

Poems for Memorization Spring 2009

1. Choosing Shoes

Frida Wolfe American

New shoes, new shoes,
Red and pink and blue shoes.
Tell me, what would you choose,
If they'd let us buy?

Buckle shoes, bow shoes,
Pretty pointy-toe shoes,
Strappy, cappy low shoes;
Let's have some to try.

Bright shoes, white shoes,
Dandy-dance-by-night shoes,
Perhaps-a-little-tight shoes,
Like some? So would I.

BUT
Flat shoes, fat shoes,
Stump-along-like-that shoes,
Wipe-them-on-the-mat shoes,
That's the sort they'll buy.

2. Three Songs of Shattering

Edna St. Vincent Millay American (1892-1950)

I
The first rose on my rose-tree
 Budded, bloomed, and shattered,
During sad days when to me
 Nothing mattered.

Grief of grief has drained me clean;
 Still it seems a pity
No one saw, – it must have been
 Very pretty.

3. To his Book

Robert Herrick English (1591-1648)

Make haste away, and let one be
A friendly patron unto thee;
Lest, rapt from hence, I see thee lie
Torn for the use of pastery;
Or see thy injured leaves serve well
To make loose gowns for mackarel;
Or see the grocers, in a trice,
Make hoods of thee to serve out spice.

4. Invictus

William Ernest Henley English (1849-1903)

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

5. Spring Song

Robert Louis Stevenson Scottish (1850-1894)

The air was full of sun and birds,
The fresh air sparkled clearly.
Remembrance wakened in my heart
And I knew I loved her dearly.

The fallows and the leafless trees
And all my spirit tingled.
My earliest thought of love, and Spring's
First puff of perfume mingled.

In my still heart the thoughts awoke,
Came lone by lone together –
Say, birds and Sun and Spring, is Love
A mere affair of weather?

6. Sanctuary Elinor Wylie American (1885-1928)

This is the bricklayer; hear the thud
Of his heavy load dumped down on stone.
His lustrous bricks are brighter than blood,
His smoking mortar whiter than bone.
Set each sharp-edged, fire-bitten brick
Straight by the plumb-line's shivering length;
Make my marvelous wall so thick
Dead nor living may shake its strength.
Full as a crystal cup with drink
Is my cell with dreams, and quiet, and cool. ...
Stop, old man! You must leave a chink;
How can I breathe? You can't, you fool!

7. The Oven Bird

Robert Frost American (1874–1963)

There is a singer everyone has heard,
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird,
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten.
He says the early petal-fall is past
When pear and cherry bloom went down in showers
On sunny days a moment overcast;
And comes that other fall we name the fall.
He says the highway dust is over all.
The bird would cease and be as other birds
But that he knows in singing not to sing.
The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing.

8. There Are Delicacies

Earle Birney Canadian (1904-1995)

there are delicacies in you
like the hearts of watches
there are wheels that turn
on the tips of rubies
& tiny intricate locks

i need your help
to contrive keys
there is so little time
even for the finest
of watches