

Poems and Songs before reading Ernest Hemingway's *In Our Time*

Give peace in our time, O Lord. -- The Book of Common Prayer

The Boxer – Words and Music by Paul Simon

I am just a poor boy.
Though my story's seldom told,
I have squandered my resistance
For a pocketful of mumbles,
Such are promises
All lies and jest
Still, a man hears what he wants to hear
And disregards the rest.

When I left my home
And my family,
I was no more than a boy
In the company of strangers
In the quiet of the railway station,
Running scared,
Laying low,
Seeking out the poorer quarters
Where the ragged people go,
Looking for the places
Only they would know.

Lie-la-lie...

Asking only workman's wages
I come looking for a job,
But I get no offers,
Just a come-on from the whores
On Seventh Avenue
I do declare,
There were times when I was so
lonesome
I took some comfort there.

Lie-la-lie...

Then I'm laying out my winter clothes
And wishing I was gone,
Going home
Where the New York City winters
Aren't bleeding me,
Leading me,
Going home.

In the clearing stands a boxer,
And a fighter by his trade
And he carries the reminders
Of ev'ry glove that laid him down
Or cut him till he cried out
In his anger and his shame,
"I am leaving, I am leaving."
But the fighter still remains
Lie-la-lie...

The Next War by Robert Graves

You young friskies who today
Jump and fight in Father's hay
With bows and arrows and wooden spears,
Playing at Royal Welch Fusiliers,
Happy though these hours you spend,
Have they warned you how games end?

Boys, from the first time you prod
And thrust with spears of curtain-rod,
From the first time you tear and slash
Your long-bows from the garden ash,
Or fit your shaft with a blue jay feather,
Binding the split tops together,
From that same hour by fate you're bound
As champions of this stony ground,
Loyal and true in everything,
To serve your Army and your King,
Prepared to starve and sweat and die
Under some fierce foreign sky,
If only to keep safe those joys
That belong to British boys,
To keep young Prussians from the soft
Scented hay of father's loft,
And stop young Slavs from cutting bows
And bendy spears from Welsh hedgerows.

Another War soon gets begun,
A dirtier, a more glorious one;
Then, boys, you'll have to play, all in;
It's the cruellest team will win.
So hold your nose against the stink
And never stop too long to think.
Wars don't change except in name;
The next one must go just the same,
And new foul tricks unguessed before
Will win and justify this War.

Kaisers and Czars will strut the stage
Once more with pomp and greed and rage;
Courtly ministers will stop
At home and fight to the last drop;
By the million men will die
In some new horrible agony;
And children here will thrust and poke,
Shoot and die, and laugh at the joke,
With bows and arrows and wooden spears,
Playing at Royal Welch Fusiliers.¹

¹ a member of any of several British regiments formerly armed with fusils (spear-like weapons).

A Child's Nightmare by Robert Graves

Through long nursery nights he stood
 By my bed unwearied,
 Loomed gigantic, formless, queer,
 Purring in my haunted ear
 That same hideous nightmare thing,
 Talking, as he lapped my blood,
 In a voice cruel and flat,
 Saying for ever, "Cat! ... Cat! ... Cat!..."

That one word was all he said,
 That one word through all my sleep,
 In monotonous mock despair.
 Nonsense may be light as air,
 But there's Nonsense that can keep
 Horror bristling round the head,
 When a voice cruel and flat
 Says for ever, "Cat! ... Cat! ... Cat!..."

He had faded, he was gone
 Years ago with Nursery Land,
 When he leapt on me again
 From the clank of a night train,
 Overpowered me foot and head,
 Lapped my blood, while on and on
 The old voice cruel and flat
 Says for ever, "Cat! ... Cat! ... Cat!..."

Morphia drowsed, again I lay
 In a crater by High Wood:
 He was there with straddling legs,
 Staring eyes as big as eggs,
 Purring as he lapped my blood,
 His black bulk darkening the day,
 With a voice cruel and flat,
 "Cat! ... Cat! ... Cat! ... Cat!..." he said, "Cat! ... Cat!..."

When I'm shot through heart and head,
 And there's no choice but to die,
 The last word I'll hear, no doubt,
 Won't be "Charge!" or "Bomb them out!"
 Nor the stretcher-bearer's cry,
 "Let that body be, he's dead!"
 But a voice cruel and flat
 Saying for ever, "Cat! ... Cat! ... Cat!"

The Wounded Bullfighter

BY CLARENCE MAJOR

Blood on his torn glossy pants.
 But the bull is down.
 Brave, holding up the bull's ear,
 he walks nearly falling.
 The bright splash of people fumble in their
 cheering.
 He makes a blunt move forward, out of the oval
 of shade.
 But the bull gets up and comes from behind.

"Señor, the blood is dripping through the
 stretcher."
 These simple facts close an afternoon.
 They clear his pants and face of blood.

This part of his life is as blunt
 as the front of a strange twilight.
 But it is still today
 and he is stretched out on an evening table.
 His gold-and-blue suit no longer fits.
 This part of his glory does not fit him well.
 "And part of the lower stomach has been ripped
 away."
 The doctor blew velvet smoke at the wife.
 She sits waiting and waiting as for a bell.
 "Internal bleeding in these cases is common.
 The soft areas are in danger."
 On the X ray, we see a slight bone chip.
 For her, the goring hurts
 way off somewhere unknown.
 But her husband is resting,
 and the bull, he is brave but dead.

