

# Poetry: Grades 7-8

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Please note: If you would like to recommend additional poems, please submit your recommendations to Mrs. Lyons at [alyons@aca-cc.org](mailto:alyons@aca-cc.org) no later than **December 8th, 2017**. Additional selections will be added to this document upon approval. Recommended works should be of similar length to the selections already provided.

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## On Turning Ten

*Billy Collins*

---

The whole idea of it makes me feel  
like I'm coming down with something,  
something worse than any stomach ache  
or the headaches I get from reading in bad light--  
a kind of measles of the spirit,  
a mumps of the psyche,  
a disfiguring chicken pox of the soul.

You tell me it is too early to be looking back,  
but that is because you have forgotten  
the perfect simplicity of being one  
and the beautiful complexity introduced by two.  
But I can lie on my bed and remember every digit.  
At four I was an Arabian wizard.  
I could make myself invisible  
by drinking a glass of milk a certain way.  
At seven I was a soldier, at nine a prince.

But now I am mostly at the window  
watching the late afternoon light.  
Back then it never fell so solemnly  
against the side of my tree house,  
and my bicycle never leaned against the garage  
as it does today,  
all the dark blue speed drained out of it.

This is the beginning of sadness, I say to myself,  
as I walk through the universe in my sneakers.  
It is time to say good-bye to my imaginary friends,  
time to turn the first big number.

It seems only yesterday I used to believe  
there was nothing under my skin but light.  
If you cut me I could shine.  
But now when I fall upon the sidewalks of life,  
I skin my knees. I bleed.

## Forgetfulness

*Billy Collins*

---

The name of the author is the first to go  
followed obediently by the title, the plot,  
the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel  
which suddenly becomes one you have never read,  
never even heard of,

as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor  
decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,  
to a little fishing village where there are no phones.

Long ago you kissed the names of the nine Muses goodbye  
and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,  
and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,

something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,  
the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.

Whatever it is you are struggling to remember,  
it is not poised on the tip of your tongue,  
not even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.

It has floated away down a dark mythological river  
whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall,  
well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those  
who have even forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.

No wonder you rise in the middle of the night  
to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.  
No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted  
out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

## Salvator Mundi: Via Crucis

Denise Levertov

---

Maybe He looked indeed  
much as Rembrandt envisioned Him  
in those small heads that seem in fact  
portraits of more than a model.  
A dark, still young, very intelligent face,  
A soul-mirror gaze of deep understanding, unjudging,  
*That* face in extremis, would have clenched its teeth  
in a grimace not shown in even the great crucifixions.  
The burden of humanness (I begin to see) exacted from Him  
that He taste also the humiliation of dread,  
cold sweat of wanting to let the whole thing go,  
like any mortal hero out of his depth,  
like anyone who has taken a step too far  
and wants himself back.  
The painters, even the greatest, don't show how,  
in the midnight Garden,  
or staggering uphill under the weight of the Cross,  
He went through with even the human longing  
to simply cease, to *not* be.  
Not torture of body,  
not the hideous betrayals humans commit  
not the faithless weakness of friends, and surely  
not the anticipation of death (not then, in agony's grip)  
Was Incarnation's heaviest weight,  
but this sickened desire to renege,  
to step back from what He, Who was God,  
had promised Himself, and had entered  
time and flesh to enact.

Sublime acceptance, to be absolute, had to have welled  
up from those depths where purpose drifted  
for *mortal* moments.

## **The Destruction of Sennacherib**

*George Gordon, Lord Byron*

---

The Assyrians came down like the 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 nostrils 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,  
And lances unlifted, the trumpet 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!

## The Tyger

*By William Blake*

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Mending Wall

*Robert Frost*

---

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair  
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;  
And on a day we meet to walk the line  
And set the wall between us once again.  
We keep the wall between us as we go.  
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
"Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"  
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,  
One on a side. It comes to little more:  
There where it is we do not need the wall:  
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
My apple trees will never get across  
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
He only says, "Good fences make good neighbours."  
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
If I could put a notion in his head:  
"Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it  
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out,  
And to whom I was like to give offence.  
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That wants it down." I could say "Elves" to him,  
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
He said it for himself. I see him there  
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top

In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
He will not go behind his father's saying,  
And he likes having thought of it so well  
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbours."

