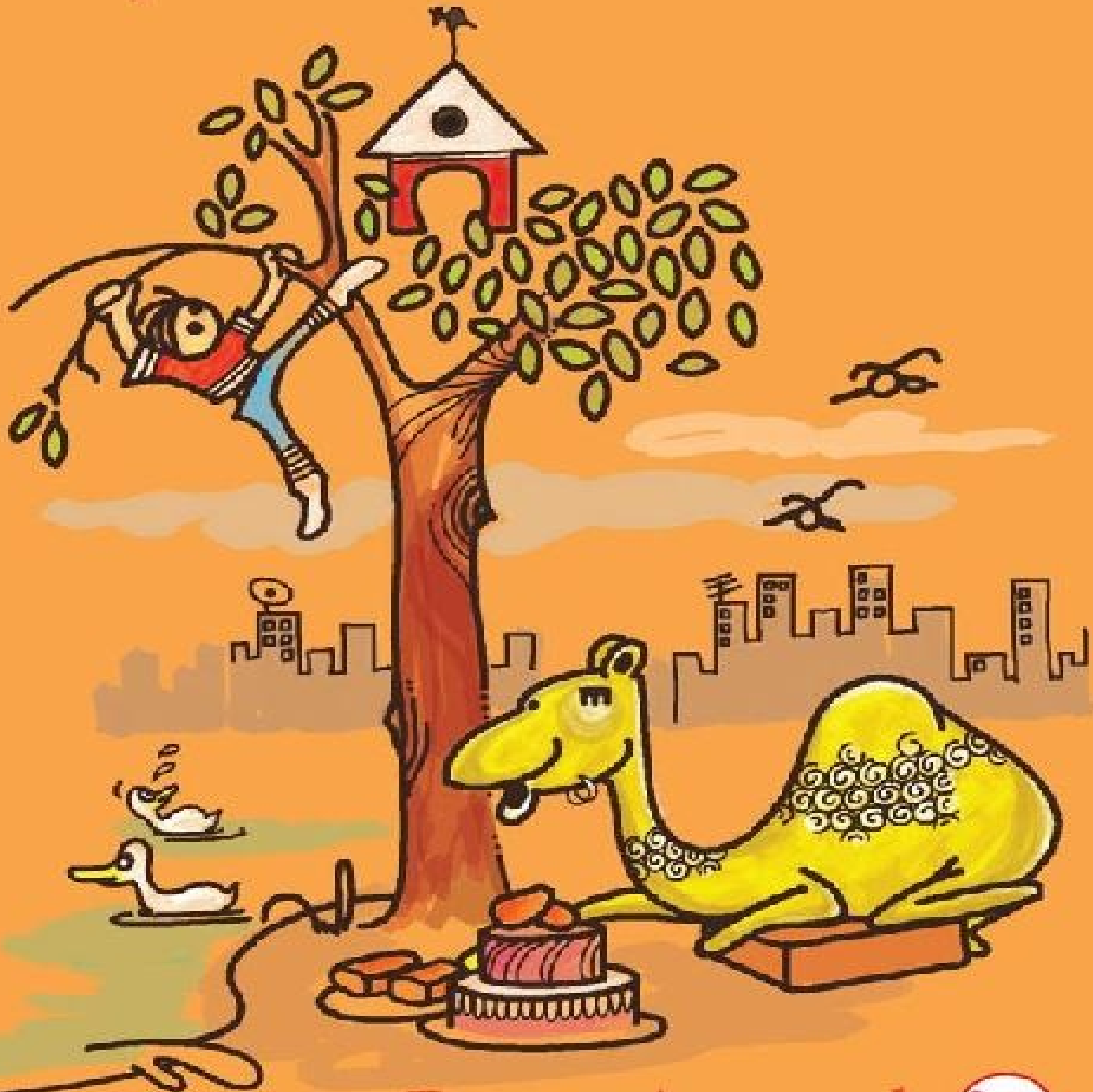


100 Great Poems for Children



edited by **Deepa Agarwal**



100 Great Poems for Children

Author, poet and translator, **Deepa Agarwal** writes for both children and adults and has over fifty published books. A frequent contributor to magazines and journals in India and abroad, she has also edited and compiled several anthologies. She has received, among others, the NCERT National Award for Children's Literature in 1993 for her picture book *Ashok's New Friends*, while her historical fiction *Caravan to Tibet* was on the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Honour List 2008. Her work has been translated into several Indian and foreign languages. Her recent titles include *Chanakya: The Master of Statecraft* (Puffin Books) and *The Wish-fulfilling Cow and Other Classic Indian Tales* (Scholastic India).

Deepa lives in Delhi with her husband and has three daughters and five grandchildren.

100 Great Poems for Children

edited by **Deepa Agarwal**



Published in Red Turtle by Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd 2015
7/16, Ansari Road, Daryaganj New Delhi 110002

Introduction Copyright © Deepa Agarwal 2015
Anthology copyright © Rupa Publications India Pvt. Ltd 2015

Copyright for the individual pieces vests with the respective authors or their estates.

While every effort has been made to trace copyright holders and obtain permission, this has not been possible in all cases; any omissions brought to our attention will be remedied in future editions.

Pages 195–197 are extensions of the copyright page.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN: 978-81-291-3735-7

First impression 2015

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

The moral right of the authors has been asserted.

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated, without the publisher's prior consent, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.

To all lovers of poetry



CONTENTS



Introduction

- The Scientist* Rabindranath Tagore
Where Did You Come from, Baby Dear? George MacDonald
The Yogi's a Solitary Kabir
Who Has Seen the Wind? Christina Rossetti
Hip-Hop Nature Boy Ruskin Bond
My Shadow Robert Louis Stevenson
The Ghost Keki Daruwalla
My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold William Wordsworth
Rathers Mary Austin
'Hope' Is the Thing With Feathers Emily Dickinson
Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore William Brighty Rands
Sonnet Toru Dutt
The Little Doll Charles Kingsley
A Roti's Grudge Natasha Sharma
How the Leaves Came Down Susan Coolidge
Leisure William Henry Davies
Tortoise K. Satchidanandan
Ode to the West Wind Percy Bysshe Shelley
The Palki Song Satyendranath Dutta
If Rudyard Kipling
Our Little Ghost Louisa May Alcott
This Kadamb Tree Subhadra Kumari Chauhan
The Old Brown Horse W.F. Holmes
The Migration of the Grey Squirrels William Howitt
All The World's a Stage William Shakespeare
Trees Joyce Kilmer
Look Jerry Pinto
Macavity: The Mystery Cat T.S. Eliot
The Forsaken Merman Matthew Arnold

The Yellow Bear *Manoj Das*
The Blind Boy *Colley Cibber*
To Flush, My Dog *Elizabeth Barrett Browning*
The Snake *David Herbert Lawrence*
The First Tooth *Charles and Mary Lamb*
The Story of Johnny Head-in-Air *Heinrich Hoffman*
A Child's Laughter *Algernon Charles Swinburne*
The One-Eyed Town *Gulzar*
A Prayer for My Daughter *W.B. Yeats*
Wordygurdyboom! *Sukumar Ray*
To See a World *William Blake*
The Cyber River *Shreekumar Varma*
The Listeners *Walter de la Mare*
The Shadow-Catching Baiya *Dash Benhur*
Invictus *William Ernest Henley*
The Zoo *Vinda Karandikar*
No Man is an Island *John Donne*
Tell Me Not, in Mournful Numbers *H.W. Longfellow*
I Remember, I Remember *Thomas Hood*
The Camel Perched Upon a Brick *Anonymous*
A Noiseless, Patient Spider *Walt Whitman*
Ode to Beauty *John Keats*
The Akond of Swat *Edward Lear*
The Tree House *Sivakami Velliangiri*
On his Blindness *John Milton*
Chuang Tzu and the Butterfly *Li Po*
The Bathing Hymn *Saroj Padki*
Ulysses *Alfred Lord Tennyson*
Butterfly Laughter *Katherine Mansfield*
A Man's a Man for A' That *Robert Burns*
Pippa's Song *Robert Browning*
Jabberwocky *Lewis Carroll*
Coromandel Fishers *Sarojini Naidu*
Goblins of the Steppes *Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin*
Breathes There the Man, with Soul so Dead *Sir Walter Scott*
Daddy Fell into the Pond *Alfred Noyes*
From Pahari Parrots *Eunice de Souza*

Granny's Come to Our House *James Whitcomb Riley*
The Good-for-Nothing *Adil Jussawala*
We Are the Music-Makers *Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy*
The Song of the Sea *Barry Cornwall*
Samarpreet Sood *Anushka Ravishankar*
The Chambered Nautilus *Oliver Wendell Holmes*
Spooky! *Sampurna Chattarji*
After the Tempest *William Cullen Bryant*
Ice Golawalla *Beheroze Shroff*
The Darkling Thrush *Thomas Hardy*
Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog *Oliver Goldsmith*
Shaper Shaped *Harindranath Chattopadhyaya*
There Is a Pleasure in the Pathless Woods *Lord Byron*
The Doll *Temsula Ao*
The Box *Lascelles Abercrombie*
Hair You Go Again *Anju Makhija*
Ode on Solitude *Alexander Pope*
A Glimpse of My Great-Grandmother *Mallika Gopal*
The Nonsense Verse *Alfred Edward Housman*
The Mountain and the Squirrel *Ralph Waldo Emerson*
The Itch *K. Ayyappa Paniker*
Friends *Abbie Farwell Brown*
Weather *Ambrose Bierce*
Kubla Khan *Samuel Taylor Coleridge*
Testing the Nation *Shanta Acharya*
Peace *Gerard Manley Hopkins*
London Snow *Robert Bridges*
Views And Woes of a Teenager *Anupa Lal*
The Way of the World *Ella Wheeler Wilcox*
The Firefly *Nirendranath Chakrabarty*
Little Brown Baby *Paul Laurence Dunbar*
Evening Primrose *John Clare*
Ma's House *Viky Arya*
I Will Be Myself *Deepa Agarwal*

Copyright Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION



What is it about poetry that a verse you read in your childhood stays with you for the rest of your life? Is it the rhythm that seems to match the pulse of your heartbeat? Or the music of the words that resonates in your head for days on end? Maybe it's a sentiment that connects with some deeply felt emotion within you. It could even be some meaning that you cannot put into words but sense intuitively in a poem.

We first discover poetry as babies, in the lullabies our mothers and fathers sing to us, or the nonsense rhymes that grandparents, uncles and aunts repeat when they play with us. Later, we learn nursery rhymes and chant verses such as 'Hara Samundar, Gopi Chander' or 'Oranges and Lemons' while playing. And as we grow older we are introduced to a wider variety of poems—funny and serious, thoughtful and inspirational. We have to memorize them in class too, which is so much easier, I always felt, than learning history dates or your thirteen times' multiplication table.

When I was asked to put this collection together, I was delighted to get an opportunity to share some of the poems I had loved as a child (and still do) with readers who might not have discovered them so far. But of course, I gave serious thought to what you, the child of today, might like to read.

So what did I assemble? Poems are written on so many different themes and convey such a variety of moods. Some delight us with their unusual use of language, others with the heart-warming sentiments they express. Some are about the familiar things in our lives, like relationships dear to us and our ordinary, everyday experiences. Others open our eyes to ideas, situations and events far removed from us.

Talking about relationships, innumerable poems have been composed on mothers. I have selected four here. 'The Scientist', the very first poem, is by Rabindranath Tagore. Beautifully translated from the Bengali original by Arunava Sinha, it is about a child sharing the sense of wonder and curiosity he experiences when face to face with natural phenomena and his own explanations for these to his mother:

Do you know for whom
They are trying to bloom

Do you think that they don't have
Mothers just like mine?

Then we have another famous classic—Subhadra Kumari Chauhan's much-loved Hindi poem 'This Kadamb Tree', lively with mischief and warm with love. Further on, in Viky Arya's charming 'Ma's House'—again a translation from Hindi—we have an evocative word picture of a nurturing mother. Anupa Lal's 'Views and Woes of a Teenager' is in a different vein—a humorous take on a teenager's exasperation with his mother. Typically it ends:

She's not so bad
After all, she is my mother!

Talking about fathers, Alfred Noyes's 'Daddy Fell into the Pond' is a comic piece that would make anyone smile. I deliberately chose this one rather than his more popular 'The Highwayman', even though that is an old favourite. There are poems about grandparents too—thoughtful ones such as Mallika Gopal's 'Glimpse of my Great-Grandmother' and enthusiastically affectionate ones like 'Granny's Come to Our House' by James Whitcomb Riley.

The delight a baby brings to one and all is expressed in poems like 'Where did You Come from, Baby Dear?' by George Macdonald, who wrote so many wonderful books for children. 'Little Brown Baby' by Paul Laurence Dunbar is another such. Interestingly, 'The First Tooth' by Charles and Mary Lamb is about the resentment an older child experiences towards the baby who is getting all the attention.

There are also poems about the pleasures of childhood play such as 'The Tree House' by Sivakami Velliangiri and 'The Doll' by Temsula Ao. And as for Charles Kingsley's touching 'The Little Doll', haven't many of us grieved over the loss of a favourite toy sometime? And can't most of us identify with the delight a well-loved pet provides, as in 'To Flush, my Dog' by the famous English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning? As for that all-time favourite—T.S. Eliot's 'Macavity: The Mystery Cat'—who hasn't been exasperated or tickled by a pet's shenanigans?

