

**Charles Causley**

(1917 – 2003)

Causley was born in Launceston, Cornwall, where he lived all his life. He served in the Navy during the war, returning to Launceston to teach for the next thirty years. He was a shy, private man who never married. He was awarded a CBE in 1986.

***“If I didn’t write poetry, I think I’d explode.”***

 ***“I was a great reader, even when I was tiny. I remember reading the newspaper aloud to my father at five and seeing how pleased he was.”***

**Timothy Winters**

Timothy Winters comes to school

With eyes as wide as a football pool,

Ears like bombs and teeth like splinters:

A blitz of a boy is Timothy Winters.

His belly is white, his neck is dark,

And his hair is an exclamation mark.

His clothes are enough to scare a crow

And through his britches the blue winds blow.

When teacher talks he won’t hear a word

And he shoots down dead the arithmetic-bird,

He licks the patterns off his plate

And he’s never even heard of the Welfare State.

Timothy Winters has bloody feet

And he lives in a house on Suez Street,

He sleeps in a sack on the kitchen floor

And they say there aren’t boys like him any more.

Old Man Winters likes his beer

And his misses ran off with a bombardier,

Grandma sits in the grate with a gin

And Timothy’s dosed with an aspirin.

The Welfare Worker lies awake

But the law’s as tricky as a ten-foot snake,

So Timothy Winters drinks his cup

And slowly goes on growing up.

At Morning Prayers the Master helves\*

For children less fortunate than ourselves,

And the loudest response in the room is when

Timothy Winters roars ‘Amen!’

So come one angel, come on ten:

Timothy Winters says ‘Amen

Amen amen amen amen.’

*Timothy Winters, Lord.*

 Amen.

(\*helves: a dialect word from north Cornwall used to describe the alarmed lowing of cattle; a desperate, pleasing note.)

**Innocent’s Song**

Who’s that knocking on the window,

Who’s that standing at the door,

What are all those presents

Lying on the kitchen floor?

Who is the smiling stranger

With hair as white as gin,

What is he doing with the children

And who could have let him in?

Why has he rubies on his fingers,

A cold, cold crown on his head.

Why, when he caws his carol,

Does the salty snow run red?

Why does he ferry my fireside

As a spider on a thread,

His fingers made of fuses

And his tongue of gingerbread?

Why does the world before him

Melt in a million suns,

Why do his yellow, yearning eyes

Burn like saffron buns?

Watch where he comes walking

Out of the Christmas flame,

Dancing, double-talking:

Herod is his name.

**Green Man in the Garden**

Green man in the garden

Staring from the tree,

Why do you look so long and hard

Through the pane at me?

Your eyes are dark as holly,

Of sycamore your horns,

Your bones are made of elder-branch,

Your teeth are made of thorns.

Your hat is made of ivy-leaf,

Of bark your dancing shoes,

And evergreen and green and green

Your jacket and shirt and trews.

 *Leave your house and leave your land*

*And throw away your key,*

*And never look behind, he creaked,*

*And come and live with me.*

 I bolted up the window,

I bolted up the door,

I drew the blind that I should find

The green man never more.

 But when I softly turned the stair

As I went up to bed,

I saw the green man standing there.

*Sleep well, my friend,* he said.



**D.H. Lawrence**

(1885 – 1930)

Lawrence was born into a mining family in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. He struggled to find a publisher for much of his work, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover,*  written in 1928 was not published in England until 1960. His artwork was not exempted from the censors’ destruction either. After the war he travelled in Europe, Australia, America and Mexico, partly to find some relief from the TB he suffered but also in an attempt to find a community in which he could live and work. He died in Vence, in the south of France at the age of 44.

***“Be still when you have nothing to say; when genuine passion***

***moves you, say what you’ve got to say, and say it hot.”***

***“I like to write when I feel spiteful. It is like having a good sneeze.”***

***“I love trying things and discovering how I hate them.”***

**Discord in Childhood**

Outside the house an ash-tree hung its terrible whips,

And at night when the wind rose, the lash of the tree

Shrieked and slashed the wind, as a ship’s

Weird rigging in a storm shrieks hideously.

Within the house two voices arose, a slender lash

Whistling she-delirious rage and the dreadful sound

Of a male thong booming and bruising, until it had drowned

The other voice in a silence of blood, ‘neath the noise of the ash.

 **Piano**

 Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me;

 Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see

 A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings

 And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings.

 In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song

 Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong

 To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside

 And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide.

 So now it is vain for the singer to burst into clamour

 With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour

 Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast

 Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

**The Mess of Love**

We’ve made a great mess of love

since we made an ideal of it.

The moment I swear to love a woman, a certain woman, all my life

that moment I begin to hate her.

The moment I even say to a woman: I love you! –

my love dies down considerably.

The moment love is an understood thing between us, we are sure of it,

it’s a cold egg, it isn’t love any more.

Love is like a flower, it must flower and fade;

if it doesn’t fade, it is not a flower,

it’s either an artificial rag blossom, or an immortelle\*, for the cemetery.

The moment the mind interferes with love, or the will fixes on it,

or the personality assumes it is an attribute, or the ego takes possession of it,

it is not love any more, it’s just a mess.

and we’ve made a great mess of love, mind-perverted, will-perverted,

 ego-perverted love.

(\*immortelle – everlasting)

**Conundrums**

Tell me a word

That you’ve often heard,

Yet it makes you squint

If you see it in print!

Tell me a thing

that you’ve often seen,

yet if put in a book

it makes you turn green!

Tell me a thing

that you often do,

which described in a story

shocks you through and through!

Tell me what’s wrong

with words or with you

that you don’t mind the thing

yet the name is taboo.



