that the family use daily,
Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo or James,
Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey –
All of them sensible everyday names.
There are fancier names if you think they sound sweeter,
Some for the gentlemen, some for the dames:
Such as Plato, Admetus, Electra, Demeter –
But all them sensible everyday names.
But I tell you, a cat needs a name that's particular,
A name that's peculiar, and more dignified,
Else how can he keep up his tail perpendicular,
Or spread out his whiskers, or cherish his pride?
Of names of this kind, I can give you a quorum,
Such as Munkustrap, Quaxo, or Coricopat,
Such as Bombalurina, or else Jellylorum –
Names that never belong to more than one cat.
But above and beyond there's still one name left over,
And that is the name that you never will guess;
The name that no human research can discover –
But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess.
When you notice a cat in profound meditation,
The reason, I tell you, is always the same:
His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name:
His ineffable effable
Effanineffable
Deep and inscrutable singular Name.

T.S. Eliot ([Galaxies_I](#), Addison Wesley)

BED SORE

I might just stay in bed today.
I've got this kind of funny pain
Around the middle of my brain –
I get it when it's going to rain.
I might just stay in bed.

I guess I'll stay in bed today.
My stomach's full of bubbling goo,
My teeth are feeling poorly too –
I maybe have a touch of flu.
I guess I'll stay in bed.

I think I'll stay in bed today.
My tongue tastes like a Brussels sprout,
My toes are sore (it could be gout),
I feel my liver leaking out.
I think I'll stay in bed.

I ought to stay in bed today.
I've got an ache in every bone
And probably a kidney stone –
I'm sure I should be left alone.
I ought to stay in bed.

I'd better stay in bed today.
My corpuscles are oozing gunk,
My heart just gave an awful clunk,
I think my floating ribs have sunk.
I'd better stay in bed.

I hate to stay in bed today.
I'll miss the test on Ancient Rome,
And fighting mean old Moose Malone,
And bringing my report card home –
Too bad I'm sick in bed!

Mary Blakeslee ([Galaxies I](#), Addison Wesley)

THE MALLARD

Brown-checked, neat as new spring tweed,
A mallard, wing-stretched in the sun,
Watched from the bank of a beer-bubble stream
Her ducklings, one after one,
Daring, dipping in dazzling weed,
Nuzzling joyful mud.
Black and yellow, downy as bees,
They busied about a fringe of reed
In a paddled nursery pool.

The mother, content, lay dry,
Relaxed her wings, slackened her throat,
Dared to close one bead-black eye
When swift as terror a lightning stoat
Forked and flashed upstream.

Splatter and splash of mother and young –
Feathered drops whirled in a storm of fear,
Water thrashed in flight.
A stone for the stoat – I flung it near
And stood alone, not knowing what fate
Lay crouched in wait, while the stillness there
Grew ominous and bright.

Phoebe Hesketh (Touchstones 3, English Universities Press)

THE UNNAMED LAKE

It sleeps among the thousand hills
Where no man ever trod,
And only nature's music fills
The silences of God.

Great mountains tower above its shore,
Green rushes fringe its brim,
And o'er its breast for evermore
The wanton breezes skim.

Dark clouds that intercept the sun
Go there in Spring to weep,
And there, when Autumn days are done.
White mists lie down to sleep.

Sunrise and sunset crown with gold
The pinks of ageless stone,
Her winds have thundered from of old
And storms have set their throne.

No echoes of the world afar
Disturb it night or day,
The sun and shadow, moon and star,
Pass and repass for aye.

'Twas in the grey of early dawn,
When first the lake we spied,
And fragments of a cloud were drawn
Half down the mountain side.

Along the shore a heron flew,
And from a speck on high,
That hovered in the deepening blue,
We heard the fish-hawk's cry.

Among the cloud-capt solitudes,
No sound the silence broke,
Save when, in whispers down the woods,
The guardian mountains spoke.

Through tangled brush and dewy brake,
Returning whence we came,
We passed in silence, and the lake
We left without a name.

Frederick G. Scott (The Unnamed Lake and Other Poems, William Briggs)

THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS

They shut the road through the woods
 Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
Before they planted the trees.
It is underneath the coppice and heath
And the thin anemones.
Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.

Yet, if you enter the woods
Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
Where the otter whistles his mate,
(They fear not men in the woods,
Because they see so few.)

You will hear the beat of a horse's feet,
And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods...
But there is no road through the woods.

Rudyard Kipling (Poetry for Pleasure, W.W. Norton & Co.)

HORSES

Those lumbering horses in the steady plough,
On the bare field – I wonder why, just now,
They seemed terrible, so wild and strange,
Like magic power on the stony grange.

Perhaps some childish hour has come again,
When I watched fearful, through the blackening rain,
Their hooves like pistons in an ancient mill
Move up and down, yet seem as standing still.

Their conquering hooves which trod the stubble down
Were ritual that turned the field to brown,
And their great hulks were seraphim of gold,
Or mute ecstatic monsters on the mould.

And oh the rapture, when, one furrow done,
They marched broad-breasted to the sinking sun!
The light flowed off their bossy sides in flakes;
The furrows rolled behind like struggling snakes.

But when at dusk with steaming nostrils home
They came, they seemed gigantic in the gloam,
And warm and glowing with mysterious fire
That lit their smouldering bodies in the mire.

Their eyes as brilliant and as wide as night
Gleamed with a cruel apocalyptic light.
Their manes the leaping ire of the wind
Lifted with rage invisible and blind.

Ah, now it fades! it fades! and I must pine
Again for that dread country crystalline,
Where the blank field and the still-standing tree
Were bright and fearful presences to me.

Edwin Muir (Poetry for Pleasure, W.W. Norton & Co.)

LONDON SNOW

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
 In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
 Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
 Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
 Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
 Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
 Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;
 Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
 Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
 All night it fell, and when full inches seven
 It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
 The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
 And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
 Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:
 The eye marveled—at the dazzling whiteness;
 The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;
 No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
 And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.
 Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,
 They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
 Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;
 Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
 Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
 “O look at the trees!” they cried, “O look at the trees!”
 With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,
 Following along the white deserted way,
 A country company long dispersed asunder:
 When now already the sun, in pale display
 Standing by Paul’s high dome, spread forth below
 His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.
 For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
 And trains of somber men, past tale of number,
 Tread long brown paths, as towards their toil they go:
 But even for them awhile no cares encumber
 Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,
 The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber
 At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the
 charm they have broken.

Robert Bridges (Echoes, G. Bell & Sons Ltd.)

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt
Among Arabian sands.
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore
Long after it was heard no more.

William Wordsworth (Sound and Sense, 2nd Ed., Harcourt Brace)

THE DAFFODILS

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
Outdid 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.

William Wordsworth ([The Art of Poetry](#), McClelland and Stewart)

SEA-FEVER

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship, and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the seagulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

John Masefield ([Poems](#), Houghton-Mifflin)

NIGHT

A pale enchanted moon is sinking low
Behind the dunes that fringe the shadowy lea,
And there is haunted starlight on the flow
Of immemorial sea.

I am alone and need no more pretend
Laughter or smile to hide a hungry heart;
I walk with solitude as with a friend
Enfolded and apart.

We tread an eerie road across the moor
Where shadows weave upon their ghostly looms,
And winds sing an old lyric that might lure
Sad queens from ancient tombs.