Nature's tranquillity, its unspoiled beauty and the unfathomable mysteries of the elements have always fascinated poets. There are several poems that muse upon it—classic ones like Christina Rossetti's 'Who has Seen the Wind?' or P.B. Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' and William Wordsworth's 'My Heart Leaps Up When I Behold'. There are verses inspired by the marvels of storm and calm, trees and rainbows, the wonder of snowfall in a city, even spiders, by immortal

poets such as Walt Whitman, Joyce Kilmore and Robert Bridges. While poems like Nirendranath Chakrabarty's 'The Firefly', translated so expressively by Swapna Dutta, talk about nature as an uplifting force, man's callousness towards his environment has been explored in poems like D.H. Lawrence's unforgettable 'The Snake' and K. Satchidanandan's brooding 'Tortoise'. These remind us about the importance of protecting rather than thoughtlessly destroying life on this planet that we share with so many living organisms. Nature has many aspects, however, and Ruskin Bond's 'Hip-Hop Nature Boy' is a hilarious take on its perils!

Whenever I feel discouraged and low, I've always found there's nothing like a poem to revive my flagging spirits. Hence, I have included immortal ones like 'Invictus' by William Ernest Henley, 'The Chambered Nautilus' by O.W. Holmes and, of course, the universal favourite 'If' by Rudyard Kipling that has been a source of inspiration to millions. I could not resist adding Alfred Lord Tennyson's 'Ulysses' too, whose memorable lines have enthused many:

And this grey spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought...

Jerry Pinto's 'Look' is another poem that can lift anyone's mood.

The iconic American poet Emily Dickinson probed the human condition in a unique style, lyrical but hard-hitting. Hope is what keeps us aloft through the worst of times and so I selected her all-time favourite "'Hope" Is the Thing with Feathers' as well as Thomas Hood's heartening 'The Darkling Thrush'.

The poems of Robert Burns have always moved me deeply. 'A Man's a Man for A' That' is one of my favourites. The dialect may be a bit of the challenge but the sense comes through strongly, despite the unfamiliar language, because surely we need to believe in the equality of all human beings and remember:

The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Then, it's not so easy for us to understand what is going on a disabled person's head, no matter how deeply we may empathize. The great poet John Milton provides us with deeply felt insights in 'On his Blindness'. These thought-provoking lines from the poem that are quoted over and over again point out that:

They also serve who only stand and wait.

Colley Cibber too reminds us that we all have different strengths in ‘The Blind Boy’, a heart-warming poem written centuries ago.

But wait—before you think that we have only serious poems in this book, there are plenty that will make you smile and chuckle. From old favourites like Lewis Carroll’s ‘Jabberwocky’ and Edward Lear’s ‘The Akond of Swat’ to Sukumar Ray’s side-splitting ‘Wordygurdyboom!’, translated from the Bengali by another wonderful poet, Sampurna Chattarji. Then we have the hilarious ‘Samarpreet Sood’ by Anushka Ravishankar, pure nonsense like ‘The One-Eyed Town’ by the one and only Gulzar, ‘The Bathing Hymn’ by Saroj Padki, translated from the Marathi original, Manoj Das’s ‘The Yellow Bear’ and Dash Benhur’s Oriya poem ‘The Shadow-Catching Baiya’—the latter two have been rendered in English by Sumanyu Sathpathy, himself an authority on Indian nonsense.

Since things that give you goosebumps have great appeal, we have poems like Keki Daruwalla’s ‘The Ghost’—more comic than scary—Sampurna Chattarji’s ‘Spooky!’ and the great Russian poet Alexander Pushkin’s eerie ‘Goblins of the Steppes’. Walter de la Mare’s verses have always lingered in my memory because they are so compellingly mysterious. I’m sure the riddle of ‘The Listeners’ will continue to intrigue you for a long time.

There are poems for almost every mood here, from many different and unusual points of view. For example, ‘The Roti’s Grudge’ by Natasha Sharma. You would also enjoy the word picture painted in ‘The Palki Song’, in which the rhythm of the palanquin-bearers’ steps is vividly replicated in the rhyme. This popular Bengali poem by Satyendranath Dutta has been performed by famous singers like Hemanta Kumar. ‘The Yogi’s a Solitary’ by iconic poet-philosopher Kabir, on the other hand, is one that makes you pause to think. The translation by renowned poet Arvind Krishna Mehrotra is a classic in itself.

And I’d like to add that since this book is meant for you, there are many poems about children—loving ones, disobedient ones, careless, questioning or simply playful—from the comic ‘Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore’ by W.B. Rands to the thoughtful ‘The Good-for-Nothing’ by Adil Jussawala.

I could go and on about the many wonderful poems put together in this collection if I had space but perhaps I’ll let you discover the rest yourself!

In the end all I can say is: enjoy these poems, relish the music of the words, tap out their rhythms, whisper or shout them aloud, explode with laughter as you read them or wipe away a tear. Stop to think. Let your heart soar or burst with emotion. Sneak into a corner to write a verse of your own.

But always remember, a good poem will stay with you forever.

THE SCIENTIST

Rabindranath Tagore



When the thunder rumbled, ma You heard the clouds so plain
When in the month of June there came The falling lines of rain
When the eastern wind did cross The fields, how hard it blew
Whistling through the bamboo grove Like a flute so true

And all at once, just see, ma Covering the earth, near and far
Oh so many flowers

Springing into view

You may think that they're just flowers Sprouting in a throng

But I think, ma, that all of you Are absolutely wrong

For in fact they're all schoolboys Books in every hand

They can be found in their classrooms That lie beneath the sand
They study on the floor

Behind a closed door

And if they want to play

The teacher makes them stand April and May for them

Are just the afternoon

When June is here the sun goes down It will be evening soon

All the branches stir and rustle Deep within the forest

When the clouds start rumbling It's four-thirty, that's best
For at once school gives over And they tumble out

In white and green and red and gold A hundred shades, no doubt
You know, ma, I really think they Live up in the sky

Where at night the stars line up In rows arranged so high

Can't you see, ma, how busy they are In your garden fine
And do you understand just why They're forming a quick line?
Do you know for whom
They are trying to bloom
Do you think that they don't have Mothers just like mine?

Translated by Arunava Sinha from the Bengali original 'Boiggyanik'

WHERE DID YOU COME FROM, BABY DEAR?

George MacDonald



Where did you come from, baby dear?
Out of the everywhere into here.
Where did you get your eyes so blue?
Out of the sky as I came through.
What makes the light in them sparkle and spin?
Some of the starry spikes left in.
Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here.
What makes your forehead so smooth and high?
A soft hand stroked it as I went by.
What makes your cheek like a warm white rose?
I saw something better than anyone knows.
Whence that three-cornered smile of bliss?
Three angels gave me at once a kiss.
Where did you get this pearly ear?
God spoke, and it came out to hear.
Where did you get those arms and hands?
Love made itself into bonds and bands.
Feet, whence did you come, you darling things?
From the same box as the cherubs' wings.
How did they all just come to be you?
God thought about me, and so I grew.
But how did you come to us, you dear?

God thought about you, and so I am here.

THE YOGI'S A SOLITARY

Kabir



The yogi's a solitary He doesn't go on pilgrimages Or to religious fairs Or attend congregations He doesn't keep fasts He doesn't have a travel bag Or utensils to cook in He doesn't carry a purse He doesn't rub

His body with ash

He doesn't have an alms bowl But never goes hungry At night

After his wanderings He returns to his house And sleeps in the courtyard You
can't meet him Says Kabir

He left the country We're citizens of And he's not coming back *Translated by
Arvind Krishna Mehrotra from the Hindi*

WHO HAS SEEN THE WIND?

Christina Rossetti



Who has seen the wind?

Neither I nor you.

But when the leaves hang trembling,

The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?

Neither you nor I.

But when the trees bow down their heads,

The wind is passing by.

HIP-HOP NATURE BOY

Ruskin Bond



When I was seven,
And climbing trees,
I stepped into a hive of bees.
Badly stung and mad with pain, I danced the hip-hop in the rain.
Hip-hop, I'm a nature boy, Mother Nature's pride and joy!
When I was twelve,
Still climbing trees,
I fell instead—
And landed on my head.
Feeling lighter,
I thought I might become a writer.
Hip-hop, dancing in the rain, A nature-writer I became!
With Nature being my natural bent, At twenty I took out my tent, And spent the
night beside a Nadi, Wearing only vest and chuddee.
At crack of dawn I woke to find A crocodile was close behind, And smiling
broadly!
In times of crisis at my best, I did not trouble to get dressed, But fled towards the
Gulf of Kutch, With fond salaams to muggermuch!
Mother Nature once again Found me dancing on the plain, Nanga-panga in the
rain!
Growing older, even bolder, Took a winding mountain trail, Up a hill and down
a dale, All to see a mountain-quail.
The quail was extinct, long expired, I was limping, very tired, Thought I saw a
comfy cot In the corner of a hut.
Feeling grateful, I sank down Upon a blanket soft as down.

Blanket rose up all at once, Gave a shudder, then a pounce.
Stumbling in the darkness there, I'd disturbed a big brown bear!
I did not stop to say goodnight, But fled into the open night.
Hip-hop in the rain,
Dancing to that old refrain.

Growing old, I thought it safer In my tryst with Mother Nature, To grow flowers
— Roses, dahlias,

Poppies, sweet peas, rare azaleas, Candy tuft and tiny tansies, Violets sweet and
naughty pansies...

A lovely garden I'd constructed, Birds and bees were soon inducted.

Bees! Did I say bees?

They were buzzing all around me— Angry, diving down upon me; For where
their hive had been suspended, By accident it lay upended!

Dear Reader, if you must In Nature put your trust, Stay away from swarms of
bees And strange crocs lurking under trees, Or else, like me, you'll dance with
pain While doing the hip-hop in the rain.

MY SHADOW

Robert Louis Stevenson



I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me, And what can be the use of him is more than

I can see.

He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head; And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.

The funniest thing about him is the way he likes to grow— Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow; For he sometimes shoots up taller like an india-rubber ball, And he sometimes goes so little that there's none of him at all.

He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play, And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.

He stays so close behind me, he's a coward you can see; I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!

One morning, very early, before the sun was up, I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup; But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head, Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

on the towel stand.

Once a forest guard saw

one fifth of his face—

the ghost's face;

he only saw eyebrows and goatee.

Another saw no legs, but sailing by he saw a dhoti.

And in a village birds would suddenly stop Their morning bicker
and their morning twitter.

They had sensed a ghost there rummaging in the litter.

But let's end these stories for ghosts give me the jitters!

MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD

William Wordsworth



My heart leaps up when I behold A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began; So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old, Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man; And I could wish my days to be Bound each to
each by natural piety.

RATHERS

Mary Austin



I know very well what I'd rather be If I didn't always have to be me!

I'd rather be an owl,

A downy feathered owl,

A wink-ity, blink-ity, yellow-eyed owl In a hole in a hollow tree.

I'd take my dinner in chipmunk town, And wouldn't I gobble the field mice
down, If I were a wink-ity, blink-ity owl, And didn't always have to be me!

I know very well what I'd like to do If I didn't have to do what I do!

I'd go and be a woodpecker, A rap-ity, tap-ity, red-headed woodpecker In the
top of a tall old tree.

And I'd never take a look

At a lesson or a book,

And I'd scold like a pirate on the sea, If I only had to do what I like to do, And
didn't always have to be me!

Or else I'd be an antelope, A pronghorned antelope,

With lots of other antelope Skimming like a cloud on a wire-grass plain.

A bounding, bouncing antelope, You'd never get me back to my desk again!

Or I might be a puma,

A single-coloured puma,

A slinking, sly-foot puma

As fierce as fierce could be!

And I'd wait by the waterholes where antelope drink In the cool of the morning
And I do

not

think

That ever any antelope could get away from me.

But if I were a hunter,
A red Indian hunter—
I'd like to be a hunter—
I'd have a bow made of juniper wood From a lightning-blasted tree, And I'd
creep and I'd creep on that puma asleep A flint-tipped arrow,
An eagle-feathered arrow,
For a puma kills calves and a puma kills sheep, And he'd never eat any more
antelope If he once met up with me!

'HOPE' IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS

Emily Dickinson



'Hope' is the thing with feathers— That perches in the soul—
And sings the tune without the words— And never stops—at all—
And sweetest—in the Gale—is heard— And sore must be the storm—
That could abash the little Bird That kept so many warm— I've heard it in the
chillest land— And on the strangest Sea—
Yet—never—in Extremity,
It asked a crumb—of Me.

GODFREY GORDON GUSTAVUS GORE

William Brighty Rands



Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore—

No doubt you have heard the name before— Was a boy who never would shut a door!

The wind might whistle, the wind might roar, And teeth be aching and throats be sore,
But still he never would shut the door.

His father would beg, his mother implore, ‘Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,
We really do wish you would shut the door!’

Their hands they wrung, their hair they tore; But Godfrey Gordon Gustavus
Gore

Was deaf as the buoy out at the Nore.

When he walked forth the folks would roar, ‘Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore,
Why don’t you think to shut the door?’

They rigged up a Shutter with sail and oar, And threatened to pack off Gustavus
Gore On a voyage of penance to Singapore.

But he begged for mercy and said, ‘No more!

Pray do not send me to Singapore

On a Shutter, and then I will shut the door!’

‘You will?’ said his parents; ‘then keep on shore!