**Edgar Allan Poe**

(1809 – 1849)

Poe was educated in England and Richmond, Virginia before running away and enlisting in the American army. 1831 saw the beginnings of his life long struggle with poverty and alcoholism. He married Virginia, a thirteen year old daughter of his paternal aunt, in 1836. *The Raven* was published in 1845 and he became the most talked about man of letters in America. Virginia died in 1847, Poe died at the age of 40 under yet to be explained circumstances.

***“I became insane with long intervals of horrible sanity.”***

***“I wish I could write as mysterious as a cat.”***

***“I have great faith in fools – self-confidence my friends will call it.”***

**To the River \_\_\_\_\_\_**

Fair river! in thy bright, clear flow

Of crystal, wandering water,

Thou art an emblem of the glow

Of beauty – the unbidden heart –

The playful maziness of art

In old Alberto’s daughter;

But when within thy wave she looks –

Which glistens then, and trembles –

Why, then, the prettiest of brooks

Her worshipper resembles;

For in his heart, as in thy stream,

Her image deeply lies –

His heart which trembles at the beam

Of her soul-searching eyes.

**Alone**

From childhood’s hour I have not been

As others were – I have not seen

As others saw – I could not bring

My passions from a common spring –

From the same source I have not taken

My sorrow – I could not awaken

My heart to joy at the same tone –

And all I lov’d – *I* lov’d alone.

*Then –* in my childhood – in the dawn

Of a most stormy life – was drawn

From ev’ry depth of good and ill

The mystery which binds me still –

From the torrent, or the fountain –

From the red cliff of the mountain –

From the sun that round me roll’d

In its autumn tint of gold –

From the lightning in the sky

As it pass’d me flying by –

From the thunder, and the storm –

And the cloud that took the form

(When the rest of Heaven was blue)

Of a demon in my view.

**Eulalie – A Song**

I dwelt alone

In a world of moan,

And my soul was a stagnant tide,

Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing bride –

Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my smiling bride.

Ah, less – less bright

The stars of the night

Than the eyes of the radiant girl!

And never a flake

That the vapour can make

With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,

Can vie with the modest Eulalie’s most regarded curl –

Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie’s most humble and careless curl.

Now Doubt – now Pain

Come n ever again,

For her soul gives me sigh for sigh,

And all day long

Shines, bright and strong,

Astarte within the sky,

Well ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron eye –

While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet eye.

**To My Mother**

Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,

The angels, whispering to one another,

Can find, among their burning terms of love,

None so devotional as that of “Mother,”

Therefore by that dear name I long have called you –

You who are more than mother unto me,

And filled my heart of hearts, where Death installed you

In setting my Virginia’s spirit free.

My mother – my own mother, who died early,

Was but the mother of myself; but you

Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,

And thus are dearer than the mother I knew

By that infinity with which my wife

Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.



**Elizabeth Barrett-Browning**

(1806 – 1861)

Barrett-Browning was born into a wealthy family in Durham. She married the poet Robert Browning against her father’s wishes; she was six years older than him and an invalid and could never quite believe he loved her as much as he said. Her poetry was popular in England and America during her life time and she was seriously considered as the next Poet Laureate after Wordsworth. Browning encouraged a move to Italy for the sake of his wife’s health; she died in Florence at the age of 55.

***“At painful times, when composition is impossible and reading is not enough,***

***grammars and dictionaries are excellent for distraction.”***

***“Why must women to be loved be weak?”***

***“Eve is a twofold mystery.”***

**If Thou Must Love Me**

If thou must love me, let it be for nought

Except for love’s sake only. Do not say

‘I love her for her smile ... her look ... her way

Of speaking gently, ... for a trick of thought

That falls in well with mine, and certes brought

A sense of pleasant ease on such a day’ –

For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may

Be changed, or change for thee, - and love, so wrought,

May be unwrought so. Neither love me for

Thine own dear pity’s wiping my cheeks dry, -

A creature might forget to weep, who bore

Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!

But love me for love’s sake, that evermore

Thou mayst love on, through love’s eternity.

**Song**

Weep, as if you thought of laughter!

Smile, as tears were coming after!

Marry your pleasures to your woes;

And think life’s green well worth its rose!

No sorrow will your heart betide,

Without a comfort by its side;

The sun may sleep in his sea-bed,

But you have starlight over head.

Trust not to Joy! the rose of June,

When opened wide, will wither soon;

Italian days without twilight

Will turn them suddenly to night.

Joy, most changeful of all things,

Flits away on rainbow wings;

And when they look the gayest, know,

It is that they are spread to go!

**Reply**

To weep awhile beside the bier,

Whereon his ashes lie,

Is well! – I know that rains must fall

When clouds are in the sky;

I know, *to die – to part,* will cloud

The brightest spirit o’er;

And yet, wouldst *thou* for ever weep,

When *he* can weep no more?

Fix not thy sight so long and fast

Upon the shroud’s despair;

Look upward unto Zion’s hill,

For death was also *there!*

And think, ‘The death, the scourge, the scorn,

My sinless Saviour bore –

The curse – the pang, too deep for tears –

That *I* should weep no more!’

**First Time He Kissed Me**

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed

The fingers of this hand wherewith I write; ...

And, ever since, it grew more clean and white, ...

Slow to world-greetings ... quick with its ‘Oh, list,’

When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst

I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,

Than that first kiss. The second passed in height

The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,

Half falling on the hair. Oh, beyond meed!

That was the chrism of love, which love’s own crown,

With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.

The third upon my lips was folded down

In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,

I have been proud and said, ‘My love, my own.’



