

Ms. Perez, Ms. Jing, and Mr. Kenny, Mr. Slotoroff

English One

June 2010

**For students who will be FRESHMEN in September 2010  
THE LITERARY GENRES**

**English I: choose ONE title; prepare responses to some of the Essential Questions for the course as a precursor to classroom discussions and subsequent writing assignments**

*The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte **OR** *The Glass Castle: A Memoir* by Jeannette Walls

**English I CP: choose TWO titles; prepare responses to some of the Essential Questions for the course as a precursor to classroom discussions and subsequent writing assignments**

*The Contender* by Robert Lipsyte, *The Glass Castle: A Memoir* by Jeannette Walls,

**AND/OR**

*The Color of Water* by James McBride

**English I Honors: Read BOTH *The Color of Water* by James McBride **AND** *The Glass Castle: A Memoir* by Jeannette Walls; prepare responses to some of the Essential Questions for the course as a precursor to classroom discussions and subsequent writing assignments**

**AND**

**Complete the Poetry Packet** (On move up day, we will provide students with a list of literary terms and poetic devices to help with completing the poetry packet.)

**Essential Questions**

If you read *The Glass Castle* or *The Color of Water*, please respond to **three (3)** of the following questions. Write a short paragraph for each.

- Can any good come from adversity? Explain.
- Do you think the writer accomplished his/her goal in writing this memoir? What is the value in studying memoirs?
- How do you think the memoir (events in the memoir) would be different change if it were told from a different point of view?
- In the face of adversity, what causes some people to prevail while others fail?
- Do you agree with the author's decision to share his/her story with the general public?
- Why is a person's story worth telling?
- What is the impact of other people's lives on our culture? Why are the details of someone's personal life appealing?

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**More on the back...**

If you read *The Contender*, please respond to **three (3)** of the following questions. Write a short paragraph for each.

- What purposes do stereotypes serve in our society today? Are they hurtful? Based on some truth?
- What is your conscience? How has it been instilled in you? By whom?
- What influences a person's (or character's) choices?
- What does the word "justice" mean? Does it always mean the same thing for everyone or rather is it something that everyone decides for him or herself?
- What does it mean to be "innocent?" Do all children "mature" at the same age or is maturity something that is acquired through life experiences?
- What are the qualities of a good leader? Is it respectable to be a good follower?
- No good deed goes un-punished. True or false?
- What lessons can be learned from the story that can apply to a person's life today?

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## **Freshman Honors Summer Reading Assignment 2010**

**Poetry Journaling** - For **10** of the poems in the packet (3 of those poems must have more than 15 lines), please do the following:

1. Identify the speaker and explain the topic.
2. Explain the significance of the title.
3. Identify 2-3 vocabulary words and define them.
4. Highlight and identify literary devices or figures of speech.
5. Explain why it speaks to you or moves you.

<b>Sample Journal Entry:</b> <b>(Keep in mind - this is a six-line poem!)</b>
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**"The Eagle" by Alfred Lord Tennyson**

The poem describes an eagle perched on a mountaintop, and then plummeting to the sea on the hunt for prey. The title is self-explanatory. The poet uses incredible imagery - "ringed with the azure world" to describe the sky, which is the eagle's territory. He uses several literary devices including alliteration - "lonely lands"; assonance - "clasps the crag"; simile - "like a thunderbolt"; and antithesis - "stands... falls".

For six lines, the poem really packs a punch. I totally saw the eagle on the mountain, almost like watching the Discovery Channel! I could also see why our nation would choose such a majestic animal for its symbol. It is proud, powerful, and at the top of the food chain!

