



*Rocky Mountain Classical
Christian Schools Speech Meet
Official Selections*

RMCCS speech and Bible selection requirements

Bible Selections

Students may choose a Bible passage of a suitable length according to the guidelines below. It is the responsibility of the student to **print off a copy** of the Bible passage in the **English Standard Version (ESV)** to turn in to their teacher.

Speech

Speech Meet selections have been expanded for **grades 2-10** to include a variety of speeches. A list of approved speeches is found below. You may also, of course, request an outside speech. It is up to you, the student, to choose an excerpt of the speech that is long enough for your grade level. Once you have chosen an excerpt, it is your responsibility to **print off** that excerpt to turn in to your teacher.

Requirement and Guidelines

Grade	Minimum Word Count of Speech Excerpt	Minimum Verse Count for Bible Passages	Minimum Lines for Poetry Selections
1st	<i>No speech selections for first grade</i>	5-10 verses	10-20 lines
2nd	100 or more	8-15 verses	15-25 lines
3rd	100 or more	10-15 verses	15-25 lines
4th	200 or more	12-18 verses	20-30 lines
5th	350 or more	14-20 verses	25-35 lines
6th	350 or more	16-22 verses	30-40 lines
7th	450 or more	18-24 verses	35-45 lines
8th	450 or more	20-26 verses	40-50 lines
9th-12th	550 or more	22-28 verses	45-55 lines

Speech possibilities

Political Speeches

Alexander the Great's victory speech, found [here](#)

Pericles' Funeral Oration from Thucydides, found [here](#)

Demosthenes - The Third Philippic, found [here](#)

Queen Elizabeth I, The Spanish Armada speech, found [here](#)

Winston Churchill, We Shall Fight on the Beaches, found [here](#)

William Wilberforce, Abolition Speech

American

Live your Life, Chief Tecumseh

Citizenship in the Republic, Teddy Roosevelt (Man in the Arena), found [here](#)

Reagan's Farewell Address to the American People

John F Kennedy, Inaugural Address

Martin Luther King Jr., I Have a Dream

Lincoln, The Gettysburg Address

Washington's Farewell Address 1796, found [here](#)

Patrick Henry, Give me Liberty or Give me Death

Theodore Roosevelt, Strength and Decency

Shakespeare:

Hamlet, "To be or not to be"

Macbeth, "Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow"

Julius Caesar, Marc Antony's speech "Friends, Romans, Countrymen"

As You Like It, Jaques, "The Seven Ages of Man"

Epics:

- Homer's *Iliad*, Book I, lines 1-50
- Homer's *Iliad*, Book VI, lines 462-520
- Homer's *Iliad*, Book VI, lines 556-600
- Homer's *Iliad*, Book XVIII, lines 91-150
- Homer's *Iliad*, Book XXII, lines 157-199
- Homer's *Iliad*, Book XXII, lines 270-320
- Homer's *Iliad*, Book XXIV, lines 893-944
- Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XIII, lines 324-373
- Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XIV, lines 1-53
- Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XXIV, lines 1-48
- Homer's *Odyssey*, Book XXIV, lines 241-293
- *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, lines 1-75

Rocky Mountain Classical Christian Schools

Speech Meet Official Selections

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Fifth Grade: Poetry

America for Me

Henry Van Dyke

'TIS fine to see the Old World, and travel up and down
Among the famous palaces and cities of renown,
To admire the crumbly castles and the statues of the kings,—
But now I think I've had enough of antiquated things.

*So it's home again, and home again, America for me!
My heart is turning home again, and there I long to be,
In the land of youth and freedom beyond the ocean bars,
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars!*

Oh, London is a man's town, there's power in the air;
And Paris is a woman's town, with flowers in her hair;
And it's sweet to dream in Venice, and it's great to study Rome;
But when it comes to living there is no place like home.

I like the German fir-woods, in green battalions drilled;
I like the gardens of Versailles with flashing fountains filled;
But, oh, to take your hand, my dear, and ramble for a day
In the friendly western woodland where Nature has her way!

I know that Europe's wonderful, yet something seems to lack:
The Past is too much with her, and the people looking back.
But the glory of the Present is to make the Future free,—
We love our land for what she is and what she is to be.

*Oh, it's home again, and home again, America for me!
I want a ship that's westward bound to plough the rolling sea,
To the bléssed Land of Room Enough beyond the ocean bars,
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars.*

anyone lived in a pretty how town

E.E. Cummings

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men (both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that no one loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then)they
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess
(and no one stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep

noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes.

Women and men(both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain

Arithmetic

Carl Sandburg

Arithmetic is where numbers fly like pigeons in and out of your head.

Arithmetic tells you how many you lose or win if you know how many
you had before you lost or won.

Arithmetic is seven eleven all good children go to heaven--
or five six bundle of sticks.

Arithmetic is numbers you squeeze from your head to your hand
to your pencil to your paper till you get the answer.

Arithmetic is where the answer is right and everything is nice
and you can look out of the window and see the blue sky--
or the answer is wrong and you have to start all over and
try again and see how it comes out this time.

If you take a number and double it and double it again and then
double it a few more times, the number gets bigger and bigger
and goes higher and higher and only arithmetic can tell you
what the number is when you decide to quit doubling.

Arithmetic is where you have to multiply--and you carry
the multiplication table in your head and hope you won't lose it.

If you have two animal crackers, one good and one bad, and you eat one
and a striped zebra with streaks all over him eats the other,
how many animal crackers will you have if somebody offers you
five six seven and you say No no no and you say Nay nay nay
and you say Nix nix nix?

If you ask your mother for one fried egg for breakfast and she gives you
two fried eggs and you eat both of them, who is better in arithmetic,
you or your mother?

