

**By: Randall Jerrell**

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.  
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,  
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

**To an Athlete Dying Young**

**By: A. E. Houseman**

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;  
Man and boy stood cheering by,  
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,  
Shoulder-high we bring you home,  
And set you at your threshold down,  
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay,  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,  
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honours out,  
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,  
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,  
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

## **When I was One and Twenty**

**By: A. E. Houseman**

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard a wise man say,  
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas  
But not your heart away;  
Give pearls away and rubies  
But keep your fancy free."  
But I was one-and-twenty,  
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty  
I heard him say again,  
"The heart out of the bosom  
Was never given in vain;  
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty  
And sold for endless rue."  
And I am two-and-twenty,  
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true.

## **XXVI**

**By: A. E. Houseman**

Along the field as we came by  
A year ago, my love and I,  
The aspen over stile and stone  
Was talking to itself alone.  
"Oh who are these that kiss and pass?  
A country lover and his lass;  
Two lovers looking to be wed;  
And time shall put them both to bed,  
But she shall lie with earth above,  
And he beside another love."

And sure enough beneath the tree  
There walks another love with me,  
And overhead the aspen heaves  
Its rainy-sounding silver leaves;  
And I spell nothing in their stir,  
But now perhaps they speak to her,  
And plain for her to understand  
They talk about a time at hand  
When I shall sleep with clover clad,  
And she beside another lad.

## **Cassilda's Song**

**By: Robert W. Chambers**

Along the shore the cloud waves break,  
The twin suns sink beneath the lake,  
The shadows lengthen  
    In Carcosa.

Strange is the night where black stars rise,  
And strange moons circle through the skies  
But stranger still is  
    Lost Carcosa.

Songs that the Hyades shall sing,  
Where flap the tatters of the King,  
Must die unheard in  
    Dim Carcosa.

Song of my soul, my voice is dead;  
Die thou, unsung, as tears unshed  
Shall dry and die in  
    Lost Carcosa.

*Excerpted from The King in Yellow*

## **When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer**

**By: Walt Whitman**

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## The Darkling Thrush

By: Thomas Hardy

I leant upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-grey,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

## **Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night**

**By: 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.

## **Knocking on Heaven's Door**

**By: Bob Dylan**

Mama, take this badge off of me  
I can't use it anymore.  
It's gettin' dark, too dark to see  
I feel I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door (x4)

Mama, put my guns in the ground  
I can't shoot them anymore.  
That long black cloud is comin' down  
I feel I'm knockin' on heaven's door.

Knock, knock, knockin' on heaven's door (x4)

## **The Road Not Taken**

**By: Robert Frost**

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

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

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

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

## El Dorado

By: Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,  
A gallant knight,  
In sunshine and in shadow,  
Had journeyed long,  
Singing a song,  
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—  
This knight so bold—  
And o'er his heart a shadow—  
Fell as he found  
No spot of ground  
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength  
Failed him at length,  
He met a pilgrim shadow—  
'Shadow,' said he,  
'Where can it be—  
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,'  
The shade replied,—  
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

## A Dream Within A Dream

By: Edgar Allan Poe

Take this kiss upon the brow!  
And, in parting from you now,  
Thus much let me avow--  
You are not wrong, who deem  
That my days have been a dream:  
Yet if hope has flown away  
In a night, or in a day,  
In a vision or in none,  
Is it therefore the less gone?  
All that we see or seem  
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar  
Of a surf-tormented shore,  
And I hold within my hand  
Grains of the golden sand--  
How few! yet how they creep  
Through my fingers to the deep  
While I weep--while I weep!  
O God! can I not grasp  
Them with a tighter clasp?  
O God! can I not save  
One from the pitiless wave?  
Is all that we see or seem  
But a dream within a dream?

## The Harlem Renaissance

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### The Negro Speaks of Rivers

By: Langston Hughes

I've known rivers:

I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the  
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.  
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln  
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy  
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:

Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

### Cross

By: Langston Hughes

My old man's a white old man  
And my old mother's black.  
If ever I cursed my white old man  
I take my curses back.  
If ever I cursed my black old mother  
And wished she were in hell,  
I'm sorry for that evil wish  
And now I wish her well  
My old man died in a fine big house.  
My ma died in a shack.  
I wonder where I'm going to die,  
Being neither white nor black?



# Mulatto

**By: Langston Hughes**

I am your son, white man!

Georgia dusk  
And the turpentine woods.  
One of the pillars of the temple fell.

You are my son!  
Like Hell!

The moon over the turpentine woods.  
The Southern night  
Full of stars,  
Great big yellow stars.

What's a body but a toy?  
Juicy bodies  
Of nigger wenches  
Blue black  
Against black fences.  
O, you little bastard boy,  
What's a body but a toy?

The scent of pine wood stings the soft night air.

What's the body of your mother?

Silver moonlight everywhere.

What's the body of your mother?

Sharp pine scent in the evening air.

A nigger night,  
A nigger joy,  
A little yellow  
Bastard boy. Naw, you ain't my brother.  
Niggers ain't my brother.  
Not ever.  
Niggers ain't my brother.

The Southern night is full of stars,  
Great big yellow stars.

O, sweet as earth,  
Dusk dark bodies  
Give sweet birth

To little yellow bastard boys.

Git on back there in the night,  
You ain't white

The bright stars scatter everywhere.  
Pine wood scent in the evening air.

A nigger night,  
A nigger joy. I am your son, white man!  
A little yellow  
Bastard boy.

## **Harlem**

**By: Langston Hughes**

What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up  
Like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore--  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over--  
like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.  
Or does it explode?

## **Song for a Dark Girl**

**By: Langston Hughes**

Way Down South in Dixie  
(Break the heart of me)  
They hung my black young lover  
To a cross roads tree.

Way Down South in Dixie  
(Bruised body high in air)  
I asked the white Lord Jesus  
What was the use of prayer.

Way Down South in Dixie  
(Break the heart of me)  
Love is a naked shadow  
On a gnarled and naked tree.

## **Incident**

**By: Countee Cullen**

Once riding in old Baltimore,  
Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,  
I saw a Baltimorean  
Keep looking straight at me.

Now I was eight and very small,  
And he was no whit bigger,  
And so I smiled, but he poked out  
His tongue, and called me, 'Nigger.'

I saw the whole of Baltimore  
From May until December;  
Of all the things that happened there  
That's all that I remember.

## **We Real Cool**

**By: Gwendolyn Brooks**

The Pool Players.  
Seven at the Golden Shovel.

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.

# Truth

**By: Gwendolyn Brooks**

And if sun comes  
How shall we greet him?  
Shall we not dread him,  
Shall we not fear him  
After so lengthy a  
Session with shade?

Though we have wept for him,  
Though we have prayed  
All through the night-years—  
What if we wake one shimmering morning to  
Hear the fierce hammering  
Of his firm knuckles  
Hard on the door?

Shall we not shudder?—  
Shall we not flee  
Into the shelter, the dear thick shelter  
Of the familiar  
Propitious haze?

Sweet is it, sweet is it  
To sleep in the coolness  
Of snug unawareness.

The dark hangs heavily  
Over the eyes.