*Ms. Perez*

# Literary Devices & Figures of Speech

Figures of speech	Words arranged for a desired effect: *** Some examples:
Alliteration	Repetition of the same initial consonant sound "the forest's ferny floor"
Anaphora	Repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of a series of phrases or clauses ("Sea Fever" I must go down the seas again...)
Antithesis	Contrasting or combining two terms, phrases, or clauses with opposed or antithetical meanings to create an effect; the rhetorical contrast of ideas by means of parallel arrangements of words, clauses, or sentences (as in "action, not words" or "they promised freedom and provided slavery")
Apostrophe	Words addressed to an absent person as though they could hear or to an object or idea as though it could hear and respond. Carlyle's "O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!"
Assonance	Repetition of vowel sounds, without repeating consonant sounds "fly high in the sky"
Cacophony	Harsh disagreeable sounds
Caesura	A brief pause in a line of poetry ("O say can you see / by the...")
Colloquialism	An expression permissible in informal speech ("gonna" instead of "going to")
Chiasmus	Crossing over of words (verb-adverb, adverb-verb); an inverted relationship between the syntactic elements of parallel phrases (as in Goldsmith's <i>to stop too fearful, and too faint to go</i> )
Consonance	Repetition of consonant sounds ("silken rustling of the wistful breeze")
Epithet	A descriptive, nickname like phrase ("the Earthshaker" for Poseidon)
Euphemism	The use of a less offensive word in place of one that is harsh or indelicate ("passed away" as opposed to "croaked")
Euphony	Pleasant sounds
Hendiadys	the expression of an idea by the use of usually two independent words connected by <i>and</i> (as <i>nice and warm</i> ) instead of the usual combination of independent word and its modifier (as <i>nicely warm</i> )
Hyperbaton	("over step") Arrangement of words in an unusual order; inversion of word order, e.g. noun-adjective "Very powerful the dark side is."
Hyperbole	Gross exaggeration for effect ("hands that dangled a mile out of his sleeves")
Hysteron Proteron	a figure of speech consisting of the reversal of a natural or rational order (as in "then came the thunder and the lightning")
Litotes	understatement in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative of the contrary (as in "not a bad singer" or "not unhappy")
Malapropism	A ludicrous blunder caused by using a wrong word something like the intended word ('The people in Hardy's novels are mostly farmers and pheasants') From Mrs. Malaprop in Sheridan's <i>The Rivals</i> .
Metaphor	An implied comparison. That man is a mountain.
Metonymy	Naming one thing for something else ("The White House stated..." for "The President stated...")
Onomatopoeia	Words whose sound suggests their meaning ("wheeze" "rustle" "buzz")
Oxymoron	a combination of contradictory or incongruous words (as <i>cruel kindness</i> )
Paradox	Seemingly self-contradictory statement. It seems impossible, but in some sense it may be true. (The more haste, the less speed.)
Paronomasia	Pun; the usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings or the meaning of another word similar in sound
Personification	Giving animals, objects or ideas the traits of a person ("The sun smiled on the beachgoers")
Polysyndeton	repetition of conjunctions in close succession (as in <i>we have ships and men and money and stores</i> )
Simile	Comparison which uses like or as ("Her hair was yellow like the ripe corn of summer")
Spoonerism	Ludicrous language slip formed by transposing sounds in two words. ("hissed my mystery lecture")
Synecdoche	(Greek, "a receiving together"): a figure of speech where the part stands for the whole (for example, "I've got wheels" for "I have a car").
Zeugma	the use of a word to modify or govern two or more words usually in such a manner that it applies to each in a different sense or makes sense with only one (as in "opened the door and her heart to the homeless boy")

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## THE EAGLE

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ringed with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain wall,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

*Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

## BALLAD OF BIRMINGHAM

(On the bombing of a church in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963)

“Mother dear, may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
In a Freedom March today?”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails  
Aren’t good for a little child.”

“But, mother, I won’t be alone,  
Other children will go with me,  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our country free.”

“No, baby, no, you may not go,  
For I fear those guns will fire.  
But you may go to church instead  
And sing in the children’s choir.”

**Summer Reading**

She has combed and brushed her night-dark hair.  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on her small brown hands,  
And white shoes on her feet.

