

POETRY - The value of learning it by heart

Professor Usha Goswami from Cambridge University's Department for Neuroscience has been studying and measuring what goes on inside the brains of babies and young children and has found that the metrical structures and rhythmic patterns of nursery rhymes coincide with the brain's neural oscillations. She reveals that the more you recite poetry to your children – before they are born as well as when they are babies and toddlers – the better they will be able to communicate, both when it comes to spoken and, later, even when it comes to written language. *'At whatever age you are,'* according to the professor, *'you still have the capacity to learn new things if you put your mind to it. There's no shortage of brain cells as you grow older.'*

She is unequivocal: learning poetry by heart is good for the brain, *"You've got to keep the brain active. I have colleagues here at Cambridge in their seventies, eighties and nineties – none of them has dementia. The exercise and discipline of learning a poem by heart is certainly going to help keep dementia at bay."*

Learning lines is good for you – and doable whatever your age. Dame Judi Dench, 83, is learning hers for her next film right now. Dame Maggie Smith, 83, has just learnt hers for the *Downton Abbey* film she is in the middle of making. Dame Eileen Atkins, 84, is opening in a new play in the West End any moment now. She is word perfect, of course. The poems that are easiest to learn are ones with a strong rhythm – and ones you have a feeling for. The professor explained that you need to learn your poem by saying it out loud. Hearing the words and feeling the rhythm are important. Rhymes aren't essential – but they are hooks that can help you in the learning process. Pick a poem you like and speak it out loud, then learn it, repeating it line by line, in the shower, in the kitchen, in the car, out of doors when you are taking a dog for a walk.

Learning poetry by heart will make you a better parent and give you a longer, happier, richer mentally-active life. Fact.

Listen: 'Poetry by Heart' at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0blhfpn>

Read: <https://www.theoldie.co.uk/blog/the-joy-of-learning-poems-by-heart>

THE FOLLOWING SELECTION MAY START YOU ON YOUR WAY

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

By Percy Bysshe Shelley

Daffodils

I WANDER'D 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 stretch'd in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed and gazed but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850)

Ye Mariners of England

Ye Mariners of England
That guard our native seas!
Whose flag has braved a thousand years
The battle and the breeze!
Your glorious standard launch again
To match another foe;
And sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow!
While the battle rages loud and long
And the stormy winds do blow.

The spirits of your fathers
Shall start from every wave--
For the deck it was their field of fame,
And Ocean was their grave:
Where Blake and mighty Nelson fell
Your manly hearts shall glow,
As ye sweep through the deep,
While the stormy winds do blow!
While the battle rages loud and long
And the stormy winds do blow.

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain-waves,
Her home is on the deep.
With thunders from her native oak
She quells the floods below,
As they roar on the shore,
When the stormy winds do blow!
When the battle rages loud and long,
And the stormy winds do blow.

The meteor flag of England
Shall yet terrific burn;
Till danger's troubled night depart
And the star of peace return.
Then, then, ye ocean-warriors!
Our song and feast shall flow
To the fame of your name,
When the storm has ceased to blow!
When the fiery fight is heard no more,
And the storm has ceased to blow.

Thomas Campbell

Fame is a Food That Dead Men Eat

FAME is a food that dead men eat,--
I have no stomach for such meat.
In little light and narrow room,
They eat it in the silent tomb,
With no kind voice of comrade near
To bid the banquet be of cheer.
But Friendship is a nobler thing,--
Of Friendship it is good to sing.
For truly, when a man shall end,
He lives in memory of his friend,
Who doth his better part recall,
And of his faults make funeral.

Austin Dobson

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

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

Lewis Carroll

Sonnet 64

When I have seen by times fell hand defaced
The rich proud cost of outworn buried age;
When some lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage:
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main
Increasing store with loss and loss with store
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state, itself confounded to decay;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminare,
That time will come and take my love away
This thought is a death which cannot choose
But weep to have, that which it fears to lose.

William Shakespeare

Sonnet CXVI

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come:
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

William Shakespeare

Lone Dog

I'm a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog, and lone;
I'm a rough dog, a tough dog, hunting on my own;
I'm a bad dog, a mad dog, teasing silly sheep;
I love to sit and bay the moon, to keep fat souls from sleep.

I'll never be a lap dog, licking dirty feet,
A sleek dog, a meek dog, cringing for my meat,
Not for me the fireside, the well-filled plate,
But shut door, and sharp stone, and cuff and kick, and hate.

Not for me the other dogs, running by my side,
Some have run a short while, but none of them would bide.
O mine is still the lone trail, the hard trail, the best,
Wide wind, and wild stars, and hunger of the quest!

