

ENGLISH POETRY

658-1920

A COPYBOOK COURSE

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HOW TO READ A POEM

- Always read the poem more than once. Notice the title.
- **Read it at least once aloud. Copying it out** is another good way to make your mind “listen” to it slowly and carefully. When you copy, be mindful of **line breaks** -- don’t just copy the poem as if it were a paragraph of text. Pay attention to **syntax** (i.e., sentence structure). Just knowing what the subject and predicate of a given sentence is (even if it’s broken over multiple lines) will help you to follow the sense of what’s being said.
- If the poem is in Anglo-Saxon or Middle English, find a YouTube video of someone reciting it, **so that you can hear how it’s supposed to sound.**
- Have a **dictionary** on hand, but don’t use it until you’ve read the poem at least once all the way through.
 - Are there unfamiliar words?
 - Are some familiar words used in an unfamiliar way?
 - If yes to the last two questions, get out a dictionary and LOOK UP all meanings of the words in question. See if you can figure out what meaning (or meanings) is relevant to the context of the poem.
- While you read, ask yourself:
 - How does the poem look on the page?
 - ✓ a block of text?
 - ✓ in **stanzas** of a regular length
 - ✓ in irregular stanzas?
 - how many lines in all?
 - Short lines or long?

✓ **End-stopped?** That is, the end of the line is the natural end of, or a natural break in, the sentence?

✓ Or **enjambéd?** That is, the line stops, but the sentence keeps going into the next line or lines, breaking at what may seem like unnatural or awkward places?

- Do some lines seem to move faster, and some slower? What seems to create that effect?

➤ What patterns of sound do you hear, if any?

- Are there **rhymes** at the ends of lines?

✓ Can you discern a regular pattern of end-rhymes?

- Are there rhymes within lines?

- Do you hear repeated consonant sounds (**alliteration**) within a line? Repeated vowel sounds (**assonance**)?

- Can you hear any regular “beat” or rhythm in the poem? Read it aloud again, and clap or tap the stressed syllables as you say them, to see whether there is a regular number of stressed syllables per line.

➤ Who is speaking in the poem?

- a **first-person** speaker (“I”)?

- a **second-person** speaker (“you”)?

- a **third-person**, possibly omniscient, speaker (“he/she/it”)?

✓ (When talking about a poem, we usually do refer to the **speaker** saying this or that, rather than the poet. The voice that speaks in a poem is more like a character in fiction than like the writer’s own personal voice – that poetic voice is an artificial construct in the same way and should not be confused with the

real-life person of the poet, even if there's not a huge divide between the two)

- Is there anyone else in the poem, or is the speaker talking to himself?
- Does the poem refer to external events (this happened, then this happened, and then I did this other thing), or is it more like following the trajectory of someone's thought process, or a series of associations with their own kind of logic?
- Can you describe what seems to be happening in the poem?
- Does the poem ever
 - compare one thing to another (or multiple things to other things)? That is to say, does it use **metaphor** or **simile**?
 - address or describe inanimate objects as if they were human (in other words, does it use **personification**?)
 - mention objects or colors that have some additional, larger meaning? (for example, roses for passionate love, white for purity -- or death: **symbolism**)
 - invoke some earlier work of literature (including the Bible or Greek myths) or work of art, some historical or cultural event (**allusion**)?
- To what kind of effect do all these things add up?
 - Do you sense a particular mood in the poem? Can you point to specific words and phrases that contribute to that mood?
 - Do you sense a larger view of the universe operating in the poem: a kind or unkind universe, a universe in which there is God and mercy and grace, or a universe without those things? Hope or despair? Love or bitterness? Again, what words and phrases hint at these things?

- Whether the poem deals with external events or with internal thoughts and feelings, do you sense *why* these events or thoughts/feelings are important? What makes them urgent?

A COMPLETE READING LIST FOR ENGLISH POETRY

By itself this copybook offers a bare-bones selection of readings for a survey of English poetry from A.D. 658 to 1920. To work through this book is to follow a basic timeline for the development of poetry in England from its beginnings to the beginning of the last century. For some students, this study will suffice, though at the very least everyone should read all of Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" and T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." In these and a handful of other instances, only a brief portion of a longer poem is provided, out of mercy for everyone's writing hand; these passages are enough to get the poet's voice into the reader's ear. Meanwhile, others who wish for a meatier course, perhaps moved through over multiple years, may benefit from the reading list below.

