

# Poetry: 2nd Grade

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## The Arrow and the Song

*Henry Wordsworth Longfellow*

I shot an arrow into the air,  
    It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
For so swiftly it flew, the sight,  
    Could not follow it in its flight.  
I breathed a song into the air,  
    It fell to earth, I knew not where;  
For who has sight so keen and strong  
    That it can follow the flight of song?  
Long, long afterward, in an oak,  
    I found the arrow, still unbroke;  
And the song, from beginning to end,  
    I found again in the heart of a friend. †

## At the Garden Gate

*David McCord*

Who so late  
at the garden gate?  
Emily, Kate,  
and John.  
“John,  
where have you been?  
It’s after six;  
Supper is on,  
And you’ve been gone  
An hour,  
John!”  
“We’ve been, we’ve been,  
We’ve just been over  
The field,” said,  
John.  
(Emily, Kate,  
and John.)

Who so late  
at the garden gate?  
Emily, Kate  
and John  
“John,  
what have you got?”  
“A whopping toad  
Isn’t he big?  
He’s a terrible  
Load.  
(We found him  
A little ways  
Up the road,”  
said Emily,  
Kate,  
and John.)

Who so late  
at the garden gate?  
Emily, Kate,  
and John.  
“John,  
put that thing down!

Do you want to get warts?”  
(They all three have ‘em  
By last

Reports.)  
Still, finding toads  
Is the best of  
Sports,  
Say Emily,  
Kate,  
and John. †

## The Balloon

*Karla Kuskin*

I went to the park  
And I bought a balloon.  
It sailed through the sky  
Like a large orange moon.  
It bumped and it fluttered  
And swam with the clouds.  
Small birds flew around it,  
In high chirping crowds.  
It bounced and it balanced  
And bowed with the breeze.  
It skimmed past the leaves  
On the tops of the trees.  
And then as the day  
Started turning to night  
I gave a short jump  
And I held the string tight  
And home we all sailed  
Through the darkening sky,  
The orange balloon, the small birds,  
And I. †

**Bedtime**

*Eleanor Farjeon*

Five minutes, five minutes more please!

Let me stay five minutes more!

Can't I just finish the castle

I'm building here on the floor?

Can't I just finish the story

I'm reading here in my book?

Can't I just finish this bead-chain—

It almost is finished, look!

Can't I just finish this game, please!

When a game's once begun

It's a pity never to find out

Whether you've lost or won.

Can't I just stay five minutes?

Well, can't I just stay four?

Three minutes then? two minutes?

Can't I stay one minute more? †

**Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown**

*Carolyn Cawthorne*

Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown  
Was really the dirtiest boy in town.  
He'd play in the mud, and splash in the pool,  
When starting out each morning for school.  
His teacher said, with a sorry frown,  
"You certainly are a disgrace to the town.  
Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown."

Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown  
Was caught, when policemen were searching the town  
To find a bad boy. Said they: "Here's the scamp!  
He surely looks like a wild little tramp!"  
But as he stood trembling, with tears running down,  
Said his clean little sister, in dainty pink gown,  
"His name is Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown!"

Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown  
Is now without spot, from his soles to his crown.  
His shoes are polished—his suit is clean  
A neater boy could never be seen.  
And teacher says now with a smile, looking down:  
"When you've grown, you'll be Mayor of the town,  
Bernard Bartholomew Benjamin Brown." †

## Boarding House

*Ted Kooser*

The blind man draws his curtains for the night  
and goes to bed, leaving a burning light

above the bathroom mirror. Through the wall,  
he hears the deaf man walking down the hall

in his squeaky shoes to see if there's a light  
under the blind man's door, and all is right †

**The Cat**

*Ogden Nash*

You get a wife, you get a house,  
Eventually you get a mouse.  
You get some words regarding mice,  
You get a kitty in a trice.

By two a.m. or thereabouts,  
The mouse is in, the cat is out.  
It dawns upon you, in your cot,  
The mouse is silent, the cat is not.

Instead of kitty, says your spouse,  
You should have got another mouse. †

## Catalogue

*Rosalie Moore*

Cats sleep fat and walk thin.  
 Cats, when they sleep, slump;  
 When they wake, pull in—  
 And where the plump's been  
 There's skin. Cats walk thin.