Irene Rutherford Mcleod

The Place where the Elephants die!

Hidden away from the haunts of men, west of a widespread Lake
Out of the scope of human ken, in a tangled thicket and brake,
'Mid arching trees where the foetid breeze ruffles the ragged sky
Elephants come to die.

Many a mighty Lord of Herd, massive of tusk and limb
Has crept away at the whispered word that signified death to him-
Driven by doom to the murky gloom where the wheeling vultures fly,
Through buffet and blast he has come at last to the place where the Elephants die.

Pile upon pile of bleaching bone, and a foul, miasmic breath
With now and again a mighty moan to break on the hush of death-
Sluggish streams, and silver beams of a silent moon on high-
God forbend I should meet my end in the Place where the Elephants die!

Once, they say, in the olden days a venturesome man set forth,
Threaded a path by devious ways, westward and south and north
Dallied with Death at every breath while many a moon went by
Till he found the brake by the Silent Lake where the Elephants come to die.
Tusk upon tusk lay whitely there, under a twisted tree
Wealth of the world, bleached stark and bare - and he gazed upon his fee
Dreaming the dream of a mighty scheme - and ambition fluttered high
Till he sank, and slept - and the rumour crept through the Place where the Elephants die.

But the Elephant Clan were close at heel - for the place was theirs to hold,
Sacrosanct to the common weal, out of the mists of old -
And the word went forth south to north, and the herds came thundering by
To kill the man who had braved the Clan in the Place where they came to die.

Only a native tale, you say, laughing in light disdain?
Maybe so - but what avail to jest when the facts are plain?
Let's hint who found on his camping ground or under the open sky
One Elephant dead then shake his head at "The Place where the Elephants die!"

Irene Rutherford Mcleod.

The Burial of Sir John Moore After Corunna

Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note,
As his corse to the rampart we hurried;
Not a soldier discharged his farewell shot
O'er the grave where our hero we buried.

We buried him darkly at dead of night,
The sods with our bayonets turning,
By the struggling moonbeam's misty light
And the lantern dimly burning.

No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Not in sheet or in shroud we wound him;
But he lay like a warrior taking his rest
With his martial cloak around him.

Few and short were the prayers we said,
And we spoke not a word of sorrow;
But we steadfastly gazed on the face that was dead,
And we bitterly thought of the morrow.

We thought, as we hollow'd his narrow bed
And smooth'd down his lonely pillow,
That the foe and the stranger would tread o'er his head,
And we far away on the billow!

Lightly they'll talk of the spirit that's gone,
And o'er his cold ashes upbraid him--
But little he'll reck, if they let him sleep on
In the grave where a Briton has laid him.

But half of our heavy task was done
When the clock struck the hour for retiring;
And we heard the distant and random gun
That the foe was sullenly firing.

Slowly and sadly we laid him down,
From the field of his fame fresh and gory;
We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
But we left him alone with his glory.

Charles Wolfe

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-eves 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,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spare 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 cyder-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-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies

John Keats

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Vitai Lampada
("They Pass On The Torch of Life")

There's a breathless hush in the Close to-night --
Ten to make and the match to win --
A bumping pitch and a blinding light,
An hour to play and the last man in.
And it's not for the sake of a ribboned coat,
Or the selfish hope of a season's fame,
But his Captain's hand on his shoulder smote --
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

The sand of the desert is sodden red, --
Red with the wreck of a square that broke; --
The Gatling's jammed and the Colonel dead,
And the regiment blind with dust and smoke.
The river of death has brimmed his banks,
And England's far, and Honour a name,
But the voice of a schoolboy rallies the ranks:
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

This is the word that year by year,
While in her place the School is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget.
This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch in flame,
And falling fling to the host behind --
'Play up! play up! and play the game!'

Sir Henry Newbolt

When the Lamp is Shattered

When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed;
When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:--
No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?
Its passions will rock thee,
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

About Ben Adhem

Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,
An Angel writing in a book of gold:
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,
And to the Presence in the room he said,
"What writest thou?" The Vision raised it's head,
And with a look made of all sweet accord
Answered, "The names of those who love the Lord."
"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"
Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still; and said, "I pray thee, then,
Write me as one who loves his fellow-men."

The Angel wrote, and vanished. The next night
It came again with a great wakening light,
And showed the names whom love of God had blessed,
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest!