## Casey at the Bat

*Ernest Lawrence Thayer*

---

The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:  
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play,  
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,  
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest  
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;  
They thought, "If only Casey could but get a whack at that—  
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat."

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,  
And the former was a hoodoo, while the latter was a cake;  
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,  
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,  
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;  
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,  
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell;  
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;  
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,  
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;  
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit Casey's face.  
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,  
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.

Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;  
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;  
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,  
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,  
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.  
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—  
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,  
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;  
“Kill him! Kill the umpire!” shouted someone on the stand;  
And it’s likely they’d have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey’s visage shone;  
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;  
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew;  
But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, “Strike two!”

“Fraud!” cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered “Fraud!”  
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.  
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,  
And they knew that Casey wouldn’t let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey’s lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,  
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;  
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,  
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey’s blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favoured land the sun is shining bright,  
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;  
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,  
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.

**Do not go gentle into that good night***Dylan Thomas*

---

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

## One Art

*Elizabeth Bishop*

---

The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (*Write it!*) like disaster.

## Ode to the West Wind I-IV

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

---

### I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,  
 Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead  
 Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,  
 Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,  
 Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,  
 Each like a corpse within its grave, until  
 Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill  
 (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)  
 With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;  
 Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

### II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,  
 Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,  
 Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread  
 On the blue surface of thine aëry surge,  
 Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge  
 Of the horizon to the zenith's height,  
 The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night  
 Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,  
 Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere  
 Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

**III**

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams  
 The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,  
 Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,  
 And saw in sleep old palaces and towers  
 Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers  
 So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou  
 For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below  
 The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear  
 The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,  
 And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

**IV**

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;  
 If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
 A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
 Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even  
 I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
 As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
 Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
 Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
 I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd  
 One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

## An Excerpt from Paradise Lost

*John Milton*

---

### Book III.80-134

"Only begotten Son, seest thou what rage Transports our Adversary? whom no bounds Prescrib'd no bars of Hell, nor all the chains Heap'd on him there, nor yet the main abyss Wide interrupt, can hold; so bent he seems On desperate revenge, that shall redound	80      85
Upon his own rebellious head. And now, Through all restraint broke loose, he wings his way Not far off Heaven, in the precincts of light, Directly towards the new created world, And man there plac'd, with purpose to assay	90
If him by force he can destroy, or, worse, By some false guile pervert; and shall pervert; For man will hearken to his glozing lies, And easily transgress the sole command, Sole pledge of his obedience: So will fall	95
He and his faithless progeny: Whose fault? Whose but his own? ingrate, he had of me All he could have; I made him just and right, Sufficient to have stood, though free to fall. Such I created all the ethereal Powers	100
And Spirits, both them who stood, and them who fail'd; Freely they stood who stood, and fell who fell. Not free, what proof could they have given sincere Of true allegiance, constant faith or love, Where only what they needs must do appear'd,	105
Not what they would? what praise could they receive? What pleasure I from such obedience paid, When will and reason (reason also is choice) Useless and vain, of freedom both despoil'd, Made passive both, had serv'd necessity,	110
Not me? they therefore, as to right belong'd, So were created, nor can justly accuse Their Maker, or their making, or their fate, As if predestination over-rul'd Their will dispos'd by absolute decree	115

Or high foreknowledge they themselves decreed  
 Their own revolt, not I; if I foreknew,  
 Foreknowledge had no influence on their fault,  
 Which had no less proved certain unforeknown.  
 So without least impulse or shadow of fate, 120  
 Or aught by me immutably foreseen,  
 They trespass, authors to themselves in all  
 Both what they judge, and what they choose; for so  
 I form'd them free: and free they must remain,  
 Till they enthrall themselves; I else must change 125  
 Their nature, and revoke the high decree  
 Unchangeable, eternal, which ordain'd  
 Their freedom: they themselves ordain'd their fall.  
 The first sort by their own suggestion fell,  
 Self-tempted, self-deprav'd: Man falls, deceiv'd 130  
 By the other first: Man therefore shall find grace,  
 The other none: In mercy and justice both,  
 Through Heaven and Earth, so shall my glory excel;  
 But Mercy, first and last, shall brightest shine."