Anglo-Saxon

Caedmon's Hymn

The Dream of the Rood

A selection of riddles from the Exeter Book

The Wanderer

Beowulf

Prose: Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*

Middle English

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

The complete Prologue to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

More medieval lyrics, songs, and carols

Drama: *Everyman*, *The Second Shepherd's Play*, *Piers Plowman*

York, Chester, or Coventry cycle of Mystery Plays

Renaissance

More poems by Wyatt, Surrey, Spenser

Sonnets by Sir Philip Sidney, Sir Walter Raleigh

More sonnets of Shakespeare

More poems by Donne and Jonson

Drama: At least one complete play by Shakespeare yearly

Seventeenth Century

Metaphysical Poets

Cavalier Poets

Milton: All of *Paradise Lost*, sonnets

Dryden, Pope

Prose: Diary of Samuel Johnson

Eighteenth Century

William Blake, *Songs of Innocence and Experience*

Prose: Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal"

Nineteenth Century

Romantic poets (Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron)

Victorian poets (Tennyson, Browning, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Arnold,
Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti)

Prose: Novels by Austen, Dickens, George Eliot, Thackeray, Trollope

Early Twentieth Century

W. B. Yeats

Thomas Hardy

World War I poets, chiefly Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon

T. S. Eliot

USING THIS COPYBOOK

As noted in the section on how to read a poem, this copybook can help you to become a better reader of poetry, simply because copying two lines at a time makes you slow down and pay attention. If you're copying two lines (or three) at a time, you can focus on those two lines, asking yourself all the questions suggested in the previous section. Read **those two lines** (or three) aloud. Look up unfamiliar words in **those two lines** (or three). Figure out what's happening in **those two lines** (or three), translating them mentally into your own words, and then figure out how they follow from what you've already copied. Then go back and reread the whole poem. Piece by piece, taking your time, you'll put the poem together, thinking your way through it, steeping in it. And by the time you get to the end of it, you'll know it. It will be yours.

Some Useful Websites to Aid Your Survey of English Poetry:

A Time-Line of English Poetry:

<https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/html/1807/4350/timeline.html#OE>

The History of English in Ten Minutes (YouTube):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njJBw2KlIEo>

Caedmon's Hymn in Old English (YouTube):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2SRmtbu0iXQ>

Canterbury Tales: Prologue (first 18 lines):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-xpzfsY4bU>

Helpful additional reading:

Perrine, Lawrence, *Sound and Sense*

Hollander, John, *Rhyme's Reason*

Gioia, Dana, ["Accentual Verse"](#)

Gioia, Dana, ["Thirteen Ways of Thinking About the Poetic Line"](#)

Terms to know (you'll want to look them up):

Rhyme
Meter
Stanza
Rhyme scheme
Line break
End-stopped
Enjambment
Couplet
Tercet
Quatrain
Alliteration
Assonance
Lyric
Narrative
Ballade
Sonnet
Epic
Free Verse

Happy reading, and happy writing.

ANGLO-SAXON VERSE

CAEDMON'S HYMN (translated from Old English)

Now we must praise Heaven-Kingdom's Keeper,
The might of the Measurer and His mind's purpose,
The work of the Glory-Father. He for many wonders,
Eternal Lord, established a beginning.
He shaped first for the sons of men
Heaven as roof, the Holy Maker,
Then Middle-Earth, mankind's Keeper,
Eternal Lord, made afterwards.

Caedmon, Anglo-Saxon, AD 658

Now we must praise Heaven-Kingdom's Keeper,
The might of the measurer and His mind's purpose.

The work of the Glory-Father. He for many wonders,
Eternal Lord, established a beginning.

He shaped first for the sons of men
Heaven as roof, the Holy Maker,

Then Middle-Earth, mankind's Guardian,
Eternal Lord, made afterwards

MIDDLE ENGLISH VERSE

ADAM LAY YBOUNDEN

Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond,
Four thousand winter thoughte he not too long;
And al was for an apple, an apple that he took,
As clerkes finden writen, writen in hir¹ book.
Ne hadde² the apple taken been, the apple taken been,
Ne hadde never Oure Lady ybeen hevene Queen.
Blessed be the time that apple taken was:
Therfore we mown³ singen Deo Gratias.