**Emily Dickinson**

(1830 – 1886)

Dickinson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts and never lived anywhere else. She suffered a nervous breakdown and became more and more reclusive throughout the 1860s and 70s. She turned away most visitors and took to wearing only white. After her death her sister found hundreds of poems in her room and had them published.

***“If I read a book and it makes my whole body so cold no fire can warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry.***

***These are the only ways I know it.***

***Is there any other way?”***

***“Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotion know what it means to want to escape from these things.”***

**I know Some Lonely Houses off the Road**

I know some lonely Houses off the Road

A Robber’d like the look of –

Wooden Barred,

And Windows hanging low,

Inviting to –

A Portico,

Where two could creep –

One – hand the Tools –

The other peep –

To make sure All’s Asleep –

Old fashioned eyes –

Not easy to surprise!

How orderly the Kitchen’d look, by night

With just a Clock –

But they could gag the Tick –

And Mice won’t bark –

And so the Walls – don’t tell –

None – will –

A pair of Spectacles ajar just stir –

An Almanac’s aware –

Was it the Mat – winked,

Or a Nervous Star?

The Moon – slides down the stair,

To see who’s there!

 Day – rattles – too

There’s plunder – where – Stealth’s – slow –

Tankard, or Spoon – The Sun has got as far

Earring – or Stone – As the third Sycamore –

A Watch – Some Ancient Brooch Screams Chanticleer\*

To match the Grandmama – “Who’s there”?

Staid sleeping – there –

 And Echoes – Trains away,

 Sneer – “Where”!

 While the old Couple, just astir,

 Fancy the Sunrise – left the door ajar!

(\*chanticleer – name given to a domestic cock)

**I Died for Beauty**

I died for Beauty – but was scarce

Adjusted in the Tomb

When One who died for Truth, was lain

In an adjoining Room –

He questioned softly “Why I failed”?

“For Beauty”, I replied –

“And I – for Truth – Themself are One –

We Brethren, are”, He said –

And so, as Kinsmen, met a Night –

We talked between the Rooms –

Until the Moss had reached our lips –

And covered up – our names –

**Because I Could Not Stop for Death**

 Because I could not stop for Death –

 He kindly stopped for me –

The Carriage held but just Ourselves –

And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste

And I had put away

My labor and my leisure too,

For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove

 At Recess – in the Ring –

 We passed the fields of Gazing Grain –

We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –

The Dews drew quivering and chill –

For only Gossamer, my Gown –

My Tippet\* – only Tulle\*\* –

We paused before a House that seemed

A Swelling of the Ground –

The Roof was scarcely visible –

The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – ‘tis Centuries – and yet

Feels shorter than the Day

I first surmised the Horses’ Heads

Were toward Eternity –

(\*Tippet – a long shawl; \*\* Tulle – a soft, fine, net material)



**Helen Dunmore**

(1952 –

Dunmore was born in Yorkshire and is an award winning writer. She taught English as a foreign language in Finland and throughout the 1980s and 90s taught poetry and creative writing. She has written novels and short stories as well as poetry and is also a writer of books for children.

***“The human longing for story is so powerful, so primitive, that it seems like something not learned, but locked into our genes.”***

***“Poetry was very important to me from childhood. I began by listening to and learning by heart all kinds of rhythms and hymns and ballads, and then went on to make up my own poems,***

 ***using the forms I’d heard. Writing these down came a little later.”***

***“We are creatures of story.”***

**The Malarkey**

Why did you tell them to be quiet

and sit up straight until you came back?

The malarkey would have led you to them.

You go from one parked car to another

and peer through the misted windows

before checking the registration.

Your pocket bulges. You’ve bought them sweets

but the mist is on the inside of the windows.

How many children are breathing?

The malarkey’s over in the back of the car.

The day is over outside the windows.

No street light has come on.

You fed them cockles soused in vinegar,

you took them on the machines.

You looked away just once.

You looked away just once

as you leaned on the chip-shop counter,

and forty years were gone.

You have been telling them for ever

*Stop that malarkey in the back there!*

Now they have gone and done it.

Is that mist, or water with breath in it?

**The Night Workers**

All you who are awake in the dark of the night,

all you companions of the one lit window

in the knuckled-down row of sleeping houses,

All you who think nothing of the midnight hour

but by three or four have done your work

and are on the way home, stopping

at traffic lights, even though there is no one

but you in either direction. How different the dark is

when day is coming; you know all this.

All you who have kept awake through the dark of the night

and now go homeward; you charged with the hospital’s

vending-machine coffee; you working all night at Tesco,

you cleaners and night-club toilet attendants,

all you wearily waiting for buses

driven by more of you, men who paint lines

in the quiet of night, women with babies

roused out of their sleep so often

they’ve given up and stand by their windows

watching the fog of pure neon

weaken at the rainy dawn’s coming.

**Lethe**

Is it Lethe or is it dock water?

Either has the power.

The neighbourhood killer

is somewhere quietly washing up

dipping and dipping his fork

in the dirty water.

The police vans sit crooning

on the crux of the Downs.

How quickly the young girls walk

from work and from the shops.

The frost that was bone cold

has eased into rain, the dock water

takes everything and turns it brown.



**John Clare**

(1793 – 1864)

Clare was born in Helpstone, Northamptonshire; the son of barely literate parents. Clare became an avid reader and began to write poetry at the age of thirteen. He fell in love with Mary Joyce but her father disapproved of their relationship, she was to die a spinster in 1838. In 1820 his first book was published and he moved to London where he met and married Patty Turner. He suffered from severe bouts of melancholy hopelessness and was admitted to an asylum in 1837. He escaped in 1841 and was sent to Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, where he died 23 years later.