I am a sister to the loveliness
Of cool far hill and long-remembered shore,
Finding in it a sweet forgetfulness
Of all that hurt before.

The world of day, its bitterness and cark,
No longer have the power to make me weep;
I welcome this communion of the dark
As toilers welcome sleep.

Lucy Maud Montgomery (The Poetry of Lucy Maud Montgomery, Fitzhenry and Whiteside)

HOLD FAST YOUR DREAMS

Hold fast your dreams!
Within your heart
Keep one still, secret spot
Where dreams may go,
And, sheltered so,
May thrive and grow
Where doubt and fear are not.
O keep a place apart,
Within your heart,
For little dreams to go!

Think still of lovely things that are not true.
Let wish and magic work at will in you.
Be sometimes blind to sorrow. Make believe!
Forget the calm that lies
In disillusioned eyes.
Though we all know that we must die,
Yet you and I
May walk like gods and be
Even now at home in immortality.

We see so many ugly things—
Deceits and wrongs and quarrelings;
We know, alas! we know
How quickly fade
The color in the west,
The bloom upon the flower,
The bloom upon the breast
And youth's blind hour.
Yet keep within your heart
A place apart
Where little dreams may go,
May thrive and grow.
Hold fast—hold fast your dreams!

Louise Driscoll ([The Best Loved Poems of the American People](#), Doubleday)

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A MAD DOG

Good people all, of every sort,
Give ear unto my song;
And if you find it wondrous short,
It cannot hold you long.

In Islington there was a man,
Of whom the world might say,
That still a godly race he ran,
Whene'er he went to pray.

A kind and gentle heart he had,
To comfort friends and foes;
The naked every day he clad,
When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
As many dogs there be,
Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound,
And curs of low degree.

This dog and man at first were friends;
But when a pique began,
The dog, to gain some private ends,
Went mad, and bit the man.

Around from all the neighbouring streets
The wondering neighbours ran,
And swore the dog had lost his wits,
To bite so good a man.

The wound it seemed both sore and sad
To every Christian eye;
And while they swore the dog was mad,
They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light,
That showed the rogues they lied;
The man recovered of the bite,
The dog it was that died.

Oliver Goldsmith (Poetry for Pleasure, W.W. Norton & Co.)

CURIOSITY

may have killed the cat; more likely
the cat was just unlucky, or else curious
to see what death was like, having no cause
to go on licking paws, or fathering
litter on litter of kittens, predictably.

Nevertheless, to be curious
is dangerous enough. To distrust
what is always said, what seems,
to ask odd questions, interfere in dreams,
leave home, smell rats, have hunches
does not endear him to those doggy circles
where well-smelt baskets, suitable wives, good lunches
are the order of things, and where prevails
much wagging of incurious heads and tails.

Face it. Curiosity
will not cause him to die—
only lack of it will.
Never to want to see
the other side of the hill,
or that improbable country
where living is an idyll
(although a probable hell)
would kill us all.

Only the curious
have, if they live, a tale
worth telling at all.

Dogs say he loves too much, is irresponsible,
is changeable, marries too many wives,
deserts his children, chills all dinner tables
with tales of his nine lives.
Well, he is lucky. Let him be
nine-lived and contradictory,
curious enough to change, prepared to pay
the cat price, which is to die
and die again, and again,
each time with no less pain.
A cat minority of one
is all that can be counted on
to tell the truth. And what he has to tell
on each return from hell
is this: that dying is what the living do,
that dying is what the loving do,
and that dead dogs are those who do not know
that hell is where, to live, they have to go.

Alastair Reid (Sound & Sense, 2nd Ed., Harcourt Brace)

THE CORN-STALK FIDDLE

When the corn's all cut and the bright stalks shine
 Like the burnished spears of a field of gold;
 When the field-mice rich on the nubbins dine,
 And the frost comes white and the wind blows
 cold;
 Then it's heigh-ho fellows and hi-diddle-diddle,
 For the time is ripe for the corn-stalk fiddle.

And you take a stalk that is straight and long,
 With an expert eye to its worthy points,
 And you think of the bubbling strains of song
 That are bound between its pithy joints—
 Then you cut out strings, with a bridge in the
 middle,
 With a corn-stalk bow for a corn-stalk fiddle.

Then the strains that grow as you draw the bow
 O'er the yielding strings with a practiced hand!
 And the music's flow never loud but low
 Is the concert note of a fairy band.
 Oh, your dainty songs are a misty riddle
 To the simple sweets of the corn-stalk fiddle.

When the eve comes on and our work is done
 And the sun drops down with a tender glance,
 With their hearts all prime for the harmless fun,

Come the neighbor girls for the evening's dance,
 And they wait for the well-known twist and twiddle,
 More time than tune—from the corn-stalk fiddle.

Then brother Jabez takes the bow,
 While Ned stands off with Susan Bland,
 Then Henry stops by Milly Snow
 And John takes Nellie Jones's hand,
 While I pair off with Mandy Biddle,
 And scrape, scrape, scrape goes the corn-stalk
 fiddle.

"Salute your partners," comes the call,
 "All join hands and circle round,"
 "Grand train back," and "Balance all,"
 Footsteps lightly spurn the ground,
 "Take your lady and balance down the middle"
 To the merry strains of the corn-stalk fiddle.

So the night goes on and the dance is o'er,
 And the merry girls are homeward gone,
 But I see it all in my sleep once more,
 And I dream till the very break of dawn
 Of an impish dance on a red-hot griddle
 To the screech and scrape of a corn-stalk fiddle.

P. L. Dunbar (*African-American Poetry of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology*, University of Illinois Press)

THE WALRUS AND THE CARPENTER

"The sun was shining on the sea,
 Shining with all his might:
 He did his very best to make
 The billows smooth and bright —
 And this was odd, because it was
 The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
 Because she thought the sun
 Had got no business to be there
 After the day was done —
 "It's very rude of him," she said,
 "To come and spoil the fun."

The sea was wet as wet could be,
 The sands were dry as dry.
 You could not see a cloud, because
 No cloud was in the sky:
 No birds were flying overhead —
 There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
 Were walking close at hand;
 They wept like anything to see
 Such quantities of sand:
 "If this were only cleared away,"
 They said, "it *would* be grand!"

"If seven maids with seven mops
 Swept it for half a year,
 Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
 "That they could get it clear?"
 "I doubt it," said the Carpenter,
 And shed a bitter tear.

"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"
 The Walrus did beseech.
 "A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
 Along the briny beach:
 We cannot do with more than four,
 To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,
 But never a word he said;
 The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
 And shook his heavy head —
 Meaning to say he did not choose
 To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,
 All eager for the treat:
 Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,
 Their shoes were clean and neat —
 And this was odd, because, you know,
 They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,
 And yet another four;
 And thick and fast they came at last,
 And more, and more, and more —
 All hopping through the frothy waves,
 And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
 Walked on a mile or so,
 And then they rested on a rock
 Conveniently low:
 And all the little Oysters stood
 And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
 "To talk of many things:
 Of shoes — and ships — and sealing-wax —
 Of cabbages — and kings —
 And why the sea is boiling hot —
 And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,
 "Before we have our chat;
 For some of us are out of breath,
 And all of us are fat!"
 "No hurry!" said the Carpenter.
 They thanked him much for that.