But mind you do! For the plague is sore Of a fellow that never will shut the door,
Godfrey Gordon Gustavus Gore!’

SONNET

Toru Dutt



A sea of foliage girds our garden round, But not a sea of dull unvaried green,
Sharp contrasts of all colours here are seen; The light-green graceful tamarinds
abound Amid the mango clumps of green profound, And palms arise, like pillars
grey, between; And o'er the quiet pools the seemuls lean, Red-red, and startling
like a trumpet's sound.

But nothing can be lovelier than the ranges Of bamboos to the eastward, when
the moon Looks through their gaps, and the white lotus changes Into a cup of
silver. One might swoon

Drunken with beauty then, or gaze and gaze On a primeval Eden, in amaze.

THE LITTLE DOLL

Charles Kingsley



I once had a sweet little doll, dears, The prettiest doll in the world;
Her cheeks were so red and so white, dears, And her hair was so charmingly
curled.
But I lost my poor little doll, dears, As I played in the heath one day;
And I cried for her more than a week, dears; But I never could find where she
lay.
I found my poor little doll, dears,
As I played in the heath one day:
Folks say she is terrible changed, dears, For her paint is all washed away,
And her arm trodden off by the cows, dears, And her hair not the least bit curled:
Yet for old sakes' sake she is still, dears, The prettiest doll in the world.

A ROTI'S GRUDGE

Natasha Sharma



I never get a second glance Hear 'yummy' on an off chance Yet, there I sit in
every plate Round and ready to meet my fate As I'm unceremoniously torn
Pinched into a scoop

A substitute for a spoon

Dunked into lentil soup

And though I don't mean

To crib, whinge and whine A little appreciation would be nice
When you sit down to dine I am eaten in many a form
Fluffy phulkas if that's the norm Roti
when I am solid and sound Paratha's dripping ghee

Triangular or round

Spicy theplas from Gujarat Dry chappatis for problems with the heart While
those with no such concern Eat me as puri and bhatura in turn Naan's for people
in between Kulchas with every stuffing seen Yet here I lie roasted

Puffed up, dejected, sad

Unrecognised for all my efforts At keeping your fussy palates glad.

HOW THE LEAVES CAME DOWN

Susan Coolidge



I'll tell you how the leaves came down, The great Tree to his children said:
'You're getting sleepy, Yellow and Brown, Yes, very sleepy, little Red;
It is quite time to go to bed.'

'Ah!' begged each silly, pouting leaf, 'Let us a little longer stay;
Dear Father Tree, behold our grief!
'Tis such a very pleasant day,
We do not want to go away.'

So, just for one more merry day
To the great Tree the leaflets clung, Frolicked and danced, and had their way,
Upon the autumn breezes swung,
Whispering all their sports among— 'Perhaps the great Tree will forget, And let
us stay until the spring, If we all beg, and coax, and fret.'

But the great Tree did no such thing; He smiled to hear their whispering.
'Come, children, all to bed,' he cried; And ere the leaves could urge their prayer,
He shook his head, and far and wide, Fluttering and rustling everywhere, Down
sped the leaflets through the air.

I saw them; on the ground they lay, Golden and red, a huddled swarm,
Waiting till one from far away,
White bedclothes heaped upon her arm, Should come to wrap them safe and
warm.

The great bare Tree looked down and smiled.

'Good-night, dear little leaves,' he said.

And from below each sleepy child

Replied, 'Good-night,' and murmured, 'It is so nice to go to bed!'

LEISURE

William Henry Davies



What is this life if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass, Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight, Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance, And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this is if, full of care, We have no time to stand and stare.

TORTOISE

K. Satchidanandan



Tortoise, tortoise,
what is your time like?
Our clocks are too fast, our lives a fever.
Let me be there
where the earth is still and hurry has no hurry,
where the waterfall is a painting the lightning is a statue and the wind has
drunkard's steps, where the hare is a snow-ball and the deer a dale.

Tortoise, tortoise,
what is your house like?
Our houses are frail,
our roofs leak.
Let me dwell under your roof no summer can melt
nor autumn dissolve.
What lies under that gold?
A weary moon and dim-lit stars?
Another sky? Or another world?

Tortoise, tortoise,
Where did you vanish
after that race with the hare?
From the fable to the myth?
Did Vishnu take your shape To lift up the mountain up from the milky sea?
How to decode the script on your shell?
Is it your horoscope?

with a small flourish

when were you born
to the breeze and the rain?

When our humankind is

gone from earth for good —we seem so keen to go— will you, the lone
survivor of storms and wars

tell the last trees our tragic tale?

ODE TO THE WEST WIND

Percy Bysshe Shelley



I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being, Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing, Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red, Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,

Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The wing'd seeds, where they lie cold and low, Each like a corpse within its grave, until Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air) With living hues and odours plain and hill: Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!

THE PALKI SONG

Satyendranath Dutta



The palki moves
And passes by,
A haze of heat
Beneath the sky!

Silent village
People run
With torso bare
In scorching sun!

Vendors on their Wooden seat
Snooze and doze
In noonday heat.

Flies flutter,
As they hum
And hover on
The milky scum.

Roughly clad
The walkers run— The market's closed In mid-day sun.
Sniffing dust,
The doggies hark— Listless, and
Too weak to bark!

Cows barge in
Without a care.
The scent of mangoes Fills the air!
The palki moves, And swings and goes— Like a dancer
On her toes!

The bearers six, So sprightly, strong— Towards the field They move along.
The field—a flaming Copper plate,
Too hot to walk— A fiery grate!
Up and down
They step and cave, Tossing like
A breaking wave!

A ship on land
That forward flits On oar-like legs Of bearers six!
The drowsy jutes Are dusky green, And paddy fields Now bare and clean.
'Beware!' they cry And take a turn.
The bearers six
See how they run!

Rapid steps—
The field's behind— A row of palm trees Now they find.
Kites in air, The cows in shed, There's the village Right ahead.
Wearing beads,
The hermit tall
Plasters mud
Upon the wall.

The farmer's boy Looks on in awe
From the rooftop Made of straw.
The hermit wears A pious air,

Spreading hay
Without a care,

A butterfly
So yellow, bright Steps on blossom, Treading light!
Who's the damsel?
Who can say?
At the pond She toils away— Scrubbing clean
Her pots and pans, She pats her clothes With dirty hands!
The palki's here?
Where can it be?
The naked toddler Runs to see!
Hear the schoolboys Read all day— Moonbeams in
A house of clay!

The school's within The village store, Where teacher sells His stuff galore!
A ruined house,
An empty bay—
Where grazing goats And sparrows stray The village ends.
Beneath a tree—
A fire burns,
As you can see,

A fresh green leaf With sloppy rice, Piping hot
And steaming nice!

Crossing now
The village store, The palki's on the Field once more!
A grate of copper Once again— The bearers run
Or tramp in pain!

The meadow's cracked In scorching sun The palki moves— A steady run!
Clouds above The sky so vast— And snowy kites
Keep racing fast!

Like a syrup
On the boil—
A steamy breeze
In ceaseless toil!

See grasshoppers Jump and run— Towards the dam
And setting sun!

The palki moves.
The spirit's low— How long is it?
How far to go?

Not too far,
We're almost there!
And there's our village Market square.
Our little shops, The narrow lanes, And just beyond— The store of grains.
The palki's home With aching feet, Neath setting sun And glowing heat!

Translated by Swapna Dutta from the Bengali original 'Paalkir Gaan'

IF

Rudyard Kipling



If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on
you,

If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their
doubting too; If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about,
don't deal in lies,

Or being hated, don't give way to hating,

And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise: If you can dream—and not make
dreams your master, If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim; If you
can meet with Triumph and Disaster

And treat those two impostors just the same; If you can bear to hear the truth
you've spoken Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools, Or watch the things
you gave your life to, broken, And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it all on one turn of
pitch-and-toss, And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a
word about your loss;

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after
they are gone, And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will
which says to them: 'Hold on!'

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings—nor lose
the common touch, If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men
count with you, but none too much; If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything
that's in it, And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

OUR LITTLE GHOST

Louisa May Alcott



Oft in the silence of the night, When the lonely moon rides high, When wintry winds are whistling, And we hear the owl's shrill cry, In the quiet, dusky chamber,

By the flickering firelight,

Rising up between two sleepers, Comes a spirit all in white.

A winsome little ghost it is, Rosy-cheeked, and bright of eye; With yellow curls all breaking loose From the small cap pushed awry, Up it climbs among the pillows, For the 'big dark' brings no dread, And a baby's boundless fancy Makes a kingdom of a bed.

A fearless little ghost it is; Safe the night seems as the day; The moon is but a gentle face, And the sighing winds are gay.

The solitude is full of friends, And the hour brings no regrets; For, in this happy little soul, Shines a sun that never sets.

A merry little ghost it is,

Dancing gaily by itself,

On the flowery counterpane,

Like a tricky household elf; Nodding to the fitful shadows, As they flicker on the wall;

Talking to familiar pictures, Mimicking the owl's shrill call.

A thoughtful little ghost it is; And, when lonely gambols tire, With chubby hands on chubby knees, It sits winking at the fire.

Fancies innocent and lovely

Shine before those baby-eyes, Endless fields of dandelions, Brooks, and birds, and butterflies.

A loving little ghost it is:

When crept into its nest,
Its hand on father's shoulder laid, Its head on mother's breast,
It watches each familiar face, With a tranquil, trusting eye; And, like a sleepy
little bird, Sings its own soft lullaby.
Then those who feigned to sleep before, Lest baby play till dawn,
Wake and watch their folded flower— Little rose without a thorn.
And, in the silence of the night, The hearts that love it most
Pray tenderly above its sleep, 'God bless our little ghost!'

THIS KADAMB TREE

Subhadra Kumari Chauhan



If this kadamb tree stood by the Yamuna river, Ma, I too would sit upon it and turn into Krishna.

If you would buy for me a two paisa flute, Ma, This kadamb branch would bend low somehow.

I wouldn't tell you, Ma, but I'd tiptoe to the tree Grab that branch and climb up very high, Ma.

I would sit on the tree and play a merry tune, Call you in the flute's voice, 'Amma-Amma!'

Hearing my flute, you'd be so delighted, Ma,
You'd leave your chores and come out to watch me.

Seeing you approach, I'd put down my flute, go still, Then hide in the leaves and play softly again, Ma.

Wouldn't come down even when you called and called.
How your mother's heart would ache for me then, Ma!

You'd spread your aanchal and sit under the tree, Close your eyes and pray fervently to God, Ma.

Seeing you lost in prayer, I'd steal upon you softly, And quickly hide beneath your spread out sari, Ma.

Startled, you'd open your eyes and laugh with joy, To find your darling boy right there in your lap, Ma!

Translated by Deepa Agarwal from the Hindi original

'Yeh Kadamb ka Ped'

THE OLD BROWN HORSE

W.F. Holmes



The old brown horse looks over the fence In a weary sort of way.
He seems to be saying to all who pass: 'Well, folks, I've had my day
I'm simply watching the world go by, And nobody seems to mind,
As they're dashing past in their motor-cars, A horse who is lame and half-blind.'
The old brown horse has a shaggy coat, But once he was young and trim,
And he used to trot through the woods and lanes With the man who was fond of
him.
But his master rides in a motor-car, And it makes him feel quite sad
When he thinks of the days that used to be, And of all the times they had.
Sometimes a friendly soul will stop Near the fence, where the tired old head
Rests wearily on the topmost bar, And a friendly word is said.
Then the old brown horse gives a little sigh As he feels the kindly touch Of a
hand on his mane or his shaggy coat, And he doesn't mind so much.
So if you pass by the field one day, Just stop for a word or two
With the old brown horse who was once as young And as full of life as you.
He'll love the touch of your soft young hand, And I know he'll seem to say
'Oh, thank you, friend, for the kindly thought For a horse who has had his day.'

THE MIGRATION OF THE GREY SQUIRRELS

William Howitt



When in my youth I travelled
Throughout each north country, Many a strange thing did I hear, And many a
strange thing to see.
But nothing was there pleased me more Than when, in autumn brown,
I came, in the depths of the pathless woods, To the grey squirrels' town.
There were hundreds that in the hollow boles Of the old, old trees did dwell,
And laid up store, hard by their door, Of the sweet mast as it fell.
But soon the hungry wild swine came, And with thievish snouts dug up Their
buried treasure, and left them not So much as an acorn cup.
Then did they chatter in angry mood, And one and all decree,
Into the forests of rich stone-pine Over hill and dale to flee.
Over hill and dale, over hill and dale, For many a league they went,
Like a troop of undaunted travellers Governed by one consent.
But the hawk and the eagle, and peering owl, Did dreadfully pursue;
And the further the grey squirrels went, The more their perils grew;
When lo! to cut off their pilgrimage, A broad stream lay in view.
But then did each wondrous creature show His cunning and bravery;
With a piece of the pine-bark in his mouth, Unto the stream came he;
And boldly his little bark he launched, Without the least delay;
His busy tail was his upright sail, And he merrily steered away.
Never was there a lovelier sight Than that grey squirrels' fleet; And with anxious
eyes I watched to see What fortune it would meet.
Soon had they reached the rough mild-stream, And ever and anon
I grieved to behold some bark wrecked. And its little steersman gone.

~~But the main fleet stoutly held across; I saw them leap to shore; They entered the~~

woods with a cry of joy, For their perilous march was o'er.

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

William Shakespeare



All the world's a stage,

And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances, And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages. At first, the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.

Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like a snail Unwillingly to school. And then the lover, Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier, Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard, Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel, Seeking the bubble reputation

Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice, In fair round belly with good capon lined, With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws and modern instances;

And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,

With spectacles on nose and pouch on side; His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, Turning again toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

From the play As You Like It

TREES

Joyce Kilmer



I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

LOOK

Jerry Pinto



Day before yesterday, it was cloudy. I opened my window and thanked the clouds.

They bring rain and the rain makes things grow.

Yesterday, it was raining. I opened my window and thanked the rain.

If it rains enough, they may cancel school.

Yesterday, it was sunny. I opened my window and thanked the sun.

The sun gives us heat and light and it's all free.

I don't know what the weather will be like tomorrow but I'm ready.

I'm going to smile at the weather, whatever it's like.

And look, I'm going to smile at you.

I'm smiling. I'm smiling.

And look you're smiling back.

It's catching. Look, she's smiling too. And she's smiling.

We're all smiling.

I think the world's already a better place.

I'm going but YOU,

YOU

Keep that smile going.

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT

T.S. Eliot



Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.

He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair: For when they reach the scene of crime—*Macavity's not there!*

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.

His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,
And when you reach the scene of crime—*Macavity's not there!*

You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air But I tell you once and once again, *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;

You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.

His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed; His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.

He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake; And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.

You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not there!*

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.) And his footsteps are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.

And when the larder's looted, or the jewel case is rifled, Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled, Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and

the trellis past repair— Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! *Macavity's not there!*

And when the foreign office find a Treaty gone astray, Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way, There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair— But it's useless to investigate—*Macavity's not there!*

And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say: 'It *must* have been Macavity!'—but he's a mile away.

You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs, Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,

There never was a cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.

He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:

At whatever time the deed took place—MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!

And they say of all the cats whose wicked deeds are widely known (I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone) Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime!

THE FORSAKEN MERMAN

Matthew Arnold



Come, dear children, let us away; Down and away below!

Now my brothers call from the bay, Now the great winds shoreward blow, Now the salt tides seaward flow; Now the wild white horses play, Champ and chafe and toss in the spray.

Children dear, let us away!

This way, this way!

Call her once before you go—

Call once yet!

In a voice that she will know:

‘Margaret! Margaret!’

Children’s voices should be dear (Call once more) to a mother’s ear; Children’s voices, wild with pain— Surely she will come again!

Call her once and come away;

This way, this way!

‘Mother dear, we cannot stay!

The wild white horses foam and fret.’

Margaret! Margaret!

Come, dear children, come away down; Call no more!

One last look at the white-walled town, And the little grey church on the windy shore; Then come down!

She will not come though you call all day; Come away, come away!

Children dear, was it yesterday We heard the sweet bells over the bay?

In the caverns where we lay,

Through the surf and through the swell, The far-off sound of a silver bell?

Sand-strewn caverns, cool and deep, Where the winds are all asleep; Where the

spent lights quiver and gleam, Where the salt weed sways in the stream, Where the sea-beasts, ranged all round, Feed in the ooze of their pasture-ground; Where the sea-snakes coil and twine, Dry their mail and bask in the brine; Where great whales come sailing by, Sail and sail, with unshut eye, Round the world for ever and aye?

When did music come this way?

Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, was it yesterday?

(Call yet once) that she went away?

Once she sate with you and me,

On a red gold throne in the heart of the sea, And the youngest sate on her knee.

She combed its bright hair, and she tended it well, When down swung the sound of a far-off bell.

She sighed, she looked up through the clear green sea; She said: 'I must go, for my kinsfolk pray In the little grey church on the shore today.

'Twill be Easter-time in the world—ah me!

And I lose my poor soul, Merman! here with thee.'

I said: 'Go up, dear heart, through the waves; Say thy prayer, and come back to the kind sea-caves!'

She smiled, she went up through the surf in the bay.

Children dear, was it yesterday?

Children dear, were we long alone?

The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan; 'Long prayers,' I said, 'In the world they say; Come,' I said; and we rose through the surf in the bay.

We went up the beach, by the sandy down Where the sea-stocks bloom, to the white-walled town; Through the narrow paved streets, where all was still, To the little grey church on the windy hill.

From the church came a murmur of folk at their prayers, But we stood without in the cold blowing airs.

We climbed on the graves, on the stones worn with rains, And we gazed up the aisle through the small leaded panes.

She sat by the pillar; we saw her clear: 'Margaret, hist! come quick, we are here!

Dear heart,' I said, 'We are long alone; The sea grows stormy, the little ones moan.'

III
Call.

But, ah, she gave me never a look, For her eyes we sealed to the holy book!

Loud prays the priest; shut stands the door.

Come away, children, call no more!

Come away, come down, call no more!

Down, down, down!

Down to the depths of the sea!

She sits at her wheel in the humming town, Singing most joyfully.

Hark, what she sings: 'O joy, O joy, For the humming street, and the child with its toy!

For the priest, and the bell, and the holy well; For the wheel where I spun,

And the blessed light of the sun!'

And so she sings her fill,

Singing most joyfully,

Till the shuttle drops from her hand, And the whizzing wheel stands still.

She steals to the window, and looks at the sand, And over the sand at the sea;

And her eyes are set in a stare; And anon there breaks a sigh,

And anon there drops a tear,

From a sorrow-clouded eye,

And a heart sorrow-laden,

A long, long sigh;

For the cold strange eyes of a little Mermaid, And the gleam of her golden hair.

Come away, away children;

Come children, come down!

The hoarse wind blows coldly;

Lights shine in the town.

She will start from her slumber When gusts shake the door;

She will hear the winds howling, Will hear the waves roar.

We shall see, while above us

The waves roar and whirl,

A coiling of amber

A ceiling of amber,
A pavement of pearl,
Singing: 'Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she!
And alone dwell for ever
The kings of the sea.'
But, children, at midnight,
When soft the winds blow, When clear fall the moonlight,
When spring-tides are low;
When sweet airs come seaward
From heaths starred with broom, And high rocks throw mildly
On the blanched sands a gloom;
Up the still, glistening beaches, Up the creeks we will hie,
Over banks of bright seaweed
The ebb-tide leaves dry.
We will gaze, from the sand-hills, At the white sleeping town;
At the church on the hillside—
And then come back down.
Singing: 'There dwells a loved one, But cruel is she!
She left lonely for ever
The kings of the sea.'

THE YELLOW BEAR

Manoj Das



A yellow bear on Iceland's shore Would sweetly speak and never roar.
None might believe, I guarantee, Except Abanie Mahantie.
Poor Abanie, his soul has passed At four-score-one he breathed his last He never
quite could understand That trains existed in this land.
It's one like you, dear Abanie, Our planet does so rarely see.
I know my Abanie would laugh
To hear this told on his behalf: Last week atop the old dam's brink I told the
moon just what I think I told the moon just what I think About a crone that I had
found Nine cubits tall and five around, Quite ungainly, I must tell,
In Indonesia did she dwell.
The old maid moon, not once in doubt, Believed my tale, then hopped about.
From cloud to cloud so daintily Delighting in her levity
O Abanie Mahantie, dear,
If I could hear your voice draw near, If I could see you sometime soon, Around
your neck I'd tie that moon.

Translated by Sumanyu Satpathy from the Oriya original

'Haladia Bhalu'

THE BLIND BOY

Colley Cibber



O say, what is that thing call'd Light, Which I can ne'er enjoy?
What is the blessing of the sight, O tell your poor blind boy!
You talk of wondrous things you see, You say the sun shines bright; I feel him
warm, but how can he Then make it day or night?
My day or night myself I make Whene'er I sleep or play;
And could I ever keep awake
With me 'twere always day.
With heavy sighs I often hear You mourn my hapless woe;
But sure with patience I can bear A loss I ne'er can know.
Then let not what I cannot have My cheer of mind destroy;
Whilst thus I sing, I am a king, Although a poor blind boy.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG

Elizabeth Barrett Browning



Yet, my pretty sportive friend, Little is't to such an end That I praise thy rareness!

Other dogs may be thy peers Haply in these drooping ears, And this glossy fairness.

But of *thee* it shall be said, This dog watched beside a bed Day and night unwearied,

Watched within a curtained room, Where no sunbeam brake the gloom Round the sick and dreary.

Roses, gathered for a vase, In that chamber died apace, Beam and breeze resigning.

This dog only, waited on

Knowing that when light is gone Love remains for shining.

Other dogs in thymy dew Tracked the hares, and followed through Sunny moor or meadow.

This dog only, crept and crept Next a languid cheek that slept, Sharing in the shadow.

Other dogs of loyal cheer Bounded at the whistle clear, Up the woodside hieing.

This dog only, watched in reach Of a faintly uttered speech, Or a louder sighing.

And if one or two quick tears Dropped upon his glossy ears, Or a sigh came double,

Up he sprang in eager haste, Fawning, fondling, breathing fast, In a tender trouble.

THE SNAKE

David Herbert Lawrence



A snake came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in pyjamas for the heat, To drink there.
In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob-tree I came down the
steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before
me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom And trailed his
yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of
the stone trough And rested his throat upon the stone bottom, And where the
water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness, He sipped with his straight
mouth,

Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body, Silently.
Someone was before me at my water-trough, And I, like a second comer,
waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do, And looked at me vaguely, as
drinking cattle do, And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused
a moment, And stooped and drank a little more,

Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth On the
day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me

He must be killed,

For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And voices in me said, If you were a man

You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,

How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough
And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless, Into the burning bowels of this
earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him? Was it perversity, that I longed to
talk to him? Was it humility, to feel so honoured?

I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:

If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid, But even so, honoured still more That
he should seek my hospitality

From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough

And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken, And flickered his tongue
like a forked night on the air, so black, Seeming to lick his lips,

And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air, And slowly turned his
head, And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream, Proceeded to draw his slow
length curving round And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole, And as he slowly drew up, snake-
easing his shoulders, and entered farther, A sort of horror, a sort of protest
against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole, Deliberately going into the
blackness, and slowly drawing himself after, Overcame me now his back was
turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,

I picked up a clumsy log

And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him,

But suddenly that part of him that was left behind convulsed in undignified
haste.

Writhed like lightning. and was gone

Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-front, At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fascination.

And immediately I regretted it.

I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!

I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human education.

And I thought of the albatross

And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king, Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld, Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.

And I have something to expiate:

A pettiness.

THE FIRST TOOTH

Charles and Mary Lamb



Sister:

Through the house what busy joy, Just because the infant boy Has a tiny tooth to show!

I have got a double row,

All as white, and all as small; Yet no one cares for mine at all.

He can say but half a word, Yet that single sound's preferred To all the words that I can say In the longest summer day.

He cannot walk, yet if he put With mimic motion out his foot, As if he thought he were advancing, It's prized more than my best dancing.

Brother:

Sister, I know jesting you are, Yet O! of jealousy beware.

If the smallest seed should be In your mind of jealousy,

It will spring, and it will shoot, Till it bear the baneful fruit.

I remember you, my dear,

Young as is this infant here.

There was not a tooth of those Your pretty, even ivory rows, But as anxiously was watch'd Till it burst its shell new hatch'd, As if it a Phoenix were,

Or some other wonder rare.

So when you began to walk—

So when you began to talk—

As now, the same encomium's pass'd.

'Tis not fitting this should last Longer than our infant days, A child is fed with milk and praise.

THE STORY OF JOHNNY HEAD-IN-AIR

Heinrich Hoffman



As he trudged along to school, It was always Johnny's rule
To be looking at the sky

And the clouds that floated by; But what just before him lay,
In his way, Johnny never thought about; So that everyone cried out, 'Look at little Johnny
there, Little Johnny Head-in-Air!'

Running just in Johnny's way Came a little dog one day;

Johnny's eyes were still astray Up on high,

In the sky;

And he never heard them cry, 'Johnny, mind, the dog is nigh!'

Bump!

Dump!

Down they fell, with such a thump, Dog and Johnny in a lump!

Once, with head as high as ever, Johnny walked beside the river.

Johnny watched the swallows trying Which was cleverest at flying.

Oh! what fun!

Johnny watched the bright round sun Going in and coming out;

This was all he thought about.

So he strode on, only think!

To the river's very brink,

Where the bank was and steep, And the water very deep;

And the fishes, in a row,

Stared to see him coming so.

One step more! oh! sad to tell!
Headlong in poor Johnny fell.
And the fishes, in dismay,
Wagged their tails and swam away.

There lay Johnny on his face, With his nice red writing-case; But, as they were passing by, Two strong men had heard him cry; And, with sticks, these two strong men Hooked poor Johnny out again.

Oh! you should have seen him shiver When they pulled him from the river, He was in a sorry plight!

Dripping wet, and such a fright!

Wet all over, everywhere,

Clothes, and arms, and face, and hair: Johnny never will forget

What it is to be so wet.

And the fishes, one, two, three, Are come back again, you see; Up they came the moment after, To enjoy the fun and laughter.

Each popped out his little head, And, to tease poor Johnny, said: 'Silly little Johnny, look, You have lost your writing-book!'