_____Middle English Lyric, 15th Century

¹ their

² Had not

³ may

Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond
Four thousand winter thoughte he not too long;

And al was for an apple, an apple that he took,
As clerkes find writen, writen in hire book.

Ne hadde the apple taken been, the apple taken been
Ne hadde never Our Lady ybeen Hevene Queene

Blessed be the time that apple taken was:
Therefore we mown singen Deo Gratias.

CANTERBURY TALES: from THE GENERAL PROLOGUE

Whan that Aprille with his⁴ shoures soote⁵
The droughte of March hath perced to the roote,
And bathed every veine⁶ in swich⁷ licour⁸
Of which vertu engendered is the flowr;
Whan Zephyrus eek⁹ with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt¹⁰ and heeth¹¹
The tendre croppes and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne¹²,
And smale fowles maken melodye
That slepen all the night with open ye¹³ --
So priketh hem¹⁴ Nature in hir corages¹⁵ --
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,
And palmeres¹⁶ for to seeken straunge strondes¹⁷
To frene halwes, couthe¹⁸ in sondry londes;
And specially from every shires ende
Of Engeland to Canterbury they wende,
The holy blisful martyr for to seeke
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke¹⁹.

Geoffrey Chaucer, 1343-1400

⁴ its

⁵ sweet

⁶ vine

⁷ such

⁸ liquid

⁹ also

¹⁰ woods

¹¹ field

¹² "has in the Ram (constellation) his half-course run"

¹³ eye

¹⁴ them

¹⁵ their hearts

¹⁶ palmers

¹⁷ foreign shores

¹⁸ known

¹⁹ sick

Whan that Aprille with his shoures soote
The droughte of March hath perced to the roote

And bathed every veine in swich licour
Of which vertu engendered is the flowr;

Whan Zephyrus eke with his sweete breeth
Inspired hath in every holt and heeth

The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne,

And smale fowles maken melodye
That slepen all the night with open ye --

So priketh them Nature in hir corages --
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,

And palmeres for to seeken straunge strondes
To ferne halwes, couthe in sondry londes;

And specially from every shires ende
Of Engelond to Canterbury they wende,

The holy blisful martyr for to seeke,
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke.

RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

MY LUTE AWAKE

My lute awake! Perform the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste
And end that I have now begun;
For when this song is sung and past,
My lute, be still, for I am done.

As to be heard where ear is none,
As lead to grave in marble stone,
My song may pierce her heart as soon;
Should we then sigh, or sing, or moan?
No, no, my lute, for I have done.

The rocks do not so cruelly
Repulse the waves continually,
As she my suit and affection;
So that I am past remedy,
Whereby my lute and I have done.

Proud of the spoil that thou hast got
Of simple hearts thorough Love's shot,
By whom, unkind, thou hast them won,
Think not he hath his bow forgot,
Although my lute and I have done.

Vengeance shall fall on thy disdain
That makest but game on earnest pain.
Think not alone under the sun,
Unquit to cause thy lovers plain²⁰,
Although my lute and I have done.

Perchance thee lie wethered and old
These winter nights that are so cold,
Plaining in vain unto the moon;
Thy wishes then dare not be told;
Care then who list, for I have done.

And then may chance thee to repent
The time that thou hast lost and spent
To cause thy lovers sigh and swoon;
Then shalt thou know beauty but lent,
And wish and want as I have done.

Now cease, my lute; this is the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste,
And ended is that we begun.
Now is this song both sung and past;
My lute, be still, for I have done.

Thomas Wyatt, 1503-1542

²⁰ to complain

My lute awake! Perform the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste

And end that I have now begun;
For when this song is sung and past,
My lute, be still, for I am done.

As to be heard where ear is none,
As lead to grave in marble stone,

My song may pierce her heart as soon;
Should we then sigh, or sing, or moan?
No, no, my lute, for I have done.

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And wish and want as I have done.

Now cease, my lute; this is the last
Labour that thou and I shall waste,

And ended is that we begun.
Now is this song both sung and past;
My lute, be still, for I have done.