***“I found the poems in the fields and only wrote them down.”***

***“Grammar in learning is like tyranny in government –***

***confound the bitch I’ll never be her slave.”***

**Autumn**

I love the fitfull gusts that shakes

The casement all the day

And from the mossy elm-tree takes

The faded leaf away

Twirling it by the window pane

With thousand others down the lane

I love to see the shaking twig

Dance till the shut of eve

The sparrow on the cottage-rig

Whose chirp would make believe

That spring was just now flirting by

In summer’s lap with flowers to lie

I love to see the cottage-smoke

Curl upwards through the naked trees

The pigeons nestled round the cote

On dull November days like these

The cock upon the dunghill crowing

The mill-sails on the heath agoing

The feather from the raven’s breast

Falls on the stubble-lea

The acorns near the old crow’s nest

Fall pattering down the tree

The grunting pigs that wait for all

Scramble and hurry where they fall

**Song**

The girl I love is flesh and blood

With face and form of fairest clay

Straight as the firdale in the wood

And lovely as a first spring day

The girl I love’s a lovely girl

Bonny and young in every feature

Richer than flowers and strings o’ pearl

A handsome and delightful creature

She’s born to grace the realms above

Where we shall both be seen together

And sweet and fair the maid I love

As rose trees are in summer weather

O bonny straight and fair she is

I wish we both lived close together

Like as the acorns on the tree

Or foxglove-bell in summer weather

Come to me love and let us dwell

Where oak-trees cluster all together

I’ll gaze upon thy bosom’s swell

And love yes love thee then forever

Her face is like another’s face

As white another’s skin may prove

But no one else could fill her place

If banished from the maid I love

**Ballad**

Summer morning is risen

And to even it wends

And still I’m in prison

Without any friends

I had joy’s assurance

Though in bondage I lie

-I am still deft in durance

Unwilling to sigh

Still the forest is round me

Where the trees bloom in green

As if chains ne’er had bound me

Or cares had ne’er been

Nature’s love is eternal

In forest and plain

Her course is diurnal

To blossom again

For homes and friends vanished

I have kindness not wrath

For in days care has banished

My heart possessed both

My hopes are all hopeless

My skys have no sun

Winter fell in youth’s Mayday

And still freezes on

But Love like the seed is

In the heart of a flower

It will blossom with truth

In a prosperous hour

True love is eternal

For God is the giver

And love like the soul will

Endure – and forever



**Margaret Atwood**

(1939 –

Atwood was born in Ottawa, Ontario her mother was a nutritionist and her father a zoologist, science has always been an important aspect of her novels. She not only writes poetry but is also an award winning novelist; her work has been translated into 30 different languages. She lives in Toronto with the writer Graeme Gibson.

***“A word after a word after a word is power.”***

***“War is what happens after language fails.”***

***“If I were going to convert to any religion I would probably choose Catholicism***

***because it at least has female saints and the Virgin Mary.”***

**It is dangerous to read newspapers**

While I was building neat

castles in the sandbox

the hasty pits were

filling with bulldozed corpses

and as I walked to the school

washed and combed, my feet

stepping on the cracks in the cement

detonated red bombs.

Now I am grownup

and literate, and I sit in my chair

as quietly as a fuse

and the jungles are flaming, the under-

brush is charged with soldiers,

the names on the difficult

maps go up in smoke.

I am the cause, I am a stockpile of chemical

toys, my body

is a deadly gadget,

I reach out in love, my hands are guns,

My good intentions are completely lethal.

Even my

passive eyes transmute

everything I look at to the pocked

black and white of a war photo,

how

can I stop myself

It is dangerous to read newspapers.

Each time I kit a key

on my electric typewriter,

speaking of peaceful trees

another village explodes.

**Game After Supper**

This is before electricity,

it is when there were porches.

On the sagging porch an old man

is rocking. The porch is wooden

the house is wooden and grey;

in the living room which smells of

smoke and mildew, soon

the woman will light the kerosene lamp.

There is a barn but I am not in the barn;

there is an orchard too, gone bad,

its apples like soft cork

but I am not there either.

I am hiding in the long grass

with my two dead cousins,

the membrane grown already

cross their throats.

We hear crickets and our own hearts

close to our ears;

though we giggle, we are afraid.

From the shadows around

the corner of the house

a tall man is coming to find us:

He will be an uncle,

if we are lucky.

**Morning in the Burned House**

In the burned house I am eating breakfast.

You understand there is no house, there is no breakfast,

yet here I am.

The spoon which was melted scrapes against

the bowl which was melted also.

No one else is around.

Where have they gone to, brother and sister,

mother and father? Off along the shore,

perhaps. Their clothes are still on the hangers,

their dishes piled beside the sink,

which is beside the woodstove

with its grate and sooty kettle,

every detail clear,

tin cup and rippled mirror.

The day is bright and songless,

the lake is blue, the forest watchful.

In the east a bank of cloud

rises up silently like dark bread.

I can see the swirls in the oilcloth,

I can see the flaws in the glass,

those flares where the sun hits them.

I can’t see my own arms and legs

or know if this is a trap or a blessing,

finding myself back here, where everything

in this house has long been over,

kettle and mirror, spoon and bowl,

including my own body,

including the body I had then,

including the body I have now

as I sit at this morning table, alone and happy,

bare child’s feet on the scorched floorboards

(I can almost see)

In my burning clothes, the thin green shorts

and grubby yellow T-shirt

holding my cindery, non-existent,

radiant flesh. Incandescent.



**Maya Angelou**

(1928 –

Angelou is a poet, novelist, educator, dramatist, producer, actor, historian and film-maker. Born in St. Louis, Mississippi she experienced personally the racial discrimination that was wide spread in the south at that time. She also experienced the values and the faith of the traditional African-American family, community and culture.