A CHILD'S LAUGHTER

Algernon Charles Swinburne



All the bells of heaven may ring, All the birds of heaven may sing, All the wells
on earth may spring, All the winds on earth may bring All sweet sounds
together;

Sweeter far than all things heard, Hand of harper, tone of bird, Sound of woods
at sundawn stirred, Welling water's winsome word, Wind in warm wan weather,

One thing yet there is, that none Hearing ere its chime be done Knows not well
the sweetest one Heard of man beneath the sun, Hoped in heaven hereafter;

Soft and strong and loud and light, Very sound of very light

Heard from morning's rosiest height, When the soul of all delight

Fills a child's clear laughter.

Golden bells of welcome rolled Never forth such notes, nor told Hours so blithe
in tones so bold, As the radiant mouth of gold

Here that rings forth heaven.

If the golden-crested wren

Were a nightingale—why, then, Something seen and heard of men Might be half
as sweet as when Laughs a child of seven.

THE ONE-EYED TOWN

Gulzar



I came upon a one-eyed town
Jam-packed with just One-Eyes,
On one hand they were crazy
On the other shrewd and wise.

In that one-eyed town I found
The rituals were so strange,
Sickness flourished in strange places Strange cures remained unchanged.
Their rivers flowed on bridges
And trains ran on water not land, On bushy tails of apes there grew Thick grapes
in bunches grand.
Umbrella in hand, on moonlit nights, They'd go out and say 'Oh my!
The dew is falling down it seems And breaking our heads from high.'
When the mice would bell themselves And go chasing after the cats
On empty bellies they'd drum their hands And sing qawallis just like that.
'In the land of the blind the one-eyed man Is king,' they say, but it's untrue, Do
see for yourself—in the one-eyed town Reigns a blind king—I swear to you.

Translated by Sampurna Chattarji from the Hindi original

'Kaano ki ek Nagri Dekhi'

A PRAYER FOR MY DAUGHTER

W.B. Yeats



Once more the storm is howling, and half hid Under this cradle-hood and
coverlid My child sleeps on. There is no obstacle But Gregory's wood and one
bare hill Whereby the haystack-and roof-levelling wind.

Bred on the Atlantic, can be stayed; And for an hour I have walked and prayed
Because of the great gloom that is in my mind.

I have walked and prayed for this young child an hour And heard the sea-wind
scream upon the tower, And under the arches of the bridge, and scream In the
elms above the flooded stream; Imagining in excited reverie

That the future years had come,
Dancing to a frenzied drum,
Out of the murderous innocence of the sea.

May she be granted beauty and yet not Beauty to make a stranger's eye
distraught, Or hers before a looking-glass, for such, Being made beautiful
overmuch, Consider beauty a sufficient end,

Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.

Helen being chosen found life flat and dull And later had much trouble from a
fool, While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray, Being fatherless could
have her way Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man.

It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of Plenty is undone.

in courtesy I have never clearly learned; Hearts are not had as a gift but hearts
are earned By those that are not entirely beautiful; Yet many, that have played
the fool For beauty's very self, has charm made wise, And many a poor man that
has roved, Loved and thought himself beloved,
From a glad kindness cannot take his eyes.

May she become a flourishing hidden tree That all her thoughts may like the
linnet be, And have no business but dispensing round Their magnanimities of
sound, Nor but in merriment begin a chase, Nor but in merriment a quarrel.

O may she live like some green laurel Rooted in one dear perpetual place.

My mind, because the minds that I have loved, The sort of beauty that I have
approved, Prosper but little, has dried up of late, Yet knows that to be choked
with hate May well be of all evil chances chief.

If there's no hatred in a mind
Assault and battery of the wind
Can never tear the linnet from the leaf.

An intellectual hatred is the worst, So let her think opinions are accursed.
Have I not seen the loveliest woman born Out of the mouth of plenty's horn,
Because of her opinionated mind
Barter that horn and every good
By quiet natures understood
For an old bellows full of angry wind?

Considering that, all hatred driven hence, The soul recovers radical innocence
And learns at last that it is self-delighting, Self-appeasing, self-affrighting, And
that its own sweet will is Heaven's will; She can, though every face should
scowl And every windy quarter howl
Or every bellows burst, be happy still.

And may her bridegroom bring her to a house Where all's accustomed,
ceremonious; For arrogance and hatred are the wares Peddled in the
thoroughfares.

How but in custom and in ceremony

Are innocence and beauty born?

Ceremony's a name for the rich horn, And custom for the spreading laurel tree.

WORDYGURDYBOOM!

Sukumar Ray



Whack-thwack boom-bam, oh what a rackers
Flowers blooming? I see! I thought they were crackers!
Whoosh-swoosh ping-pong my ears clench with fear You mean that's just a
pretty smell getting out of here?
Hurry-scurry clunk-thunk—what's that dreadful sound?
Can't you see the dew is falling, you better stay housebound!
Hush-shush listen! Slip-slop-sper-lash!
Oh no the moon's sunk—glub-glub-glubbash!
Rustle-bustle slip-slide the night just passed me by Smash-cash my dreams just
shattered, who can tell me why?
Rumble-tumble buzz-buzz I'm in such a tizzy!
My mind dancing round and round making me so dizzy!
Cling-clang ding-dong my aches ring like bells— O wow pop pop oh my heart it
bursts and swells!
Helter-skelter bang-bang '*help! help!*' they're screeching— Itching for a fight,
they said? Quick! Run out of reaching!

Translated by Sampurna Chattarji from the Bengali original

'Shado Kalpo Droom!'

TO SEE A WORLD

William Blake



To see a world in a grain of sand And a heaven in a wild flower, Hold infinity in
the palm of your hand And eternity in an hour.

A robin redbreast in a cage

Puts all heaven in a rage.

A dove house fill'd with doves and pigeons Shudders hell thro' all its regions.

A dog starv'd at his master's gate Predicts the ruin of the state.

A horse misus'd upon the road

Calls to heaven for human blood.

Each outcry of the hunted hare A fibre from the brain does tear.

He who shall train the horse to war Shall never pass the polar bar.

The beggar's dog and widow's cat, Feed them and thou wilt grow fat.

The gnat that sings his summer song Poison gets from slander's tongue.

The poison of the snake and newt Is the sweat of envy's foot.

A truth that's told with bad intent Beats all the lies you can invent.

It is right it should be so;

Man was made for joy and woe;

And when this we rightly know

Thro' the world we safely go.

Every night and every morn

Some to misery are born.

Every morn and every night

Some are born to sweet delight.

Some are born to sweet delight, Some are born to endless night.

Extracts from 'Auguries of Innocence'

THE CYBER RIVER

Shreekumar Varma



Hacking through forests of deadly data and backing-up each of them later,
I suffered a dangerous virus sting
but resumed with infinite zip and zing.

thick foliage of pop-ups and banners
and sudden beasts with really no manners; I crawled and I crept and I plodded on
to places no nerd had then trodded on.

I stole through a game that won me a prize, though it's really the steal that gave
me the highs.

but, hush! there's this department site that honestly gave me a terrible fright.
the squeak and the roar and the howl of a hound, though I'd taken great care to
lower the sound.

I'm nearing the end, I've forded a creek— jolly adventurer, no more a geek!
I type in a name and the shrubbery parts: see there's a sight to warm up your
hearts!

sipping the sun in a silver repast the river that crosses your future and past!
dressed in a smile I dive in so fast
that even the fish are rather aghast;

there's nothing on earth that can ever compare with the synthetic waves of a
million software!

swim and I leap and I frolic about,
I already feel I'll never get out!

the earth and the sky and a golden sunlight are nothing compared to the cyber
delight!

they're calling me now as they generally do but soon they will tire of all this
ado. they'll leave me alone and go back to bed the waters are closing iust over

my head.

THE LISTENERS

Walter de la Mare



‘Is there anybody there?’ said the Traveller, Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grass 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 grey 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.

THE SHADOW-CATCHING BAIYA

Dash Benhur



The shadow-catching Baiya came Sunshine filled the midday sky Kaiya was his given name

Who can tell what trick he played Back behind the clouds that day Skies of brightest sapphire splayed The rain-cloud-catching friend appeared, Blackest Night, his kinsman, too They approached as evening neared Seated, he guffawed like thunder Clouds soon hid or went astray Moonlight shone in all its wonder The moon-catching fisherman stayed awake High inside the Tungle Tree

Holding his net above the lake The full moon cast its image bright Upon the lake, to fake a swim And fool the fisherman that night The liar-catching cop barked out Coming quick that early eve

‘Bring me Hilsa!’ was his shout ‘Where’s the hilsa?’ liars asked Not in total innocence— Jumping in the river fast

The river-catching engineer

Came with minister in tow

Bringing words for all to hear Both of them did rant and shout For a dam they must construct A raucous rally came about

Explanation’s hard to hear

Rallies turn bitter lies

Sounds of truth resist the ear.

Translated by Sumanyu Satpathy from the Oriya original

‘Chhaidhara Baiya’

INVICTUS

William Ernest Henley



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

In the fell clutch of circumstance I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance My head is bloody, but unbowed.
Beyond this place of wrath and tears Looms but the Horror of the shade, And yet
the menace of the years Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.
It matters not how strait the gate, How charged with punishments the scroll.
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul.

THE ZOO

Vinda Karandikar



One day I dreamt of the zoo:
On the elephant's back, a snake or two.

And playing cards with the deer Two wily cheetahs sat quite near.
The monkey read the Puraan
While the camel read the Koran.

The lion lectured so long
The donkey wrote it down all wrong.

The giraffe sang ever so well: High as his neck his tune would swell.
The jackal managed the shop;
He thinned the milk to watery slop.

The animals of the zoo
Saw me and said, 'Give him a cage too!'

That's when I woke up—*phew!*
One day I dreamt of the zoo.

Translated by Anita Vachharajani from the Marathi original

'Ranichi Baag'

NO MAN IS AN ISLAND

John Donne



No man is an island, Entire of itself,
Every man is a piece of the continent, A part of the main.
If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less.
As well as if a promontory were.
As well as if a manor of thy friend's Or of thine own were: Any man's death
diminishes me, Because I am involved in mankind, And therefore never send to
know for whom the bell tolls;
It tolls for thee.

TELL ME NOT, IN MOURNFUL NUMBERS

H.W. Longfellow



Tell me not, in mournful numbers, Life is but an empty dream!
For the soul is dead that slumbers, And things are not what they seem.

Life is real! Life is earnest!

And the grave is not its goal; Dust thou art, to dust returnest, Was not spoken of
the soul.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow, Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow Find us farther than to-day.

Art is long, and Time is fleeting, And our hearts, though stout and brave, Still,
like muffled drums, are beating Funeral marches to the grave.

In the world's broad field of battle, In the bivouac of Life,

Be not like dumb, driven cattle!

Be a hero in the strife!

Trust no Future, howe'er pleasant!

Let the dead Past bury its dead!

Act, act in the living Present!

Heart within, and God o'erhead!

Lives of great men all remind us We can make our lives sublime, And,
departing, leave behind us Footprints on the sands of time; Footprints, that
perhaps another, Sailing o'er life's solemn main, A forlorn and shipwrecked
brother, Seeing, shall take heart again.

Let us, then, be up and doing, With a heart for any fate;

Still achieving, still pursuing, Learn to labour and to wait.

I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER

Thomas Hood



I remember, I remember

The house where I was born, The little window where the sun
Came peeping in
at morn;

He never came a wink too soon Nor brought too long a day; But now, I often
wish the night
Had borne my breath away.

I remember, I remember

The roses red and white,

The violets and the lily cups, Those flowers made of light!

The lilacs where the robin built, And where my brother set

The laburnum on his birthday, The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember

Where I was used to swing, And thought the air must rush as fresh
To swallows
on the wing;

My spirit flew in feathers then, That is so heavy now,

The summer pools could hardly cool The fever on my brow.

I remember, I remember

The fir-trees dark and high; I used to think their slender tops
Were close against
the sky: It was a childish ignorance, But now 'tis little joy

To know I'm farther off from Heaven Than when I was a boy.

THE CAMEL PERCHED UPON A BRICK

Anonymous



The camel perched upon a brick Was selling fried cake rather quick With bag in
hand the roguish rat Rode to the fair, upon a cat
An ant sold at the market stall An elephant two storeys tall
A wolf sat on the elephant's head The passers-by played golf instead A sheep sat
happily astride
The wolf, and went off for a ride The hen sat on the fox's back

Serving it a tasty snack

The seed was lying in the bin

Forecasting futures to the hen The blind bird sitting on the fence Uttered words
that made no sense Beneath a tree, upon the coast A bird perused its morning
post The snake and the mongoose had a fight They went to court to set it right.

Translated by B.S. Talwadi from the Kannada

A NOISELESS, PATIENT SPIDER

Walt Whitman



A noiseless, patient spider,
I mark'd, where, on a little promontory, it stood, isolated;
Mark'd how, to explore the vacant, vast surrounding, It launch'd forth filament,
filament, filament, out of itself;
Ever unreeling them—ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you, O my Soul, where you stand,
Surrounded, surrounded, in measureless oceans of space, Ceaselessly musing,
venturing, throwing,—seeking the spheres, to connect them; Till the bridge you
will need, be form'd—till the ductile anchor hold; Till the gossamer thread you
fling, catch somewhere,
O my Soul.

ODE TO BEAUTY

John Keats



A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:

Its lov'liness increases; it will never

Pass into nothingness; but still will keep A bower quiet for us, and a sleep

Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing A flowery band to bind us to the earth,

Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,

Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkn'd ways Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all, Some shape of beauty moves away the pall From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon, Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon For simple sheep; and such are daffodils With the green world they live in; and clear rills That for themselves a cooling covert make 'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake, Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms: And such too is the grandeur of the dooms We have imagined for the mighty dead;

An endless fountain of immortal drink, Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

THE AKOND OF SWAT

Edward Lear



WHO or why, or which, or *what*, Is the Akond of SWAT?