Cats wait in a lump,  
 Jump in a streak.  
 Cats when they jump, are sleek  
 As a grape slipping its skin—  
 They have technique.  
 Oh, cats don't creak.  
 They sneak.

Cats sleep fat.  
 They spread comfort beneath them  
 Like a good mat  
 As if they picked the place  
 And then sat.  
 You walk around one  
 As if he were the City Hall  
 After that.

When everyone else is just ready to go out,  
 The cat is just ready to come in.  
 He's not where he's been.  
 Cats sleep fast and walk thin. †

## A Child's Evening Prayer

*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,  
God grant me grace my prayers to say:  
O God! preserve my mother dear  
In strength and health for many a year;  
And, O! preserve my father too,  
And may I pay him reverence due;

And may I my best thoughts employ  
To be my parents' hope and joy;  
And O! preserve my brothers both  
From evil doings and from sloth,

And may we always love each other  
Our friends, our father, and our mother:  
And still, O Lord, to me impart  
An innocent and grateful heart,  
That after my great sleep I may  
Awake to thy eternal day! Amen †

## Counting-Out Rhyme

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

Silver bark of beech, and sallow  
Bark of yellow birch and yellow  
    Twig of willow.

Stripe of green in moosewood maple,  
Colour seen in leaf of apple,  
    Bark of popple.

Wood of popple pale as moonbeam,  
Wood of oak for yoke and barn-beam,  
    Wood of hornbeam.

Silver bark of beech, and hollow  
Stem of elder, tall and yellow  
    Twig of willow. †

**A Day***Emily Dickinson*

I'll tell you how the sun rose —  
A ribbon at a time.  
The steeples swam in amethyst,  
The news like squirrels ran.

The hills untied their bonnets,  
The bobolinks begun.  
Then I said softly to myself,  
“That must have been the sun!”

But how he set, I know not.  
There seemed a purple stile  
Which little yellow boys and girls  
Were climbing all the while

Till when they reached the other side,  
A dominie in gray  
Put gently up the evening bars,  
And led the flock away. †

**Eletelephony**

*Laura E. Richards*

Once there was an elephant,  
Who tried to use the telephant—  
No! No! I mean an elephone  
Who tried to use the telephone  
(Dear me! I am not certain quite  
That even now I've got it right.)

Howe'er it was, he got his trunk  
Entangled in the telephunk;  
The more he tried to get it free,  
The louder buzzed the telephee—  
(I fear I'd better drop the song  
Of elephop and telephong.) †

## Going to Bed

*Marchette Chute*

I'm always told to hurry up—  
Which I'd be glad to do,  
If there were not so many things  
That need attending to

But first I have to find my towel  
Which fell behind the rack  
And when a pillow's thrown at me  
I have to throw it back.

And then I have to get the things  
I need in bed with me  
Like marbles and my birthday train  
And Pete the chimpanzee.

I have to see my polliwog  
Is safely in its pan,  
And stand a minute on my head  
To be quite sure I can.

I have to bounce upon my bed  
To see if it will sink  
And then when I am covered up  
I find I need a drink. †

## Habits of the Hippopotamus

*Arthur Guiterman*

The hippopotamus is strong  
And huge of head and broad of bustle;  
The limbs on which he rolls along  
Are big with hippopotomuscle.

He does not greatly care for sweets  
Like ice cream, apple pie, or custard,  
But takes to flavor what he eats  
A little hippopotomustard.

The hippopotamus is true  
To all his principles, and just;  
He always tries his best to do  
The things one hippopotomust.

He never rides in trucks or trams,  
In taxicabs or omnibuses,  
And so keeps out of traffic jams  
And other hippopotomusses. †

## Halfway Down

*A. A. Milne*

Halfway down the stairs

Is a stair

Where I sit.

There isn't any

Other stair

Quite like

It.

I'm not at the bottom

I'm not at the top

So this is the stair

Where

I always

Stop.

Halfway up the stairs

Isn't up,

And isn't down.

It isn't in the nursery,

It isn't in the town.

And all sorts of funny

thoughts

Run round my head:

"It isn't really

Anywhere!

It's somewhere else

Instead!" †

**If I Can Stop One Heart from Breaking***Emily Dickinson*

If I can stop one heart from breaking

I shall not live in vain,

If I can ease one life the aching

Or cool one pain,

Or help one fainting robin

Into his nest again,

I shall not live in vain. †

## **I Meant to Do My Work Today**

*Richard LeGallienne*

I meant to do my work today—  
But a brown bird sang in the apple tree,  
And a butterfly flitted across the field,  
And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,  
Tossing the grasses to and fro,  
And a rainbow held out its shining hand—  
So what could I do but laugh and go?