At Breakfast Time

Edgar A. Guest

My Pa he eats his breakfast in a funny sort of way:
We hardly ever see him at the first meal of the day.
Ma puts his food before him and he settles in his place
An' then he props the paper up and we can't see his face;
We hear him blow his coffee and we hear him chew his toast,
But it's for the morning paper that he seems to care the most.
Ma says that little children mighty grateful ought to be
To the folks that fixed the evening as the proper time for tea.
She says if meals were only served to people once a day,
An' that was in the morning just before Pa goes away,
We'd never know how father looked when he was in his place,
'Coz he'd always have the morning paper stuck before his face.
He drinks his coffee steamin' hot, an' passes Ma his cup
To have it filled a second time, an' never once looks up.
He never has a word to say, but just sits there an' reads,
An' when she sees his hand stuck out Ma gives him what he needs. She guesses what it
is he wants, 'coz it's no use to ask:
Pa's got to read his paper an' sometimes that's quite a task.
One morning we had breakfast an' his features we could see,
But his face was long an' solemn an' he didn't speak to me,
An' we couldn't get him laughin' an' we couldn't make him smile, An' he said the toast
was soggy an' the coffee simply vile.
Then Ma said: "What's the matter? Why are you so cross an' glum?" An' Pa 'most took
her head off 'coz the paper didn't come.

Brighten the Corner Where you Are

Helen Steiner Rice

We cannot all be famous
Or listed in "Who's Who,"
But every person great or small
has important work to do,
For seldom do we realize
The importance of small deeds,
Or to what degree of greatness
unnoticed kindness leads—
For it's not the big celebrity
in a world of fame and praise.
But it's doing unpretentiously
in undistinguished ways,
The work that God assigned for us,
unimportant as it seems,
That makes our task outstanding
and bring reality to dreams—
So do not sit and idly wish
for wider, newer dimension,
Where you can put in practice
Your many good intentions—
But at the spot God placed you
begin at once to do
Little things to brighten up
the lives surrounding you,
For if everybody brightened up
the spot on which they're standing,
By being more considerate
And a little less demanding,
This dark cold world would very soon
eclipse the Evening Star,
If everybody brightened up
the corner where they are.

Castor Oil

Edgar A. Guest

I don't mind lickin's, now an'then,
An' I can even stand it when
My mother calls me in from play
To run some errand right away.
There's things 'bout bein' just a boy
That ain't all happiness an'joy,
But I suppose I've got to stand
My share o' trouble in this land,
An' I ain't kickin' much—but, say,
The worst of parents is that they
Don't realize just how they spoil
A feller's life with castor oil.

Of all the awful stuff, Gee Whiz!
That is the very worst there is.
An' every time if I complain,
Or say I've got a little pain,
There's nothing else that they can think
'Cept castor oil for me to drink.
I notice, though, when Pa is ill,
That he gets fixed up with a pill,
An' Pa don't handle Mother rough
An' make her swallow nasty stuff;
But when I've got a little ache,
It's castor oil I've got to take.

I don't mind goin' up to bed
Afore I get the chapter read;
I don't mind bein' scolded, too,
For lots of things I didn't do;
But, Gee! I hate it when they say,
"Come! Swallow this—an' right away!"
Let poets sing about the joy
It is to be a little boy,
I'll tell the truth about my case:
The poets here can have my place,
An' I will take their life of toil
If they will take my castor oil.

Christ and the Little Ones

Julia Gill

“The Master has come over Jordan”
Said Hannah the Mother one day
“He is healing the people who throng Him,
With a touch of His finger,” they say,
“And now I will carry the children,
Little Rachel and Samuel and John,
I shall carry the baby Esther,
For the Lord to look upon.”
The father looked at her kindly,
But he shook his head and smiled;
“Now who but a doting mother
Would think of a thing so wild?
If the children were tortured by demons,
Or dying of fever, ‘twere well;
Or had they the taint of the leper
Like many in Israel.”
“Nay, do not hinder me, Nathan,
I feel such a burden of care,
If I carry it to the Master,
Perhaps I shall leave it there.
If he laid his hand on the children,
My heart will be lighter, I know,
For a blessing for ever and ever
Will follow them as they go.”
So over the hills of Judah,

Along the vine-rows green,
With Esther asleep on her bosom,
And Rachel, her brothers between,
‘Mid the people who hung on His teaching,
Or waited His touch or His word—
Through the rows of proud Pharisees
listening
She pressed to the feet of the Lord.
“Now why shouldst thou hinder the Master,”
Said Peter, “With children like these?
Seest now how from morning to evening
He teacheth and healeth disease?”
Then Christ said, “Forbid not the children,
Permit them to come unto me!”
And he took in His arms little Esther
And Rachel He set on His knee.
And the heavy heart of the mother
Was lifted all earth-care above,
As He laid His hands on the brothers
And blest them with tenderest love;
As He said of the babes in His bosom,
“Of such is the kingdom of heaven—
And strength for all duty and trial,
That hour to her spirit was given.

Christopher Columbus

Stephen Vincent Benet

There are lots of queer things that discoverers do
But his was the queerest, I swear.
He discovered our country in One Four Nine Two
By thinking it couldn't be there.

It wasn't his folly, it wasn't his fault,
For the very best maps of the day
Showed nothing by water, extensive and salt,
On the West, between Spain and Bombay.

There were monsters, of course, every watery mile,
Great krakens with blubbery lips
And sea-serpents smiling a crocodile-smile
As they waited for poor little ships.

There were whirlpools and maelstroms, without any doubt
And tornadoes of lava and ink.
(Which, as nobody yet had been there to find out,
Seems a little bit odd, don't you think?)

But Columbus was bold and Columbus set sail
(Thanks to Queen Isabella, her pelf),
For he said "Though there may be both monster and gale,
I'd like to find out for myself."

And he sailed and he sailed and he sailed and he SAILED,
Though his crew would have gladly turned round
And, morning and evening, distressfully wailed
"This is running things into the ground!"

But he paid no attention to protest or squall,
This obstinate son of the mast,
And so, in the end, he discovered us all,
Remarking, "Here's India, at last!"

"He didn't intend it, he meant to heave to
At Calcutta, Rangoon or Shanghai,

There are many queer things that discoverers do
But his was the queerest. Oh my!

The Charge of the Light Brigade

Alfred Tennyson

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabers bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sab'ring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the saber-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered:
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of death
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them—
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
Oh, the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade—
Noble six hundred!

Christmas Bells

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
 And wild and sweet
 The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
 Had rolled along
 The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
 A voice, a chime,
 A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
 And with the sound

The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
 And made forlorn
 The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
 "For hate is strong,
 And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
 The Wrong shall fail,
 The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men."

The Concord Hymn

Ralph Waldo Emerson

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled.
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set today a votive stone,
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.

