

Name:

Class:

Read through the following poems, which are the favorites of some of your teachers or counselors. Find one you like, and write that staff member a nice letter about their poem.

This doesn't have to be an analysis - write about what spoke to you about the poem, what you find inspirational about it, or what you liked about it. Be genuine! These will be printed and delivered to the teacher.

Make sure you use an appropriate letter format and edit it carefully.

1. Ms Keyes: Self-Dependence by Matthew Arnold
2. Ms. Ford: Almost Perfect by Shel Silverstein
3. Ms. McKenna: Hinges by Shel Silverstein
4. Ms. Fischl: Smart by Shel Silverstein
5. Ms. Stella: The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S. Eliot
6. Ms. Holt: Odi et Amo by Catullus
7. Ms. Franford: Dame la mano (Give me your hand) by Gabriela Mistral
8. Mr. Christie: Song of the Snails Who Went to Burial by Jacques Prévert
9. Ms. Carlson and Mr. Condakes: The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost
10. Ms. Dash: Two Tramps in Mudtime by Robert Frost
11. Ms Smith: Ice Ice Baby by Vanilla Ice
12. Ms. Miller: Panic Button Collector by Andrea Gibson
13. Ms. Ebersman: B (If I Should Have a Daughter) by Sarah Kay
14. Ms. Whitney: The Red Wheelbarrow by William Carlos Williams
15. Mr. Greenstein: Advice by Langston Hughes
16. Ms. Hyman: Song of Myself by Walt Whitman
17. Ms. Renzi: A Bird Came Down the Walk by Emily Dickinson
18. Ms Bistran: i carry your heart by e.e. cummings
19. Ms. Fractal: Soliloquy of a Tortoise on Revisiting the Lettuce Beds After an Interval of One Hour while Supposed to be Sleeping in a Clump of Blue Hollyhocks by E.V. Rieu

Ms. Keyes' favorite poem is called Self-Dependence by Matthew Arnold. It's got some tricky language in the middle, but don't be intimidated. Visualize the guy at the front of a large boat at night, looking up at the stars, wishing he could be like them. By the end, he learns not to wish to be anything but what he is. Ms. Keyes cited her favorite lines to be: "Resolve to be thyself; and know that he, / Who finds himself, loses his misery."

Self-Dependence by Matthew Arnold

Weary of myself, and sick of asking
What I am, and what I ought to be,
At this vessel's prow I stand, which bears me
Forwards, forwards, o'er the starlit sea.

And a look of passionate desire
O'er the sea and to the stars I send:
"Ye who from my childhood up have calm'd me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end!

"Ah, once more," I cried, "ye stars, ye waters,
On my heart your mighty charm renew;
Still, still let me, as I gaze upon you,
Feel my soul becoming vast like you!"

From the intense, clear, star-sown vault of heaven,
Over the lit sea's unquiet way,
In the rustling night-air came the answer:
"Wouldst thou *be* as these are? *Live* as they.

"Unaffrighted by the silence round them,
Undistracted by the sights they see,
These demand not that the things without them
Yield them love, amusement, sympathy.

"And with joy the stars perform their shining,
And the sea its long moon-silver'd roll;
For self-poised they live, nor pine with noting
All the fever of some differing soul.

"Bounded by themselves, and unregardful
In what state God's other works may be,
In their own tasks all their powers pouring,
These attain the mighty life you see."

O air-born voice! long since, severely clear,
A cry like thine in mine own heart I hear:
"Resolve to be thyself; and know that he,
Who finds himself, loses his misery!"

Ms. Ford, Ms. McKenna, and Ms. Fischl all picked poems by Shel Silverstein, who is known for his books of poetry such as *A Light in the Attic* and *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. Silverstein's poems are sometimes funny, sometimes creepy and dark, and sometimes deep and philosophical. Google them - usually there's an accompanying picture.

Almost Perfect

"Almost perfect... but not quite."
Those were the words of Mary Hume
At her seventh birthday party,
Looking 'round the ribboned room.
"This tablecloth is pink not white--
Almost perfect... but not quite."