**I'm Nobody! Who Are You?***Emily Dickinson*

I'm nobody! Who are you?  
Are you nobody, too?  
Then there's a pair of us -don't tell!  
They'd banish us, you know.

How dreary to be somebody!  
How public, like a frog  
To tell your name the livelong day  
To an admiring bog! †

## In the Morning

*Ralph Cushman*

I met God in the morning,  
When my day was at its best  
And His presence came like sunrise  
Like a glory in my breast.

All day long the Presence lingered.  
All day long He stayed with me.  
And we sailed with perfect calmness  
O're a very troubled sea.

Other ships were blown and battered  
Other ships were sore distressed.  
But the winds that seemed to drive them  
Brought to us a peace and rest.

Then I thought of other mornings  
With a keen remorse of mind,  
When I, too, had loosed the moorings  
With the Presence left behind.

So I think I know the secret  
Learned from many a troubled way.  
You must seek God in the morning  
If you want Him through the day. †

## Jabbering in School

*Eleanor Farjeon*

Was that me jabbering?

I expect it was.

It's no use complaining

Why and because;

When you've been jabbering

Teacher doesn't try

To take any interest

In because and why.

I might have seen a heron

Flying in the sun,

Or been telling Jeanie

Her pinny was undone,

I might have been noticing

Something dark and dire,

Like lions in the playground,

Or the curtains on fire,

I might have had a stomachache—

Oh, there might have been

Lots of reasons why I

Was jabbering with Jean.

But it's no use explaining

Why and because.

Was that me jabbering?

I expect it was. †

## A Kitten

*Eleanor Farjeon*

He's nothing much but fur  
And two round eyes of blue,  
He has a giant purr  
And a midget mew.

He darts and pats the air,  
He starts and cocks his ear,  
When there is nothing there  
For him to see and hear.

He runs around in rings,  
But why we cannot tell;  
With sideways leaps he springs  
At things invisible.

Then halfway through a leap  
His startled eyeballs close,  
And he drops off to sleep  
With one paw on his nose. †

**A Little Bird I Am**

*Louisa May Alcott*

'A little bird I am,  
Shut from the fields of air,  
And in my cage I sit and sing  
To Him who placed me there:  
Well pleased a prisoner to be,  
Because, my God, it pleases Thee!

'Naught have I else to do;  
I sing the whole day long;  
And He whom most I love to please  
Doth listen to my song,  
He caught and bound my wandering wing,  
But still He bends to hear me sing.' †

## Little Things

*Julia A. Carney*

Little drops of water,  
Little grains of sand,  
Make the mighty ocean  
And the beautiful land.

And the little moments,  
Humble though they be,  
Make the mighty ages  
Of eternity.

So our little errors  
Lead the soul away,  
From the paths of virtue  
Into sin to stray.

Little deeds of kindness,  
Little words of love,  
Make our earth an Eden,  
Like the heaven above. †

## The Little Whistler

*Frances Frost*

My mother whistled softly,  
My father whistled bravely,  
My brother whistled merrily,  
And I tried all day long!  
I blew my breath inwards,  
I blew my breath outwards,  
But all you heard was breath blowing  
And not a bit of song!

But today I heard a bluebird,  
A happy, young and new bird,  
Whistling in the apple tree,  
He'd just discovered how!  
Then quick I blew my breath in,  
And happy I blew my breath out,  
And sudden I blew three wild notes—  
And I can whistle now! †

**Missing**

*A.A. Milne*

Has anybody seen my mouse?  
I opened his box for half a minute,  
Just to make sure he was really in it,  
And while I was looking, he jumped outside!  
I tried to catch him, I tried, I tried.  
I think he's somewhere about the house.  
Has anyone seen my mouse?  
Uncle John have you seen my mouse?  
Just a small sort of mouse, a dear little brown one,  
He came from the country, he wasn't a town one,  
So he'll feel lonely in a London street;  
Why, what could he possibly find to eat?  
He must be somewhere. I'll ask Aunt Rose:  
Have you seen a mouse with a woffelly nose?  
Oh, somewhere about—  
He's just got out ...  
Hasn't anybody seen my mouse? †

**My Cat, Mrs. Lick-A-Chin**

*John Ciardi*

Some of the cats I know about  
Spend a little time in and a lot of time out.  
Or a lot of time out and a little time in.  
But my cat, Mrs. Lick-a-chin,  
Never knows where she wants to be.  
If I let her in, she looks at me  
And begins to sing that she wants to go out.  
So I open the door, and she looks about  
And begins to sing, "Please let me in!"