## The Creation

*James Weldon Johnson*

---

And God stepped out on space,  
And he looked around and said:  
I'm lonely—  
I'll make me a world.

And far as the eye of God could see  
Darkness covered everything,  
Blacker than a hundred midnights  
Down in a cypress swamp.

Then God smiled,  
And the light broke,  
And the darkness rolled up on one side,  
And the light stood shining on the other,  
And God said: That's good!

Then God reached out and took the light in his hands,  
And God rolled the light around in his hands  
Until he made the sun;  
And he set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.  
And the light that was left from making the sun  
God gathered it up in a shining ball  
And flung it against the darkness,  
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.  
Then down between  
The darkness and the light  
He hurled the world;  
And God said: That's good!

Then God himself stepped down—  
And the sun was on his right hand,  
And the moon was on his left;  
The stars were clustered about his head,  
And the earth was under his feet.  
And God walked, and where he trod  
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out  
And bulged the mountains up.

Then he stopped and looked and saw  
That the earth was hot and barren.  
So God stepped over to the edge of the world  
And he spat out the seven seas—  
He batted his eyes, and the lightnings flashed—  
He clapped his hands, and the thunders rolled—

And the waters above the earth came down,  
The cooling waters came down.

Then the green grass sprouted,  
And the little red flowers blossomed,  
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,  
And the oak spread out his arms,  
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,  
And the rivers ran down to the sea;  
And God smiled again,  
And the rainbow appeared,  
And curled itself around his shoulder.

Then God raised his arm and he waved his hand  
Over the sea and over the land,  
And he said: Bring forth! Bring forth!  
And quicker than God could drop his hand,  
Fishes and fowls  
And beasts and birds  
Swam the rivers and the seas,  
Roamed the forests and the woods,  
And split the air with their wings.  
And God said: That's good!

Then God walked around,  
And God looked around  
On all that he had made.  
He looked at his sun,  
And he looked at his moon,  
And he looked at his little stars;  
He looked on his world  
With all its living things,  
And God said: I'm lonely still.

Then God sat down—  
On the side of a hill where he could think;  
By a deep, wide river he sat down;  
With his head in his hands,  
God thought and thought,  
Till he thought: I'll make me a man!

Up from the bed of the river  
God scooped the clay;  
And by the bank of the river

He kneeled him down;  
And there the great God Almighty  
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,  
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,  
Who rounded the earth in the middle of his hand;  
This great God,  
Like a mammy bending over her baby,  
Kneeled down in the dust

Toiling over a lump of clay  
Till he shaped it in his own image;

Then into it he blew the breath of life,  
And man became a living soul.  
Amen. Amen.

## The Crucifixion

James Weldon Johnson

---

Jesus, my gentle Jesus,  
 Walking in the dark of the Garden --  
 The Garden of Gethsemane,  
 Saying to the three disciples:  
 Sorrow is in my soul --  
 Even unto death;  
 Tarry ye here a little while,  
 And watch with me.  
 Jesus, my burdened Jesus,  
 Praying in the dark of the Garden --  
 The Garden of Gethsemane.  
 Saying: Father,  
 Oh, Father,  
 This bitter cup,  
 This bitter cup,  
 Let it pass from me.  
 Jesus, my sorrowing Jesus,  
 The sweat like drops of blood upon his brow,  
 Talking with his Father,  
 While the three disciples slept,  
 Saying: Father,  
 Oh, Father,  
 Not as I will,  
 Not as I will,  
 But let thy will be done.  
 Oh, look at black-hearted Judas --  
 Sneaking through the dark of the Garden --  
 Leading his crucifying mob.  
 Oh, God!  
 Strike him down!  
 Why *don't* you strike him down,  
 Before he plants his traitor's kiss  
 Upon my Jesus' cheek?  
 And they take my blameless Jesus,  
 And they drag him to the Governor,  
 To the mighty Roman Governor.  
 Great Pilate seated in his hall,--  
 Great Pilate on his judgment seat,

Said: In this man I find no fault.  
 I find no fault in him.  
 And Pilate washed his hands.