"Almost perfect... but not quite."
Those were the words of grown-up Mary
Talking about her handsome beau,
The one she wasn't gonna marry.
"Squeezes me a bit too tight--
Almost perfect... but not quite."

"Almost perfect... but not quite."
Those were the words of ol' Miss Hume
Teaching in the seventh grade,
Grading papers in the gloom
Late at night up in her room.
"They never cross their t's just right--
Almost perfect... but not quite."

Ninety-eight the day she died
Complainin' 'bout the spotless floor.
People shook their heads and sighed,
"Guess that she'll like heaven more."
Up went her soul on feathered wings,
Out the door, up out of sight.
Another voice from heaven came--
"Almost perfect... but not quite."

Hinges

If we had hinges on our head
There would be no sin,
'Cause we could take the bad stuff out
And leave the good stuff in.

Smart

My dad gave me one dollar bill
'Cause I'm his smartest son,
And I swapped it for two shiny quarters
'Cause two is more than one!

And then I took the quarters
And traded them to Lou.
For three dimes -- I guess he don't know
That three is more than two!

Just then along came old blind Bates
And just 'cause he can't see
He gave me four nickels for my three dimes,
And four is more than three!

And I took the nickels to Hiram Coombs
Down at the seed-feed store,
And the fool gave me five pennies for them,
And five is more than four!

And then I went and showed my dad.
And he got red in the cheeks.
And closed his eyes and shook his head--
Too proud of me to speak!

Up for a challenge? Probably the most difficult poem on the list is Ms. Stella's - The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock by T.S. Eliot.

Eliot is a "modernist" poet, which means he was writing in the late 19th - early 20th century, when the world was becoming "modern." Technology was increasing and life was changing very rapidly. This poem is written like a monologue in a play - just the speaker, Prufrock, explaining how lonely, isolated, confused, and indecisive he is. There are lots of references to the Bible, Shakespeare, and other poets, but in the end, he's just a guy who's so trapped in his own mind, paralyzed by anxiety and doubt, that he can't make a decision.

Below is just a couple of stanzas of the poem - it's 131 lines - but feel free to google the whole thing if you like what you see.

An Excerpt from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot

And would it have been worth it, after all,
Would it have been worth while,
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor --
And this, and so much more?--
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:
Would it have been worth while
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
And turning toward the window, should say:
"That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous--
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
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.

A few of your teachers chose poems in other languages. While we can translate the meaning, the sound is lost when we switch languages. You might think about googling and listening to these in the original language, even if you don't understand it, to get a sense of what it sounds like, or even better - ask the teacher!

Odi et Amo - Catullus Carmen 85

*Odi et amo. quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?
nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.*

*I hate and I love. Why do I do it, perhaps you ask?
I don't know, but I feel it to be and I am tortured.*

Dame la Mano by Gabriela Mistral

Dame la mano y danzaremos;
dame la mano y me amarás.
Como una sola flor seremos
como una flor, y nada más.

El mismo verso cantaremos,
al mismo paso bailarás.
Como un espiga ondularemos,
como una espiga, y nada más.

Te llamas Rosa y yo Esperanza;
pero tu nombre olvidarás,
porque seremos una danza
en la colina, y nada más.

Give Me Your Hand

Give me your hand and give me your love,
give me your hand and dance with me.
A single flower, and nothing more,
a single flower is all we'll be.

Keeping time in the dance together,
you'll be singing the song with me.
Grass in the wind, and nothing more,
grass in the wind is all we'll be.

I'm called Hope and you're called Rose:
but losing our names we'll both go free,
dance on the hills, and nothing more,
a dance on the hills is all we'll be.