"Anthem" by Leonard Cohen

The birds they sang
at the break of day
Start again
I heard them say
Don't dwell on what
has passed away
or what is yet to be.
Ah the wars they will
be fought again
The holy dove
She will be caught again
bought and sold
and bought again
the dove is never free.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

We asked for signs
the signs were sent:
the birth betrayed
the marriage spent
Yeah the widowhood
of every government --
signs for all to see.

I can't run no more
with that lawless crowd
while the killers in high places
say their prayers out loud.
But they've summoned, they've summoned up
a thundercloud
and they're going to hear from me.

Ring the bells that still can ring ...

You can add up the parts
but you won't have the sum
You can strike up the march,
there is no drum
Every heart, every heart
to love will come
but like a refugee.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.

Ring the bells that still can ring
Forget your perfect offering
There is a crack, a crack in everything
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in.
That's how the light gets in.

Throw A Stone In The Water, See The Ripples

Spread by Barbara Crooker

We set up our tent, secure the gear,
and sink into the deep green quiet
of the woods, even though it's a state campground,
and boomboxes crackle by the campfires,
even though we've brought our children,
one of whom doesn't understand the meaning of
silence,
but babbles in his own language like clear water
running in a stream, or the lake water rippling
off the prow of our canoe as we drift at twilight;
the full moon spills its light in the water,
bull frogs chug-a-rum in the cattails,
the thin blue smoke of campfires rises in the
hemlocks,
circles the lake, a tart blue, the berries we picked
on the island, where the bushes grew over our heads,
but now the dark tent of night covers the sky,
and we drift off to sleep, souged by the pines,
our breath in the tent rises, joins the small music
of the crickets and katydids, floats all the way
to the harmony of the stars.

it may not always be so - e e cummings

it may not always be so; and i say
that if your lips, which i have loved, should
touch
another's, and your dear strong fingers
clutch
his heart, as mine in time not far away;
if on another's face your sweet hair lay
in such silence as i know, or such
great writhing words as, uttering overmuch,
stand helplessly before the spirit at bay;

if this should be, i say if this should be--
you of my heart, send me a little word;
that i may go unto him, and take his hands,
saying, Accept all happiness from me.
Then shall i turn my face and hear one bird
sing terribly afar in the lost lands

"The Child is the Father of the Man"
— William Wordsworth

Along With Youth by Ernest Hemingway

A porcupine skin,
 Stiff with bad tanning,
 It must have ended somewhere.
 Stuffed horned owl
 Pompous
 Yellow eyed;
 Chuck-wills-widow on a biased twig
 Sooted with dust.
 Piles of old magazines,
 Drawers of boy's letters
 And the line of love
 They must have ended somewhere.
 Yesterday's Tribune is gone
 Along with youth
 And the canoe that went to pieces on the beach
 The year of the big storm
 When the hotel burned down
 At Seney, Michigan.

Home, by Warsan Shire

no one leaves home unless
 home is the mouth of a shark.

you only run for the border
 when you see the whole city
 running as well.

your neighbors running faster
 than you, the boy you went to school with
 who kissed you dizzy behind
 the old tin factory is
 holding a gun bigger than his body,
 you only leave home
 when home won't let you stay.

no one would leave home unless home
 chased you, fire under feet,
 hot blood in your belly.

it's not something you ever thought about
 doing, and so when you did -
 you carried the anthem under your breath,
 waiting until the airport toilet
 to tear up the passport and swallow,
 each mouthful of paper making it clear that
 you would not be going back.

you have to understand,
 no one puts their children in a boat
 unless the water is safer than the land.

who would choose to spend days
 and nights in the stomach of a truck
 unless the miles travelled
 meant something more than journey.

no one would choose to crawl under fences,
 be beaten until your shadow leaves you,
 raped, then drowned, forced to the bottom of
 the boat because you are darker, be sold,
 starved, shot at the border like a sick animal,
 be pitied, lose your name, lose your family,
 make a refugee camp a home for a year or two or ten,
 stripped and searched, find prison everywhere
 and if you survive
 and you are greeted on the other side
 with
 go home blacks, refugees
 dirty immigrants, asylum seekers
 sucking our country dry of milk,
 dark, with their hands out
 smell strange, savage -
 look what they've done to their own countries,
 what will they do to ours?

the dirty looks in the street
 softer than a limb torn off,
 the indignity of everyday life
 more tender than fourteen men who
 look like your father, between
 your legs, insults easier to swallow
 than rubble, than your child's body
 in pieces - for now, forget about pride
 your survival is more important.

i want to go home,
 but home is the mouth of a shark
 home is the barrel of the gun
 and no one would leave home
 unless home chased you to the shore
 unless home tells you to
 leave what you could not behind,
 even if it was human.

no one leaves home until home
 is a damp voice in your ear saying
 leave, run now, i don't know what
 i've become.