***“Music was my refuge, I could crawl into the space between the notes***

***and curl my back to loneliness.”***

***“Nothing will work unless you do.”***

***“As far as I knew white women were never lonely except in books.***

***White men adored them, Black men desired them and***

***Black women worked for them.”***

**My Guilt**

My guilt is “slavery’s chains”, too long

the clang of iron falls down the years.

This brother’s sold, this sister’s gone,

is bitter wax, lining my ears.

My guilt made music with the tears.

My crime is “heroes, dead and gone,”

dead Vesey, Turner, Gabriel,

dead Malcolm, Marcus, Martin King.

They fought too hard, they loved too well.

My crime is I’m alive to tell.

My sin is “hanging from a tree,”

I do not scream, it makes me proud.

I take to dying like a man.

I do it to impress the crowd.

My sin lies in not screaming loud.

**They Ask Why**

A certain person wondered why

a big strong girl like me

wouldn’t keep a job

which paid a normal salary.

I took my time to lead her

and to read her every page.

Even minimal people

can’t survive on minimal wage.

A certain person wondered why

I wait all week for you.

I didn’t have the words

to describe just what you do.

I said you had the motion

of the ocean in your walk,

and when you solve my riddles

You don’t even have to talk.

**The Thirteens (Black)**

Your Momma took to shouting,

Your Poppa’s gone to war,

Your sister’s in the streets,

Your brother’s in the bar,

The thirteens. Right On.

Your cousin’s taking smack,

Your uncle’s in the joint,

Your buddy’s in the gutter,

Shooting for his point,

The thirteens. Right On.

And you, you make me sorry,

You out here by yourself,

I’d call you something dirty,

But there just ain’t nothing left,

‘cept

The thirteens. Right On. **The Thirteens (White)**

Your Momma kissed the chauffeur,

Your Poppa balled the cook,

Your sister did the dirty,

In the middle of the brook,

The thirteens. Right On.

Your daughter wears a jock strap,

Your son he wears a bra,

Your brother jonesed your cousin

In the back seat of the car.

The thirteens. Right On.

Your money thinks you’re something,

But if I’d learned to curse,

I’d tell you what your name is,

But there just ain’t nothing worse

Than

The thirteens. Right On.

**Sepia Fashion Show**

Their hair, pomaded, faces jaded

bones protruding, hip-wise,

the models strutted, backed and butted,

then stuck their mouths out, lip-wise.

They’d nasty manners, held like banners,

while they looked down their nose-wise.

I’d see ‘em in hell, before they’d sell

me one thing they’re wearing, clothes-wise.

The Black Bourgeois, who all say “yah”

when yeah is what they’re meaning,

should look around, both up and down,

before they set out preening.

“Indeed,” they swear, “that’s what I’ll wear

when I go country-clubbing.”

I’d remind them please, look at those knees,

you got at Miss Ann’s scrubbing.

**Harlem Hopscotch**

One foot down, then hop! It’s hot.

Good things for the ones that’s got.

Another jump, now to the left.

Everybody for hisself.

In the air, now both feet down.

Since you black, don’t stick around.

Food is gone, the rent is due,

Curse and cry and then jump two.

All the people out of work,

Hold for three, then twist and jerk.

Cross the line, they count you out.

That’s what hopping’s all about.

Both feet flat, the game is done.

They think I lost. I think I won.

**Woman Work**

I’ve got the children to tend

The clothes to mend

The floor to mop

The food to shop

Then the chicken to fry

The baby to dry

I got company to feed

The garden to weed

I’ve got the shirts to press

The tots to dress

The cane to be cut

I gotta clean up this hut

Then see about the sick

And the cotton to pick.

Shine on me, sunshine

Rain on me, rain

Fall softly, dewdrops

And cool my brow again.

Storm, blow me from here

With your fiercest wind

Let me float across the sky

Till I can rest again.

Fall gently, snowflakes

Cover me with white

Cold icy kisses and

Let me rest tonight.

Sun, rain, curving sky

Mountain, oceans, leaf and stone

Star shine, moon glow

You’re all that I can call my own.

****

**Robert** **Frost**

(1874 – 1963)

Frost was born in San Francisco, California and lived and worked with his wife and children on a New Hampshire farm for twelve years, the place where his love and knowledge of the countryside grew. They moved to England in 1912 believing it would be easier to find a publisher for his poetry. They returned to America in 1915 where they settled on another farm. Frost continued to write and also to teach, something he was to do on and off for the next 45 years.

***“In three words I can sum up everything I’ve learned about life: it goes on.”***

***“If one couldn’t laugh we would all go insane.”***

***“A poem begins with a lump in the throat, a home-sickness or a love-sickness. It is a reaching-out toward expression; and effort to find fulfilment. A complete poem is one where the emotion has found its thought and the thought has found the words.”***

**The Impulse**

It was too lonely for her there,

And too wild,

And since there were but two of them,

And no child,

And work was little in the house,

She was free,

And followed where he furrowed field,

Or felled tree.

She rested on a log and tossed

The fresh chips,

With a song only to herself

On her lips.

And once she went to break a bough

Of black alder.

She strayed so far she scarcely heard

When he called her –

And didn’t answer – didn’t speak –

Or return.

She stood, and then she ran and hid

In the fern.

He never found her, though he looked

Everywhere,

And he asked at her mother’s house

Was she there.

Sudden and swift and light as that

The ties gave,

And he learned of finalities

Besides the grave.

**The Line-Gang**

Here come the line-gang pioneering by.

They throw a forest down less cut than broken.

They plant dead trees for living, and the dead

They string together with a living thread.