The mother smiled to know her child  
Was in the sacred place,  
But that smile was the last smile  
To come upon her face.

For when she heard the explosion,  
Her eyes grew wet and wild.  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Calling for her child.

She clawed through bits of glass and brick,  
Then lifted out a shoe.  
“O, here’s the shoe my baby wore,  
But, baby, where are you?”

*Dudley Randall*

**English 9 H**

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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### IS MY TEAM PLOUGHING

“Is my team ploughing,  
That I was used to drive  
And hear the harness jingle  
When I was a man alive?”

Aye, the horses trample,  
The harness jingles now;  
No change though you lie under  
The land you used to plough.

“Is football playing  
Along the river shore,  
With lads to chase the leather,  
Now I stand up no more?”

Ay, the ball is flying,  
The lads play heart and soul;  
The goal stands up, the keeper  
Stands up to keep the goal.

“Is my girl happy,  
That I thought hard to leave,  
And has she tired of weeping;  
As she lies down at eve?”

Ay, she lies down lightly,  
She lies not down to weep  
Your girl is well contented,  
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

“Is my friend hearty,  
Now I am thin and pine;  
And has he found to sleep in  
A better bed than mine?”

Yes, lad, I lie easy,  
I lie as lads would choose;  
I cheer a dead man’s sweetheart,  
Never ask me whose.

*A. E. Housman*

### THERE IS NO FRIGATE LIKE A BOOK

There is no frigate like a book  
To take us lands away,  
Nor any coursers like a page  
Of prancing poetry;  
This traverse may the poorest take  
Without oppress of toll;  
How frugal is the chariot  
That bears the human soul!

*Emily Dickinson*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## MEETING AT NIGHT

The gray sea and the long black land;  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;  
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, through its joys and fears,  
Then the two hearts beating each to each!

*Robert Browning*

## THE GUITARIST TUNES UP

With what attentive courtesy he bent  
Over his instrument;  
Not as a lordly conqueror who could  
Command both wire and wood,  
But as a man with a loved woman might,  
Inquiring with delight  
What slight essential things she had to say  
Before they started, he and she, to play.

*Frances Cornford*

## METAPHORS

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,  
An elephant, a ponderous house,  
A melon strolling on two tendrils,  
Red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!  
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.  
Money's new minted in this fat purse.  
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.  
I've eaten a bag of green apples,  
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

*Sylvia Plath*

## DREAM DEFERRED

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?*

*Langston Hughes*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## CURIOSITY

may have killed the cat; more likely  
the cat was just unlucky, or else curious  
to see what death was like, having no cause  
to go on licking paws, or fathering  
litter on litter of kittens, predictably.

Nevertheless, to be curious  
is dangerous enough. To distrust  
what is always said, what seems,  
to ask odd questions, interfere in dreams,  
leave home, smell rats, have hunches  
do not endear cats to those doggy circles  
where well-smelt baskets, suitable wives, good lunches  
are the order of things, and where prevails  
much wagging of incurious heads and tails.

Face it. Curiosity  
will not cause us to die -  
only lack of it will.  
Never to want to see  
the other side of the hill  
or that improbable country  
where living is an idyll  
(although a probable hell)  
would kill us all.  
Only the curious  
have, if they live, a tale  
worth telling at all.

Dogs say cats love too much, are irresponsible,  
are changeable, marry too many wives,  
desert their children, chill all dinner tables

with tales of their nine lives.  
Well, they are lucky. Let them be  
nine-lived and contradictory,  
curious enough to change, prepared to pay  
the cat price, which is to die  
and die again and again,  
each time with no less pain.  
A cat minority of one  
is all that can be counted on  
to tell the truth. And what cats have to tell  
on each return from hell  
is this: that dying is what the living do,  
that dying is what the loving do,  
and that dead dogs are those who do not know  
that dying is what, to live, each has to do.