FROM A TRANSLATION OF VERGIL'S *AENEID*

They whisted²¹ all, with fixed face attent,
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat
Thus gan to speak: "O Queen²², it is thy will
I should renew a woe cannot be told,
How that the Greeks did spoil and overthrow
The Phrygian wealth and wailful realm of Troy,
Those ruthful²³ things that I myself beheld,
And whereof no small part fell to my share,
Which to express, who could refrain from tears?"

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, 1517-1547

²¹ fell quiet

²² Dido

²³ regretful

They whisted all, with fixed face attent,
When Prince Aeneas from the royal seat

Thus gan to speak: “O Queen, it is thy will
I should renew a woe cannot be told,

How that the Greeks did spoil and overthrow
The Phrygian wealth and wailful realm of Troy,

Those ruthful things that I myself beheld,
And whereof no small part fell to my share,

Which to express, who could refrain from tears?”

SONNET 68

Most glorious Lord of lyfe, that on this day
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin:
And having harrowed hell, didst bring away
Captivity thence captive us to win:
This joyous day, deare Lord, with joy begin,
And grant that we for whom thou diddest dye
Being with thy deare blood clene washt from sin,
May live forever in felicity.
And that thy love we weighing worthily,
May likewise love thee for the same againe:
And for thy sake that all lyke deare didst buy,
With love may one another entertayne.
So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought,
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

Edmund Spenser, 1552-1599

Most glorious Lord of lyfe, that on this day
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin:

And having harrowed hell, didst bring away
Captivity thence captive us to win:

This joyous day, deare Lord, with joy begin,
And grant that we for whom thou diddest dye

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And that thy love we weighing worthily,
May likewise love thee for the same againe:

And for thy sake that all lyke deare didst buy,
With love may one another entertayne.

So let us love, deare love, lyke as we ought,
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.

THE BURNING BABE

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat that made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear;
Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed
As though his floods should quench his flames which with his tears were fed.
“Alas,” quoth he, “But newly born, in fiery heats I fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I!
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;
The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,
For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood.”
With this he vanish'd out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas Day.

St. Robert Southwell, S.J. (martyr), 1561-1595

As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat that made my heart to glow;

And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe all burning bright did in the air appear;

Who, scorched with excessive heat, such floods of tears did shed
As though his floods should quench his flames which with his tears were fed.

“Alas,” quoth he, “But newly born, in fiery heats I fry,
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The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals,
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defiled souls,

For which, as now on fire I am to work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath to wash them in my blood."

With this he vanish'd out of sight and swiftly shrunk away,
And straight I called unto mind that it was Christmas Day.

SHAKESPEARE

SONNET 18

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wandrest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

William Shakespeare, 1564-1616

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.

Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

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By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st.

Nor shall death brag thou wandrest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

SONNET 73

That time of year thou mayest in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self that seals all up in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which it must leave ere long.

William Shakespeare

That time of year thou mayest in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang

Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west;

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Death's second self that seals all up in rest.

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That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,

As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which it must leave ere long.

OBERON'S SPEECH

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,
Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:
There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;
And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:
And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.
Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
A sweet Athenian lady is in love
With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies
May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.
Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love:
And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Act II, Scene 1

I know a bank where the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows,

Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses and with eglantine:

There sleeps Titania sometime of the night,
Lull'd in these flowers with dances and delight;

And there the snake throws her enamell'd skin,
Weed wide enough to wrap a fairy in:

And with the juice of this I'll streak her eyes,
And make her full of hateful fantasies.

Take thou some of it, and seek through this grove:
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With a disdainful youth: anoint his eyes;
But do it when the next thing he espies

May be the lady: thou shalt know the man
By the Athenian garments he hath on.

Effect it with some care, that he may prove
More fond on her than she upon her love:

And look thou meet me ere the first cock crow.

JULIET'S SOLILOQUY

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner
As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.
Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That runaway's eyes may wink and Romeo
Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites
By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,
Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.
Come, night; come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night
And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,
But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day
As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes
And may not wear them. O, here comes my nurse,

And she brings news; and every tongue that speaks
But Romeo's name speaks heavenly eloquence.

William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*
Act III, Scene 2

Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds,
Towards Phoebus' lodging: such a wagoner

As Phaethon would whip you to the west,
And bring in cloudy night immediately.