Clock-O'-Clay*

John Clare

In the cowslip pips I lie,
Hidden from the buzzing fly,
While green grass beneath me lies,
Pearled with dew like fishes' eyes,
Here I lie, a clock-o'-clay,
Waiting for the time o' day.

While grassy forests quakes surprise,
And the wild wind sobs and sighs,
My gold home rocks as like to fall,
On its pillars green and tall;
When the pattering rain drives by
Clock-o'-clay keeps warm and dry.

Day by day and night by night,
All the week I hide from sight;
In the cowslip pips I lie,
In rain and dew still warm and dry;
Day and night and night and day,
Red, black-spotted clock-o'-clay.

My home shakes in wind and showers,
Pale green pillar topped with flowers,
Bending at the wild wind's breath,
Till I touch the grass beneath;
Here I live, lone clock-o'-clay,
Watching for the time of day

*(a clock o' clay is a ladybug)

Columbus

Joaquin Miller

Behind him lay the gray Azores,
Behind the Gates of Hercules;
Before him not the ghosts of shores,
Before him only shoreless seas.
The good mate said, "Now we must pray
For, lo, the very stars are gone.
Brave Adm'r'l, speak: what shall I say?"
"Why, say: Sail on! Sail on! And on!"

"My men grow mutinous day by day;
My men grow ghastly, wan and weak."
The stout mate thought of home; a spray
Of salt wave washed his swarthy cheek.
"What shall I say, brave Adm'r'l, say,
If we sight naught but sea at dawn?"
"Why, you shall say at break of day,
Sail on! Sail on! Sail on! And on!"

They sailed and sailed as winds might blow,
Until at last the blanched mate said;
"Why, now not even God would know
Should I and all my men fall dead.
These very winds forget their ways,

For God from these dread seas is gone.
Now speak brave Adm'r'l, speak and say."
He said: "Sail on! Sail on! And on!"

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the
mate,
"This mad sea shows his teeth tonight,
He curls his lip, he lies in wait,
With lifted teeth as if to bite:
Brave Adm'r'l, say but one good word;
What shall we do when hope is gone?"
The words leaped as a leaping sword:
"Sail on! Sail on! Sail on! Sail on!"

Then pale, and worn, he kept his deck
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night
Of all dark nights! A light!
A light! A light! A light!
It grew, a starlight flag unfurled!
It grew to be time's burst of dawn.
He gained a world; he gave that world
Its greatest lesson. "On! Sail on!"

Crossing the Bar

Alfred Tennyson

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark!
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have cross'd the bar.

The Doctor

Edgar A. Guest

I don't see why Pa likes him so,
 And seems so glad to have him
come;
He jabs my ribs and wants to know
 If here and there it's hurting some.

He holds my wrist, 'coz there are things
 In there, which always jump and jerk,
Then, with a telephone he brings,
 He listens to my breather work.

He taps my back and pinches me,
 Then hangs a mirror on his head
And looks into my throat to see
 What makes it hurt and if it's red.

Then on his knee he starts to write
 And says to mother, with a smile:
"This ought to fix him up all right,
 We'll cure him in a little while."

I don't see why Pa likes him so.
 Whenever I don't want to play
He says: "The boy is sick, I know!
 Let's get the doctor right away."

And when he comes, he shakes his hand,
 And hustles him upstairs to me,
And seems contented just to stand
 Inside the room where he can see.

Then Pa says every time he goes:
 "That's money I am glad to pay;
It's worth it, when a fellow knows
 His pal will soon be up to play."

But maybe if my Pa were me,
 And had to take his pills and all,
He wouldn't be so glad to see
 The doctor come to make a call.

Drop a Pebble in the Water

James W. Foley

Drop a pebble in the water: just a splash, and it is gone;
But there's half-a-hundred ripples, circling on and on and on,
Spreading, spreading from the center, flowing on out to the sea.
And there is no way of telling where the end is going to be.

Drop a pebble in the water: in a minute you forget,
But there's little waves a-flowing and there's ripples circling yet,
And those little waves a-flowing to a great big wave have grown;
You've disturbed a mighty river just by dropping in a stone.

Drop an unkind word, or careless: in a minute it is gone;
But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on.
They keep spreading, spreading, spreading from the center as they go,
And there is no way to stop them, once you've started them to flow.

Drop an unkind word, or careless: in a minute you forget;
But there's little waves a-flowing, and there's ripples circling yet,
And perhaps in some sad heart a mighty wave of tears you've stirred,
And disturbed a life was happy 'ere you dropped that unkind word.

Drop a word of cheer and kindness: just a flash and it is gone;
But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on,
Bearing hope and joy and comfort on each splashing, dashing wave
Till you wouldn't believe the volume of the one kind word you gave.

Drop a word of cheer and kindness: in a minute you forget;
But there's gladness still a-swelling, and there's joy a-circling yet,
And you've rolled a wave of comfort whose sweet music can be heard
Over miles and miles of water just by dropping one kind word.

Father William (*also known as* The Old Man's Complaints. And how he gained them.)

Robert Southey

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
The few locks which are left you are grey;
You are hale, Father William, a hearty old man,
Now tell me the reason I pray.

In the days of my youth, Father William replied,
I remember'd that youth would fly fast,
And abused not my health and my vigour at first
That I never might need them at last.

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
And pleasures with youth pass away,
And yet you lament not the days that are gone,
Now tell me the reason I pray.

In the days of my youth, Father William replied,
I remember'd that youth could not last;
I thought of the future whatever I did,
That I never might grieve for the past.

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
And life must be hastening away;
You are cheerful, and love to converse upon death!
Now tell me the reason I pray.

I am cheerful, young man, Father William replied,
Let the cause thy attention engage;
In the days of my youth I remember'd my God!
And He hath not forgotten my age.

Fear

Martha Snell Nicholson

How strange that we who are the sons of God
Should be familiar with the face of fear,
So sure that every cloud will bring a storm,
So fearful lest tomorrow be not clear.

We shrink from woes which never come to pass,
Mere phantoms, with no substance and no strength;
But even if they had, would not our Lord provide
His strength to meet the need of each day's length?

Children of God, with quaking, craven hearts
Consumed by the corrosive power of dread!...
And yet He holds us in His hallowed hand,
And counts the very hairs upon our head.