## *Alastair Reid*

### **The Germ**

A mighty creature is the germ,  
Though smaller than a pachyderm.  
His customary dwelling place  
Is deep within the human race.  
His childish pride he often pleases  
By giving people strange diseases.  
Do you, my poppet, feel infirm?  
You probably contain a germ.  
- Ogden Nash, 1902 - 1971

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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### THE SEA-TURTLE AND THE SHARK

Strange but true is the story  
of the sea-turtle and the shark-  
the instinctive drive of the weak to survive  
in the oceanic dark.

Driven,  
riven  
by hunger  
from abyss to shoal,  
sometimes the shark swallows  
the sea-turtle whole.  
The sly reptilian marine  
withdraws,  
into the shell  
of his undersea craft,  
his leathery head and the rapacious claw  
that can rip a rhinoceros' hide  
or strip  
a crocodile to fare-thee-well;

now,  
*inside* the shark,  
the sea-turtle begins the churning seesaws  
of his descent into pelagic hell;  
then . . . *then*,  
with ravenous jaws  
that can cut sheet steel scrap,  
the sea-turtle gnaws  
. . . and gnaws . . . and gnaws . . .  
*his* way to freedom,  
beyond the vomiting dark,  
beyond the stomach walls  
of the shark.

*Melvin B. Tolson*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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### FOG

The fog comes  
on little cat feet.

It sits looking  
over harbor and city  
on silent haunches  
and then moves on

*Carl Sandburg*

### WIND AND SILVER

Greatly shining,  
The Autumn moon floats in the thin sky;  
And the fish ponds shake their backs and flash their dragon scales  
As she passes over them.

*Amy Lowell*

### PESSIMIST AND OPTIMIST

Two men look out through the same bars;  
One sees the mud, and one the stars.

*Frederick Langbridge*

### HEART! WE WILL FORGET HIM!

Heart! We will forget him!  
You and I, tonight!  
You may forget the warmth he gave,  
I will forget the light!

When you have done, pray tell me  
That I may straight begin!  
Haste! Lest while you're lagging  
I remember him!

*Emily Dickinson*

### OZYMANDIAS

I met a traveller from an antique land  
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert . . . Near them, on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,  
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, and stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:  
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## **FIRE AND ICE**

Some say the world will end in fire,  
Some say in ice.  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire.  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great  
And would suffice.

*Robert Frost*

## **SLOWLY**

Heavy is my heart,  
    Dark are thine eyes.  
Thou and I must part  
    Ere the sun must rise.  
  
Ere the sun must rise.  
    Thou and I must part.  
Dark are thine eyes,  
    Heavy is my heart.

*Mary Coleridge*

in Just-  
spring when the world is mud-  
luscious the little  
lame balloonman  
  
whistles far and wee  
  
and eddieandbill come  
  
running from marbles and  
piracies and it's  
spring  
  
when the world is puddle-wonderful  
  
the queer  
old balloonman whistles  
far and wee  
and bettyandisbel come dancing  
  
from hop-sotch and jump-rope and  
  
it's  
spring  
and  
    the  
        goat-footed  
  
balloonMan whistles  
far  
and  
wee  
  
*e.e. cummings*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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### DINOSAUR LOVE

On the museum of Natural History's 4th floor  
I greeted my old friend:  
"Hey, T.Rex! Long time, no see!"  
"Over two years, E. Katz,  
I missed you."

Surprised, I asked, "You missed me?  
I didn't know dinosaurs had emotions.  
Rexy, did you know love?"

Rexy sighed: "I knew love  
not as humans can  
but as humans do:  
love of self  
and love of finding something weaker  
to pounce upon.  
E. Katz, can your species be saved  
by love's possibilities?"

"Rexy," I answered, "you haven't lost  
your ability  
to ask the tough question.  
Let me ask you something we humans  
have been curious about for centuries.  
How did you die?"

"I don't know.  
One day I looked around  
and I wasn't there."