Song of the Snails Who Went to Burial

Jacques Prévert

To the funeral of a dead leaf
Two snails did go
Black shells they have
With black mourning crepe around their horns
They leave in the evening
A very fine autumn evening
Alas, when they arrive
It's already spring
The leaves that were dead
Are all revived
And the two snails
Are very disappointed
But there's the sun
The sun that says to them
Take, take the time
The time to sit down
Have a glass of beer
If the heart tells you so
Take it if you please
The coach for Paris
It leaves this evening
You'll see the country
But do not mourn
It's I who tell you this
Grief blackens the white of the eye
And then it uglifies
The stories of coffins
Is sad and not happy
Take up again your colours
The colours of life
So, all the beasts
The trees and the plants
Begin to sing
To sing as loudly as they can
The real, living, song
The song of summer
And everyone drinks
Everyone raises their glasses

It's a very pleasant evening
A pleasant summer evening
And the two snails
Returning to their home
They leave very moved
They leave very happy
So much they'd drunk
They staggered a little bit
But way up high in the sky
The moon watched over them.

Here's a link to a funny animation
so you can hear it in French:

www.goodnewsnetwork.org/watch-wonderfully-animated-french-poem-of-animals-encouraging-snails-to-celebrate-spring

One of the most well known American poets is Robert Frost. Three of your teachers picked his poetry as their favorite. Ms. Carlson and Mr. Condakes both like The Road Not Taken.

The Road Not Taken

BY ROBERT FROST

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Ms. Dash likes a poem called Two Tramps in Mudtime, which is about two drifters who come out of the woods while the speaker is chopping wood and want to do the work for him because they need the money. He acknowledges that he should probably let them so they can have money to eat, but also knows that a job is best done by someone who loves it, not just someone who is doing it for money. Here is the last stanza, which Ms. Dash says has guided her life.

But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight.
Only where love and need are one,
And the work is play for mortal stakes,
Is the deed ever really done
For Heaven and the future's sakes.

The next two poems are meant to be heard. One is a song, Ice Ice Baby by Vanilla Ice. This is a rap song from the 1990s, mostly describing his music style and abilities. This song has great wordplay and surprising similes to make its rhyme scheme work. Here is an excerpt:

Yo, VIP, let's kick it!
Ice ice baby/Ice ice baby
All right stop/Collaborate and listen
Ice is back with my brand new invention
Something grabs a hold of me tightly
Flow like a harpoon daily and nightly
Will it ever stop?/Yo, I don't know
Turn off the lights and I'll glow
To the extreme, I rock a mic like a vandal
Light up a stage and wax a chump like a candle
Dance/Go rush the speaker that booms
I'm killin' your brain like a poisonous mushroom
Deadly, when I play a dope melody
Anything less than the best is a felony
Love it or leave it
You better gangway
You better hit bull's eye
The kid don't play
If there was a problem/Yo, I'll solve it
Check out the hook while my DJ revolves it
Ice ice baby Vanilla/Ice ice baby Vanilla
Ice ice baby Vanilla/Ice ice baby Vanilla
Now that the party is jumping
With the bass kicked in, and the Vegas are pumpin'
Quick to the point, to the point no faking
I'm cooking MC's like a pound of bacon
Burning 'em if, if you ain't quick and nimble
I go crazy when I hear a cymbal
And a hi hat with a souped up tempo
I'm on a roll and it's time to go solo
If there was a problem/Yo, I'll solve it
Check out the hook while my DJ revolves it
Ice ice baby Vanilla/Ice ice baby Vanilla
Ice ice baby Vanilla/Ice ice baby Vanilla

Ms. Miller's and Ms. Ebersman's favorite poems are spoken word. This means they're meant to be performed. The first poet is Andrea Gibson, and she wrote this poem about her anxiety.

Check out the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gYrSPbljTfo>
Lyrics are on the next page.