What strong firm bulwarks He has built around
The daily lives of those He holds so dear:
The blessed Holy Spirit in our hearts,
His guardian angels ever hovering near

Lest we should dash our feet against a stone.
The unseen hosts of God camp round about.
We dwell there safely in His secret place,
And still we tremble, wracked with fear and doubt!

O child of God, it is so safe, so sweet,
To trust the One who never knew defeat!

The First Snow

Robert Freeman Bound

We waited for hours,
As children all will,
After Father had told us
The news with a thrill:

'Twas the oddest sensation
When we'd gaze at the sky;
We seemed to be falling,
But we didn't know why.

Next morning the light
Reflected from snow
Made shimmering patterns
With walls all aglow;

From lowering clouds
And a temperature fall,
The first snow of winter
Would come with a squall.

Then early that evening
The first flakes descended;
And when we retired
The fall hadn't ended

We looked from our beds
At a white, silent scene
Of tall, pearly trees
And the buildings between.

And our happy, old dog,
With great barking leaps,
Was chasing a rabbit
Through high, snowy heaps.

Oh, the wonderful joy
To be young and know
The thrill of a child
At winter's first snow.

The Fish *Elizabeth Bishop*

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth.
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wallpaper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
- the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly! thought of the coarse
white flesh
packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder
like a big peony.
I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil

seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.
They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.
- It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light.
I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw
that from his lower lip
- if you could call it a lip
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.
A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.
Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.
I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge
where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels- until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.

Fred

Eleanor Farjeon

Fred likes creatures,
And has a lot of 'em.
Bees don't sting him,.
He's got a pot of 'em,

Little round velvety bodies they are

Making honey in Fred's jam-jar.

Fred likes creatures.
Hedgehogs don't prick him,
They flatten their quills
And scarcely tickle him,

But lie with their pointed snouts on his palm,

And their beady eyes are perfectly calm.

Fred likes creatures.
The nestling fallen out
Of the tree-top
With magpie callin' out

Where? Where? Where? contented lingers

In the round nest of Fred's thick fingers.

Fred likes creatures.
Nothing's queer to him,
Ferrets, tortoises,
Newts are dear to him.

The lost wild rabbit comes to his hand

As to a burrow in friendly land.

Fred eats rabbit
Like any glutton, too,
Fred eats chicken
And beef and mutton too.

Moral? None. No more to be said
Than Fred likes creatures,
and creatures like Fred.

Grandpapa's Spectacles

Author Unknown

Grandpapa's spectacles cannot be found;
He has searched all the rooms, high and low, 'round and 'round;
Now he calls to the young ones, and what does he say?
"Ten cents for the child who will find them today."

Then Henry and Nelly and Edward all ran,
And a most thorough hunt for the glasses began,
And dear little Nell, in her generous way,
Said: "I'll look for them, Grandpa, without any pay."

All through the big Bible she searches with care
That lies on the table by Grandpapa's chair.
They feel in his pockets, they peep in his hat,
They pull out the sofa, they shake out the mat.

Then down on all fours, like two good natured bears,
Go Henry and Ed under tables and chairs,
'Til, quite out of breath, Ed is heard to declare
He believes that those glasses are not anywhere.

But Nelly, who, leaning on Grandpapa's knee,
Was thinking most earnestly where they could be,
Looked suddenly up in the kind, faded eyes,
And her own shining brown ones grew big with surprise.

She clapped both her hands—all her dimples came out—
She turned to the boys with a bright roguish shout:
"You may leave off your looking, both Henry and Ed,
For there are the glasses on Grandpapa's head!"

The Gingercake Man

James Foley

The gingercake man was a lump of brown dough
Till a great rolling pin was run over him, so!
To flatten him out, and he lay there so thin,
His bones almost popped through the holes in his skin:
They sifted him over with flour and spice,
And made him some eyes with two kernels of rice,
And took some dried currants, the biggest and best,
To make him some buttons for closing his vest.

The Gingercake man wobbled this way and that.
When they seeded a raisin and make him a hat
That was stuck on his head in the jauntiest way.
For a Gingercake man is not made every day.
They stuck in some cloves for his ears yes, indeed!
And made him some teeth out of caraway seed,
And when he had finished they buttered a pan—
The biggest they had—for the Gingercake man.

Then into the oven they put him to bake
Until he was hard and could stand and not break
His legs when he stood; and they set him to cool
Until all the children should come home from school.
And oh, the delight and the wonder and glee.
When mother invited the children to see,
All sifted with sugar and out of the pan,
The good-natured face of the Gingercake man.

But alas and alas! 'Tis a short life and sweet
Is the Gingercake man's—for they ate off his feet,
They broke off his arms with the hungriest zest,
And picked all the buttons from out of his vest;
They nibbled his legs off and ate up his hat.
And everything edible went just like that,
Till the cloves and the kernels of rice you may scan
As all that is left of the Gingercake man!

A Hymn to God the Father

John Donne

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

I Hear America Singing

Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud

William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd
A host of golden daffodils
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the Milky Way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I, at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood;
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

In the Carpenter Shop

Author Unknown

I wish I had been His apprentice
To see Him each morning at seven,
As He tossed His gray tunic about Him,
The Master of earth and of heaven;

When He lifted the lid of His work-chest
And opened His carpenter's kit,
And looked at His chisels and augers,
And took the bright tools out of it;

When He gazed at the rising sun tinting
The dew on the opening flowers,
And He smiled at the thought of His Father
Whose love floods this fair world of ours.

When He fastened the apron about Him,
And put on His workingman's cap,
And grasped the smooth haft of His hammer
To give the bent woodwork a tap,

Saying, "Lad, let us finish this ox yoke.
The farmer must finish his crop."
Oh, I wish I had been His apprentice
And worked in the Nazareth shop.

It Couldn't Be Done

Edgar A. Guest

Somebody said that it couldn't be done,
 But he with a chuckle replied
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one
 Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin
 On his face. If he worried he hid it.
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
 That couldn't be done, and he did it.
Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;
 At least no one ever has done it";
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,
 And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,
 Without any doubting or quiddit,
He started to sing as he tackled the thing
 That couldn't be done, and he did it.
There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done
 There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,
 The dangers that wait to assail you.
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin.
 Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing
 That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

Johnny Appleseed

Rosemary and Stephen V. Bené

Of Jonathan Chapman
Two things are known
That he loved apples,
That he walked alone.