*Eliot Katz*

Summer Reading

### Sonnet CXXX

#### MY MISTRESS' EYES ARE NOTHING LIKE THE SUN

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips' red:  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:  
I grant I never saw a goddess go;  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare  
As any she belied with false compare.

*William Shakespeare*

English 9 H

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## THINGS TO DO IN THE BIBLE

Get drunk.  
Walk on water.  
Collect foreskins.  
Pluck out an eye.

Build an ark.  
Interpret dreams.  
Kill your brother.  
Don't look back

Join a tribe.  
Listen to clouds.  
Live in a tent.  
Quit your job.

Take to the hills.  
Report to the king.  
Raise the dead.  
Seek the spirit.

Reap what you sow.  
Count your blessings.  
Gnash your teeth.  
Fish for men.

Grow a beard.  
Wear a cowl.  
Ride a donkey.  
Carry a torch.

Sit by a well.  
Live to a ripe, old age.  
Remain a virgin  
and speak in tongues.

These are the words of the Lord.

*Elaine Equi*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## FOR THE CHILDREN

The rising hill, the slopes,  
of statistics  
lie before us,  
the steep climb  
of everything, going up,  
up, as we all  
go down.

In the next century  
or the one beyond that,  
they say,  
are valleys, pastures,  
we can meet there in peace  
if we make it.

To climb these coming crests  
one word to you, to  
you and your children:

*stay together*  
*learn the flowers*  
*go light*

*Snyder*

## THE LISTENERS

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,  
Knocking on the moonlit door;  
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses  
Of the forest's ferny floor;  
And a bird flew up out of the turret,  
Above the Traveller's head:

And he smote upon the door again a second time;  
"Is there anybody there?" he said.  
But no one descended to the Traveller;  
No head from the leaf-fringed sill  
Leaned over and looked into his gray eyes,  
Where he stood perplexed and still.  
But only a host of phantom listeners  
That dwelt in the lone house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight  
To that voice from the world of men:  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,  
That goes down to the empty hall,  
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken  
By the lonely Traveller's call.  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,  
Their stillness answering his cry,  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,  
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;  
For he suddenly smote on the door, even  
Louder, and lifted his head:--  
"Tell them I came, and no one answered,  
That I kept my word," he said.  
Never the least stir made the listeners,  
Though every word he spake  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house  
From the one man left awake:  
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,  
And the sound of iron on stone,  
And how the silence surged softly backward,  
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

*Walter de la Mare*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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## MID-TERM BREAK

I sat all morning in the college sick bay  
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.  
At two o'clock our neighbors drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying --  
He had always taken funerals in his stride --  
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram  
When I came in, and I was embarrassed  
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were "sorry for my trouble,"  
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,  
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.  
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived  
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops  
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him  
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,  
He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.  
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.

A four foot box, a foot for every year.

*Seamus Heaney*

## SEPARATION

Your absence has gone through me  
Like thread through a needle.  
Everything I do is stitched with its color.

*Wright*

## EBB

I know what my heart is like  
Since your love died;  
It is like a hollow ledge  
Holding a little pool  
Left there by the tide,  
A little tepid pool,  
Drying inward from the edge.

*Edna St. Vincent Millay*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

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### MY LAST DUCHESS

That's my last duchess painted on the wall.  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth of passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps  
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart - how shall I say? - too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West.  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace - all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men - good! But thanked  
Somehow - I know not how - as if she ranked

My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech - which I have not - to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark" - and if she let  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse -  
E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
The company below, then. I repeat,  
The Count your master's known munificence  
Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

*Robert Browning*

### EARTH

"A planet doesn't explode of itself," said drily  
The Martian astronomer, gazing off into the air -  
"That they were able to do it is proof that highly  
Intelligent beings must have been living there."

*John Hall Wheelock*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-13-

### **NARCISSUS, PHOTOGRAPHER**

Mirror-mad,  
he photographed reflections;  
sunstorms in puddles,  
cities in canals,

double portraits framed  
in sunglasses,  
the fat phantoms who dance  
on the flanks of cars.