They string an instrument against the sky

Wherein words whether beaten out or spoken

Will run as hushed as when they were a thought.

But in no hush they string it: they go past

With shouts afar to pull the cable taut,

To hold it hard until they make it fast,

To ease away – they have it. With a laugh,

An oath of towns that set the wild night at naught

They bring the telephone and telegraph.

**The Sound of the Trees**

 I wonder about the trees.

Why do we wish to bear

Forever the noise of these

More than another noise

So close to our dwelling place?

We suffer them by the day

Till we lose all measure of pace,

And fixity in out joys,

And acquire a listening air.

They are that that talks of going

But never gets away;

And that talks no less foe knowing,

As it grows wiser and older,

That now it means to stay.

My feet tug at the floor

And my head sways to my shoulder

Sometimes when I watch trees sway,

From the window or the door.

I shall set forth for somewhere,

In shall make the reckless choice

Some day when they are in voice

And tossing so as to scare

The white clouds over them on.

I shall have less to say,

But I shall be gone.



**Sarojini Naidu**

(1879 – 1949)

Naidu was born in Hyderabad, India; her meeting with Mahatma Ghandi in 1916 sparked her interest in the fight for India’s freedom. She was elected as the first female President of the India National Congress in 1925. After independence she became the first woman Governor of Uttar Pradesh.

***“Where there is oppression, the only self-respecting thing is to rise and say this shall cease today, because my right is justice. If you are stronger, you have to help the weaker boy or girl both in play and in the work.”***

**Cradle-Song**

From groves of spice,

 O’er fields of rice,

 Athwart the lotus-stream,

 I bring for you,

 Aglint with dew

 A little lovely dream.

 Sweet, shut your eyes,

 The wild fire-flies

 Dance through the fairy neem;\*

 From the poppy-bole

 For you I stole

 A little lovely dream.

 Dear eyes, good-night,

 In golden light

 The stars around you gleam;

 On you I press

 With soft caress

 A little lovely dream.

(\*neem – a tropical, Old World tree)

**In the Forest**

Here, O my heart, let us burn the dear dreams that are dead,

Here in this wood let us fashion a funeral pyre

Of fallen white petals and leaves that are mellow and red,

Here let us burn them in noon’s flaming torches of fire.

We are weary, my heart, we are weary, so long we have borne

The heavy loved burden of dreams that are dead, let us rest,

Let us scatter their ashes away, for a while let us mourn;

We will rest, O my heart, till the shadows are gray in the west.

But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must wander again

Into the war of the world and the strife of the throng;

Let us rise, O my heart, let us gather the dreams that remain,

We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow of song.

**Suttee**\*

Lamp of my Life, the lips of Death

Hath blown thee out with their sudden breath;

Naught shall revive thy vanished spark ...

Love, must I dwell in the living dark?

Tree of my life, Death’s cruel foot

Hath crushed thee down to thy hidden root;

Nought shall restore thy glory fled ...

Shall the blossom live when the tree is dead?

Life of my life, Death’s bitter sword

Hath severed us like a broken word,

Rent us in twain who are but one ...

Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?

(\*Suttee – Hindu practice of a widow throwing herself on to her husband’s funeral pyre)

**Leili**

The serpents are asleep among the poppies,

The fireflies light the soundless panther’s way

To tangled paths where shy gazelles are straying,

And parrot-plumes outshine the dying day.

O soft! the lotus-buds upon the stream

Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream.

A caste-mark on the azure brows of Heaven,

The golden moon burns sacred, solemn, bright

The winds are dancing in the forest-temple,

And swooning at the holy feet of Night.

Hush! in the silence mystic voices sing

And make the gods their incense-offering.

**The Indian Gypsy**

In tattered robes that hoard a glittering trace

Of bygone colours, broidered to the knee,

Behold her, daughter of a wandering race,

Tameless, with the bold falcon’s agile grace,

And the lithe tiger’s sinuous majesty.

With frugal skill her simple wants she tends,

She folds her tawny heifers and her sheep

On lonely meadows when the daylight ends,

Ere the quick night upon her flock descends

Like a black panther from the caves of sleep.

Time’s river winds in foaming centuries

Its changing, swift, irrevocable course

To far off and incalculable seas;

She is twin-born with primal mysteries,

And drinks of life at Time’s forgotten source.



**Seamus Heaney**

(1939 –

Heaney was born in County Derry, Northern Ireland where his father owned and farmed a small farm and was much respected as a cattle dealer. Heaney has taught at Harvard and Oxford; neither position was full time therefore he did not have to uproot his family from Ireland. He is married to Marie Devlin who appears directly and indirectly in many of his poems. He was awarded the Noble Prize for Literature in 1995.

***“I can’t think of a case where poems changed the world, but what they do is***

***they change people’s understanding of what’s going on in the world.”***

***“Human beings suffer, they torture one another, they get hurt and get hard.***

***No poem or play or song can fully right a wrong inflicted and endured.”***

**Blackberry Picking**

Late August, given heavy rain and sun

For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.

At first, just one, a glossy purple clot

Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.

You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet

Like thickened wine: summer’s blood was in it

Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for

Picking. Then red ones inked up, and that hunger

Sent us out with milk-cans, pea-tins, jam-pots

Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.

Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills,

We trekked and picked until the cans were full,

Until the tinkling bottom had been covered

With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned

Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered

With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard’s.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.

But when the bath was filled we found a fur,

A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.

The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush,

The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.

I always felt like crying. It wasn’t fair

That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.

Each year I hoped they’d keep, knew they would not.

**Mid-Term Break**

I sat all morning in the college sick bay,

Counting bells knelling classes to a close.