At seventy-odd
He was gnarled as could be.
But ruddy and sound
As a good apple tree.

For fifty years over
Of harvest and dew,
He planted his apples
Where no apples grew.

The winds of the prairie
Might blow through his rags,
But he carried his seeds
In the best deerskin bags.

From old Ashtabula
To frontier Fort Wayne
He planted and pruned
And he planted again.

He had not a hat
To encumber his head.
He wore a tin pan
On his white hair instead.

He nested with owl,
And with bear cub and 'possum,

And knew all his orchards,
Root, tendril and blossom.

A fine old man,
As ripe as a pippin,
His heart still light,
And his step still skipping.

The stalking Indian,
The beast in its lair
Did no hurt
While he was there.

For they could tell,
As wild things can
That Jonathan Chapman
Was God's own man.

Why did he do it?
We do not know.
He wished that apples
Might root and grow.

He has no statue
He has no tomb.
He has his apple trees
Still in bloom.

Consider, consider,
Think well upon
The marvelous story
Of Appleseed John.

Jabberwocky

by Lewis Carroll

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffing through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One two! And through and throughou
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous Day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

"Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mom raths outgrabe.

The Joy of a Dog

Edgar A. Guest

Ma says no, it's too much care
An' it will scatter germs an' hair,
An' it's a nuisance through and through,
An' barks when you don't want it to;
An' carries dirt from off the street,
An' tracks the carpets with its feet.
But it's a sign he's growin' up
When he is longin' for a pup.

Most every night he comes to me
An' climbs a-straddle of my knee
An' starts to fondle me an' pet,
Then asks me if I've found one yet.
An' ma says: "Now don't tell him yes;
You know they make an awful mess,"
An' starts their faults to catalogue.
But every boy should have a dog.

An' some night when he comes to me,
Deep in my pocket there will be
The pup he's hungry to possess
Or else I sadly miss my guess.
For I remember all the joy
A dog meant to a little boy
Who loved it in the long ago—
The joy that's now his right to know.

The King's Breakfast

A. A. Milne

The King asked
The Queen, and
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid:
"Could we have some
butter
for
The Royal slice of bread?"
The Queen asked
The Dairymaid,
The Dairymaid
Said, "Certainly,
I'll go and tell
The cow
Now
Before she goes to bed."
The Dairymaid
She curtsied,
And went and told
The Alderney:
"Don't forget the butter for
The Royal slice of bread."
The Alderney
Said sleepily:
"You'd better tell
His Majesty
That many people
nowadays
Like marmalade
Instead."
The Dairymaid
Said, "Fancy!"
And went to
Her Majesty.
She curtsied to the Queen,

and
She turned a little red:
"Excuse me,
Your majesty
For taking of
The liberty,
But Mamalade is tasty, if
It's very
Thickly
Spread."
The Queen said
"Oh!" And went to His
Majesty:
"Talking of the butter for
The Royal slice of bread,
Many people
Think that
Marmalade
Is nicer.
Would you like to try a little
Marmalade
Instead?"
The King said,
"Bother!"
And then he said,
"Oh, deary me!"
The King sobbed, "Oh,
deary
me!"
And went back to bed.
"Nobody,"
He whimpered,
"Could call me
A fussy man;
I only want

A little bit
Of butter for
My bread!"
The Queen said,
"There, there!"
And went to
The Dairymaid.
The Dairymaid
Said "There, There!"
And went to the shed.
The cow said,
"There, there!"
I didn't really
Mean it;
Here's milk for his
porringer
And butter for his bread."
The Queen took
The butter
And brought it to
His Majesty;
The King said,
"Butter, eh?"
And bounced out of bed.
"Nobody," he said,
As he slid down
The banisters,
"Nobody,
My darling,
Could call me
A fussy man—
BUT
I do like a little bit of butter
for my bread!"

The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers

Felicia Hemans

The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
The woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches tossed;

The heavy night hung dark
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted, came;
Not with the roll of stirring drums
And the trumpet that sings of fame.

Admidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea;
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods
rang
To the anthem of the free.

There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim-band—
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow, serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trod;
They have left unstained what there they
found,
Freedom to worship God.

Last Words Before Winter

Louis Untermeyer

Farewell, flocks,
Farewell. But let me find you
Safe in your stall and barn and box
With your winter's tale behind you.

Farewell my cattle (both);
I leave you just as loath
As though you were a hundred head,
Instead
Of two-and-a-half –
Two cows and a calf.

Farewell, my apple trees;
You have learned what it is to freeze,
With the drift on your knees.
But, oh, beware
Those first kind of days, the snare
Of the too promising air,
The cost
Of over-sudden trust –
And then the killing frost.

Farewell, beloved acres.
I leave you in the hands
Of one whose earliest enterprise was lands –
Your Maker's.

Yard, hutch, and house, farewell.
It is for you to tell
How you withstood the great, white wolf, whose fell
Is softer than a lambskin's
But whose breath
Is death.
Farewell,, hoof, claw, and wing,
Finned, furred, and feathered thing,
Till Spring.

Live Christmas Every Day

Helen Steiner Rice

Christmas is more than a day
at the end of the year,
More than a season
of joy and good cheer,
Christmas is really
God's pattern for living
To be followed all year
by unselfish giving.
For the holiday season
awakens good cheer
And draws us closer
to those we hold dear,
And we open our hearts
and find it is good
To live among men
as we always should.
But as soon as the tinsel
is stripped from the tree,
The spirit of Christmas
fades silently
Into the background
of daily routine,

And is lost in the whirl
of life's busy scene.
And all unaware
we miss and forego
The greatest blessing
that mankind can know,
For if we lived Christmas
every day, as we should,
And made it our aim
to always do good,
We'd find the lost key
to meaningful living
That comes not from getting,
but from unselfish giving.
And we'd know the great joy
of Peace upon Earth,
Which was the real purpose
of our Savior's birth,
For in the Glad Tidings
of that first Christmas night,
God showed us THE WAY
and the Truth and the Light!

Manners

Elizabeth Bishop

My grandfather said to me
as we sat on the wagon seat,
"Be sure to remember to always
speak to everyone you meet."