Poor silly Mrs. Lick-a-chin!

The thing about cats, as you may find,  
Is that no one knows what they have in mind.  
And I'll tell you something about that:  
No one knows it less than my cat. †

## Ornithology

*Eleanor Farjeon*

What's ornithology? Pray can you tell?  
 It's hard to pronounce and it's harder to spell—  
 Yet that's what you're learning whenever you care

To study the Birds of the Earth, Sea, and Air.

There's a long word

To stand for a Bird!

For a Lark or a Sparrow its length is absurd!  
 Eagles and Ostriches need no apology

If you should label them as ornithology!

But how can it fit

The tiny Tom-Tit?

The Finch.

Wants a word that's no more than an inch!  
 Yet all the Birds of the East and the West,

Whatever they be, and wherever they nest—

The Vulture—the Hen—

The Flamingo—the Wren—

The Dove—the Canary—

The queer Cassowary

The Thrush on the bough, and the Duck in the pool—  
 They are all ornithology when you're in School! †

## Out in the Fields with God

*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*

The little cares that fretted me  
I lost them yesterday  
Among the fields, above the sea,  
Among the winds at play,  
Among the lowing of the herds,  
The rustling of the trees,  
Among the singing of the birds,  
The humming of the bees.

The foolish fears of what might happen,  
I cast them all away,  
Among the clover-scented grass,  
Among the new-mown hay,  
Among the husking of the corn,  
Where drowsy poppies nod,  
Where ill thoughts die and good are born--  
Out in the fields with God. †

## Questions at Night

*Louis Untermeyer*

Why  
Is the sky?

What starts the thunder overhead?  
Who makes the crashing noise?  
Are the angels falling out of bed?  
Are they breaking all their toys?

Why does the sun go down so soon?  
Why do the night-clouds crawl  
Hungrily up to the new-laid moon  
And swallow it, shell and all?

If there's a Bear among the stars  
As all the people say,  
Won't he jump over those Pasture-bars  
And drink up the Milky Way?

Does every star that happens to fall  
Turn into a fire-fly?  
Can't it ever get back to heaven at all?

And why  
Is the sky? †

## Rain in Summer

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

How beautiful is the rain!  
After the dust and heat,  
In the broad and fiery street,  
In the narrow lane,  
How beautiful is the rain!  
How it clatters along the roofs,  
Like the tramp of hoofs!

How it gushes and struggles out  
From the throat of the overflowing spout!  
Across the window pane  
It pours and pours;  
And swift and wide,  
With a muddy tide,  
Like a river down the gutter roars  
The rain, the welcome rain! †

## The Reason for the Pelican

*John Ciardi*

The reason for the pelican  
Is difficult to see:  
His beak is clearly larger  
Than there's any need to be.

It's not to bail a boat with—  
He doesn't own a boat.  
Yet everywhere he takes himself  
He has that beak to tote.

It's not to keep his wife in—  
His wife had got one, too.  
It's not a scoop for eating soup.  
It's not an extra shoe.

It isn't quite for anything.  
And yet you realize  
It's really quite a splendid beak  
In quite a splendid size. †

**Seal**

*William Jay Smith*

See how he dives  
From the rocks with a zoom!  
See how he darts  
Through his watery room  
Past crabs and eels  
And green seaweed,  
Past fluffs of sandy  
Minnow feed!  
See how he swims  
With a swerve and a twist,  
A flip of the flipper,  
A flick of the wrist!  
Quicksilver quick,  
Softer than spray,  
Down he plunges  
And sweeps away;  
Before you can think,  
Before you can utter  
Words like "Dill pickle"  
Or "Apple butter,"  
Back up he swims  
Past sting-ray and shark,  
Out with a zoom,  
A whoop, a bark;  
Before you can say  
Whatever you wish,  
He plops at your side  
With a mouthful of fish! †

## The Things I Do

*Karla Kuskin*

I'm very good at climbing  
I nearly climbed a tree  
But just as I was almost up  
I sort of skinned my knee.