Nothing caught his eye  
unless it bent  
or glistered  
over something else.

He trapped clouds in bottles  
the way kids  
trap grasshoppers.  
Then one misty day

he was stopped  
by the windshield.  
Behind him,  
an avenue of trees,

before him,  
the mirror of that scene.  
He seemed to enter  
what, in fact, he left.

*Erica Jong*

### **TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME**

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,  
Old Time is still a-flying;  
And this same flower that smiles today  
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the Sun,  
The higher he's a-getting,  
The sooner will his race be run,  
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,  
When youth and blood are warmer;  
But being spent, the worse, and worst  
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time;  
And while ye may, go marry;  
For having lost but once your prime,  
You may forever tarry.

*Robert Herrick*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-14-

### **SINCE THERE'S NO HELP**

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part;  
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me,  
And I am glad, yea, glad with all my heart  
That thus so cleanly I myself can free;  
Shake hands forever, cancel all our vows,  
And when we meet at any time again,  
Be it not seen in either of our brows  
That we one jot of former love retain.  
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,  
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies,  
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
And Innocence is closing up his eyes,  
Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,  
From death to life thou mightst him yet recover.

*Michael Drayton*

### **THE TURTLE**

The turtle lives 'twixt plated decks  
Which practically conceal its sex.  
I think it clever of the turtle  
In such a fix to be so fertile.

*Odgen Nash*

### **WE REAL COOL**

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.

*Gwendolyn Brooks*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-15-

## **PARTING, WITHOUT A SEQUEL**

She has finished and sealed the letter  
At last, which he so richly has deserved,  
With characters venomous and hatefully curved,  
And nothing could be better.

But even as she gave it  
Saying to the blue-capped functioner of doom,  
“Into his hands,” she hoped the leering groom  
Might somewhere lose and leave it.

Then all the blood  
Forsook the face. She was too pale for tears,  
Observing the ruin of her younger years.  
She went and stood

Under her father’s vaunting oak  
Who kept his peace in wind and sun, and glistened  
Stoical in the rain; to whom she listened  
If he spoke.

And now the agitation of the rain  
Rasped his sere leaves, and he talked low and gentle  
Reproaching the wan daughter by the lintel;  
Ceasing and beginning again.

Away went the messenger’s bicycle,  
His serpent’s track went up the hill forever,  
And all the time she stood there hot as fever  
And cold as any icicle.

*John Crowe Ransom*

## **NOTHING GOLD CAN STAY**

Nature’s first green is gold,  
Her hardest hue to hold.  
Her early leaf’s a flower;  
But only so an hour.  
Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
So Eden sank to grief,  
So dawn goes down to day.  
Nothing gold can stay.

*Robert Frost*

## **SOUND AND SENSE**

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,  
As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

*Alexander Pope*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-16-

### I LIKE TO SEE IT LAP THE MILES

I like to see it lap the miles,  
And lick the valleys up,  
And stop to feed itself at tanks;  
And then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,  
And, supercilious, peer  
In shanties by the sides of roads;  
And then a quarry pare

To fit its ribs,  
And crawl between,  
Complaining all the while  
In horrid, hooting stanza;  
Then chase itself downhill

And neigh like Boanerges;  
Then, punctual as a star,  
Stop - docile and omnipotent -  
At its own stable door.

*Emily Dickinson*

### EIGHT O'CLOCK

He stood, and heard the steeple  
Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.  
One, two, three, four, to market-place and people  
It tossed them down.

Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,  
He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;  
And then the clock collected in the tower  
Its strength, and struck.

*A. E. Housman*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-17-

## A HANDFUL OF LIMERICKS

I sat next to a Duchess at tea.  
It was just as I feared it would be:  
Her rumblings abdominal  
Were simply abominable,  
And everyone thought it was me.