Leigh Hunt

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 flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
 When I have crossed the bar.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

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Much Madness is divinest Sense -
To a discerning Eye -
Much Sense - the starkest Madness -
'Tis the Majority
In this, as all, prevail -
Assent - and you are sane -
Demur - you're straightway dangerous -
And handled with a Chain -

Emily Dickinson

She Walks in Beauty

She walks in Beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impair'd the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

Lord Byron

The Tiger

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

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

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

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terror clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And watered heaven with their tears.
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

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

William Blake

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

The Unknown Citizen

He was found by the bureau of statistics to be
One against whom there was no official complaint,
And all the reports on his conduct agree
That, in the modern sense of an old fashioned word, he was a saint,
For in everything he did he served the greater community.
Except for the war till the day he retired
He worked in the factory and never got fired,
But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.
Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,
For his Union reports that he paid his dues,
(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)
And our Social Psychology workers found
That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.
The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day
And that his reactions to poetry were normal in every way.
Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,
And his Health Card shows he was once in a hospital but left it cured.
Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare
He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Installment Plan
And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,
A gramophone, a radio, a car, and a frigidaire.
Our researchers into public opinion are content
That he held the popular opinions for the time of year.
When there was peace, he was for peace; when there was war, he went.

He was married and added five children to the population,
Which our Eugenists say was the right number for a parent of his generation,
And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.
Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:
Had anything been wrong, we certainly should have heard.

W H Auden

The Dying Aviator

A typical boozing song of the Royal Flying Corps, full of the black humour of the day...

A young aviator lay dying,
At the end of a bright summer's day (summer's day).
His comrades had gathered around him,
To carry his fragments away.

The aeroplane was piled on his wishbone,
His Lewis was wrapped round his head (his head).
He wore a spark plug in each elbow,
'Twas plain he would shortly be dead.
He spat out a valve and a gasket,
As he stirred in the sump where he lay (he lay),
And then to his wondering comrades
These brave parting words did he say:

'Take the manifold out of my larynx,
And the butterfly-valve off my neck (my neck).
Remove from my kidneys the camrods,
There's a lot of good parts in this wreck.

'Take the piston rings out of my stomach,
And the cylinders out of my brain (my brain).
Extract from my liver the crankshaft,
And assemble the engine again!

'Pull the longeron out of my backbone,
The turnbuckle out of my ear (my ear).
From the small of my back take the rudder-
There's all of your aeroplane here.

'I'll be riding a cloud in the morning,
With no rotary before me to cuss (to cuss).
Take the lead from your feet and get busy,
There's another lad needing the bus!'

High Flight

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

'High Flight' was written by Pilot Officer Gillespie Magee Jnr, of 412 Squadron, RCAF.
He was killed in a Spitfire on December 11th, 1941.

Full Cycle

God, to know himself as God
Breathed and produced a Son
And all that is, or great or small
Is member of that One.

And each is self, unsevered light
And every self a flame
And you and I, the eyes of God
Are self without a name

But in the darkness yet unseen
And now as yet divine,
The voice of folly cries aloud,
I am, and this is mine.

And so we suffer, self deceived
And bitterly complain,
Until we rise and take the road
From God to God again.

Purge from they heart all sensual desire

Purge from they heart all sensual desire,
Let low ambitions perish in the fire
Of higher aims. Then, as the transient dies,
The eternal shall unfold before thine eyes
The fleeting hours will grant thee thy request;
Take thou immortal gifts and leave the rest.

Windy Nights

WHENEVER the moon and stars are set,
Whenever the wind is high,
All night long in the dark and wet,
A man goes riding by.
Late in the night when the fires are out,
Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,
And ships are tossed at sea,
By, on the highway, low and loud,
By at the gallop goes he.
By at the gallop he goes, and then
By he comes back at the gallop again.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find me, unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

William Ernest Henley

The Mystery of Aimheirgin

I am the wind that breathes over the sea
I am a wave of the ocean
I am the murmur of the wave
I am the great ox of the seven combats
I am a vulture upon the rocks
I am a beam of the sun
I am a tall green plant
I am a lake in the plain
I am a word of science
I am the death point of the battle spear
I am the god who kindles in the head of man the fire of thought
Who is it that casts light on the hosting on the mountain top
Who is that that proclaims the ages of the moon
Who is it that reveals the bed of the sun
Who
If it be not I

Believed to be the first poem to come out of Ireland

A High Way and a Low

To everyone there openeth
A way, and ways, and a way,
And the high soul climbs the high way,
And the low soul gropes the low;
And in between, on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.

But to everyone there openeth
A high way and a low,
And everyone decideth
The way his soul shall go.