Panic Button Collector

I check my Facebook page 36 times a day for the sole purpose of making sure I have not accidentally posted a nude photo of myself
I reread an email 13 times before pressing send to ensure I have not written something in the email that could convict me of a crime
Before taking a stage when asked if I allow flash photography I always want to say "No" because I'm terrified flash photography will give me epilepsy
I know it doesn't work like that, still
I never eat nuts on an airplane out of fear of that I will suddenly develop a nut allergy and if I have to asphyxiate I don't want it to happen at 30,000 feet
Twice in the last two years I've been deboarded from an airplane for running screaming down the aisles as the plane was taking off

I can't walk through San Francisco without worrying my indigestion is the beginning of an earthquake
I brace for tsunamis besides lakes in Colorado
I'm not joking
The last time I saw Niagara Falls I couldn't take it
It was too much much
I had to plug my ears to look at it and close my eyes to listen
Generally I can't do all my senses at the same time they are too much much
Like if you touch me without warning, whoever you are, it will take everything I have to not scream
Imagine your hands are electrical sockets and I am constantly aware that I am 70% water
it's not that I've not tried to build a dam

Ask my therapist who pays her mortgage
My cost of living went up
at five years old when I told my mother I have to stop going to birthday parties because every time I hear a balloon pop I feel like I'm gonna get murdered in the heart
Last year a balloon popped on the stage where I was performing, I started crying in front of the whole crowd
plugged my ears and kept repeating the word "LOUD LOUD LOUD LOUD" it was super sexy
That's what I do
I do super sexy
Like when I asked the super cute barista 11 times 'are you sure this is decaffeinated? Are you sure this is decaffeinated? Are you sure that'- yes I drink decaffeinated and still jitter like a bug running from the bright bright bright
I have spent years of my life wearing a tight rubber band hidden beneath my hair so my brain could have a hug
These days when no one's looking I wear a fuzzy fitted winter hat that buttons tight beneath the chin
I only ever wear a tie so that when I convince myself I'm choking my senses have something they are certain they can blame
As a kid I was so certain I would die the way of meteor falling on my head
I would go whole weeks without looking at the sky 'cause I didn't want to witness the coming of my own death
I started tapping the kitchen sink seven times to build a shield
My mother started making lists of everything I thought would kill me in hopes that if I saw my fears they would disappear
Bless her heart but the first time I saw that list I started filling a salad bowl with bleach and soaking my shoe laces overnight so in the morning when I ironed them they would be so bright I would be certain I had control over how much dark could break into my light
how much jack hammer could break into my heart
My spine it has always been a lasso that could never catch my breath
I honestly can't imagine how it would feel to walk into a room full of people and not feel the roof collapsing on my 'NO NO NO I am not fine'

Fine never tells the truth
And more than anything I have ever been afraid of I am terrified of lies
How they war the world
How they sound by our tongues
How they bone dry the marrow
How did we get through high school without being taught Dr. King spent two decades having
panic attacks?
Avoided Windows
Jumped at thunder
I think we are all part fight the flight
part run for your life
Part 'please please please like me'
Part Can't breathe
Part scared to say you're scared
Part say it anyway

You panic button collector
You clock of beautiful ticks
You can always, always shake like a leaf on my family tree and know you belong here
You belong here and everything you feel is okay
Everything you feel is okay

Ms Ebersman's is called B (If I Should Have a Daughter) by Sarah Kay

Listen to it here:

https://www.ted.com/talks/sarah_kay_if_i_should_have_a_daughter?language=en#t-208790

Here are the words:

If I should have a daughter, instead of mom, she's going to call me Point B,
because that way she knows that no matter what happens,
at least she can always find her way to me.
And I am going to paint the Solar Systems on the backs of her hands,
so she has to learn the entire universe before she can say 'Oh, I know that like the back of my
hand'
And she's going to learn that this life will hit you,
hard,
in the face,
wait for you to get back up, just so it can kick you in the stomach
but getting the wind knocked out of you is the only way to remind your lungs how much they like
the taste of air.
There is hurt, fear that cannot be fixed by band aids or poetry
so the first time she realizes that Wonder Woman isn't coming
I'll make sure she knows she does not have to wear the cape all by herself
because no matter how wide you stretch your fingers,
your hands will always be too small to catch all the pain you want to heal.
Believe me, I've tried
And baby, I'll tell her, don't keep your nose up in the air like that
I know that trick, I've done it a million times
You're just smelling for smoke so you can follow the trail