Spread thy close curtain, love-performing night,
That runaway's eyes may wink and Romeo

Leap to these arms, untalk'd of and unseen.
Lovers can see to do their amorous rites

By their own beauties; or, if love be blind,
It best agrees with night. Come, civil night,

Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match,

Play'd for a pair of stainless maidenhoods:
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,

With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.

Come, night; come, Romeo; come, thou day in night;
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night

Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,

Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,
Take him and cut him out in little stars,

And he will make the face of heaven so fine
That all the world will be in love with night

And pay no worship to the garish sun.
O, I have bought the mansion of a love,

But not possess'd it, and, though I am sold,
Not yet enjoy'd: so tedious is this day

As is the night before some festival
To an impatient child that hath new robes

And may not wear them. O, here comes my nurse,
And she brings news; and every tongue that speaks

But Romeo's name speaks heavenly eloquence.

KING HENRY'S SPEECH

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more;
Or close the wall up with our English dead.
In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
As modest stillness and humility:
But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
Then imitate the action of the tiger;
Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favour'd rage;
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect;
Let pry through the portage of the head
Like the brass cannon; let the brow o'erwhelm it
As fearfully as doth a galled rock
O'erhang and jutty his confounded base,
Swill'd with the wild and wasteful ocean.
Now set the teeth and stretch the nostril wide,
Hold hard the breath and bend up every spirit
To his full height. On, on, you noblest English.
Whose blood is fet from fathers of war-proof!
Fathers that, like so many Alexanders,
Have in these parts from morn till even fought
And sheathed their swords for lack of argument:
Dishonour not your mothers; now attest
That those whom you call'd fathers did beget you.
Be copy now to men of grosser blood,
And teach them how to war. And you, good yeoman,
Whose limbs were made in England, show us here
The mettle of your pasture; let us swear
That you are worth your breeding; which I doubt not;
For there is none of you so mean and base,
That hath not noble lustre in your eyes.
I see you stand like greyhounds in the slips,

Straining upon the start. The game's afoot:
Follow your spirit, and upon this charge
Cry 'God for Harry, England, and Saint George!'

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*
Act III, Scene 1

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SHAKESPEARE'S YOUNGER CONTEMPORARIES

HOLY SONNET 10

Death be not proud, though some have call`ed thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou are slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell.
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

John Donne, 1572-1631

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Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

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

One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

SONG: TO CELIA

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise,
Doth ask a drink divine:
but might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honoring thee,
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered be.
But thou thereon did'st only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

Ben Jonson, 1572-1637

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And I will pledge with mine;

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And sent'st it back to me;

Since when it grows and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

LOVE (III)

Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.

But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answer'd, “worthy to be here”;
 Love said, “You shall be he.”

“I, the unkind, the ungrateful? ah, my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.”

Love took my hand and smiling did reply,
 “Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them; let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.”

“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”
 “My dear, then I will serve.”

“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”
 So I did sit and eat.

George Herbert, 1593-1633

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Guilty of dust and sin.

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So I did sit and eat.

FROM *PARADISE LOST*, BOOK I

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, did inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heav'ns and earth
Rose out of Chaos; or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th'Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th'upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support,
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.

John Milton, 1608-1674

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I may assert Eternal Providence
And justify the ways of God to men.

VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS

(translation of the 9th-century anonymous Latin hymn)

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world's foundations first were laid,
Come, visit ev'ry pious mind;
Come, pour thy joys on human-kind;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make Thy temples worthy Thee.

O, Source of uncreated Light,
The Father's promis'd Paraclete!
Thrice Holy Fount, thrice Holy Fire,
Our hearts with heav'nly love inspire;
Come, and Thy Sacred Unction bring
To sanctify us, while we sing!

Plenteous of grace, descend from high,
Rich in thy sev'nfold energy!
Thou strength of His Almighty Hand,
Whose power does heav'n and earth command:
Proceeding Spirit, our Defence,
Who does the gift of tongues dispense,
And crown'st Thy gift with eloquence!

Refine and purge our earthly parts;
But oh! inflame and fire our hearts!
Our frailties help, our vice control;
Submit the senses to the soul;
And when rebellious they are grown,
Then, lay Thy hand, and hold 'em down.