Is he tall or short, or dark or fair?

Does he sit on a stool or a sofa or chair, or SQUAT,

The Akond of Swat?

Is he wise or foolish, young or old?

Does he drink his soup and his coffee cold, or HOT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he sing or whistle, jabber or talk, And when riding abroad does he gallop
or walk, or TROT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he wear a turban, a fez, or a hat?

Does he sleep on a mattress, a bed, or a mat, or a COT,

The Akond of Swat?

When he writes a copy in round-hand size, Does he cross his Ts and finish his Is
with a DOT,

The Akond of Swat?

Can he write a letter concisely clear Without a speck or a smudge or smear or
BLOT,

The Akond of Swat!

Do his people like him extremely well?

Or do they, whenever they can, rebel, or PLOT,

At the Akond of Swat?

If he catches them then, either old or young, Does he have them chopped in
pieces or hung, or SHOT,

The Akond of Swat?

Do his people prig in the lanes or park?

Or even at times, when days are dark, GAROTTE?

O the Akond of Swat!

Does he study the wants of his own dominion?

Or doesn't he care for public opinion a JOT,

The Akond of Swat?

To amuse his mind do his people show him Pictures, or any one's last new poem, or WHAT,

For the Akond of Swat?

At night if he suddenly screams and wakes, Do they bring him only a few small cakes, or a LOT,

For the Akond of Swat?

Does he live on turnips, tea, or tripe?

Does he like his shawl to be marked with a stripe, or a DOT,

The Akond of Swat?

Do he like to lie on his back in a boat Like the lady who lived in that isle remote, SHALLOTT,

The Akond of Swat?

Is he quiet, or always making a fuss?

Is his steward a Swiss or a Swede or a Russ, or a SCOT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he like to sit by the calm blue wave?

Or to sleep and snore in a dark green cave, or a GROTT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he drink small beer from a silver jug?

Or a bowl? or a glass? or a cup? or a mug?

or a POT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he beat his wife with a gold-topped pipe, When she lets the gooseberries grow too ripe, or ROT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he wear a white tie when he dines with friends, And tie it neat in a bow
with ends, or a KNOT,

The Akond of Swat?

Does he like new cream, and hate mince-pies?

When he looks at the sun does he wink his eyes or NOT,

The Akond of Swat.

Does he teach his subjects to roast and bake?

Does he sail about on an inland lake, in a YACHT,

The Akond of Swat?

Some one, or nobody, knows, I wot, Who or which or why or what

Is the Akond of Swat!

THE TREE HOUSE

Sivakami Velliangiri



Come summer holidays, we built a tree house in the back ‘*muttam*’ of *Sarojini Amma*’s compound.

In truth I had no idea about the geometry of it.

I merely helped with sawing of the planks did all the odd jobs, but here every screw mattered.

After several afternoons of carpentry
all of a sudden Chetan fixed up the roof
the house was hoisted up, the ladder kicked away.

It could hold two children at a time. They
were all up on the branches. I was the last to go.

I looked down at the tool set that I had left behind all open like reptile’s teeth,
baby-mouth-open-crocs.

It might have been a man’s job, but when we are children, boys can be girls and
girls might be boys

unless a real bully came and bossed us around— but then I had always a treasure
chest of word weapons!

ON HIS BLINDNESS

John Milton



When I consider how my light is spent

Ere half my days in this dark world and wide, And that one talent which is death
to hide Lodg'd with me useless, though my soul more bent To serve therewith
my Maker, and present My true account, lest he returning chide, 'Doth God
exact day-labour, light denied?'

I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies: 'God doth not need Either man's work or his own
gifts: who best Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state Is kingly;
thousands at his bidding speed And post o'er land and ocean without rest: They
also serve who only stand and wait.'

CHUANG TZU AND THE BUTTERFLY

Li Po



Chuang Tzu in dream became a butterfly,
And the butterfly became Chuang Tzu at waking.
Which was the real—the butterfly or the man?
Who can tell the end of the endless changes of things?
The water that flows into the depth of the distant sea
Returns anon to the shallows of a transparent stream.
The man, raising melons outside the green gate of the city,
Was once the Prince of the East Hill.
So must rank and riches vanish.
You know it, still you toil and toil,—what for?

THE BATHING HYMN

Saroj Padki



Om havumm bathum namaha
Om take offum clothesum namaha
On the body applyum oilum namaha
Scrubscrubum namaha rubrubum namaha
Scrubscrubum namaha.

Om on the body pourum waterum namaha
Glugglugum namaha blugblugum namaha

Om applyum soapum namaha
Scrubscrubum namaha rubrubum namaha
Work upum latherum namaha

Om porum more waterum namaha
Glugglugum namaha blugblugum namaha
Wash offum soapum namaha.

Om wipum bodyum namaha
Wearum clothesum namaha
Bring outum snacksum namaha!

Translated by Anushka Ravishankar from the Marathi original

'Aanghol Stotra'

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 for ever 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 grey 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

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.

'Tis 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.

BUTTERFLY LAUGHTER

Katherine Mansfield



In the middle of our porridge plates
There was a blue butterfly painted
And each morning we tried who should reach the butterfly first.
Then the Grandmother said: 'Do not eat the poor butterfly.'
That made us laugh.
Always she said it and always it started us laughing.
It seemed such a sweet little joke.
I was certain that one fine morning
The butterfly would fly out of our plates,
Laughing the teeniest laugh in the world,
And perch on the Grandmother's lap.

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT

Robert Burns



Is there for honest poverty

That hings his head, an' a' that; The coward slave—we pass him by, We dare be poor for a' that!

For a' that, an' a' that,

Our toils obscure an' a' that, The rank is but the guinea's stamp, The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine, Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that?

Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine, A man's a man for a' that.

For a' that, an' a' that,

Their tinsel show, an' a' that, The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor, Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord, Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that; Tho' hundreds worship at his word, He's but a coof for a' that.

For a' that, an' a' that, His ribband, star, an' a' that, The man o' independent mind

He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A price can mak a belted knight, A marquise, duke, an' a' that; But an honest man's aboon his might, Gude faith, he maunna fa' that!

For a' that, an' a' that,

Their dignities an' a' that,

The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth, Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may, (As come it will for a' that,) That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth, Shall bear the gree, an' a' that.

For a' that, an' a' that,

That man to man, the world o'er, Shall brithers be for a' that.

PIPPA'S SONG

Robert Browning



The year's at the spring,
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hillside's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in His heaven—
All's right with the world!

Extract from 'Pippa Passes'

JABBERWOCKY

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
a while in thought.
And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!
One two! One two! And through and through
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!
Oh 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 borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

COROMANDEL FISHERS

Sarojini Naidu



Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening skies pray to the morning light,
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night.
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore and set our catamarans free, To
capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of the sea!
No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea gull's call, The sea is
our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are our comrades all.
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the sea-god drives?
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives.

Sweet is the shade of the coconut glade, and the scent of the mango grove, And
sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon with the sound of the voices we love;
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the wild foam's
glee; Row, brothers, row to the edge of the verge, where the low sky mates with
the sea.

GOBLINS OF THE STEPPES

Alexander Sergeyevich Pushkin



Stormy clouds delirious straying, Showers of whirling snowflakes white, And
the pallid moonbeams waning— Sad the heavens, sad the night!

Further speeds the sledge, and further, Loud the sleighbell's melody,
Gruesome, frightful 'tis becoming, 'Mid these snow fields now to be!

Hasten! 'That is useless, Master, Heavier for my team their load, And my eyes
with snow o'er plastered Can no longer see the road!

Lost all trace of our direction, Sir, what now? The goblins draw Us already
round in circles,

Pull the sledge with evil claw!

See! One hops with frantic gesture, In my face to grin and hiss,

See! It goads the frenzied horses Onward to the black abyss!

In the darkness, like a paling One stands forth,—and now I see Him like
walking-fire sparkling— Then the blackness,—woe is me!

Stormy clouds delirious straying, Showers of snowflakes whirling white, And
the pallid moonbeams waning— Sad the heavens, sad the night!

Sudden halt the weary horses,

Silent too the sleighbells whirr— Look! What crouches on the ground there?

'Wolf,—or shrub,—I know not, Sir.'

How the wind's brood rage and whimper!

Scenting, blow the triple team; See! One hops here! Forward Driver!

How his eyes with evil gleam!

Scarce controllable the horses, How the harness bells resound!

Look! With what a sneering grimace Now the spirit band surround!

Translation by [unreadable]

in an endless long procession,

Formless, countless of their kind Circle us in flying coveys

Like the leaves in Autumn wind.

Now in ghastly silence deathly, Now with shrilling elfin cry— Is it some mad
dance of bridal, Or a death march passing by?

Stormy clouds delirious straying Showers of snowflakes whirling white, And the
pallid moonbeams waning— Sad the heavens, sad the night!

Cloudward course the evil spirits In unceasing phantom bands,

And their moaning and bewailing Grip my heart with icy hands!

BREATHES THERE THE MAN, WITH SOUL SO
DEAD

Sir Walter Scott



Breathes there the man, with soul so dead, Who never to himself hath said,
'This is my own, my native land!'

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned, As home his footsteps he hath
turned, From wandering on a foreign strand!

If such there breathe, go, mark him well; For him no Minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name, Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf, The wretch, concentrated all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown, and, doubly dying, shall go down To the vile
dust, from whence he sprung, Unwept, unhonoured, and unsung.

DADDY FELL INTO THE POND

Alfred Noyes



Everyone grumbled. The sky was grey.
We had nothing to do and nothing to say.
We were nearing the end of a dismal day, And there seemed to be nothing
beyond,

THEN

Daddy fell into the pond!

And everyone's face grew merry and bright, And Timothy danced for sheer
delight.

'Give me the camera, quick, oh quick!

He's crawling out of the duckweed.'

Click!

Then the gardener suddenly slapped his knee, And doubled up, shaking silently,
And the ducks all quacked as if they were daft And is sounded as if the old drake
laughed.

O, there wasn't a thing that didn't respond

WHEN

Daddy fell into the pond!

FROM PAHARI PARROTS

Eunice de Souza



V

Spring, and the trees are translucent.
One can hardly tell
Leaf from parrot
Berries from beak
Red splash on wing
From veins that tingle.

VI

Two trees—and a garbage heap.
The garbage brings the barbets.
The parrots love the peepul tree.
There's a bulbul singing in the ashoka.
Throw in sparrows, crows and mynahs, You have your common city garden
Complete with pandemonium at dawn.
The lady on the third floor says We should cut down the trees She can't sleep for
the noise.
Lady, you're a fingernail
Scratching a blackboard.

GRANNY'S COME TO OUR HOUSE

James Whitcomb Riley



Granny's come to our house, And ho! my lawzy-daisy!
All the childern round the place Is ist a-runnin' crazy!
Fetched a cake fer little Jake, And fetched a pie fer Nanny, And fetched a pear
fer all the pack That runs to kiss their Granny!
Lucy Ellen's in her lap,
And Wade and Silas Walker Both's a-ridin' on her foot, And 'Pollos on the
rocker; And Marthy's twins, from Aunt Marinn's, And little Orphant Annie,
All's a-eatin' gingerbread And giggle-un at Granny!
Tells us all the fairy tales Ever thought er wundered— And 'bundance o' other
stories— Bet she knows a hunderd!— Bob's the one fer 'Whittington,'
And 'Golden Locks' fer Fanny!
Hear 'em laugh and clap their hands, Listenin' at Granny!
'Jack the Giant-Killer's good; And 'Bean-Stalk's' another!
So's the one of 'Cinderell'
And her old godmother;
That-un's best of all the rest Bestest one of any,
Where the mices scampers home Like we runs to Granny!
Granny's come to our house, Ho! my lawzy-daisy!
All the childern round the place Is ist a-runnin' crazy!

THE GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

Adil Jussawala



How do I learn to be good who am good for nothing, thinks the boy rejected
over and over
for reasons he can't understand.

He presses his face against glass to make it look uglier.

How do I learn to be tall who am only a dull story, never to be repeated, he
wonders.

Every day I grow stronger and stronger, every day I get better and better, he tells
himself over and over as his father told him to.

WE ARE THE MUSIC-MAKERS

Arthur William Edgar O'Shaughnessy



We are the music-makers,

And we are the dreamers of dreams, Wandering by lone sea-breakers, And
sitting by desolate streams.

World-losers and world-forsakers, Upon whom the pale moon gleams; Yet we
are the movers and shakers, Of the world forever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties We build up the world's great cities, And out of
a fabulous story

We fashion an empire's glory:

One man with a dream, at pleasure, Shall go forth and conquer a crown; And
three with a new song's measure Can trample an empire down.

We, in the ages lying

In the buried past of the earth, Built Nineveh with our sighing, And Babel itself
with our mirth; And o'erthrew them with prophesying To the old of the new
world's worth; For each age is a dream that is dying, Or one that is coming to
birth.

THE SONG OF THE SEA

Barry Cornwall



The sea! the sea! the open sea!

The blue, the fresh, the ever free!

Without a mark, without a bound,

It runneth the earth's wide regions round; It plays with the clouds; it mocks the skies, Or like a cradled creature lies.

I'm on the sea! I'm on the sea!