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“A loaf of bread,” the Walrus said,
“Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed —
Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed.”

“But not on us!” the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
“After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!”
“The night is fine,” the Walrus said.
“Do you admire the view?”

“It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!”
The Carpenter said nothing but
“Cut us another slice:
I wish you were not quite so deaf —
I've had to ask you twice!”

“It seems a shame,” the Walrus said,
“To play them such a trick,
After we've brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!”
The Carpenter said nothing but
“The butter's spread too thick!”

“I weep for you,” the Walrus said:
“I deeply sympathize.”
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

“O Oysters,” said the Carpenter,
“You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?”
But answer came there none —
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one.

Lewis Carroll (Through the Looking Glass, MacMillan & Co.)

THE HAIRY TOE

Once there was a woman went out to pick beans,
and she found a Hairy Toe.
She took the Hairy Toe home with her,
and that night, when she went to bed,
the wind began to moan and groan.
Away off in the distance
she seemed to hear a voice crying,
'Where's my Hair-r-ry To-o-oe?
Who's got my Hair-r-ry To-o-oe?'

The woman scrooched down,
'way down under the covers,
and about that time
the wind appeared to hit the house,

smoosh,

and the old house creaked and cracked
like something was trying to get in.
The voice had come nearer,
almost at the door now,
and it said,
'Where's my Hair-r-ry To-o-oe?
Who's got my Hair-r-ry To-o-oe?'

The woman scrooched further down
under the covers
and pulled them tight around her head.

The wind growled around the house
like some big animal
and r-r-um-bled
over the chimbley.
All at once she heard the door cr-r-a-ack
and Something slipped in
and began to creep over the floor.

The floor went
cre-e-eak, cre-e-eak
at every step that thing took towards her bed.
The woman could almost feel
it bending over her bed.
There in an awful voice it said:
'Where's my Hair-r-ry To-o-oe?
Who's got my Hair-r-ry To-o-oe?
YOU'VE GOT IT!'

Anon. (Touchstones 1, Hodder & Stoughton)

ICE CREAM

At home,
 when we had ice cream
 we'd all sit round eating it
 going
 "Mmmm, this is nice. This is really nice."
 But then my dad'd say,
 "You know what this could do with?
 Just a little bit of fruit salad with it."

So next time we had ice cream
 we had ice cream
and
 a little bit of fruit salad with it,
 and we'd all sit round eating it
 going
 "Mmmm, this is nice. This is really nice."
 But then my dad'd say,
 "You know what this could do with?
 Just a few chopped nuts on the top.
 That would really make this perfect."

So next time we had ice cream
 we had ice cream, a little bit of fruit salad
and
 a few chopped nuts over top,
 and we'd all sit round eating it
 going
 "Mmmm, this is nice. This is really nice."
 But then my dad'd say,
 "You know what this could do with?
 A few of those tiny bits of chocolate scattered
 over the top
 that would make it—"

But then my mum wouldn't let him say anymore.
 She goes
 'You're always the same, you are.
 Nothing's good enough for you, is it?
 I'll tell you something—
 if you don't like this café
 find another one.
 You know why you're like this?
 I'll tell you.
 It was that grandmother of yours
 It was her fault.
 She pampered you.
 You were pampered, you were.
 All I ever hear is,
 "No one makes it like my grandmother did."
 Well you can get this into your head.
 I'M NOT YOUR GRANDMOTHER, OKAY?"

And my dad'd turn to us and go,
 "What did I say?
 What did I say wrong?
 All I said was,
 "A few bits of chocolate
 over the top would be very nice."
 What's wrong with that?
 A few bits of chocolate
would be very nice, wouldn't they?
 What's all the fuss about?
 What is all the fuss about?"

Michael Rosen ([In Context: Anthology Three](#), Nelson Canada)

THE RUM TUM TUGGER

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat:
 If you offer him pheasant he would rather have grouse.
 If you put him in a house he would much prefer a flat,
 If you put him in a flat then he'd rather have a house.
 If you set him on a mouse then he only wants a rat,
 If you set him on a rat then he'd rather chase a mouse.
 Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—
 And there isn't any call for me to shout it:
 For he will do
 As he do do
 And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a terrible bore:
 When you let him in, then he wants to be out;
 He's always on the wrong side of every door,
 And as soon as he's at home, then he'd like to get about.
 He likes to lie in the bureau drawer,
 But he makes such a fuss if he can't get out.
 Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—
 And there isn't any use for you to doubt it:
 For he will do
 As he do do
 And there's no doing anything about it!

The Rum Tum Tugger is a curious beast:
 His disobliging ways are a matter of habit.
 If you offer him fish then he always wants a feast;
 When there isn't any fish then he won't eat rabbit.
 If you offer him cream then he sniffs and sneers,
 For he only likes what he finds for himself;
 So you'll catch him in it right up to the ears,
 If you put it away on the larder shelf.
 The Rum Tum Tugger is artful and knowing,
 The Rum Tum Tugger doesn't care for a cuddle;
 But he'll leap on your lap in the middle of your sewing,
 For there's nothing he enjoys like a horrible muddle.
 Yes the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat—
 And there isn't any need for me to spout it:
 For he will do
 As he do do
 And there's no doing anything about it!

T. S. Eliot (Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, Faber & Faber)

FARM BASEBALL

After supper we play
ball in the yard,
embraced by the shadows
of gathering dusk,

My cousin wears
a John Deere cap, the one
his father might have worn
in a previous game,

The children giggle:
it's them against us
as it was 20 years before,
small nervous offspring
testing their uncertain powers
on a makeshift diamond,
shoes & chairs for bases,

Dad hits a long fly
into the tall trees,
that sprang from saplings
one Sunday long ago,
He pauses for a moment
to savour the ball's high

c
e t
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thru the clean August air,

The adults move to make
a play on my son,
“Get him get him!” cries my mother,
reliving the time
she tried to catch
my dodgy youth,

A doubleplay:
my aunt waits at 1st
with outstretched arms
to tag her daughter—,
the two of them lost
in private ecstasy,

Like 20 years before though
the sky turns to velvet,
& the grown-ups tire first,
The children plead for
extra innings
but “umpires” have deaf ears,

Played out, we all retire
from the field,
our ritual of the summer lawn
postponed because of dark,

Walking toward our twilight cars,
we dream of being around
in time for the next
unscheduled game

Richard Davies (*Working Together Anthology*, Prentice-Hall)

COBB WOULD HAVE CAUGHT IT

In sunburnt parks where Sundays lie,
Or the wide wastes beyond the cities,
Teams in grey deploy through sunlight.

Talk it up, boys, a little practice.

Coming in stubby and fast, the baseman
Gathers a grounder in fat green grass,
Picks it stinging and clipped as wit
Into the leather: a swinging step
Wings it deadeye down to first.
Smack. Oh, attaboy, attyoldboy.

Catcher reverses his cap, pulls down
Sweaty casque, and squats in the dust:
Pitcher rubs new ball on his pants,
Chewing, puts a jet behind him;
Nods past batter, taking his time.
Batter settles, tugs at his cap:
A spinning ball: step and swing to it,
Caught like a cheek before it ducks
By shivery hickory: socko, baby:
Cleats dig into dust. Outfielder,
On his way, looking over shoulder,
Makes it a triple. A long peg home.