But they cried out, saying:  
 Crucify him!--  
 Crucify him!--  
 Crucify him!--  
 His blood be on our heads.  
 And they beat my loving Jesus,

They spit on my precious Jesus;  
 They dressed him up in a purple robe,  
 They put a crown of thorns upon his head,  
 And they pressed it down --  
 Oh, they pressed it down --  
 And they mocked my sweet King Jesus.  
 Up Golgotha's rugged road  
 I see my Jesus go.  
 I see him sink beneath the load,  
 I see my drooping Jesus sink.  
 And then they laid hold on Simon,  
 Black Simon, yes, black Simon;  
 They put the cross on Simon,  
 And Simon bore the cross.  
 On Calvary, on Calvary,  
 They crucified my Jesus.  
 They nailed him to the cruel tree,  
 And the hammer!  
 The hammer!  
 The hammer!  
 Rang through Jerusalem's streets.  
 The hammer!  
 The hammer!  
 The hammer!  
 Rang through Jerusalem's streets.  
 Jesus, my lamb-like Jesus,  
 Shivering as the nails go through his hands;

Jesus, my lamb-like Jesus,  
 Shivering as the nails go through his feet.  
 Jesus, my darling Jesus,  
 Groaning as the Roman spear plunged in his  
 side;  
 Jesus, my darling Jesus,  
 Groaning as the blood came spurting from his  
 wound.  
 Oh, look how they done my Jesus.  
 Mary,  
 Weeping Mary,  
 Sees her poor little Jesus on the cross.  
 Mary,  
 Weeping Mary,  
 Sees her sweet, baby Jesus on the cruel cross,  
 Hanging between two thieves.  
 And Jesus, my lonesome Jesus,  
 Called out once more to his Father,  
 Saying:

My God,  
 My God,  
 Why hast thou forsaken me?  
 And he drooped his head and died.

And the veil of the temple was split in two,  
 The midday sun refused to shine,  
 The thunder rumbled and the lightning wrote  
 An unknown language in the sky.  
 What a day! Lord, what a day!  
 When my blessed Jesus died.

Oh, I tremble, yes, I tremble,  
 It causes me to tremble, tremble,  
 When I think how Jesus died;  
 Died on the steeps of Calvary,  
 How Jesus died for sinners,  
 Sinners like you and me.

## The Highwayman

*By Alfred Noyes*

---

### PART ONE

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.  
 The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.  
 The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
 And the highwayman came riding—  
 Riding—riding—  
 The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,  
 A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin.  
 They fitted with never a wrinkle. His boots were up to the thigh.  
 And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,  
 His pistol butts a-twinkle,  
 His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard.  
 He tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred.  
 He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
 But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
 Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
 Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked  
 Where Tim the ostler listened. His face was white and peaked.  
 His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,  
 But he loved the landlord's daughter,  
 The landlord's red-lipped daughter.  
 Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say—

“One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,  
 But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;  
 Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,  
 Then look for me by moonlight,  
 Watch for me by moonlight,  
 I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way.”

He rose upright in the stirrups. He scarce could reach her hand,  
 But she loosened her hair in the casement. His face burnt like a brand

As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over his breast;  
 And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,  
 (O, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)  
 Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and galloped away to the west.

## PART TWO

He did not come in the dawning. He did not come at noon;  
 And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise of the moon,  
 When the road was a gypsy's ribbon, looping the purple moor,  
 A red-coat troop came marching—  
 Marching—marching—  
 King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-door.

They said no word to the landlord. They drank his ale instead.  
 But they gagged his daughter, and bound her, to the foot of her narrow bed.  
 Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at their side!  
 There was death at every window;  
 And hell at one dark window;  
 For Bess could see, through her casement, the road that *he* would ride.