A tutor who tooted the flute  
Tried to tutor two tooters to toot.  
Said the two to the tutor,  
“Is it harder to toot or  
To tutor two tooters to toot?”

There was an old man from Peru  
Who dreamt he was eating his shoe.  
He awoke in the night  
In a terrible fright,  
And found it was perfectly true!

A decrepit old gas man named Peter,  
While hunting around for the meter,  
Touched a leak with his light.  
He arose out of sight,  
And, as anyone can see by reading this, he  
also destroyed the meter.

## ON READING POEMS TO A SENIOR CLASS AT SOUTH HIGH

Before  
I opened my mouth  
I noticed them sitting there  
as orderly as frozen fish  
in a package.

Summer Reading

Slowly water began to fill the room  
though I did not notice it  
till it reached  
my ears

and then I heard the sounds  
of fish in an aquarium

and I knew that though I had  
tried to drown them  
with my words  
that they had only opened up  
like gills for them  
and let me in.

Together we swam around the room  
like thirty tails whacking words  
till the bell rang  
puncturing  
a hole in the door

where we all leaked out

They went to another class  
I suppose and I home

where Queen Elizabeth  
my cat met me  
and licked my fins  
till they were hands again.

*D. C. Berry*

English 9 H

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-18-

### A POISON TREE

I was angry with my friend:  
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.  
I was angry with my foe:  
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears,  
Night and morning with my tears;  
And I sunned it with smiles,  
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night  
Till it bore an apple bright;  
And my foe beheld it shine,  
And he knew that it was mine,

And into my garden stole  
When the night had veiled the pole:  
In the morning glad to see  
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

### THE MOST VITAL THING IN LIFE

When you feel like saying something  
That you know you will regret,  
Or keenly feel an insult  
Not quite easy to forget,  
That's the time to curb resentment  
And maintain a mental peace,  
For when your mind is tranquil  
All your ill-thoughts simply cease.

It is easy to be angry  
When defrauded or defied,  
To be peeved and disappointed  
If your wishes are denied;  
But to win a worthwhile battle  
Over selfishness and spite,  
You must learn to keep strict silence  
Though you know you're in the right.

So keep your mental balance  
When confronted by a foe,  
Be it enemy in ambush  
Or some danger that you know.  
If you are poised and tranquil  
When all around is strife,  
Be assured that you have mastered  
The most vital thing in life.

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-19-

### **MIRROR**

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
Whatever I see I swallow immediately  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful --  
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.  
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.  
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long  
I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.  
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,  
Searching my reaches for what she really is.  
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.  
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.  
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.  
I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

*Sylvia Plath*

### **Friendships Come and Friendships Go**

Like the waves upon the sand  
Like the day and night  
Like the birds in flight  
Like the snowflakes when they land  
But you and I are something else  
Our friendship's here to stay  
Like the weeds and rocks and dirty socks  
It never goes away.

**Kari Lauer**

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## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-20-

### **DID I MISS ANYTHING?**

*Question frequently asked by students after missing a class*

Nothing. When we realized you weren't here  
we sat with our hands folded on our desks  
in silence, for the full two hours.

Everything. I gave an exam worth  
40 percent of the grade for this term  
and assigned some reading due today  
on which I'm about to hand out a quiz  
worth 50 percent.

Nothing. None of the content of this course  
has value or meaning.  
Take as many days off as you like:  
any activities we undertake as a class  
I assure you will not matter either to you or me  
and are without purpose.

Everything. A few minutes after we began last time  
a shaft of light descended and an angel  
or other heavenly being appeared  
and revealed to us what each woman or man must do  
to attain divine wisdom in this life and  
the hereafter  
This is the last time the class will meet  
before we disperse to bring this good news to all  
people on earth.

Nothing. When you are not present  
how could something significant occur?

Everything. Contained in this classroom  
is a microcosm of human existence  
assembled for you to query and examine and ponder.  
This is not the only place such an opportunity has  
been gathered

but it was one place

And you weren't here.