Innings and afternoons. Fly lost in sunset.
Throwing arm gone bad. There's your old ball game.
Cool reek of the field. Reek of companions.

Robert Fitzgerald (Twentieth Century Poetry: American & British (1900-1970), McGraw-Hill)

CASEY AT THE BAT

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play;
And so, when Cooney died at first, and Burrows did the same,
A sickly silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
The thought, if only Casey could get a whack at that,
They'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a pudding and the latter was a fake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe on second, and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from the gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell,
It bounded from the mountaintop, and rattled in the dell;
It struck upon the hillside, and recoiled upon the flat;
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place,
There was pride in Casey's bearing, and a smile on Casey's face;
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt,
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt,
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance gleamed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there;
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped.
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one," the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;
"Kill him! kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand,
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

continued on next page...

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew,
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and the echo answered,
"Fraud!"
But a scornful look from Casey, and the audience was awed;
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lips, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go.
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh! somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out!

Ernest Lawrence Thayer (Words on Wings II, Thomas Nelson)

THE SKYFOOGLE

There was a man
who turned up round our way once
put up a tent in the park, he did,
put up notices all round the streets saying
that he was going to put on show
A TERRIFYING CREATURE!!!!!!
called:
THE SKYFOOGLE!!!!!!
No one had ever seen this thing before.
The show was on for
2 o'clock, the next day.

Next day, we all turned up to see
THE FIERCEST ANIMAL IN THE WORLD!!!!!!!!!!
The man took the money at the door.
And we poured into the tent.
There was a kind of stage up one end
with a curtain in front of it.
We all sat down and waited.
The man went off behind the curtain.
Suddenly we heard a terrible scream.
There was an awful yelling and crying,
there was the noise of chains rattling
and someone shouting.
Suddenly the man came running on to the stage
in front of the curtain.
All his clothes were torn,
there was blood on his face
and he screamed:

Quick, get out
get out
get out of here,
THE SKYFOOGLE HAS ESCAPED!!!!!!!!!!

We got up
and ran out the door
and got away as fast as we could.

By the time we got ourselves together
the man had gone.
We never saw him again.
We never saw our money again either...
...And none of us has ever seen THE SKYFOOGLE!!!!

Michael Rosen (Perspectives 2, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

THE EXPRESS

After the first powerful plain manifesto
The black statement of pistons, without more fuss
But gliding like a queen, she leaves the station.
Without bowing and with restrained unconcern
She passes the houses which humbly crowd outside,
The gasworks and at last the heavy page
Of death, printed by gravestones in the cemetery.
Beyond the town there lies the open country
Where, gathering speed, she acquires mystery,
The luminous self-possession of ships on ocean.
It is now she begins to sing—at first quite low
Then loud, and at last with a jazzy madness—
The song of her whistle screaming at curves,
Of deafening tunnels, brakes, innumerable bolts.
And always light, aerial, underneath
Goes the elate metre of her wheels.
Steaming through metal landscape on her lines
She plunges new eras of wild happiness
Where speed throws up strange shapes, broad curves
And parallels clean like the steel of guns.
At last, further than Edinburgh or Rome,
Beyond the crest of the world, she reaches night
Where only a low streamline brightness
Of phosphorus on the tossing hills is white.
Ah, like a comet through flame she moves entranced
Wrapt in her music no bird song, no, nor bough
Breaking with honey buds, shall ever equal.

Stephen Spender (Twentieth Century Poetry: American And British, McGraw-Hill)

LANGUAGES

There are no handles upon a language
Whereby men take hold of it
And mark it with signs for its remembrance.
It is a river, this language,
Once in a thousand years
Breaking a new course
Changing its way to the ocean.
It is mountain effluvia
Moving to valleys
And from nation to nation
Crossing borders and mixing.
Languages die like rivers.
Words wrapped round your tongue today
And broken to shape of thought
Between your teeth and lips speaking
Now and today
Shall be faded hieroglyphics
Ten thousand years from now.
Sing—and singing—remember
Your song dies and changes
And is not here to-morrow
Any more than the wind
Blowing ten thousand years ago.

Carl Sandburg (The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg, Harcourt, Inc.)

WE HAVE BEEN CALLED

We have been called
naïve
as if it were
a dirty word
We have been called
innocent
as though with shame
our cheeks should burn
So
We visited with
the careful idols
of cynicism
to learn to sneer
and pant and walk
so as not to feel the scales
of judgment rub wrongly
But we say
some things must
remain simple
some things must remain
untouched
and pure
lest we all forget
the legacy which begot us
the health of our origins
the poetry of our fundamental selves

And so
it is to
the longing hearts we sing

rise! spread
your wings!
Let no hand
nor ill will
keep you.

Jewel Kilcher ([A Night Without Armor](#), Harper Collins)

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?

Allen Ginsberg (Twentieth Century Poetry: American And British, McGraw-Hill)

THE DYING EAGLE

A light had gone out from his vanquished eyes;
 His head was cupped within the hunch of his
 shoulders;
 His feathers were dull and bedraggled; the tips
 Of his wings sprawled down to the edge of his tail.
 He was old, yet it was not his age
 Which made him roost on the crags
 Like a rain-drenched raven
 On the branch of an oak in November.
 Nor was it the night, for there was an hour
 To go before sunset. An iron had entered
 His soul which bereft him of pride and of realm,
 Had struck him today; for up to noon
 That crag had been his throne.
 Space was his empire, bounded only
 By forest and sky and the flowing horizons.
 He had outfought, outlived all his rivals,
 And the eagles that now were poised over glaciers
 Or charting the coastal outlines of clouds
 Were his by descent: they had been tumbled
 Out of their rocky nests by his mate,
 In the first trial of their fledgeling spins.
 Only this morning the eyes of the monarch
 Were held in arrest by a silver flash
 Shining between two peaks of the ranges—
 A sight which galvanized his back,
 Bristled the feathers on his neck,
 And shot little runnels of dust where his talons
 Dug recesses in the granite.
 Partridge? Heron? Falcon? Eagle?
 Game or foe? He would reconnoitre.

Catapulting from the ledge,
 He flew at first with rapid beat,
 Level, direct: then with his grasp
 Of spiral strategy in fight,
 He climbed the orbit
 With swift and easy undulations,
 And reached position where he might
 Survey the bird—for bird it was;
 But such a bird as never flew
 Between the heavens and the earth
 Since pterodactyls, long before

The birth of condors, learned to kill
 And drag their carrion up the Andes.

The eagle stared at the invader,
 Marked the strange bat-like shadow moving
 In leagues over the roofs of the world,
 Across the passes and moraines,
 Darkening the vitriol blue of the mountain lakes.
 Was it a flying dragon? Head,
 Body and wings, a tail fan-spread
 And taut like his own before the strike;
 And there in front two whirling eyes
 That took unshuttered
 The full blaze of the meridian.
 The eagle never yet had known
 A rival that he would not grapple,
 But something in this fellow's length
 Of back, his plated glistening shoulders,
 Had given him pause. And did that thunder
 Somewhere in his throat not argue
 Lightning in his claws? And then
 The speed – was it not double his own?
 But what disturbed him most, angered
 And disgraced him was the unconcern
 With which this supercilious bird
 Cut through the aquiline dominion,
 Snubbing the ancient suzerain
 With extra-territorial insolence,
 And disappeared.