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest.  
 They had bound a musket beside her, with the muzzle beneath her breast!  
 "Now, keep good watch!" and they kissed her. She heard the doomed man say—  
*Look for me by moonlight;*  
*Watch for me by moonlight;*  
*I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!*

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!  
 She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!  
 They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years  
 Till, now, on the stroke of midnight,  
 Cold, on the stroke of midnight,  
 The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

The tip of one finger touched it. She strove no more for the rest.  
 Up, she stood up to attention, with the muzzle beneath her breast.  
 She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;  
 For the road lay bare in the moonlight;  
 Blank and bare in the moonlight;  
 And the blood of her veins, in the moonlight, throbbed to her love's refrain.

*Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot!* Had they heard it? The horsehoofs ringing clear;  
*Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot,* in the distance? Were they deaf that they did not hear?  
 Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the hill,  
 The highwayman came riding—  
 Riding—riding—  
 The red coats looked to their priming! She stood up, straight and still.

*Tlot-tlot,* in the frosty silence! *Tlot-tlot,* in the echoing night!  
 Nearer he came and nearer. Her face was like a light.  
 Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last deep breath,  
 Then her finger moved in the moonlight,  
 Her musket shattered the moonlight,  
 Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him—with her death.

He turned. He spurred to the west; he did not know who stood  
 Bowed, with her head o'er the musket, drenched with her own blood!  
 Not till the dawn he heard it, and his face grew grey to hear  
 How Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
 The landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
 Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,  
 With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high.  
 Blood red were his spurs in the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat;  
 When they shot him down on the highway,  
 Down like a dog on the highway,  
 And he lay in his blood on the highway, with a bunch of lace at his throat.

...

*And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,  
 When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,  
 When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
 A highwayman comes riding—  
 Riding—riding—  
 A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.*

*Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard.  
 He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred.  
 He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there  
 But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,  
 Bess, the landlord's daughter,  
 Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.*



## Paul Revere's Ride

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

---

Listen my children and you shall hear  
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,  
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;  
Hardly a man is now alive  
Who remembers that famous day and year.  
He said to his friend, "If the British march  
By land or sea from the town to-night,  
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch  
Of the North Church tower as a signal light,--  
One if by land, and two if by sea;  
And I on the opposite shore will be,  
Ready to ride and spread the alarm  
Through every Middlesex village and farm,  
For the country folk to be up and to arm."  
Then he said "Good-night!" and with muffled oar  
Silently rowed to the Charlestown shore,  
Just as the moon rose over the bay,  
Where swinging wide at her moorings lay  
The Somerset, British man-of-war;  
A phantom ship, with each mast and spar  
Across the moon like a prison bar,  
And a huge black hulk, that was magnified  
By its own reflection in the tide.  
Meanwhile, his friend through alley and street  
Wanders and watches, with eager ears,  
Till in the silence around him he hears  
The muster of men at the barrack door,  
The sound of arms, and the tramp of feet,  
And the measured tread of the grenadiers,  
Marching down to their boats on the shore.  
Then he climbed the tower of the Old North Church,  
By the wooden stairs, with stealthy tread,  
To the belfry chamber overhead,  
And startled the pigeons from their perch  
On the sombre rafters, that round him made  
Masses and moving shapes of shade,--  
By the trembling ladder, steep and tall,  
To the highest window in the wall,  
Where he paused to listen and look down