I am where I would ever be;

With the blue above and the blue below, And silence wheresoe'er I go.

If a storm should come and awake the deep What matter? I shall ride and sleep.

I love, oh, how I love to ride

On the fierce, foaming, bursting tide, When every mad wave drowns the moon,
Or whistles aloud his tempest tune, And tells how goeth the world below, And why the southwest blasts do blow.

I never was on the dull, tame shore, But I loved the great sea more and more,
And back I flew to her billowy breast, Like a bird that seeketh its mother's nest;
And a mother she was, and is, to me, For I was born on the open sea!

I've lived, since then, in calm and strife, Full fifty summers a sailor's life, With
wealth to spend and a power to range, But never have sought nor sighed for
change; And Death, whenever he comes to me, Shall come on the wild,
unbounded sea.

SAMARPREET SOOD

Anushka Ravishankar



This is the story of Samarpreet Sood
Who one day decided to give up all food.

She stopped eating things that she'd never tasted For if nothing is eaten then
nothing is wasted.

Next she eschewed anything that was written For what's in a book can never be
bitten.

The next thing to go was the quiet, songless bird— She couldn't bear to swallow
what could not be heard She said no to sodium monoglutamate

And pushed away phosphate compounds from her plate She threw out the
cabbage and banished the beans The purples, the yellows, the blues and the
greens Anything with fibre was chucked out the door (Except the rag used for
wiping the floor) 'Hair is to humans as flour is to bread!'

Cried Samarpreet Sood, as she shaved off her head.

'Nothing will stay that can be consumed!

Throw out the cactus! Debug the rooms!'

In a frenzy of anger she cleaned up the place Crying, 'Food is the bane of the
great human race!'

And when she was done, she was well satisfied, Pleased and contented and
swollen with pride.

But hunger, it bided its wicked old time

It snuck up with sneakers, it slipped in like slime It attacked young Sood with its
sudden sharp pangs It ripped at her insides with rude ruthless fangs It clawed at
her tongue-tip, it rumbled her tum It made her remember her dad and her mum

It made her pancreas scrunch up into knots It disturbed her dreams, it troubled
her thoughts— She dreamed of an egg that was perfectly boiled With hair that
was gelled and a nose that was oiled She dreamed of a suited and booted banana

With a sombrero, calling out, 'Hasta manana!'

She dreamed of an aubergine baking a pie

She dreamed that the pie was waving goodbye.

And the worst thing of all was that all through her dreams She could hear her poor stomach's sad, suffering screams.

Samarpreet Sood could bear it no more.

She ate up a TV, a lamp and a door

She ate up a bottle, filled only with air

She ate up a staircase and left not a stair She ate up the walls and the sofa and cushions She ate up all pullouts and hunted the push-ins She ate up the table, the chair and the stool The sight of the toilet bowl caused her to drool She ate up the bags the bins and the dishes She ate up the pictures of birds, bees and fishes.

The last thing to go was the clock, with its minutes Then she ate up her house— but forgot she was in it.

That is the story of Samarpreet Sood

Who ate herself up, though she gave up all food.

THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

Oliver Wendell Holmes



This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign, Sails the unshadowed main,— The
venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren
sings, And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.

Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl; Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell, As the frail tenant shaped his
growing shell, Before thee lies revealed,— Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless
crypt unsealed!
Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new, Stole with soft step its shining
archway through, Built up its idle door, Stretched in his last-found home, and
knew the old no more.
Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee, Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born Than ever Triton blew from wreathed
horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings: Build thee more
stately mansions, O my soul, As the swift seasons roll!

Leave thy low-vaulted past!

Let each new temple, nobler than the last, Shut thee from heaven with a dome
more vast, Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!

SPOOKY!

(TO BE SHOUTED OUT WHENEVER THE WORD APPEARS) *Sampurna Chattarji*



A tall man with a red mouth that smells of blood and sizzling green eyes of fire
— *Spoooky!*

A woman with a bulgy bag that wriggles under her arm as she climbs up the
stairs— *Spoooky!*

A bend in the road where the shadow of a tree falls like a skeleton onto The
stones— *Spoooky!*

A light in the night that goes off then on then off then on then off then on then
OUT— *Spoooky!*

A noise under the bed that sounds like the shuffle of wet limbs slooooooooly
dragging— *Spoooky!*

AFTER THE TEMPEST

William Cullen Bryant



The day had been a day of wind and storm;—
The wind was laid, the storm was overpast,— And stooping from the zenith,
bright and warm Shone the great sun on the wide earth at last.
I stood upon the upland slope and cast
My eye upon a broad and beauteous scene,
Where the vast plain lay girt by mountains vast, And hills o'er hills lifted their
heads of green, With pleasant vales scooped out and villages between.
The rain-drops glistened on the trees around, Whose shadows on the tall grass
were not stirred, Save when a shower of diamonds, to the ground, Was shaken
by the flight of startled bird;
For birds were warbling round, and bees were heard About the flowers; the
cheerful rivulet sung And gossiped, as he hastened ocean-ward;
To the grey oak the squirrel, chiding clung, And chirping from the ground the
grasshopper upsprung.

And from beneath the leaves that kept them dry Flew many a glittering insect
here and there, And darted up and down the butterfly,
That seemed a living blossom of the air.
The flocks came scattering from the thicket, where The violent rain had pent
them; in the way
Strolled groups of damsels frolicsome and fair; The farmer swung the scythe or
turned the hay, And 'twixt the heavy swaths his children were at play.
It was a scene of peace—and, like a spell,
Did that serene and golden sunlight fall
Upon the motionless wood that clothed the fell, And precipice upspringing like a
wall,

And glassy river and white waterfall,
And happy living things that trod the bright And beauteous scene; while far
beyond them all, On many a lovely valley, out of sight,
Was poured from the blue heavens the same soft golden light.

I looked, and thought the quiet of the scene An emblem of the peace that yet
shall be,

When, o'er earth's continents and isles between, The noise of war shall cease
from sea to sea, And married nations dwell in harmony;

When millions, crouching in the dust to one, No more shall beg their lives on
bended knee, Nor the black stake be dressed, nor in the sun The o'erlaboured
captive toil, and wish his life were done.

Too long, at clash of arms amid her bowers

And pools of blood, the earth has stood aghast, The fair earth, that should only
blush with flowers And ruddy fruits; but not for aye can last

The storm, and sweet the sunshine when 'tis past.

Lo, the clouds roll away—they break—they fly, And, like the glorious light of
summer, cast O'er the wide landscape from the embracing sky, On all the
peaceful world the smile of heaven shall lie.

ICE GOLAWALLA

Beheroze Shroff



In the May vacation when heat shrivelled our tongues to twigs, we hunted for you
like Arabs for an oasis.

On schooldays
saved five paise bus fare, walked home.
At the *naka*
stopped by your cart, resting on four flattened tyres.
under our vulture eyes your hands shaped
on a stick
a ball of ice shavings on which you poured red-coloured syrup.
Ice gola made our hearts tinkle like the bell on your cart,
that our throats
echoed in infection.

THE DARKLING THRUSH

Thomas Hardy



I leant upon a coppice gate, When Frost was spectre-grey, And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.

The tangled bine-stems scored the sky Like strings of broken lyres, And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to me The Century's corpse outleant, Its crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind its death-lament.

The ancient pulse of germ and birth Was shrunken hard and dry, And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervorless as I.

At once a voice arose among The bleak twigs overhead, In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited.

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small, With blast-beruffled plume, Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings Of such ecstatic sound

Was written on terrestrial things Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through His happy good-night air Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew,
And I was unaware.

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A MAD DOG

Oliver Goldsmith



Good people all, of every sort, Give ear unto my song;
And if you find it wondrous short, It cannot hold you long.
In Islington there was a man Of whom the world might say, That still a godly
race he ran— Whene'er he went to pray.
A kind and gentle heart he had, To comfort friends and foes; The naked every
day he clad— When he put on his clothes.
And in that town a dog was found, As many dogs there be,
Both mongrel, puppy, whelp, and hound, And curs of low degree.
This dog and man at first were friends; But when a pique began,
The dog, to gain some private ends, Went mad, and bit the man.
Around from all the neighbouring streets The wond'ring neighbours ran, And
swore the dog had lost its wits To bite so good a man.
The wound it seemed both sore and sad To every Christian eye;
And while they swore the dog was mad, They swore the man would die.
But soon a wonder came to light That showed the rogues they lied— The man
recovered of the bite, The dog it was that died!

SHAPER SHAPED

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya



In days gone by I used to be A potter who would feel
His fingers mould the yielding clay To patterns on his wheel;
But now, through wisdom lately won, That pride has gone away,
I have ceased to be the potter And have learned to be the clay.
In other days I used to be A poet through whose pen
Innumerable songs would come To win the hearts of men;
But now, through new-got knowledge Which I hadn't had so long, I have ceased
to be the poet And have learned to be the song.
I was a fashioner of swords, In days that now are gone, Which on a hundred
battle-fields Glittered and gleamed and shone; But now I am brimming with The
silence of the Lord,
I have ceased to be sword-maker And have learned to be the sword.
In by-gone days I used to be A dreamer who would hurl
On every side an insolence Of emerald and pearl.
But now I am kneeling
At the feet of the Supreme I have ceased to be the dreamer And have learned to
be the dream.

THERE IS A PLEASURE IN THE PATHLESS
WOODS

Lord Byron



There is a pleasure in the pathless woods, There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes, By the deep sea, and music in its roar: I
love not man the less, but Nature more, From these our interviews, in which I
steal From all I may be, or have been before, To mingle with the Universe, and
feel

What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

THE DOLL

Temsula Ao



The only doll I ever had Was a ragged hand-me-down From a rich man's daughter.

She must have once been A prized possession But when she came to me She had lost her hair One eye and All her clothes.

I adored her all the same Because she was mine And the one remaining eye Could shut by itself When I laid her down.

The missing eye

I could not restore But her bald pate I covered with my crayons And tied some old ribbons Round her colourful head.

My mother gave rags To cover her naked state And when I clothed her in them The supple rubber

Of the doll-body

Came alive and became A new person

My closest friend

And a prized possession Because at last

Someone was truly mine.

THE BOX

Lascelles Abercrombie



Once upon a time, in the land of Hush-A-Bye, Around about the wondrous days
of yore, They came across a kind of box

Bound up with chains and locked with locks And labelled 'Kindly do not touch;
it's war.'

A decree was issued round about, and all with a flourish and a shout And a gaily
coloured mascot tripping lightly on before.

Don't fiddle with this deadly box,

Or break the chains, or pick the locks.

And please don't ever play about with war.

The children understood. Children happen to be good And they were just as
good around the time of yore.

They didn't try to pick the locks

Or break into that deadly box.

They never tried to play about with war.

Mommies didn't either; sisters, aunts, grannies neither 'Cause they were quiet,
and sweet, and pretty In those wondrous days of yore.

Well, very much the same as now, And not the ones to blame somehow

For opening up that deadly box of war.

But someone did. Someone battered in the lid And spilled the insides out across
the floor.

A kind of bouncy, bumpy ball made up of guns and flags And all the tears, and
horror, and death that comes with war.

It bounced right out and went bashing all about, Bumping into everything in
store.

And what was sad and most unfair

Was that it didn't really seem to care

Much who it bumped, or why, or what, or for.

It bumped the children mainly. And I'll tell you this quite plainly, It bumps them every day and more, and more, And leaves them dead, and burned, and dying
Thousands of them sick and crying.

'Cause when it bumps, it's really very sore.

Now there's a way to stop the ball. It isn't difficult at all.

All it takes is wisdom, and I'm absolutely sure That we can get it back into the box,

And bind the chains, and lock the locks.

But no one seems to want to save the children anymore.

Well, that's the way it all appears, 'cause it's been bouncing round for years and years

In spite of all the wisdom wizzed since those wondrous days of yore And the time they came across the box,

Bound up with chains and locked with locks, And labeled 'Kindly do not touch; it's war.'

HAIR YOU GO AGAIN

Anju Makhija



My hair is tired of pins and clips, tired of these chains, mom.
You oil it, brush it,
free it from dandruff—
hair you go again, mom!

My hair is suffocating, let in some oxygen, mom.
Don't pull it back in a plait, let it hang really loose like a horse's mane, mom!

ODE ON SOLITUDE

Alexander Pope



Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air,
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread,
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest! who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years slide soft away,
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night; study and ease
Together mix'd; sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please,
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown;
Thus unlamented let me dye;
Steal from the world, and not a stone
Tell where I lye.

A GLIMPSE OF MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER

Mallika Gopal



Yellow skin wrinkled

like paint smeared
over a piece of crumpled paper; Tiny diamond
on the side of her nose competing with two beady twinkling eyes; Arms
stretched out as though trying to ensure that she is living; Soft lips quivering,
trying to say something about
a bygone era;
and a long nose to get a whiff of the past.

THE NONSENSE VERSE

Alfred Edward Housman



At the door of my own little hovel, Reading a novel I sat;
And as I was reading the novel A gnat flew away with my hat.
As fast as a fraudulent banker Away with my hat it fled,
And calmly came to an anchor In the midst of the cucumber-bed.
I went and purchased a yacht And traversed the garden-tank, And I gave it that
insect hot When I got to the other bank; Of its life I made an abridgment By
squeezing it somewhat flat, But I still cannot think what that midge meant By
running away with my hat.