back to a burning house so you can find the boy who lost everything in the fire
to see if you can save him.
Or else find the boy who lit the fire in the first place to see if you can change him
But I know she will anyway, so instead, I'll always keep an extra supply of chocolate
and rainboots nearby.
Because there is no heartbreak that chocolate can't fix.
Ok, there's a few heartbreaks that chocolate can't fix,
but that's what the rainboots are for because rain will
wash away everything if you let it.
I want her to look at the world through the underside of a glass bottomed boat
To look through a microscope at the galaxies that exist on the pinpoint of a human mind
Because that's the way my mom taught me.
That there'll be days like this
that there's be days like this my mama said
When you open your hands to catch, and wind up with only blisters and bruises.
When you step out of the phone booth and try to fly
And the very people you want to save are the ones standing on your cape
When your boots will fill with rain and you'll be up to your knees in disappointment
and those are the very days you have all the more reason to say thank you
because there's nothing more beautiful than the way the ocean refuses to stop
kissing the shoreline no matter how many times it is sent away.
You will put the win in winsome ... lose some
You will put the star in starting over and over.
And no matter how many landmines erupt in a minute
be sure your mind lands on the beauty of this funny place called life.
And yes, on a scale from one to overtrusting, I am pretty damn naive.
But I want her to know that this world is made out of sugar.
It can crumble so easily.
But don't be afraid to stick your tongue out and taste it.
Baby, I'll tell her, remember your mama is a worrier
and your papa is a warrior.
And you're the girl with small hands and big eyes who never stops asking for more.
Remember that good things come in threes and so do bad things and
always apologize when you've done something wrong
but don't you ever apologize for the way your eyes refuse to stop shining,
your voice is small but don't ever stop singing.
And when they finally hand you a heartache,
when they slip war and hatred under your door and offer you handouts on street corners
of cynicism and defeat, you tell them that
they
really ought to meet your mother.

The next few poems are classics. Some of these pack a lot of meaning into just a few words.

The Red WheelbarrowBY WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens

Advice*by Langston Hughes*

Folks, I'm telling you,
birthing is hard
and dying is mean —
so get yourself
a little loving
in between.

Song of Myself is 52 parts! Ms. Hyman's favorite stanza is the one copied on the next page, but the whole poem is a celebration of the human individual and our ability to become one with nature, which is part of a school of thought called Transcendentalism.

Song of Myself by Walt Whitman (an excerpt)

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public road.
Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,
You must travel it for yourself.
It is not far, it is within reach,
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

A Bird, came down the Walk - (359)BY EMILY DICKINSON

A Bird, came down the Walk -
He did not know I saw -
He bit an Angle Worm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then, he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass -
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass -

He glanced with rapid eyes,
That hurried all abroad -
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought,
He stirred his Velvet Head. -

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb,
And he unrolled his feathers,
And rowed him softer Home -

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam,
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon,
Leap, plashless as they swim.

The last classic poem is by e.e. cummings, who writes his name and much of his poetry in lower case letters. He did this in order to strip any familiarity away from words - he wants you to look at them with fresh eyes. He also played around with spacing, often splitting letters across multiple lines to make shapes or puns.

i carry your heart by e.e. cummings

i carry your heart with me(i carry it in
my heart)i am never without it(anywhere
i go you go,my dear;and whatever is done
by only me is your doing,my darling)
i fear
no fate(for you are my fate,my sweet)i want
no world(for beautiful you are my world,my true)
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant
and whatever a sun will always sing is you

here is the deepest secret nobody knows
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life;which grows
higher than soul can hope or mind can hide)
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart(i carry it in my heart)

As a treat for getting through all those classics, here is one last poem:

**Soliloquy of a Tortoise on Revisiting the Lettuce Beds After an Interval of One Hour while
Supposed to be Sleeping in a Clump of Blue Hollyhocks** by E.V. Rieu

One cannot get enough

of this delicious stuff!