

Poetry for Memorization
Fall 2009

1. Limericks

There was a young man from the city,
who saw what he thought was a kitty.
To make sure of that,
He gave it a pat.
They buried his clothes. What a pity.

Despite all the guidance I've had
From Mother and brothers and Dad,
I find that I still
Experience a thrill
Whenever I do something bad!

Submitted by Dot Smith

2. Heart, we will forget him!

Emily Dickinson American (1830–86)

Heart, we will forget him!
You and I, to-night!
You may forget the warmth he gave,
I will forget the light.

When you have done, pray tell me,
That I my thoughts may dim;
Haste! lest while you're lagging,
I may remember him!

3. A Song

William Butler Yeats Irish (1865-1939)

I thought no more was needed
Youth to prolong
Than dumb-bell and foil
To keep the body young.
(O who could have foretold
That the heart grows old?)

Though I have many words,
What woman's satisfied,
I am no longer faint
Because at her side?
(O who could have foretold
That the heart grows old)

I have not lost desire
But the heart that I had;
I thought 'twould burn my body
Laid on the death-bed,
(For who could have foretold
That the heart grows old?)

4. November

Walter de la Mare English (1873-1956)

There is wind where the rose was,
Cold rain where sweet grass was,
And clouds like sheep
Stream o'er the steep
Grey skies where the lark was.

Nought warm where your hand was,
Nought gold where your hair was,
But phantom, forlorn,
Beneath the thorn,
Your ghost where your face was.

Cold wind where your voice was,
Tears, tears where my heart was,
And ever with me,
Child, ever with me,
Silence where hope was.

5. Demeter's Prayer to Hades

Rita Dove African-American (1952-)

This alone is what I wish for you: knowledge.
To understand each desire has an edge,
to know we are responsible for the lives
we change. No faith comes without cost,
no one believes without dying.
Now for the first time
I see clearly the trail you planted,
what ground opened to waste,
though you dreamed a wealth
of flowers.

There are no curses – only mirrors
held up to the souls of gods and mortals.
And so I give up this fate, too.
Believe in yourself,
go ahead – see where it gets you.

6. Do Not Accept

Yehuda Amichai German-Israeli (1924-2000)

Do not accept these rains that come too late.
Better to linger. Make your pain
An image of the desert. Say it's said
And do not look to the west. Refuse

To surrender. Try this year too
To live alone in the long summer,
Eat your drying bread, refrain
From tears. And do not learn from

Experience. Take as an example my youth,
My return late at night, what has been written
In the rain of yesteryear. It makes no difference

Now. See your events as my events.
Everything will be as before: Abraham will again
Be Abram. Sarah will be Sarai.

7. from: **Merciless Beauté: Captivity**

Geoffrey Chaucer English (1343-1400)

Your eyen two wol sleye me sodenly;
I may the beauté; of hem not susteyne,
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

And but your word wol helen hastily
My hertes wounde, whyl that hit is grene,
Your eyen two wol sleye me sodenly,
I may the beauté; of hem nat susteyne,

Upon my trouthe I sey yow feithfully,
That ye ben of my lyf and deeth the quene;
For with my deeth the trouthe shal be sene.
Your eyen two wol sleye me sodenly,
I may the beauté; of hem nat susteyne,
So woundeth hit through-out my herte kene.

8. April Love

Ernest Dowson English (1867-1900)

We have walked in Love's land a little way,
We have learnt his lesson a little while,
And shall we not part at the end of day,
With a sigh, a smile?

A little while in the shine of the sun,
We were twined together, joined lips forgot
How the shadows fall when day is done,
And when Love is not.

We have made no vows – there will none be broke,
Our love was free as the wind on the hill,
There was no word said we need wish unspoke,
We have wrought no ill.

So shall we not part at the end of day,
Who have loved and lingered a little while,
Join lips for the last time, go our way,
With a sigh, a smile.