So evening found him on the crags again,
 This time with sloven shoulders
 And nerveless claws.
 Dusk had outridden the sunset by an hour
 To haunt his unhorizoned eyes.
 And soon his flock flushed with the chase
 Would be returning, threading their glorious
 curves
 Up through the crimson archipelagoes
 Only to find him there –
 Deaf to the mighty symphony of wings,
 And brooding
 Over the lost empire of the peaks.

E.J. Pratt (Poetry of our Time, Macmillan)

IT'S HOT IN THE CITY

It's *Hot* in the City.

White light glares on car rails, cobbles,
Swirling dust, and scraps of paper
Stirred by baked-enamel autos.
Shirt-sleeved drivers, forearms upright
Sweat and swear and steer one-handed.
Sickly-sweet, warm, wafted smells—from
Joe's Place and the Lucky Garden—
Mingling, bring no invitation.

Lolling dogs droop in dead doorways.
Children seek the soiled and struggling
Patch of earthy grass between the
Bus stop and the supermarket;
Lining up to bow and gasp in
Turn at the delicious shock of
Water gushing from the fountain.

Damp, red men, and moist, pale women
Feel the grilling sidewalks reach up;
Suck vitality through shoe soles
Down toward the earth's hot centre.
Old folk, wise, released from tension,
Rock, or fan themselves on porches
By front steps of teaming houses.

But
Nobody hurries.

Friday: and man flies, gasping
From what he has made:
Out, off and away
To the cool wood,
The sweet turf
Or the limpid lake—
To breathe...

It's *Hot* in the City.

Peter West (Tribal Drums, McGraw Hill)

CHOOSE SOMETHING LIKE A STAR

O Star (the fairest one in sight),
We grant your loftiness the right
To some obscurity of cloud—
It will not do to say of night,
Since dark is what brings out your light.

Some mystery becomes the proud.
But to be wholly taciturn
In your reserve is not allowed.
Say something to us we can learn
By heart and when alone repeat.
Say something! And it says, 'I burn.'
But say with what degree of heat.
Talk Fahrenheit, talk Centigrade.
Use language we can comprehend.
Tell us what elements you blend.
It gives us strangely little aid,
But does tell something in the end.

And steadfast as Keats' Eremite,
Not even stooping from its sphere,
It asks a little of us here.
It asks of us a certain height,
So when at times the mob is swayed
To carry praise or blame too far,
We may choose something like a star
To stay our minds on and be staid.

Frost, Robert (The Poetry of Robert Frost, Henry Holt & Company)

EXCERPT FROM: THE WINTER SCENE

The rutted roads are all like iron; skies
Are keen and brilliant: only the oak-leaves cling
In the bare woods, or the hardy bitter-sweet;
Drivers have put their sheepskin jackets on;
And all the ponds are sealed with sheeted ice
That rings with stroke of skate and hockey-stick,
Or in the twilight cracks with running whoop.
Bring in the logs of oak and hickory,
And make an ample blaze on the wide hearth.
Now is the time, with winter o'er the world,
For books and friends and yellow candle-light,
And timeless lingering by the setting fire,
While all the shuddering stars are keen with cold.

* * * * *

Russet and white and gray is the oak wood
In the great snow. Still from the North it comes,
Whispering, settling, sifting through the trees,
O'erloading branch and twig. The road is lost.
Clearing and meadow, stream and ice-bound pond
Are made once more a trackless wilderness
In the white hush where not a creature stirs;
And the pale sun is blotted from the sky.
In that strange twilight the lone traveler halts
To listen to the stealthy snowflakes fall.
And then far off toward the Stamford shore,
Where through the storm the coastwise liners go,
Faint and recurrent on the muffled air,
A foghorn booming through the smother—hark!

When the day changed and the mad wind died down,
The powdery drifts that all day long had blown
Across the meadows and the open fields,
Or whirled like diamond dust in the bright sun.
Settled to rest, and for a tranquil hour
The lengthening bluish shadows on the snow
Stole down the orchard slope, and a rose light
Flooded the earth with beauty and with peace.
Then in the west behind the cedars black
The sinking sun stained red the winter dusk
With sullen flare upon the snowy ridge,—
As in a masterpiece by Hokusai,
Where on a background gray, with flaming breath
A scarlet dragon dies in dusky gold.

Bliss Carman (Words on Wings II, Thomas Nelson)

BLACK ROOK IN RAINY WEATHER

On the stiff twig up there
Hunches a wet black rook
Arranging and rearranging its feathers in the rain.
I do not expect miracle
Or an accident

To set the sight on fire
In my eye, nor seek
Any more in the desultory weather some design,
But let spotted leaves fall as they fall,
Without ceremony, or portent.

Although, I admit, I desire,
Occasionally, some backtalk
From the mute sky, I can't honestly complain:
A certain minor light may still
Leap incandescent

Out of kitchen table or chair
As if a celestial burning took
Possession of the most obtuse objects now and then –
Thus hallowing an interval
Otherwise inconsequent

By bestowing largesse, honour,
One might say love. At any rate, I now walk
Wary (for it could happen
Even in this dull, ruinous landscape); skeptical,
Yet politic; ignorant

Of whatever angel may choose to flare
Suddenly at my elbow. I only know that a rook
Ordering its black feathers can so shine
As to seize my senses, haul
My eyelids up, and grant

A brief respite from fear
Of total neutrality. With luck,
Trekking stubborn through this season
Of fatigue, I shall
Patch together a content

Of sorts. Miracles occur,
If you care to call those spasmodic
Tricks of radiance miracles. The wait's begun again,
The long wait for the angel,
For that rare, random descent.

Sylvia Plath (*Voices: An Anthology of Poetry & Pictures*, Peguis)

ON THE MOVE

'Man, you gotta Go.'

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
Some hidden purpose, and the gust of birds
That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,
Have nested in the trees and undergrowth.
Seeking their instinct, or their poise, or both,
One moves with an uncertain violence
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense
Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:
Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boys,
Until the distance throws them forth, their hum
Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.
In goggles, donned impersonality,
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,
They strap in doubt—by hiding it, robust—
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardiness
Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts
They ride, direction where the tires press.
They scare a flight of birds across the field:
Much that is natural, to the will must yield.
Men manufacture both machine and soul,
And use what they imperfectly control
To dare a future from the taken routes.

It is a part solution, after all.
One is not necessarily discord
On earth; or damned because, half animal,
One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes
Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.
One joins the movement in a valueless world,
Choosing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,
One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:
The self-defined, astride the created will
They burst away; the towns they travel through
Are home for neither bird nor holiness,
For birds and saints complete their purposes.
At worst, one is in motion; and at best,
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,
One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Thom Gunn (Tribal Drums, McGraw Hill)

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
 Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
 Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
 The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen ([Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen](#), New Directions Publishers)

LOCHINVAR

Oh young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
 Through all the wide Border his steed was the best;
 And save his good broadsword he weapons had none.
 He rode all unarmed, and he rode all alone.
 So faithful in love and so dauntless in war,
 There never was knight like the young Lochinvar.

He stayed not for brake and he stopped not for stone,
 He swam the Eske River where ford there was none,
 But ere he alighted at Netherby gate
 The bride had consented, the gallant came late:
 For a laggard in love and a dastard in war
 Was to wed the fair Ellen of brave Lochinvar.