At two o’clock our neighbours drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying –

He had always taken funerals in his stride –

And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram

When I came in, and I was embarrassed

By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were ‘sorry for my trouble’.

Whispered informed strangers I was the eldest,

Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.

At ten o’clock the ambulance arrived

With the corpse, stanched and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops

And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him

For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,

He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.

No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four foot box, a foot for every year.

 **The Early purges**

I was six when I first saw kittens drown.

Dan Taggart pitched them, ‘the scraggy wee shits’.

Into a bucket; a frail metal sound.

Soft paws scraping like mad. But their tiny din

Was soon soused. They were slung in the snout

Of the pump and the water pumped in.

‘Sure isn’t it better for them now?’ Dan said.

Like wet gloves they bobbed and shone till he sluiced

Them out on the dunghill, glossy and dead.

Suddenly frightened, for days I sadly hung

Round the yard, watching the three sogged remains

Turn mealy and crisp as old summer dung

Until I forgot them. But the fear came back

When Dan trapped big rats, snared rabbits, shot crows

Or, with a sickening tug, pulled old hen’s necks.

Still, living displaces false sentiments

And now, when shrill pups are prodded to drown,

I just shrug, ‘Bloody pups’. It makes sense:

‘Prevention of cruelty’ talk cuts ice in town

Where they consider death unnatural,

 But on well-run farms pests have to be kept down



**Siegfried Sassoon**

(1886 – 1967)

Sassoon was an officer who fought in World War One and was decorated for bravery on the Western Front. He spent some time at Craiglockhart hospital in Edinburgh where he met fellow poet Wilfred Owen. He became increasingly more outspoken against the war as the conflict continued, at one point handing back his medal and refusing to return to the front. His return was due to the respect he felt for the men who served under him.

***“Soldiers are dreamers.”***

***“The dead ... are more real than the living because they are complete.”***

**The Hero**

‘Jack fell as he’d have wished,’ the Mother said,

And folded up the letter that she’s read.

‘The Colonel writes so nicely.’ Something broke

In the tired voice that quavered to a choke.

She half looked up. ‘We mothers are so proud

Of our dead soldiers.’ Then her face was bowed.

Quietly the Brother officer went out.

He’s told the poor old dear some gallant lies

That she would nourish all her days, no doubt.

For while he coughed and mumbled, her weak eyes

Had shone with gentle triumph, brimmed with joy,

Because he’s been so brave, her glorious boy.

He thought how ‘Jack’, cold-footed, useless swine,

Has panicked down the trench that night the mine

Went up at Wicked Corner; how he’d tried

To get sent home, and how, at last, he died,

Blown to small bits. And no one seemed to care

Except that lonely woman with white hair.

*(August 1916)*

**Base Details**

If I were fierce, and bald, and short of breath,

I’d live with scarlet Majors at the Base,

And speed glum heroes up the line to death.

You’d see me with my puffy petulant face,

Guzzling and gulping in the best hotel,

Reading the Roll of Honour. ‘Poor young chap,’

I’d say – ‘I used to know his father well;

Yes, we’ve lost heavily in this last scrap.’

And when the war is done and youth stone dead,

I’d toddle safely home and die – on bed.

 *(March 1917)*

**To the Warmongers**

I’m back again from hell

With loathsome thought to sell;

Secrets of death to tell;

And horrors from the abyss.

Young faces bleared with blood,

Sucked down into the mud,

You shall hear things like this,

Till the tormented slain

Crawl round once again,

With limbs that twist awry

Moan out their brutish pain,

As the fighters pass them by.

For you our battles shine

With triumph half-divine;

And the glory of the dead

Kindles in each proud eye.

But a curse is on my head,

That shall not be unsaid,

And the wounds in my heart are red,

For I have watched them die.

 *(April 1917)*

**Glory of Women**

You love us when we’re heroes, home on leave,

Or wounded in a mentionable place.

You worship decorations; you believe

That chivalry redeems the war’s disgrace.

You make us shells, You listen with delight,

By tales of dirt and danger fondly thrilled.

You crown our distant ardours while we fight,

And mourn our laurelled memories when we’re killed.

You can’t believe that British troops ‘retire’

When hell’s last horror breaks them, and they run,

Trampling the terrible corpses – blind with blood.

 O German mother dreaming by the fire,

While you are knitting socks to send your son

His face is trodden deeper in the mud.

 *(1917)*

**Aftermath**

*Have you forgotten yet? ...*

For the world’s events have rumbled on since those gagged days,

Like traffic checked while at the crossing of city-ways:

And the haunted gap in your mind has filled with thoughts that flow

Like clouds in the lit heaven of life; and you’re a man reprieved to go,

Taking your peaceful share of Time, with joy to spare.

*But the past is just the same – and War’s a bloody game ...*

*Have you forgotten yet? ...*

*Look down, and swear by the slain of the War that you’ll never forget.*

Do you remember the dark months you held the sector at Mametz –

The nights you watched and wired and dug and piled sandbags on parapets?

Do you remember the rats; and the stench

Of corpses rotting in front of the front-line trench –

And dawn coming, dirty-white, and chill with a hopeless rain?

Do you ever stop and ask, ‘Is it all going to happen again?’

Do you remember that hour of din before the attack –

And the anger, the blind compassion that seized and shook you

As you peered at the doomed and haggard faces of your men?

Do you remember the stretcher-cases lurching back

With dying eyes and lolling heads – those ashen-grey

Masks of the lads who once were keen and kind and gay?

*Have you forgotten yet? ...*

*Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you’ll never forget.*

*(March 1919)*



 **Ted Hughes**

(1930 – 1998)

Hughes was born in Yorkshire and won a scholarship to study at Cambridge. He met Sylvia Plath in 1956 and they were married within four months of knowing each other, they had two children and separated in 1962. Plath was to commit suicide a year later, Hughes was blamed by many but he chose not to speak out for love of his children. In 1984 he was made Poet Laureate.