We met a stranger on foot.
My grandfather's whip tapped his hat.
"Good day, sir. Good day. A fine day."
And I said it and bowed where I sat.

Then we overtook a boy we knew
with his big pet crow on his shoulder.
"Always offer everyone a ride;
don't forget that when you get older,"

my grandfather said. So Willy
climbed up with us, but the crow
gave a "Caw!" and flew off. I was worried.
How would he know where to go?

But he flew a little way at a time
from fence post to fence post, ahead;
and when Willy whistled he answered.
"A fine bird," my grandfather said,

"and he's well brought up. See, he answers
nicely when he's spoken to.
Man or beast, that's good manners.
Be sure that you both always do."

When automobiles went by,
the dust hid the people's faces,
but we shouted, "Good day! Good day!
Fine day!" at the top of our voices.

When we came to Hustler Hill,
he said that the mare was tired,
so we all got down and walked,
as our good manners required.

My Kingdom

Louisa May Alcott

A little kingdom I possess
Where thoughts and feelings dwell.
And very hard I find the task
Of governing it well;
For passion tempts and troubles me,
A wayward will misleads,
And selfishness its shadow casts
On all my words and deeds.
How can I learn to rule myself,
To be the child I should,
Honest and brave, nor ever tire
Of trying to be good?
How can I keep a sunny soul
To shine along life's way?
How can I tune my little heart
To sweetly sing all day?
Dear Father, help me with the love
That casteth out my fear,
Teach me to lean on Thee, and feel
That Thou are very near,
That no temptation is unseen,
No childish grief too small,
Since Thou, with patience infinite,
Doth soothe and comfort all.
I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win,
Nor seek to conquer any world,
Except the one within.
Be Thou my guide until I find,
Led by a tender hand,
Thy happy kingdom in myself,
And dare to take command.

O Captain! My Captain!

Walt Whitman

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribboned wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will.
The ship is anchored safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

An Old Woman of the Roads

Padraic Colum

O, to have a little house!
To own the hearth and stool and all!
The heaped up sods against the fire,
The pile of turf against the wall!

To have a clock with weights and chains
And pendulum swinging up and down!
A dresser filled with shining delph,
Speckled and white and blue and brown!

I could be busy all the day
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,
And fixing on their shelf again
My white and blue and speckled store!

I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delph!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
And tired I am of bog and road,
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

And I am praying to God on high,
And I am praying Him night and day,
For a little house - a house of my own
Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

On First Looking into Chapman's Homer

John Keats

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

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.

One, Two, Three

Harry C. Bunner

It was an old, old, old lady
And a boy that was half-past three;
And the way that they played together
Was beautiful to see.

She couldn't go running and jumping,
And the boy, no more could he,
For he was a thin little fellow,
With a thin little twisted knee.

They sat in the yellow sunlight
Out under the maple trees,
And the game that they played I'll tell you
Just as it was told to me.

It was hide-and-go-seek they were playing,
Though you'd never had known it to be
With an old, old, old lady,
And a boy with a twisted knee.

The boy would bend his face down
On his one little sound right knee,
And he'd guess where she was hiding,
In guesses One, Two, Three.

"You are in the china closet,"

He would cry and laugh with glee
It wasn't the china closet,
But he still had Two, and Three.

"You are up in papa's big bedroom,
In the chest with the queer old key,"
And she said; "You are warm and warmer
But you're not quite right," said she.

"It can't be the little cupboard
Where mama's things used to be;
So it must be the clothes press, Grandma."
And he found her with his Three.

Then she covered her face with her fingers,
That were wrinkled and white and wee
And she guessed where the boy was hiding,
With a One and a Two and a Three.

And they never had stirred from their places,
Out under the maple tree
This old, old, old, old lady
And the boy with the lame little knee
This dear, dear, dear old lady
And the boy who was half-past three.

Pilgrim Song—Then and Now

George Lunt

Over the mountain wave
See where they come;
Storm cloud and wintry wind
Welcome them home;
Yet, where the sounding gale
Howls to the sea,
There their song peals along
Deep seated and free
“Pilgrims and wanderers,
Hither we come;
Where the free dare to be—
This is our home!”

Dim grew the finest path;
Onward they trod;
Firm beat their noble hearts,
Trusting in God;
Gray men and blooming maids,
High rose their song
Hear it sweep, clear and deep,
Ever along—
“Pilgrim and wanderers,
Hither we come;
Where the free dare to be—
This is our home!”

Green be their mossy graves!
Ours be their fame,
While their song peals along
Ever the same;
“Pilgrims and wanderers,
Hither we come;
Where the free dare to be—
This is our home!”

Pocahontas

Rosemary Carr Benet

Princess Pocahontas,
Powhatan's daughter,
Stared at the white men
Come across the water.

She was like a wild deer
Or a bright, plumed bird,
Ready then to flash away
At one harsh word.

When the faces answered hers,
Paler yet, but smiling,
Pocahontas looked and looked,
Found them quite beguiling.

Liked the whites and trusted them,
Spite of kin and kith,
Fed and protected
Captain John Smith.

Pocahontas was revered
By each and every one.
She married John Rolfe
She had a Rolfe son.

She crossed the sea to London Town,
And must have found it queer,
To be lady Rebecca
And the toast of the year.

"La Belle Sauvage! La Belle Sauvage!
Our nonpareil is she!"
But Princess Pocahontas
Gazed sadly toward the sea.

They gave her skills and furbelows.
She pined, as wild things do
And, when she died at Gravesend
She was only twenty-two.

Problem Child

J. E. Faulker

How shall I deal with Roger, Mrs. Prodger?
I've never yet been able
To sit him at a table
And make him paint a label
For the salmon in the kindergarten shop.
 But he's full of animation
 When I mention a dictation
 And he never wants a spelling test to stop.
I've encouraged self-expression
And intentional digression
But I think I'll have to let the system drop.
 For the normal child, like Roger,
 Is a do-er, not a dodger,
And my methods, Mrs. Prodger, are a flop.
How shall I deal with Roger, Mrs. Prodger?
I've had projects on the fairies,
On markets, shops and dairies;
I've had projects on the prairies,
But the little fellow doesn't want to play:
 Instead he has a yearning
 For unreasonable learning,
 And wants to do arithmetic all day.
He shows a strong proclivity
For purposeless activity,
And doesn't want experience in clay.
So I rather think that Roger
Is a do-er, not a dodger,
And how would you deal with Roger, can you say?