So boldly he entered the Netherby Hall,
 Among bridesmen, and kinsmen, and brothers, and all:
 Then spoke the bride's father, his hand on his sword—
 For the poor craven bridegroom said never a word—
 "Oh come ye in peace here, or come ye in war,
 Or to dance at our bridal, young Lord Lochinvar?"

"I long wooed your daughter, my suit you denied;
 Love swells like the Solway, but ebbs like its tide—
 And now am I come, with this lost love of mine,
 To lead but one measure, drink one cup of wine.
 There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
 That would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar."

The bride kissed the goblet; the knight took it up,
 He quaffed off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
 She looked down to blush, and she looked up to sigh,
 With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.
 He took her soft hand ere her mother could bar—
 "Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
 That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
 While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
 And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
 And the bride-maidens whispered, "'Twere better by far
 To have matched our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

One touch to her hand and one word in her ear,
 When they reached the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
 So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
 So light to the saddle before her he sprung!
 "She is won! We are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
 They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.

There was mounting 'mong Graemes of the Netherby clan;
 Forsters, Fenwicks, and Musgraves, they rode and they ran:
 There was racing and chasing on Cannobie Lee,
 But the lost bride of Netherby ne'er did they see.
 So daring in love and so dauntless in war,
 Have ye e'er heard of gallant like young Lochinvar?

Sir Walter Scott (Poems to Read Aloud, W.W. Norton & Co.)

CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The food may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

Alfred Lord Tennyson ([Oxford Book of English Verse](#), Oxford Press)

TO AUTUMN

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness!
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eaves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes, whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers;
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cider-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft
The redbreast whistles from a garden croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats (Poetry of the Year, D. Appleton and Co.)

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.

William Butler Yeats (The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats, Wordsworth Editions)

FLAT LAND

I love flat land; flat as a table top
Holding up on its breast a growing crop
Of oats or barley . . . wheat in serried rows,
A trailing buckwheat vine that often grows
Amid the wheat as if to give it grace
Like a print apron with a frill of lace.

Deep bottom land they call it, fields that hold
the heavy strength of loam and peaty mold
Rich earth to feed the roots of growing stuff,
Stout trunks with branches sinewy and tough,
And tender leaves veined like a baby's hand
Drawing their strength and beauty from the land.

I love flat land where quiet orchards grow,
And little winds sing softly as they blow,
Across the fields where sheep and cattle graze,
Cooling the heat of sultry summer days,
As the long summer twilight settles down,
Upon the little houses of the town.

I love flat roads that seem to stretch away,
Beyond the narrow borders of today,
Into some never-never land where we
May find tall castles by a shining sea,
But for today I'll take a quiet field,
With a bright sun above it like a shield.

Edna Jaques ([The Best of Edna Jaques](#), Western Producer Book Service)

THE FIRE OF DRIFTWOOD

We sat within the farm-house old,
 Whose windows, looking o'er the bay,
 Gave to the sea-breeze damp and cold,
 An easy entrance, night and day.

Not far away we saw the port, --
 The strange, old-fashioned, silent town, --
 The lighthouse, -- the dismantled fort, --
 The wooden houses, quaint and brown.

We sat and talked until the night,
 Descending, filled the little room;
 Our faces faded from the sight,
 Our voices only broke the gloom.

We spake of many a vanished scene,
 Of what we once had thought and said,
 Of what had been, and might have been,
 And who was changed, and who was dead;

And all that fills the hearts of friends,
 When first they feel, with secret pain,
 Their lives thenceforth have separate ends,
 And never can be one again;

The first slight swerving of the heart,
 That words are powerless to express,
 And leave it still unsaid in part,
 Or say it in too great excess.

The very tones in which we spake
 Had something strange, I could but mark;
 The leaves of memory seemed to make
 A mournful rustling in the dark.

Oft died the words upon our lips,
 As suddenly, from out the fire
 Built of the wreck of stranded ships,
 The flames would leap and then expire.

And, as their splendor flashed and failed,
 We thought of wrecks upon the main, --
 Of ships dismasted, that were hailed
 And sent no answer back again.

The windows, rattling in their frames, --
 The ocean, roaring up the beach, --
 The gusty blast, -- the bickering flames, --
 All mingled vaguely in our speech;

Until they made themselves a part
 Of fancies floating through the brain, --
 The long-lost ventures of the heart,
 That send no answers back again.

O flames that glowed! O hearts that yearned!
 They were indeed too much akin,
 The driftwood fire without that burned,
 The thoughts that burned and glowed within.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ([The Poetical Works of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow](#), George Routledge and Sons)

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 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 sing, O bells!
 But I, with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman ([Oxford Book of English Verse](#), Oxford University Press)

IN AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

One face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel — every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more or less.
He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

Christina Rossetti (Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Bell and Sons)

EARTH VOICES

I

I heard the spring wind whisper
Above the brushwood fire,
"The world is made forever
Of transport and desire.

"I am the breath of being,
The primal urge of things;
I am the whirl of star dust,
I am the lift of wings.

"I am the splendid impulse
That comes before the thought,
The joy and exaltation
Wherein the life is caught.

"Across the sleeping furrows
I call the buried seed,
And blade and bud and blossom
Awaken at my need.

"Within the dying ashes
I blow the sacred spark,
And make the hearts of lovers
To leap against the dark."

II

I heard the spring light whisper
Above the dancing stream,
"The world is made forever
In likeness of a dream.

"I am the law of planets,
I am the guide of man;
The evening and the morning
Are fashioned to my plan.

"I tint the dawn with crimson,
I tinge the sea with blue;
My track is in the desert,
My trail is in the dew.

"I paint the hills with color,
And in my magic dome

I light the star of evening
To steer the traveller home.

"Within the house of being,
I feed the lamp of truth
With tales of ancient wisdom
And prophecies of youth."

III

I heard the spring rain murmur
Above the roadside flower,
"The world is made forever
In melody and power.

"I keep the rhythmic measure
That marks the steps of time,
And all my toil is fashioned
To symmetry and rhyme.

"I plow the untilled upland,
I ripe the seeding grass,
And fill the leafy forest
With music as I pass.

"I hew the raw, rough granite
To loveliness of line,
And when my work is finished,
Behold, it is divine!

"I am the master-builder
In whom the ages trust.
I lift the lost perfection
To blossom from the dust."

IV

Then Earth to them made answer,
As with a slow refrain
Born of the blended voices
Of wind and sun and rain,

"This is the law of being
That links the threefold chain:
The life we give to beauty
Returns to us again."

Bliss Carman ([April Airs: A Book of New England Lyrics](#), Small, Maynard)

THE BALLAD OF THE OYSTERMAN

It was a tall young oysterman lived by the
 river-side,
 His shop was just upon the bank, his boat was
 on the tide;
 The daughter of a fisherman, that was so
 straight and slim,
 Lived over on the other bank, right opposite
 to him.

It was the pensive oysterman that saw a
 lovely maid,
 Upon a moonlight evening, a sitting in the
 shade;
 He saw her wave her handkerchief, as much
 as if to say,
 'I'm wide awake, young oysterman, and all
 the folks away.'