***“What’s writing really about? It’s about trying to take fuller possession of the reality of your life.”***

***“The inmost spirit of poetry, ... is at bottom, in every recorded case, the voice of pain – and the physical body, so to speak, of poetry, is the treatment by which the poet tries to***

***reconcile that pain with the world.”***

***“Imagine what you are writing about. See it and live it.”***

 **A Grin**

There was this hidden grin.

It wanted a permanent home. It tried faces

In their forgetful moments, the face for instance

Of a woman pushing a baby out between her legs

But that didn’t last long, the face

Of a man so preoccupied

With the flying steel in the instant

Of the car-crash he left his face

To itself that was even shorter, the face

 Of a machine-gunner a long burst not long enough and

The face of a steeplejack the second

Before he hit the paving, the faces

Of two lovers in the seconds

They got so far into each other they forgot

Each other completely that was O.K.

But none of it lasted.

So the grin tried the face

Of somebody lost in sobbing

A murderer’s face and the racking moments

Of the man smashing everything

He could reach and had strength to smash

Before he went beyond his body.

It tried the face

In the electric chair to get a tenure

In eternal death, but that too relaxed.

The grin

Sank back, temporarily nonplussed,

Into the skull.

**The Minotaur**

The mahogany table-top you smashed

Had been the broad plank top

Of my mother’s heirloom sideboard –

Mapped with the scars of my whole life.

That came under the hammer.

The high stool you swung that day

Demented by my being

Twenty minutes late for baby-minding.

‘Marvellous!’ I shouted, ‘Go on,

Smash it into kindling,.

That’s the stuff you’re keeping out of your poems!’

And later, considered and calmer,

‘Get that shoulder under your stanzas

And we’ll be away.’ Deep in the cave of your ear

The goblin snapped his fingers.

So what had I given him?

The bloody end of the skein

That unravelled your marriage,

Left your children echoing

Like tunnels in a labyrinth,

Left your mother a dead-end,

Brought you to the horned, bellowing

Grave of your risen father –

And your own corpse in it.

 **Perfect Light**

There you are, in all your innocence,

Sitting among your daffodils, as in a picture

Posed as for the title: ‘Innocence’.

Perfect light in your face lights it up

Like a daffodil. Like any one of those daffodils

It was to be your only April on earth

Among your daffodils. In your arms,

Like a teddy bear, your new son,

Only a few weeks into his innocence.

Mother and Infant, as in the Holy portrait.

And beside you, laughing up at you,

Your daughter, barely two. Like a daffodil

You turn your face down to her, saying something.

Your words were lost in the camera.

 And the knowledge

Inside the hill on which you are sitting,

A moated fort hill, bigger than your house,

Failed to reach the picture. While your next moment,

Coming towards you like an infantryman

Returning slowly out of no-man’s-land,

Bowed under something, never reached you –

Simply melted into the perfect light.



**Thomas Hardy**

(1840 – 1928)

Hardy was born in Dorset and although he travelled around Europe and loved the fashionable life of London, Dorset was to be his home and the place where he died. He had a happy childhood, his father played the violin and his mother encouraged him to read. As a young man he was apprenticed as an architect and it was to take up a place in an architect’s office that took him to London for the first time. After a four year engagement he married Emma Gifford, whose death in 1912 was to spark some of his most memorable poetry.

***“A man’s silence is wonderful to listen to.”***

***“If Galileo had said in verse that the world moved,***

***the Inquisition might have let him alone.”***

***“It is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly***

***made by men to express theirs.”***

**At Tea**

The kettle descants in a cosy drone,

And the young wife looks in her husband’s face,

And then at her guest’s, and shows in her own

Her sense that she fills an envied place;

And the visiting lady is all abloom,

And she says there was never so sweet a room.

And the happy young housewife does not know

That the woman beside her was first his choice,

Till the fates ordained it could not be so ...

Betraying nothing in look or voice

The guest sits smiling and sips her tea,

And he throws her a stray glance yearningly.

**The Market-Girl**

Nobody took any notice of her as she stood on the causey\* kerb

All eager to sell her honey and apples and bunches of garden herb;

And if she had offered to give her wares and herself with them too that day,

I doubt if a soul would have cared to take a bargain so choice away.

But chancing to trace her sunburnt grace that morning as I passed nigh,

I went and I said ‘Poor maidy dear! – and will none of the people buy?’

And so it began; and soon we knew what the end of it all must be,

And I found that though no others had bid, a prize had been won by me.

(\*causey – paved-way)

**The Frozen Greenhouse**

‘There was a frost

Last night!’ she said,

‘And the stove was forgot

When we went to bed,

And the greenhouse plants

Are frozen dead!’

By the breakfast blaze

Blank-faced spoke she,

Her scared young look

Seeming to be

The very symbol

Of tragedy.

The frost is fiercer

Than then today,

As I pass the place

Of her once dismay,

But the greenhouse stands

Warm, tight, and gay,

While she who was grieved

At the sad lot

Of her pretty plants –

Cold, iced, forget –

Herself is colder,

And knows it not.

 **The Voice**

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,

Saying that now you are not as you were

When you had changed from the one who was all to me,

But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you, then,

Standing as when I drew near to the town

Where you would wait for me: yes, as I knew you then,

Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness

Travelling across the wet mead to me here,

You being ever dissolved to existlessness,

Heard no more again far or near?

 Thus I; faltering forward,

 Leaves around me falling,

Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,

 And the woman calling.