The Red Sea

Martha Snell Nicholson

When the children of Israel crossed the sea
It comforts my heart to know
That there must have been many timorous ones
Who faltered and feared to go;

Feared the ribbon of road which stretched
Ahead like a narrow track
With the waves piled high on either side,
And nothing to hold them back—

Nothing to hold them back but a hand
They could neither see nor feel.
Their God seemed distant and far away,
And inly the peril real.

Yet the fearful ones were as safe as the brave,
For the mercy of God is wide.
Craven and fearless, He leads them all
Dry shod to the other side.

And I think of the needless terror and pain
We bring to our own Red Sea.
Strengthen Thy timorous ones, dear Lord,
And help us to trust in Thee!

Rereading Frost

Linda Pastan

Sometimes I think all the best poems
have been written already,
and no one has time to read them,
so why try to write more?

At other times though,
I remember how one flower
in a meadow already full of flowers
somehow adds to the general fireworks effect

as you get to the top of a hill
in Colorado, say, in high summer
and just look down at all that brimming color.
I also try to convince myself

that the smallest note of the smallest
instrument in the band,
the triangle for instance,
is important to the conductor

who stands there, pointing his finger
in the direction of the percussions,
demanding that one silvery ping.
And I decide not to stop trying,

at least not for a while, though in truth
I'd rather just sit here reading
how someone else has been acquainted
with the night already, and perfectly

The Road Not Taken

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.

Solitude

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone;
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,
But has trouble enough of its own.
Sing, and the hills will answer;
Sigh, it is lost on the air;
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,
But shrink from voicing care.

Rejoice, and men will seek you;
Grieve, and they turn and go;
They want full measure of all your pleasure,
But they do not need your woe.
Be glad, and your friends are many;
Be sad, and you lose them all,—
There are none to decline your nectared wine,
But alone you must drink life's gall.

Feast, and your halls are crowded;
Fast, and the world goes by.
Succeed and give, and it helps you live,
But no man can help you die.
There is room in the halls of pleasure
For a large and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on
Through the narrow aisles of pain.

The Star-Spangled Banner

Francis Scott Key

O! say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming—
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming!
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O! say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?

On that shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream;
'Tis the star-spangled banner; O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps, pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave;
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,
And this be our motto—"In God is our trust":
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

The happy birds, that change their sky
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret
Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest.

Thy Will Be Done

Helen Steiner Rice

Do you want what you want when you want it?
Do you pray and expect a reply?
And when it's not instantly answered,
Do you feel that God passed you by?
Well, prayers that are prayed in this manner
Are really not prayers at all,
For you can't go to God in a hurry
And expect Him to answer your call ...
For prayers are not meant for obtaining
What we selfishly wish to acquire,
For God in His wisdom refuses
The things that we wrongly desire.
Don't pray for freedom from trouble,
Or ask that life's trials pass you by,

Instead pray for strength and for courage
To meet life's "dark hours" and not cry
That God was not there when you called Him,
And He turned a deaf ear to your prayer
And just when you needed Him most,
He left you alone in despair ...
Wake up! You are missing completely
The reason and purpose for prayer,
Which is really to keep us contented
That God holds us safe in His care.
And God only answers our pleadings
When He knows that our wants fill a need,
And whenever "our will" becomes "His will"
There is no prayer that God does not heed.

The Trial of Derek Drew

Allan Ahlberg

The charges:

Derek Drew:

For leaving his reading book at home.
For scribbling his handwriting
practice.
For swinging on the pegs in the
cloakroom.
For sabotaging the girls' skipping.
For doing disgusting things with his
dinner.

Also charged

Mrs. Alice Drew (nee Alice Jukes):
For giving birth to Derek Drew.
Mr. Dennis Drew:
For aiding and abetting Mrs. Drew.
Mrs. Muriel Drew and Mr. Donald
Drew;
For giving birth to Dennis Drew, etc.
Mrs. Jane Jukes and Mr. Paul Jukes:
For giving birth to Alice Jukes, etc.
Previous generations of the Drew and
Juke families:
for being born, etc., etc.

Witnesses

'He's always forgetting his book.'
Mrs. Pine.
'He can write neatly, if he wants to.'
Ditto.
'I seen him on the pegs, Miss!'
'And me!' 'And me!' Friends of the
accused.
'He just kept jumpin' in the rope!'
Eight third grade girls.

In Miss Hodge's class.

'It was disgusting!' Mrs. Foot (dinner
lady).

For the defense

'I was never in the cloakroom!' Derek
Drew.

Mitigating circumstances

This boy is ten years old.

He asks for 386 other charges to be taken
into consideration.

'He's not like this at home,' his mother says.

The verdict:

Guilty.

The sentence:

Life!

And do his handwriting again.

To the Flag

Adapted from Leland Scott and Grace Bush

Remember me? People call me Old Glory ... the Stars and Stripes ... the Star-Spangled Banner. What-ever they call me, I am your flag—the flag of the United States of America!

I am the symbol of America—an America more precious than ever, because the gifts it has given you are threatened with loss and destruction. I am the thrilling heart of America—the sign of your inheritance.

The courage and strength of the pioneers—the pathfinders who met hardship in the days when we were beginning to be a nation—are in the red of my stripes.

The noble mind and motive of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and others who held high their beliefs in the greatness of this nation, are in the white of my stripes.

The truth that will not stoop, the integrity of the principles that undergird you, the unshakable trust in God that have come down to you, that you might walk in safety—these are in the blue of my field of stars.

And every one of those stars takes on fresh splendor—the splendor of a people free to worship God as they choose, free to work, to laugh, to love, to own, and to live—as you realize with bright, new clarity how much these freedoms mean!

I am your Flag. I am the soul of America. Hold me proudly high!