Then up arose the oysterman, and to himself
 said he,
 'I guess I'll leave the skiff at home, for fear
 that folks should see;
 I read it in the story-book, that, for to kiss his
 dear,
 Leander swam the Hellespont,—and I will
 swim this here.'

And he has leaped into the waves, and
 crossed the shining stream,
 And he has clambered up the bank, all in the
 moonlight gleam;
 Oh there were kisses sweet as dew, and
 words as soft as rain,—
 But they have heard her father's step, and in
 he leaps again!

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,— 'Oh, what
 was that, my daughter?'
 "Twas nothing but a pebble, sir, I threw into
 the water.'
 'And what is that, pray tell me, love, that
 paddles off so fast?'
 'It's nothing but a porpoise, sir, that's been
 a-swimming past.'

Out spoke the ancient fisherman,— 'Now
 bring me my harpoon!
 I'll get into my fishing-boat, and fix the fellow
 soon.'
 Down fell that pretty innocent, as falls a
 snow-white lamb,
 Her hair drooped round her pallid cheeks,
 like seaweed on a clam.

Alas for those two loving ones! she waked not
 from her swoond,
 And he was taken with the cramp, and in the
 waves was drowned;
 But Fate has metamorphosed them, in pity of
 their woe,
 And now they keep an oyster-shop for
 mermaids down below.

Oliver Wendell Holmes ([The Random House Treasury of Best Loved Poems](#), Random House)

BUSHED

He invented a rainbow but lightning struck it
shattered it into the lake-lap of a mountain
so big his mind slowed when he looked at it

Yet he built a shack on the shore
learned to roast porcupine belly and
wore the quills on his hatband

At first he was out with the dawn
whether it yellowed bright as wood-columbine
or was only a fuzzed moth in a flannel of storm
But he found the mountain was clearly alive
sent messages whizzing down every hot morning
boomed proclamations at noon and spread out
a white guard of goat
before falling asleep on its feet at sundown

When he tried his eyes on the lake ospreys
would fall like valkyries
choosing the cut-throat
He took then to waiting
till the night smoke rose from the boil of the sunset

But the moon carved unknown totems
out of the lakeshore
owls in the beardusky woods derided him
moosehorned cedars circled his swamps and tossed
their antlers up to the stars
Then he knew though the mountain slept the winds
were shaping its peak to an arrowhead
poised

And now he could only
bar himself in and wait
for the great flint to come singing into his heart

Earle Birney ([Selected Poems by Earle Birney](#), McClelland & Stewart)

CHRIST CLIMBED DOWN

Christ climbed down
 from His bare Tree
 this year
 and ran away to where
 there were no rootless Christmas trees
 hung with candycanes and breakable stars

Christ climbed down
 from His bare Tree
 this year
 and ran away to where
 there were no gilded Christmas trees
 and no tinsel Christmas trees
 and no tinfoil Christmas trees
 and no pink plastic Christmas trees
 and no gold Christmas trees
 and no black Christmas trees
 and no powderblue Christmas trees
 hung with electric candles
 and encircled by tin electric trains
 and clever cornball relatives

Christ climbed down
 from His bare Tree
 this year
 and ran away to where
 no intrepid Bible salesmen
 covered the territory
 in two-tone cadillacs
 and where no Sears Roebuck creches
 complete with plastic babe in manger
 arrived by parcel post
 the babe by special delivery
 and where no televised Wise Men
 praised the Lord Calvert Whiskey

Christ climbed down
 from His bare Tree
 this year
 and ran away to where

no fat handshaking stranger
 in a red flannel suit
 and a fake white beard
 went around passing himself off
 as some sort of North Pole saint
 crossing the desert to Bethlehem
 Pennsylvania
 in a Volkswagen sled
 drawn by rollicking Adirondack reindeer
 with German names
 and bearing sacks of Humble Gifts
 from Saks Fifth Avenue
 for everybody's imagined Christ child

Christ climbed down
 from His bare Tree
 this year
 and ran away to where
 no Bing Crosby carolers
 groaned of a tight Christmas
 and where no Radio City angels
 iceskated wingless
 thru a winter wonderland
 into a jinglebell heaven
 daily at 8:30
 with Midnight Mass matinees

Christ climbed down
 from His bare Tree
 this year
 and softly stole away into
 some anonymous Mary's womb again
 where in the darkest night
 of everybody's anonymous soul
 He awaits again
 an unimaginable
 and impossibly
 Immaculate Reconciliation
 the very craziest
 of Second Comings

Lawrence Ferlinghetti (*I Am A Sensation*, McClelland & Stewart)

THE WITCHES' CHANT

*A Cavern: in the middle, a boiling cauldron.
Thunder. Enter the three witches.*

1st Witch Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd

2nd Witch Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whin'd

3rd Witch Harpier cries, 'Tis time, 'tis time.'

1st Witch Round about the cauldron go:

In the poisoned entrails throw;
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty one

Swelter'd venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' th' charmed pot.

All Double, double, toil and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

2nd Witch Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron 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 howlet's wing;
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth, boil and bubble.

All Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

3rd 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' th' 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 ingredients of our cauldron.

All Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

William Shakespeare (Macbeth, Act IV, scene i, Scott, Foresman)

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT

Macavity's a Mystery Cat; he's called the Hidden Paw—
 For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.
 He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:
 For when they reach the scene of crime—*Macavity's not there!*

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
 He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.
 His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,
 And when you reach the scene of crime—*Macavity's not there!*
 You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air—
 But I tell you once and once again, *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;
 You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.
 His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;
 His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.
 He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake;
 And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
 For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.
 You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square—
 But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not there!*

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)
 And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.
 And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,
 Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled,
 Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair—
 Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! *Macavity's not there!*

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone astray,
 Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,
 There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair—
 But it's useless to investigate— *Macavity's not there!*
 And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:
 "It *must* have been Macavity!"—but he's a mile away.
 You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs,
 Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
 There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.
 He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:
 At whatever time the deed took place— MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!
 And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known
 (I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)
 Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time
 Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime!

T.S. Eliot (Poems to Read Aloud, W.W. Norton & Co.)

WILDERNESS

There is a wolf in me...fangs pointed for tearing gashes
 ...a red tongue for raw meat...and the hot lapping of
 blood—I keep this wolf because the wilderness gave it to
 me and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fox in me...a silver-gray fox...I sniff and
 guess...I pick things out of the wind and air...I nose
 in the dark night and take sleepers and eat them and hide
 the feathers...I circle and loop and double-cross.

There is a hog in me—a snout and a belly...a machinery
 for eating and grunting...a machinery for sleeping
 satisfied in the sun—I got this too from the wilderness
 and the wilderness will not let it go.

There is a fish in me...I know I came from salt-blue
 water-gates...I scurried with shoals of herring...I
 blew waterspouts with porpoises...before land was...
 before the water went down...before Noah...before
 the first chapter of Genesis.

There is a baboon in me...clambering-clawed...dog-faced
 ...yawping a galoot's hunger...hairy under the
 armpits...here are the hawk-eyed hankering men...
 here are the blond and blue-eyed women...here they hide
 curled asleep waiting...ready to snarl and kill...ready
 to sing and give milk...waiting—I keep the baboon
 because the wilderness says so.