A moment on the roofs of the town  
And the moonlight flowing over all.  
Beneath, in the churchyard, lay the dead,  
In their night encampment on the hill,  
Wrapped in silence so deep and still  
That he could hear, like a sentinel's tread,  
The watchful night-wind, as it went  
Creeping along from tent to tent,  
And seeming to whisper, "All is well!"  
A moment only he feels the spell  
Of the place and the hour, and the secret dread  
Of the lonely belfry and the dead;  
For suddenly all his thoughts are bent  
On a shadowy something far away,  
Where the river widens to meet the bay,--  
A line of black that bends and floats  
On the rising tide like a bridge of boats.  
Meanwhile, impatient to mount and ride,  
Booted and spurred, with a heavy stride  
On the opposite shore walked Paul Revere.  
Now he patted his horse's side,  
Now he gazed at the landscape far and near,  
Then, impetuous, stamped the earth,  
And turned and tightened his saddle girth;  
But mostly he watched with eager search  
The belfry tower of the Old North Church,  
As it rose above the graves on the hill,  
Lonely and spectral and sombre and still.  
And lo! as he looks, on the belfry's height  
A glimmer, and then a gleam of light!  
He springs to the saddle, the bridle he turns,  
But lingers and gazes, till full on his sight  
A second lamp in the belfry burns.  
A hurry of hoofs in a village street,  
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,  
And beneath, from the pebbles, in passing, a spark  
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet;  
That was all! And yet, through the gloom and the light,  
The fate of a nation was riding that night;  
And the spark struck out by that steed, in his flight,  
Kindled the land into flame with its heat.  
He has left the village and mounted the steep,  
And beneath him, tranquil and broad and deep,  
Is the Mystic, meeting the ocean tides;  
And under the alders that skirt its edge,

Now soft on the sand, now loud on the ledge,  
 Is heard the tramp of his steed as he rides.  
 It was twelve by the village clock  
 When he crossed the bridge into Medford town.  
 He heard the crowing of the cock,  
 And the barking of the farmer's dog,  
 And felt the damp of the river fog,  
 That rises after the sun goes down.  
 It was one by the village clock,  
 When he galloped into Lexington.  
 He saw the gilded weathercock  
 Swim in the moonlight as he passed,  
 And the meeting-house windows, black and bare,  
 Gaze at him with a spectral glare,  
 As if they already stood aghast  
 At the bloody work they would look upon.  
 It was two by the village clock,  
 When he came to the bridge in Concord town.  
 He heard the bleating of the flock,  
 And the twitter of birds among the trees,  
 And felt the breath of the morning breeze  
 Blowing over the meadow brown.  
 And one was safe and asleep in his bed  
 Who at the bridge would be first to fall,  
 Who that day would be lying dead,  
 Pierced by a British musket ball.  
 You know the rest. In the books you have read  
 How the British Regulars fired and fled,---  
 How the farmers gave them ball for ball,  
 >From behind each fence and farmyard wall,  
 Chasing the redcoats down the lane,  
 Then crossing the fields to emerge again  
 Under the trees at the turn of the road,  
 And only pausing to fire and load.  
 So through the night rode Paul Revere;  
 And so through the night went his cry of alarm  
 To every Middlesex village and farm,---  
 A cry of defiance, and not of fear,  
 A voice in the darkness, a knock at the door,  
 And a word that shall echo for evermore!  
 For, borne on the night-wind of the Past,  
 Through all our history, to the last,  
 In the hour of darkness and peril and need,  
 The people will waken and listen to hear

The hurrying hoof-beats of that steed,  
And the midnight message of Paul Revere.

## The Village Blacksmith

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

---

Under a spreading chestnut-tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms  
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,  
His face is like the tan;  
His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns whate'er he can,  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,  
You can hear his bellows blow;  
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,  
With measured beat and slow,  
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school  
Look in at the open door;  
They love to see the flaming forge,  
And hear the bellows roar,  
And catch the burning sparks that fly  
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church,  
And sits among his boys;  
He hears the parson pray and preach,  
He hears his daughter's voice,  
Singing in the village choir,  
And it makes his heart rejoice.

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,  
Singing in Paradise!  
He needs must think of her once more,  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes  
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling, --rejoicing, --sorrowing,  
Onward through life he goes;  
Each morning sees some task begin,  
Each evening sees it close  
Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
For the lesson thou hast taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought.

## And To Think I saw it on Mulberry Street.

*Dr. Seuss*

---

When I leave home to walk to school,  
Dad always says to me,  
“Marco, keep your eyelids up  
And see what you can see.”