John Oxenham

The spirit within is the long-lost Word

The spirit within is the long-lost Word,
Besought by the world of the soul in pain
Through a world of words which are void and vain.
O never while shadow and light are blended
Shall the world's Word-Quest or its woe be ended,
And never the world of its wounds made whole
Till the Word made flesh be the Word made soul!

Arthur Edward Waite

The Hound of Heaven

I fled Him down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him down the arches of the years;
I fled Him down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated,
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase, And unperturbed pace
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat, and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet –
'All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.'

Francis Thompson

No Coward Soul Is Mine

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.
O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life--that in me has rest,
As I--undying Life--have Power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts: unutterably vain;
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void:
Thou--Thou art Being and Breath,
And what Thou art may never be destroyed.

Emily Bronte

Extract from: Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the Man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

William Wordsworth

A Need for Unfavourable Weather and Other Circumstances

This country has too many
rich farmers with Ford
and Fordson too many half educated sporting students
study at too many universities with too many social academics
too profuse are the summer days and too short
the winters threadbare the autumn and false the spring.

This country has too vast an interior too many elephant and lion
and too few waterbirds too few lakes and cold pools
with swans nothing disturbs
the rugby-ball sun when they barbecue it
never snows no mist swirls
like milk against the windowpanes no fairy tales

happen in woods. There are too many newspapers
and newspaper stars like whores and murderers
too many un-monarchical queens and drum majorettes
too many carousing news-idols ¹ too many repetitive
superficialities ² too many paramours
and ministers with their deputies and other snobs.

There are too few paintings and books
and too few wintry fireplace months the sun
shines continuously there is no imaginative changing
of seasons and opinions no dark corners
against storms too few storms too far apart
lie heaven and earth interspersed with too much good weather.

Ray Hattingh

Transalation of T T Cloete's poem:
Behoefte aan ongunstige weers-
en ander omstandighede

The Second Coming
O Captain! My Captain!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won, The port is near, the bells
I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up- for you the flag is flung- for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths- for you the shores
a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

Walt Whitman

Plead for Me

Oh, thy bright eyes must answer now,
When Reason, with a scornful brow,
Is mocking at my overthrow !
Oh, thy sweet tongue must plead for me
And tell, why I have chosen thee !

Stern Reason is to judgment come,
Arrayed in all her forms of gloom:
Wilt thou, my advocate, be dumb ?
No, radiant angel, speak and say,
Why I did cast the world away.

Why I have persevered to shun
The common paths that others run,
And on a strange road journeyed on,
Heedless, alike, of wealth and power!
Of glory's wreath and pleasure's flower.

These, once, indeed, seemed Beings Divine;
And they, perchance, heard vows of mine,
And saw my offerings on their shrine;
But, careless gifts are seldom prized,
And mine were worthily despised.

So, with a ready heart I swore
To seek their altar-stone no more;
And gave my spirit to adore
Thee, ever-present, phantom thing;
My slave, my comrade, and my king,

A slave, because I rule thee still;
Incline thee to my changeful will,
And make thy influence good or ill:
A comrade, for by day and night
Thou art my intimate delight,

My darling pain that wounds and sears
And wrings a blessing out from tears
By deadening me to earthly cares;
And yet, a king, though Prudence well
Have taught thy subject to rebel.

And am I wrong to worship, where
Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair,
Since my own soul can grant my prayer ?
Speak, God of visions, plead for me,
And tell why I have chosen thee !

Emily Bronte

I had a guinea golden --
 I lost it in the sand --
 And tho' the sum was simple
 And pounds were in the land --
 Still, had it such a value
 Unto my frugal eye --
 That when I could not find it --
 I sat me down to sigh.

I had a crimson Robin --
 Who sang full many a day
 But when the woods were painted,
 He, too, did fly away --

Time brought me other Robins --
 Their ballads were the same --
 Still, for my missing Troubador
 I kept the "house at home."

I had a star in heaven --
 One "Pleiad" was its name --
 And when I was not heeding,
 It wandered from the same.
 And tho' the skies are crowded --
 And all the night ashine --
 I do not care about it --
 Since none of them are mine.

My story has a moral --
 I have a missing friend --
 "Pleiad" its name, and Robin,
 And guinea in the sand.
 And when this mournful ditty
 Accompanied with tear --
 Shall meet the eye of traitor
 In country far from here --
 Grant that repentance solemn
 May seize upon his mind --
 And he no consolation
 Beneath the sun may find.

Emily Dickinson

619

Glee -- The great storm is over --
Four -- have recovered the Land --
Forty -- gone down together --
Into the boiling Sand --

Ring -- for the Scant Salvation --
Toll -- for the bonnie Souls --
Neighbor -- and friend -- and Bridegroom --
Spinning upon the Shoals --

How they will tell the Story --
When Winter shake the Door --
Till the Children urge --
But the Forty --
Did they -- come back no more?