Chase from our minds th'Infernal Foe;
And peace, the fruit of love, bestow;
And, lest our feet should step astray,
Protect, and guide us in the way.

Make us eternal truths receive,
And practise, all that we believe:
Give us Thy self, that we may see
The Father and the Son by Thee.

Immortal honour, endless fame,
Attend th'Almighty Father's Name:
The Saviour Son be glorified,
Who for lost Man's redemption died:
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Paraclete, to Thee!

John Dryden, 1631-1700

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The world's foundations first were laid,

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WONDER

How like an angel I came down!
 How bright are all things here!
When first among His works I did appear,
 O how their glory me did crown!
The world resembled His eternity,
 In which my soul did walk;
And everything that I did see
 Didst with me talk.

The skies in their magnificence,
 The lively, lovely air;
Oh how divine, how soft, how sweet, how fair!
 The stars did entertain my sense,
And all the works of God, so bright and pure,
 So rich and great did seem,
As if they ever must endure
 In my esteem.

A native health and innocence
 Within my bones did grow,
And while my God did all His glories show,
 I felt a vigour in my sense
That was all spirit. I within did flow
 With seas of life, like wine;
I nothing in the world did know,
 But 'twas divine.

Harsh ragged objects were conceal'd,
 Oppressions tears and cries,
Sins, griefs, complaints, dissensions, weeping eyes
 Were hid, and only things reveal'd

Which heav'nly spirits, and the angels prize.

The state of innocence
And bliss, not trades and poverties,
Did fill my sense.

The streets were paved with golden stones,

The boys and girls were mine,
Oh how did all their lovely faces shine!

The sons of men were holy ones,
In joy and beauty they appear'd to me,
And every thing which here I found,
While like an angel I did see,
Adorn'd the ground.

Rich diamond and pearl and gold

In ev'ry place was seen;
Rare splendours, yellow, blue, red, white, and green,
Mine eyes did everywhere behold.
Great wonders cloth'd with glory did appear,
Amazement was my bliss,
That and my wealth was ev'rywhere:
No joy to this!

Curs'd and despis'd proprieties,

With envy, avarice
And fraud, those fiends that spoil even Paradise,
Flew from the splendour of mine eyes,
And so did hedges, ditches, limits, bounds,
I dream'd not aught of those,
But wander'd over all men's grounds,
And found repose.

Proprieties themselves were mine,
And hedges ornaments;
Walls, boxes, coffers, and their rich contents
Did not divide my joys, but all combine.
Clothes, ribbons, jewels, laces, I esteem'd
My joys by others worn;
For me they all to wear them seem'd
When I was born.

Thomas Traherne, 1637-1674

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My joys by others worn;

For me they all to wear them seem'd
When I was born.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

JUBILATE AGNO (excerpt)

For I will consider my cat Jeoffrey.
For he is the servant of the Living God duly and daily serving Him.
For at the first glance of the glory of God in the East he worships in his way.
For this is done by wreathing his body seven times round with elegant quickness.
For then he leaps up to catch the musk, which is the blessing of God upon his prayer.
For he rolls upon prank to work it in.
For having done duty and received blessing he begins to consider himself.
For this he performs in ten degrees.
For first he looks upon his forepaws to see if they are clean.
For secondly he kicks up behind to clear away there.
For thirdly he works it upon stretch with the forepaws extended.
For fourthly he sharpens his paws upon wood.
For fifthly he washes himself.
For sixthly he rolls upon wash.
For seventhly he fleas himself, that he may not be interrupted upon the beat.
For eighthly he rubs himself against a post.
For ninthly he looks up for his instructions.
For tenthly he goes in quest of food.
For having considered God and himself, he will consider his neighbour.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.

Christopher Smart, 1722-1771

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For tenthly he goes in quest of food.

For having considered God and himself, he will consider his neighbour.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.

A POISON TREE

I was angry with my friend.
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
I was angry with my foe.
I told it not; my wrath did grow;

And I water'd it in fears,
Night and morning with my tears;
And I sunned it with smiles,
And with soft deceitful wiles;

And it grew both day and night
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole,
When the night had veiled the pole.
In the morning, glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

William Blake, 1757-1827

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I told my wrath, my wrath did end.