But when I tell him where I've been  
And what I think I've seen,  
He looks at me and sternly says,  
“Your eyesight's much too keen.”  
“Stop telling such outlandish tales.  
Stop turning minnows into whales.”

Now, what can I say  
when I get home today?

All the long way to school  
And all the way back,  
I've looked and I've looked  
And I've kept careful track.  
But all that I've noticed, Except my own feet  
Was a horse and a wagon on Mulberry Street.  
That's nothing to tell of,  
That won't do, of course....  
Just a broken-down wagon  
That's drawn by a horse.

That *can't* be my story. That's only a *start*.  
I'll say that a ZEBRA was pulling that cart!  
And that is a story that no one can beat,  
When I say that I saw it on Mulberry Street.  
Yes, the zebra is fine,  
But I think it's a shame,  
Such a marvelous beast  
With a cart that's so tame.  
The story would really be better to hear  
If the driver I saw there were a charioteer.  
A gold and blue chariot's *something* to meet,  
Rumbling like thunder down Mulberry Street.

No, it won't do at all... a zebra's too small.  
A reindeer is better; he's fast and he's fleet,  
And he'd look mighty smart  
On old Mulberry Street.  
Hold on a minute! There's something wrong!  
A reindeer hates the way it feels  
To pull a thing that runs on wheels.  
He'd be much happier, instead,  
If he could pull a fancy sled.  
Hmmm.. A reindeer and a sleigh..  
Say-*anyone* could think of *that*,  
Jack or Fred or Joe or Nat--  
Say, even Jane could think of *that*.

But it isn't too late to make one little change.  
A sleigh and an ELEPHANT!

Say! That makes a story that *no one* can beat,  
When I say that I saw it on Mulberry Street.  
But now I don't know... It still doesn't seem right.  
An elephant pulling a thing that's so light  
Would whip it around in the air like a kite.

But he'd look simply grand  
With a great big brass band!  
A band that's so good should have someone to hear  
it,  
But it's going so fast that it's hard to keep near it.  
I'll put on a trailer! I know they won't mind  
If a man sits and listens while hitched on behind.

But now is it fair? Is it fair what I've done?  
I'll bet those wagons weigh more than a ton.  
That's really too heavy a load for *one* beast;  
I'll give him some helpers. He needs two, at least.  
But now what worries me is this..  
Mulberry Street runs into Bliss.  
Unless there's something I can fix up,  
There'll be an *awful* traffic mix-up!

It takes Police to do the trick,  
 To guide them through where traffic's thick –  
 It takes Police to do the trick.

They'll never crash now, They'll race at top speed.  
 With Sergeant Mulvaney, himself, in the lead.  
 The Mayor is there, And he thinks it is grand,  
 And he raises his hat as they dash by the stand.  
 The Mayor is there and the Aldermen too,  
 All waving big banners of red, white and blue.  
 And that is a story that NO ONE can beat  
 When I say that I saw it on Mulberry Street!

With a roar of its motor an airplane appears  
 And dumps out confetti while everyone cheers  
 And that makes a story that's really not bad!  
 But it still could be better. Suppose that I add...  
 No time for more, I'm almost home.

I swung 'round the corner and dashed through the  
 gate, I ran up the steps and I felt simply GREAT!

For I had a story that NO ONE could beat!  
 And to think that I saw it on Mulberry Street!

But Dad said quite calmly,  
 “just draw up your stool”  
 and tell me the sights on  
 the way home from school”

There was so much to tell,

I JUST COULDN'T BEGIN!

Dad looked at me sharply  
 and pulled at his chin.  
 He frowned at me sternly from there in his seat,  
 “was  
 there nothing to look at..No people to greet?  
 Did *nothing* excite you or make your heart beat?”  
 “Nothing,” I said, growing red as a beet,  
 “But a plain horse and wagon on Mulberry Street.”