There is an eagle in me and a mockingbird...and the eagle
 flies among the Rocky Mountains of my dreams and fights
 among the Sierra crags of what I want...and the
 mockingbird warbles in the early forenoon before the dew
 is gone, warbles in the underbrush of my Chattanooga
 of hope, gushes over the blue Ozark foothills of my
 wishes—And I got the eagle and the mockingbird from
 the wilderness.

O, I got a zoo, I got a menagerie, inside my ribs, under my
 bony head, under my red-valve heart—and I got
 something else; it is a man-child heart, a woman-child
 heart: it is a father and mother and lover: it came from
 God-Knows-Where: it is going to God-Knows-Where—
 For I am the keeper of the zoo: I say yes and no: I sing
 and kill and work: I am a pal of the world: I came from
 the wilderness.

Carl Sandburg (Fire & Ice, R.J. McMaster)

TO A YOUNG FRIEND

You asked me:
Cannot youth save the world?
Cannot the young build here, on this earth, a shining house,
Out of our hearts, out of our good intentions?
And I made some stupid reply;
I think I said, No.
Now that you are gone, I think as always, of the things
 I should have said to you:
How youth is a seed, falling across the earth,
Blowing over the land, forever blowing, forever falling:
How some of it finds good soil, and grows with beauty,
How some of it withers to death among the stones...
Here in one spot, roses; and elsewhere, the desert.
(Someone else said that, long ago;-do you remember?)
Loam and sand, the seed falls, it cannot keep from falling.
How youth is a wave, rolling away in all directions,
Part of it to break against rocks, or die on the beaches,
Or in the great calms--
And yet, how the wave itself must rush on, foaming, far
 out into the distance,
Into the darkness...
And the next wave,
And the next,
Forever rising, forever breaking...
Those are the things I should have told you.
I do not know why I did not remember them.

Robert Nathan (Words on Wings Book II, Thomas Nelson & Sons)

EARTHRISE

On Christmas Eve, 1968, astronaut Bill Anders
Snapped a photo of the earth
As Apollo 8 orbited the moon.
Those three guys
Were surprised
To see from their eyes
Our planet looked like an earthrise
A blue orb hovering over the moon's gray horizon,
with deep oceans and silver skies.

It was our world's first glance at itself
Our first chance to see a shared reality,
A declared stance and a commonality;

A glimpse into our planet's mirror,
And as threats drew nearer,
Our own urgency became clearer,
As we realize that we hold nothing dearer
than this floating body we all call home.

We've known
That we're caught in the throes
Of climactic changes some say
Will just go away,
While some simply pray
To survive another day;
For it is the obscure, the oppressed, the poor,
Who when the disaster
Is declared done,
Still suffer more than anyone.

Climate change is the single greatest challenge of our time,

Of this, you're certainly aware.
It's saddening, but I cannot spare you
From knowing an inconvenient fact, because
It's getting the facts straight that gets us to act and not to wait.

So I tell you this not to scare you,
But to prepare you, to dare you
To dream a different reality,

continued on next page...

Where despite disparities
We all care to protect this world,
This riddled blue marble, this little true marvel
To muster the verve and the nerve
To see how we can serve
Our planet. You don't need to be a politician
To make it your mission to conserve, to protect,
To preserve that one and only home
That is ours,
To use your unique power
To give next generations the planet they deserve.

We are demonstrating, creating, advocating
We heed this inconvenient truth, because we need to be anything but lenient
With the future of our youth.

And while this is a training,
in sustaining the future of our planet,
There is no rehearsal. The time is
Now
Now
Now,
Because the reversal of harm,
And protection of a future so universal
Should be anything but controversial.

So, earth, pale blue dot
We will fail you not.

Just as we chose to go to the moon
We know it's never too soon
To choose hope.
We choose to do more than cope
With climate change
We choose to end it—
We refuse to lose.
Together we do this and more
Not because it's very easy or nice
But because it is necessary,
Because with every dawn we carry
the weight of the fate of this celestial body orbiting a star.
And as heavy as that weight sounded, it doesn't hold us down,
But it keeps us grounded, steady, ready,
Because an environmental movement of this size
Is simply another form of an earthrise.

continued on next page...

To see it, close your eyes.
Visualize that all of us leaders in this room
and outside of these walls or in the halls, all
of us changemakers are in a spacecraft,
Floating like a silver raft
in space, and we see the face of our planet anew.
We relish the view;
We witness its round green and brilliant blue,
Which inspires us to ask deeply, wholly:
What can we do?
Open your eyes.
Know that the future of
this wise planet
Lies right in sight:
Right in all of us. Trust
this earth uprising.
All of us bring light to exciting solutions never tried before
For it is our hope that implores us, at our uncompromising core,
To keep rising up for an earth more than worth fighting for.

Amanda Gorman ([North American Association for Environmental Education](https://eeepro.naaee.org/community/blog/earthrise-poem-amanda-gorman),
<https://eeepro.naaee.org/community/blog/earthrise-poem-amanda-gorman>)

WALK WITH ME

walk with me
try to see what i see
look inside yourself
listen to the voices generations old
passed on to you
ones you carry as gospel
walk with me
listen to what i hear
silence those you carry for awhile
i don't want those voices silenced
i want you to hear what i hear
ones that echo when you speak
walk with me
see that one there
hand out disheveled
carrying his ghosts in the clothes he carries
ones we find abandoned in a bus shack
that place where he made his bed
walk with me
take the chill from your body
as you rest inside someone's place of rest
imagine waking to shouts of derision
as you gather what little you have left
gather those words place them near you
walk with me awhile
let's leave this place
abandon the clothing that hold your memories
let someone else carry them
share your story
the one you carry on the clothes you claimed
when you entered someone's else's dream
walk with me
i'll walk with you

Duncan Mercredi ([Winnipeg Arts Council](https://winnipegarts.ca/poet-laureate/duncan-mercredi), <https://winnipegarts.ca/poet-laureate/duncan-mercredi>)

ADVENTURES OF ISABEL

Isabel met an enormous bear,
Isabel, Isabel, didn't care;
The bear was hungry, the bear was ravenous,
The bear's big mouth was cruel and cavernous.
The bear said, Isabel, glad to meet you,
How do, Isabel, now I'll eat you!
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She washed her hands and she straightened her hair up,
Then Isabel quietly ate the bear up.

Once in a night as black as pitch
Isabel met a wicked old witch.
The witch's face was cross and wrinkled,
The witch's gums with teeth were sprinkled.
Ho ho, Isabel! the old witch crowed,
I'll turn you into an ugly toad!
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry,
She showed no rage and she showed no rancour,
But she turned the witch into milk and drank her.

Isabel met a hideous giant,
Isabel continued self-reliant.
The giant was hairy, the giant was horrid,
He had one eye in the middle of his forehead.

Good morning, Isabel, the giant said,
I'll grind your bones to make my bread.
Isabel, Isabel didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She nibbled the zwieback that she always fed off,
And when it was gone, she cut the giant's head off.

Isabel met a troublesome doctor,
He punched and he poked till he really shocked her.
The doctor's talk was of coughs and chills
And the doctor's satchel bulged with pills.
The doctor said unto Isabel,
Swallow this, it will make you well.
Isabel, Isabel, didn't worry,
Isabel didn't scream or scurry.
She took those pills from the pill concocter,
And Isabel calmly cured the doctor.

Ogden Nash ([The New Oxford Book of Children's Verse](#), Oxford University Press)