I was angry with my foe.
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And I water'd it in fears,
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When the night had veiled the pole.

In the morning, glad I see
My foe outstretch'd beneath the tree.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

DEJECTION: AN ODE (PART IV)

O Lady! We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!
 And would we aught behold, of higher worth,
Than that inanimate cold world allowed
To the poor loveless ever-anxious crowd,
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
 Enveloping the Earth --
And from the soul itself must there be sent
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772-1834

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A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,
Of all sweet sounds the life and element!



THE DESTRUCTION OF SENNACHERIB

The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold:
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen;
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpets unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!

George Gordon, Lord Byron, 1788-1824

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ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
 Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
 Yet never did I breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He star'd at the Pacific -- and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise --
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

John Keats, 1795-1821

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And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;

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Look'd at each other with a wild surmise --
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND (PART V)

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!
And by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792-1822

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THE PRELUDE (excerpt)

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear;
Much-favor'd in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which, ere long,
I was transplanted. Well I call to mind
(‘Twas at an early age, ere I had seen
Nine summers) when upon the mountain slope
The frost and breath of frosty wind had snapp’d
The last autumnal crocus, ‘twas my joy
To wander half the night among the Cliffs
And the smooth Hollows, where the wood-cocks ran
Along the open turf. In thought and wish,
That time, my shoulder all with springes hung,
I was a fell destroyer. On the heights,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
My anxious visitation, hurrying on,
Still hurrying, hurrying onward; moon and stars
Were shining o’er my head; I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That was among them . . .

William Wordsworth, 1770-1850

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear;

Much-favor'd in my birthplace, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which, ere long,

I was transplanted. Well I call to mind
('Twas at an early age, ere I had seen

Nine summers) when upon the mountain slope
The frost and breath of frosty wind had snapp'd

The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
To wander half the night among the Cliffs

And the smooth Hollows, where the wood-cocks ran
Along the open turf. In thought and wish,

That time, my shoulder all with springes hung,
I was a fell destroyer. On the heights,

Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
My anxious visitation, hurrying on,

Still hurrying, hurrying onward; moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,

And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That was among them . . .

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

Break, break, break,
 On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
 The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,
 That he shouts with his sister at play!
O, well for the sailor lad,
 That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
 To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
 And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
 At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
 Will never come back to me.

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1809-1892

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MY STAR

All that I know

Of a certain star

Is, it can throw

(Like the angled spar)

Now a dart of red,

Now a dart of blue;

Till my friends have said

They would fain see, too,

My star that dartles the red and the blue!

Then it stops like a bird; like a flower, hangs furled;

They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.

What matter to me if their star is a world?

Mine has opened its soul to me; therefore I love it.

Robert Browning, 1812-1889

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Of a certain star

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(Like the angled spar)

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SHAKESPEARE

Others abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask -- Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadiest footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling place,
Spares but the cloudy border of his base
to the foiled searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-schooled, self-scanned, self-honored, self-secure,
Didst tread on earth unguessed at. -- Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Matthew Arnold, 1822-1888

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TWENTIETH CENTURY

THE WILD SWANS AT COOLE

The trees are in their autumn beauty,
The woodland paths are dry,
Under the October twilight the water
Mirrors a still sky;
Upon the brimming water among the stones
Are nine-and-fifty swans.

The nineteenth autumn has come upon me
Since I first made my count;
I saw, before I had well finished,
All suddenly mount
And scatter wheeling in great unbroken rings
Upon their clamourous wings.

I have looked upon those brilliant creatures,
And now my heart is sore.
All is changed since I, hearing at twilight,
The first time on this shore,
The bell-beat of their wings above my head,
Trode with a lighter tread.

Unwearied still, lover by lover,
They paddle in the cold
Companionable streams or climb the air;
Their hearts have not grown old;
Passion or conquest, wander where they will,
Attend upon them still.

But now they drift on the still water,
Mysterious, beautiful;
Among what rushes will they build,
By what lake's edge or pool
Delight men's eyes when I awake some day
To find they have flown away?

William Butler Yeats, 1865-1939

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ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

What passing-bells for those 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 now 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, 1893-1918

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FROM THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown,
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

T.S. Eliot, 1888-1965

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