Then a softness -- suffuse the Story --
And a silence -- the Teller's eye --
And the Children -- no further question --
And only the Sea -- reply --

Emily Dickinson

Indwelling

If thou couldst empty all thyself of self
Like to a shell dishabited
Then might He find thee on an ocean shelf
And say: This is not dead,
And fill thee with Himself instead.

But thou art so replete with very thou
And hast such shrewd activity
That when He comes He'll say: 'It is enow
Unto itself. 'Twere better let it be,
It is so small and full, and has no need of Me.'

T E Brown

Antigonish

As I was going up the stair
I met a man who wasn't there!
He wasn't there again today,
I wish, I wish he'd stay away!

When I came home last night at three,
The man was waiting there for me
But when I looked around the hall,
I couldn't see him there at all!
Go away, go away, don't you come back any more!
Go away, go away, and please don't slam the door...

Last night I saw upon the stair,
A little man who wasn't there,
He wasn't there again today
Oh, how I wish he'd go away...

William Hughes Mearns

Four Men

It chanced upon a winter's night, safe sheltered from the weather,
The board was spread for only one, yet four men dined together.
There sat the man I meant to be, in glory spurred and booted,
And close beside him to the right, the man I am reputed.

The man I think myself to be, a seat was occupying
Hard by the man I really am, who to hold his own was trying,
And though beneath one roof we met, none called his fellow brother,
No sign of recognition passed -- they knew not one another.

Anonymous

Sonnet 94

They that have power to hurt and will do none,
Who do not do the thing they most do show,
Who, moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmovéd, cold, and to temptation slow ~
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense;
They are the lords and owners of their faces,
Others but stewards of their excellence.
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself it only live and die,
But should that flower with base infection meet
The basest weed outbraves his dignity.
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds:
Lillies that fester smell far worse than weeds.

William Shakespeare

The Purist

I give you now Professor Twist,
A conscientious scientist,
Trustees exclaimed, "He never bungles!"
And sent him off to distant jungles.
Camped on a tropic riverside,
One day he missed his loving bride.
She had, the guide informed him later,
Been eaten by an alligator.
Professor Twist could not but smile.
"You mean," he said, "a crocodile."

Ogden Nash

Chameleons

Colour those idealistic chameleons non-racist
When they are not subject to oppression,
When they act from a position of privilege.
Colour them, "Justice for all".

Colour them righteous as they stone police,
Creating disorder, perpetuating violence.
(How easy to advocate justice when protected.)
Colour them, "Justice before order".

Colour them new racists when they suffer,
When they themselves become victims.
Recolour those police-stoning chameleons.
Colour them, "Order before justice".

Colour them also bewildered, angry, hurt,
Resentful of the crime-ridden disorder they leave.
(How easy to be non-racist when privileged.)
Now colour them, "Disillusioned - emigrating".

Ray Hattingh

Lines from Locksley Hall (1842)

For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be;
Saw the heavens fill with commerce, argosies of magic sails,
Pilots of the purple twilight dropping down with costly bales;
Heard the heavens fill with shouting, and there rain'd a ghastly dew
From the nations' airy navies grappling in the central blue;
Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm;
Till the war-drum throb'd no longer, and the battle-flags were furl'd
In the Parliament of man, the Federation of the world.

Alfred Lord Tennyson

I am not here

Though I walk in the heat of the day
And rest through the dark hours of night.
I am not here.

Though I breathe and eat and sleep
And see and act and speak.
There is no cheer,
I am not here.

A disassociated self the ether spans
And lives the life the body bans.
Though I am. I am not.
It is clear,
I am not here.

Michael Angelo
British soldier

Anonymous

Remember the day I borrowed your brand
new car and dented it?
I thought you'd kill me, but you didn't.

And remember the time I dragged you to the beach,
and you said it would rain, and it did?
I thought you'd say, "I told you so." But you didn't.

Do you remember the time I flirted with all
the guys to make you jealous, and you were?
I thought you'd leave me, but you didn't.

Do you remember the time I spilled strawberry pie
all over your car rug?
I thought you'd hit me, but you didn't.

And remember the time I forgot to tell you the dance
was formal and you showed up in jeans?
I thought you'd drop me, but you didn't.

Yes, there were lots of things you didn't do.
But you put up with me, and loved me, and protected me.

There were lots of things I wanted to make up to you
when you returned from Vietnam.

But you didn't.