THE MOUNTAIN AND THE SQUIRREL

Ralph Waldo Emerson



The mountain and the squirrel Had a quarrel,
And the former called the latter 'Little prig.'

Bun replied,

'You are doubtless very big; But all sorts of things and weather
Must be taken in together To make up a year

And a sphere.

And I think it no disgrace To occupy my place.

If I'm not so large as you, You are not so small as I, And not half so spry: I'll not
deny you make A very pretty squirrel track.

Talents differ; all is well and wisely put; If I cannot carry forests on my back,
Neither can you crack a nut.'

THE ITCH

K. Ayyappa Paniker



my first itch
came to squat on my right knee.
my last itch
leaned on my left knee.
shan't we scratch, o my people, shan't we scratch?
some say
the world was born of a divine itch.
others say
the lord himself was born of an itch.
the disputationists!
all i know is this— the pleasure
of scratching an itch.
all else may be illusion, but this is truth eternal.

FRIENDS

Abbie Farwell Brown



How good to lie a little while And look up through the tree!
The Sky is like a kind big smile Bent sweetly over me.
The Sunshine flickers through the lace Of leaves above my head,
And kisses me upon the face Like Mother, before bed.
The Wind comes stealing o'er the grass To whisper pretty things; And though I
cannot see him pass, I feel his careful wings.
So many gentle Friends are near Whom one can scarcely see, A child should
never feel a fear, Wherever he may be.

WEATHER

Ambrose Bierce



Once I dipt into the future far as human eye could see, And I saw the Chief
Forecaster, dead as anyone can be— Dead and damned and shut in Hades as a
liar from his birth, With a record of unreason seldom paralleled on earth.

While I looked he reared him solemnly, that incandescent youth, From the coals
that he'd preferred to the advantages of truth.

He cast his eyes about him and above him; then he wrote On a slab of thin
asbestos what I venture here to quote— For I read it in the rose-light of the
everlasting glow: 'Cloudy; variable winds, with local showers; cooler; snow.'

KUBLA KHAN

Samuel Taylor Coleridge



In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an
incense-bearing tree; And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a
cedarn cover!

A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was
haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!

And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast
thick pants were breathing, A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid
whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail: And 'mid these dancing rocks at
once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.

Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred
river ran, Then reached the caverns measureless to man, And sank in tumult to a
lifeless ocean: And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices
prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;

Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,

A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer

In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me, That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there, And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread, For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

TESTING THE NATION

Shanta Acharya



If the Hundred Years' War lasted a hundred and sixteen, and the October Revolution took place in November, if Chinese gooseberries are from New Zealand and Panama hats from Ecuador, if cat gut is made from the bowels of sheep and other animals, and camel's hair brush from squirrel fur, if the Canary Islands were named after dogs and King George VI's first name was Albert, if English muffins are not from England, nor French fries from France— waht is rong if r chilren

canot reed or rite, lak comun sens, tink eggs do not gro in Grate Britun and potatos r milkt from caus?

Note: The last stanza is based on answers given by children in a London primary school when asked where eggs and potatoes came from.

PEACE

Gerard Manley Hopkins



When will you ever, Peace, wild wooddove, shy wings shut, Your round me
roaming end, and under be my boughs?

When, when, Peace, will you, Peace? I'll not play hypocrite To own my heart: I
yield you do come sometimes; but That piecemeal peace is poor peace. What
pure peace allows Alarms of wars, the daunting wars, the death of it?

O surely, reaving Peace, my Lord should leave in lieu Some good! And so he
does leave Patience exquisite, That plumes to Peace thereafter. And when Peace
here does house He comes with work to do, he does not come to coo, He comes
to brood and sit.

LONDON SNOW

Robert Bridges



When men were all asleep the snow came flying, In large white flakes falling on
the city brown, Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying, Hushing the
latest traffic of the drowsy town; Deadenng, muffling, stifling its murmurs
failing; Lazily and incessantly floating down and down: Silently sifting and
veiling road, roof and railing; Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven It lay in the depth of its
uncompacted lightness, The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness Of the winter
dawning, the strange unheavenly glare: The eye marvelled—marvelled at the
dazzling whiteness; The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air; No
sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling, And the busy morning cries
came thin and spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling, They gathered up the
crystal manna to freeze

Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing; Or rioted in a drift,
plunging up to the knees; Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
'O look at the trees!' they cried, 'O look at the trees!'

With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder, Following along the white
deserted way,

A country company long dispersed asunder:

When now already the sun, in pale display

Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below His sparkling beams, and
awoke the stir of the day.

For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow; And trains of sombre
men, past tale of number, Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they
go: But even for them awhile no cares encumber

Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken, The daily thoughts of labour

and sorrow slumber At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm
they have broken.

VIEWS AND WOES OF A TEENAGER

Anupa Lal



I won't say I dislike her At times I even like her I hardly ever hate her

Just that sometimes
It's hard to tolerate her!

She's always very busy

Busy being busy

Though when her work gets done I find sometimes

She really can be fun!

If only she'd relax more If only she'd collapse more And not be half as huffy
And giggle more

Instead of being so stuffy!

I know her through and through I suppose she knows me too We understand
each other She's not so bad

After all, she is my mother!

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

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 long and lordly train,
But one by one we must all file on Through the narrow aisles of pain.

THE FIREFLY

Nirendranath Chakrabarty



You leave the ground with happy ease I can't, like you— I don't lose knowing
the other's weak The way you do.

Does this only mean that I

Am not so choosy, nor so high?

I reach out for the sky, no doubt But to the earth I'm true?

The fish love water, birds the sky But I love just this earth

I'm homely, I don't venture out Of tempters there's no dearth— Does that mean
I don't like risk?

A little makes me glad and brisk My days roll by in my own den Whatever be
they worth!

But when at daybreak countless stars Glow on sky's range

My breath comes quick, my heart's astir With something strange— Does that
mean that this same 'I'

Am someone when the day is high But when it's dusk, to someone altered I do
change?

My mind is busy counting words The whole day long

But it discovers gold in dust At evensong— I know not why, at break of day A
firefly swims and skims away Within my heart and in my soul In raptures
strong!

Translated by Swapna Dutta from the Bengali original 'Jonaki'

LITTLE BROWN BABY

Paul Laurence Dunbar



Little brown baby wif spa'klin eyes,
Come to yo' pappy an' set on his knee.
What you been doin', suh—makin' san' pies?
Look at dat bib—you's ez du'ty ez me.

Look at dat mouf—dat's merlasses, I bet; Come hyeah, Maria, an' wipe off his
han's.

Bees gwine to ketch you an' eat you up yit, Bein' so sticky an' sweet—goodness
lan's!

Little brown baby wif spa'klin eyes,
Who's pappy's darlin' an' who's pappy's chile?
Who is it all de day nevah once tries

Fu' to be cross, er once loses dat smile?
Whah did you git dem teef?

My, you's a scamp!

Whah did dat dimple come f'om in yo' chin?

Pappy do' know yo—I b'lieves you's a tramp; Mammy, dis hyeah's some ol'
straggler got in!

Let's th'ow him outen de do' in de san', We do' want stragglers a-layin' 'roun'
hyeah; Let's gin him 'way to de big buggah-man; I know he's hidin' erroun'
hyeah right neah.

Buggah-man, buggah-man, come in de do', Hyeah's a bad boy you kin have fu'
to eat.

Mammy an' pappy do' want him no mo',

Swaller him down f'om his haid to his feet!
Dah, now, I t'ought dat you'd hug me up close.

Go back, ol' buggah, you sha'n't have dis boy.

He ain't no tramp, ner no straggler, of co'se; He's pappy's pa'dner an'
playmate an' joy.

Come to you' pallet now—go to yo' res; Wisht you could allus know ease an'
cleah skies; Wisht you could stay jes' a chile on my breas'— Little brown baby
wif spa'klin' eyes.

EVENING PRIMROSE

John Clare



When once the sun sinks in the west, And dewdrops pearl the evening's breast;
Almost as pale as moonbeams are, Or its companionable star,

The evening primrose opes anew

Its delicate blossoms to the dew; And, hermit-like, shunning the light, Wastes its
fair bloom upon the night, Who, blindfold to its fond caresses, Knows not the
beauty it possesses; Thus it blooms on while night is by; When day looks out
with open eye, Bashed at the gaze it cannot shun, It faints and withers and is
gone.

MA'S HOUSE

Viky Arya



Ma sits in the courtyard stitch by stitch

casts a home

the mild winter sun a frisky squirrel

darts about

the winds will weave their nest seasons chirp by

As stitch by stitch Ma knits a home the home is taking shape this a double sided sweater with Ma on one side the home on the other the home envelopes Ma Ma envelopes the home Ma has put in her entire life's savings

to make this home

lifelong the home
and lifelong its warmth the same as ever, ever the same.

Translated by Rashmi Dewan and Deep Ranjini Rai from the

Hindi original 'Aangan Mein'

I WILL BE MYSELF

Deepa Agarwal



When you played, swam
splashed
in the water of my womb, safe
from want and desire longing and need, anger and greed, did you not wonder as
you fought your way out how you would survive a water being
on arid earth?
Or, did you bear your own fulfilment clenched in your tiny fists?
As you announced through that first insistent yell— I am here, I am I, call me
what you will, I have already chosen the shape of my nose the sound of my
voice.
And I will be I
in spite of you
in spite of yours mother father
brother sister
I will grow and be myself against all odds!

COPYRIGHT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



Grateful acknowledgement is made to the following for permission to reprint copyright material:

Arunava Sinha for ‘The Scientist’, his English translation of Rabindranath Tagore’s Bengali poem ‘Boiggyanik’.

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra for ‘The Yogi’s a Solitary’ from *Songs of Kabir*, Gurgaon: Hachette India, 2011.

Ruskin Bond for ‘Hip-Hop Nature Boy’ from his collection *Hip-Hop Nature Boy and Other Poems*, New Delhi: Puffin Books, 2012.

Keki Daruwalla for ‘The Ghost’ from his collection *The Scarecrow and the Ghost*, New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 2004.

Natasha Sharma for ‘A Roti’s Grudge’.

K.Satchidanandan for ‘Tortoise’.

Swapna Dutta for ‘The Palki Song’, her English translation of Satyendranath Dutta’s Bengali poem ‘Palkir Gaan’.

Jerry Pinto for ‘Look’.

Faber and Faber for ‘Macavity: The Mystery Cat’ from *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats* by T. S.Eliot. London: Faber, 1939.

Michael Heyman, Anushka Ravishankar, Sumanyu Satpathy and the poets and translators for the following— ‘The Yellow Bear’ by Manoj Das from *The Tenth Rasa: An Anthology of Indian Nonsense*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007, published here in translation by Sumanyu Satpathy; ‘The One-Eyed Town’ by Gulzar, translated by Sampurna Chattarji; ‘Wordygurdyboom!’ by Sukumar Ray, translated by Sampurna Chattarji; ‘The Shadow-Catching Baiya’ by Dash Benhur, translated by Sumanyu Satpathy; ‘The Zoo’ by Vinda Karandikar, translated by Anita Vachchrajani; ‘The Camel Perched Upon a Brick’, translated by B.S. Talwadi; and ‘The Bathing Hymn’ by Saroj Padki, translated by Anushka Ravishankar.

Shreekumar Varma for ‘The Cyber River’ from *The Puffin Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Eunice de Souza and Melanie Silgado, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007.

Sivakami Velliangiri for ‘The Tree House’ from *To Catch a Poem*, edited by Anju Makhija and Jane Bhandari, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014.

The Society of Authors as literary representatives of the estates of Alfred

Noyes and Walter de la Mare for 'Daddy Fell into the Pond' by Alfred Noyes and 'The Listeners' by Walter de la Mare.

Eunice de Souza for 'Pahari Parrots' from *Dangerlok*, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2001.

Adil Jussawala for 'The Good-for-Nothing' from *To Catch a Poem*, edited by Anju Makhija and Jane Bhandari, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014.

Anushka Ravishankar for 'Samarpreet Sood' from *This Book Makes no Sense*, Gurgaon: Scholastic India, 2012.

Sampurna Chattarji for 'Spooky!' from *The Fried Frog and Other Funny, Freaky, Foodie, Feisty Poems*, Gurgaon: Scholastic India, 2009.

Beheroze Shroff for 'Ice Golawalla' from *The Puffin Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Eunice de Souza and Melanie Silgado, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007.

Temsula Ao for 'The Doll' from *To Catch a Poem*, edited by Anju Makhija and Jane Bhandari, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014.

Anju Makhija for 'Hair You Go Again' from *To Catch a Poem*, edited by Anju Makhija and Jane Bhandari, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014.

Meena Kumari for 'The Itch' by K. Ayyappa Paniker from *The Puffin Book of Poetry for Children*, edited by Eunice de Souza and Melanie Silgado, New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2007.

Shanta Acharya for 'Testing the Nation' from *To Catch a Poem*, edited by Anju Makhija and Jane Bhandari, New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014.

Anupa Lal for 'View and Woes of a Teenager' from *Dream Scream and Other Poems*, New Delhi: Rupa Publications, 2003.

Nirendranath Chakrabarty for 'The Firefly' published here in translation by Swapna Dutta.

Viky Arya for 'Ma's House' published here in translation by Rashmi Dewan and Deep Ranjini Rai.

Deepa Agarwal for 'I Will Be Myself' from *Do Not Weep Lonely Mirror*, Mumbai: Frog Books, 2004.