Ulysses

Alfred Lord Tennyson

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;
And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades
For ever and forever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!
As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains: but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'T is not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Up to the Ceiling

Edgar A. Guest

Up to the ceiling
And down to the floor,
Hear him now squealing
And calling for more.
Laughing and shouting,
“Away up!” he cries.
Who could be doubting
The love in his eyes.
Heigho! my baby!
And heigho! my son!
Up to the ceiling
Is wonderful fun.
Bigger than daddy
And bigger than mother;
Only a laddie,
But bigger than brother.
Laughing and shouting,
And squirming and wriggling,
Cheeks fairly glowing,
Now cooing and giggling!
Down to the cellar,
Then quick as a dart
Up to the ceiling
Brings joy to the heart.
Gone is the hurry,
The anguish and sting,
The heartache and worry
That business cares bring;
Gone is the hustle,
The clamor for gold,
Who could be doubting
The rush and the bustle
The day’s affairs hold.
Peace comes to the battered
Old heart of his dad,
When “up to the ceiling”
He plays with his lad.

Warren's Address to the American Soldiers

John Pierpont

Stand! the ground's your own, my braves!
Will ye give it up to slaves?
Will ye look for greener graves?
Hope ye mercy still?
What's the mercy despots feel?
Hear it in that battle-peal!
Read it on yon bristling steel!
Ask it,—ye who will.

Fear ye foes who kill for hire?
Will ye to your homes retire?
Look behind you! they're afire!
And, before you, see
Who have done it!—From the vale
On they come!—And will ye quail?—
Leaden rain and iron hail
Let their welcome be!

In the God of battles trust!
Die we may,—and die we must;
But, O, where can dust to dust
Be consigned so well,
As where Heaven its dews shall shed
On the martyred patriot's bed,
And the rocks shall raise their head,
Of his deeds to tell!

What Christ Said

George MacDonald

I said, "Let me walk in the fields"
He said, "Nay, walk in the town"
I said, "There are no flowers there"
He said, "No flowers, but a crown."
I said, "But the air is thick,
And fogs are veiling the sun"
He answered, "Yet hearts are sick,
And souls in the dark undone."
I said, "I shall miss the light,
And friends will miss me, they say"
He answered me, "Choose tonight
If I am to miss you or they."
I pleaded for time to be given,
He said, "Is it hard to decide?
It will not seem hard in heaven
To have followed the steps of your Guide."
I cast one look at the field,
Then set my face to the town
He said, "My child, do you yield?
Will you leave the flowers for a crown?"
Then into His hand went mine,
And into my heart came He.
And I walked in a light divine
The path I had feared to see.

The Wind and the Moon

George MacDonald

Said the Wind to the Moon, "I will blow you out,
 You stare
 In the air
 Like a ghost in a chair,
Always looking what I am about—
I hate to be watched; I'll blow you out."

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
 So, deep
 On a heap
 Of clouds to sleep,
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,
Muttering low, "I've done for that Moon."

He turned in his bed; she was there again!
 On high
 In the sky,
 With her one ghost eye,
The Moon shone white and alive and plain.
Said the Wind, "I will blow you out again."

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew dim.
 "With my sledge,
 And my wedge,
 I have knocked off her edge!
If only I blow right fierce and grim,
The creature will soon be dimmer than dim."

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.
 "One puff
 More's enough
 To blow her to snuff!
One good puff more where the last was bred,
And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go the thread."

He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone
 In the air

Nowhere
Was a moonbeam bare;
Far off and harmless the shy stars shone—
Sure and certain the Moon was gone!

The Wind he took to his revels once more;
On down,
In town,
Like a merry-mad clown,
He leaped and hallooed with whistle and roar—
"What's that?" The glimmering thread once more!

He flew in a rage—he danced and blew;
But in vain
Was the pain
Of his bursting brain;
For still the broader the Moon-scrap grew,
The broader he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

Slowly she grew—till she filled the night,
And shone
On her throne
In the sky alone,
A matchless, wonderful silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind: "What a marvel of power am I
With my breath,
Good faith!
I blew her to death—
First blew her away right out of the sky—
Then blew her in; what strength have I!"

But the Moon she knew nothing about the affair;
For high
In the sky,
With her one white eye,
Motionless, miles above the air,
She had never heard the great Wind blare.

The world is too much with us; late and soon

William Wordsworth

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

The World We Make

Alfred Grant Walton

We make the world in which we live
By what we gather and what we give
By our daily deeds and the things we say,
By what we keep or we cast away.

We make our world by the beauty we see
In a skylark's song or a lilac tree,
In a butterfly's wing, in the pale moon's rise,
And the wonder that lingers in midnight skies.

We make our world by the life we lead,
By the friends we have, by the books we read,
By the pity we show in the hour of care,
By the loads we lift and the love we share.

We make our world by the goals we pursue,
By the heights we seek and the higher view,
By hopes and dreams that reach the sun
And a will to fight till the heights are won.

What is the place in which we dwell,
A hut or a palace, a heaven or hell
We gather and scatter, we take and we give,
We make our world—and there we live.

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod

Eugene Field

Wynken, Blynken, and Nod one night

Sailed off in a wooden shoe--

Sailed on a river of crystal light,

Into a sea of dew.

"Where are you going, and what do you wish?"

The old moon asked of the three.

"We have come to fish for the herring fish

That live in this beautiful sea;

Nets of silver and gold have we!"

Said Wynken,

Blynken,

And Nod.

The old moon laughed and sang a song,

As they rocked in the wooden shoe,

And the wind that sped them all night long

Ruffled the waves of dew.

The little stars were the herring fish

That lived in that beautiful sea--

"Now cast your nets wherever you wish--

Never afeard are we!"

So cried the stars to the fishermen three:

Wynken,

Blynken,

And Nod.

All night long their nets they threw

To the stars in the twinkling foam---

Then down from the skies came the wooden shoe,

Bringing the fishermen home;

'T was all so pretty a sail it seemed

As if it could not be,

And some folks thought 't was a dream they 'd dreamed

Of sailing that beautiful sea---

But I shall name you the fishermen three:

Wynken,

Blynken,

And Nod.

Wynken and Blynken are two little eyes,
And Nod is a little head,
And the wooden shoe that sailed the skies
Is a wee one's trundle-bed.
So shut your eyes while mother sings
Of wonderful sights that be,
And you shall see the beautiful things
As you rock in the misty sea,
Where the old shoe rocked the fishermen three:
Wynken,
Blynken,
And Nod.