*Tom Wagman*

# A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-21-

## THE CRYSTAL MOMENT

Once or twice this side of death  
Things can make one hold his breath.

From my boyhood I remember  
A crystal moment of September.

A wooded island rang with sounds  
Of church bells in the throats of hounds.

A buck leaped out and took the tide  
With jewels flowing past each side.

With his high head like a tree  
He swam within a yard of me.

I saw the golden drop of light  
In his eyes turned dark with fright.

I saw the forest's holiness  
On him like a fierce caress.

Fear made him lovely past belief,  
My heart was trembling like a leaf.

He leaned toward the land and life  
With need upon him like a knife.

In his wake the hot hounds churned,  
They stretched their muzzles out and yearned.

They bayed no more, but swam and throbbed,  
Hunger drove them till they sobbed.

Pursued, pursuers reached the shore  
And vanished. I saw nothing more.

So they passed, a pageant such  
As only gods could witness much,

Life and death upon one tether  
And running beautifully together.

*Robert P. Tristram Coffin*

## MAY

The wind is tossing the lilacs,  
The new leaves laugh in the sun,  
And the petals fall on the orchard wall,  
But for me the spring is done.

Beneath the apple blossoms  
I go a wintry way,  
For love that smiled in April  
Is false to me in May.

*Sara Teasdale*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-22-

### IN THE TUB TONIGHT, MY SON

In the tub tonight, my son  
and his favorite boats.

*Go down*, he says like God.  
Like God, he plants one finger on each bow.  
The boats oblige.

But when he lifts his hands,  
the foolish things bob up again,  
white-sailed and arrogant.

This angers him, the boy,  
and, in a rage I have not seen in him before,  
he tears the sail from each blue boat  
and rends them, masts and decks and hulls.  
But still the pieces float.

He rises then,  
the water on his small boy's body  
shimmering, he pulls the plug.

*Go down*, he says.

They do, for good; blue  
shards scattered, beached around his feet  
on the sandy, white bottom of the tub.

He stands, a stranger to me almost,  
amid the devastation he has wrought,  
then seems, a moment, lost; he shivers  
and steps from the tub.

Late into the night, I hear  
him in the dark house,  
crying for his beautiful boats.

*Anne Caston*

## A SAMPLING OF POETRY

-23-

a m b u l a n c e

Some fool ignores the manual  
    Accompanying his sparkling ACME  
Chainsaw. Or maybe someone orders spoiled cube  
    Steak from a diner's menu.  
Or can't refuse his twelfth shot of Jim Beam.  
    Whatever the case, those who balance  
Mercy on a gurney of red & blue  
    Light will come to the rescue. One medic able  
To juggle bags of blood while his partner zigzags the fast lane.  
    The ghosts of your grandparents will lean  
Above you asking your name, but you won't have a clue.

*Terrance Mann (?)*

*Forgetfulness*

The name of the author is the first to go  
followed obediently by the title, the plot,  
the heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel  
which suddenly becomes one you have never read,  
never even heard of,  
as if, one by one, the memories you used to harbor  
decided to retire to the southern hemisphere of the brain,  
to a little fishing village where there are no phones.  
Long ago you kissed the names of the nine Muses goodbye  
and watched the quadratic equation pack its bag,  
and even now as you memorize the order of the planets,  
something else is slipping away, a state flower perhaps,  
the address of an uncle, the capital of Paraguay.  
Whatever it is you are struggling to remember  
it is not poised on the tip of your tongue,  
not even lurking in some obscure corner of your spleen.  
It has floated away down a dark mythological river  
whose name begins with an L as far as you can recall,  
well on your own way to oblivion where you will join those  
    who have even  
forgotten how to swim and how to ride a bicycle.  
No wonder you rise in the middle of the night  
to look up the date of a famous battle in a book on war.  
No wonder the moon in the window seems to have drifted  
out of a love poem that you used to know by heart.

*Billy Collins*