## The Cremation of Sam McGee

Robert W. Service

---

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun  
By the men who toil for gold;  
The Arctic trails have their secret tales  
That would make your blood run cold;  
The Northern Lights have seen queer sights,  
But the queerest they ever did see  
Was that night on the marge of Lake Lebarge  
I cremated Sam McGee.*

Now Sam McGee was from Tennessee, where the cotton blooms and blows.  
Why he left his home in the South to roam 'round the Pole, God only knows.  
He was always cold, but the land of gold seemed to hold him like a spell;  
Though he'd often say in his homely way that "he'd sooner live in hell."

On a Christmas Day we were mushing our way over the Dawson trail.  
Talk of your cold! through the parka's fold it stabbed like a driven nail.  
If our eyes we'd close, then the lashes froze till sometimes we couldn't see;  
It wasn't much fun, but the only one to whimper was Sam McGee.

And that very night, as we lay packed tight in our robes beneath the snow,  
And the dogs were fed, and the stars o'erhead were dancing heel and toe,  
He turned to me, and "Cap," says he, "I'll cash in this trip, I guess;  
And if I do, I'm asking that you won't refuse my last request."

Well, he seemed so low that I couldn't say no; then he says with a sort of moan:  
"It's the cursèd cold, and it's got right hold till I'm chilled clean through to the bone.  
Yet 'tain't being dead—it's my awful dread of the icy grave that pains;  
So I want you to swear that, foul or fair, you'll cremate my last remains."

A pal's last need is a thing to heed, so I swore I would not fail;  
And we started on at the streak of dawn; but God! he looked ghastly pale.  
He crouched on the sleigh, and he raved all day of his home in Tennessee;  
And before nightfall a corpse was all that was left of Sam McGee.

There wasn't a breath in that land of death, and I hurried, horror-driven,  
With a corpse half hid that I couldn't get rid, because of a promise given;  
It was lashed to the sleigh, and it seemed to say: "You may tax your brawn and brains,  
But you promised true, and it's up to you to cremate those last remains."

Now a promise made is a debt unpaid, and the trail has its own stern code.  
 In the days to come, though my lips were dumb, in my heart how I cursed that load.  
 In the long, long night, by the lone firelight, while the huskies, round in a ring,  
 Howled out their woes to the homeless snows— O God! how I loathed the thing.

And every day that quiet clay seemed to heavy and heavier grow;  
 And on I went, though the dogs were spent and the grub was getting low;  
 The trail was bad, and I felt half mad, but I swore I would not give in;  
 And I'd often sing to the hateful thing, and it hearkened with a grin.

Till I came to the marge of Lake Lebarge, and a derelict there lay;  
 It was jammed in the ice, but I saw in a trice it was called the "Alice May."  
 And I looked at it, and I thought a bit, and I looked at my frozen chum;  
 Then "Here," said I, with a sudden cry, "is my cre-ma-tor-eum."

Some planks I tore from the cabin floor, and I lit the boiler fire;  
 Some coal I found that was lying around, and I heaped the fuel higher;  
 The flames just soared, and the furnace roared—such a blaze you seldom see;  
 And I burrowed a hole in the glowing coal, and I stuffed in Sam McGee.

Then I made a hike, for I didn't like to hear him sizzle so;  
 And the heavens scowled, and the huskies howled, and the wind began to blow.  
 It was icy cold, but the hot sweat rolled down my cheeks, and I don't know why;  
 And the greasy smoke in an inky cloak went streaking down the sky.

I do not know how long in the snow I wrestled with grisly fear;  
 But the stars came out and they danced about ere again I ventured near;  
 I was sick with dread, but I bravely said: "I'll just take a peep inside.  
 I guess he's cooked, and it's time I looked"; ... then the door I opened wide.

And there sat Sam, looking cool and calm, in the heart of the furnace roar;  
 And he wore a smile you could see a mile, and he said: "Please close that door.  
 It's fine in here, but I greatly fear you'll let in the cold and storm—  
 Since I left Plumtree, down in Tennessee, it's the first time I've been warm."

*There are strange things done in the midnight sun  
 By the men who toil for gold;  
 The Arctic trails have their secret tales  
 That would make your blood run cold;  
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