I'm wonderful at walking  
I almost walked a mile  
But when I got around the block  
I rested for a while.

I'm excellent at swimming  
Though I'm not very old  
I almost swam the ocean once  
But the water was too cold.

But what I'm really best at  
Is skipping down the hall.  
I'm very good at skipping.  
I'm wonderful at skipping.  
I'm marvelous at skipping,  
That is unless I fall. †

**Timothy Boon***Ivy 0. Eastwick*

Timothy Boon  
Bought a balloon  
Blue as the sky,  
Round as the moon.  
“Now I will try  
To make it fly  
Up to the moon,  
Higher than high!”  
Timothy said,  
Nodding his head.

Timothy Boon  
Sent his balloon  
Up through the skies,  
Up to the moon.  
But a strong breeze  
Stirred in the trees  
Rocked the bright moon,  
Tossed the great seas,  
And, with its mirth,  
Shook the whole earth.

Timothy Boon,  
And his balloon,  
Caught by the breeze  
Flew to the moon;  
Up past the trees,  
Over the seas,  
Up to the moon—  
Swift as you please!—  
And, oh, I forget,  
They have not come down yet! †

**Tiptoe***Karla Kuskin*

Yesterday I skipped all day,  
The day before I ran,  
Today I'm going to tiptoe  
Everywhere I can.

I'll tiptoe down the stairway.  
I'll tiptoe through the door.  
I'll tiptoe to the living room  
And give an awful roar

And my father, who is reading,  
Will jump up from his chair  
And mumble something silly like  
"I don't see you there."

I'll tiptoe to my mother  
And give a little cough  
And when she spins to see me  
Why, I'll softly tiptoe off.

I'll tiptoe through the meadows,  
Over hills and yellow sands  
And when my toes get tired  
Then I'll tiptoe on my hands. †

## To God, with Love

*Alice Joyce Davidson*

Dear God,  
This is the first time ever that  
I've written You a letter ... but I just had  
to thank You, now that everything is better.

I came to You a while back so troubled  
and distressed, I didn't know what course to  
take, what action would be best ... I told You  
all my troubles, and I felt Your presence near ...  
and as I talked the clouds broke up and seemed  
to disappear.

So, thank You, God, for listening, for  
keeping me from harm, for wiping tears and  
holding me within Your loving arms. †

### **Verbs**

*Eleanor Farjeon*

Nouns are the things I see and touch,  
My Cake, my Mother, and my Ball;  
I like some nouns very much,  
Though some I do not like at all.

Verbs are the things I do, and make,  
And feel, in one way or another.  
Thanks to Verbs, I eat my Cake,  
And throw my Ball, and hug my Mother.

Yet Verbs, which make me laugh and play,  
Can also make me cry and fall,  
And tease my Mother every day,  
And spoil my Cake, and lose my Ball! †

## Weather

*Eve Merriam*

Dot a dotdot ...dot a dotdot

Spotting the windowpane.

Spack a spack speck ...flick a flack fleck

Freckling the windowpane.

A spatter a scatter ...a wetcat aclatter

A splatter a rumble outside.

Umbrella umbrella umbrella umbrella

Bumbershoot barrel of rain.

Slosh a galosh ...slosh a galosh

Slither and slather a glide

A puddle a jump a puddle a jump

A puddle a jump puddle splosh

A juddle a pump aluddle a dump a

Puddmuddle jump in and slide! †

**What is Pink?**

*Christina Rossetti*

What is pink? A rose is pink

By the fountain's brink.

What is red? A poppy's red

In its barley bed.

What is blue? The sky is blue

Where the clouds float through.

What is white? A swan is white

Sailing in the light.

What is yellow? Pears are yellow,

Rich and ripe and mellow.

What is green? The grass is green,

With small flowers between.

What is violet? Clouds are violet

In the summer twilight.

What is orange? Why, an orange,

Just an orange! †

## Will There Really Be a Morning?

*Emily Dickinson*

Will there really be a morning?  
Is there such a thing as day?  
Could I see it from the mountains  
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water lilies?  
Has it feathers like a bird?  
Is it brought from famous countries  
Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!  
Oh, some wise man from the skies!  
Please to tell a little pilgrim  
Where the place called morning lies! †