

Practice Poems

Prosodic terms: prosody, syllable-timed language, stress-timed language, scan/scansion, rhyme scheme (e.g. ABAB, ABBA), eye rhyme (e.g. main, again), alliteration, assonance, repetition, verse, stanza, refrain, coda (line added to last stanza), meter, foot; monometer, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter, heptameter; anacrusis (unstressed syllable[s] at the beginning of a line), caesura (pause), iambic (i.), trochaic (t.), anapestic (a.), dactylic (d.), spondaic (s.); doggerel.

1. As I was going up the stair
I met a man who wasn't there
He wasn't there again today—
O how I wish he'd go away!

2. Fire and Ice Robert Frost
American (1874-1963)

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

3. Résumé
Dorothy Parker (US 1893-1967)

Razors pain you;
Rivers are damp;
Acids stain you;
And drugs cause cramp.
Guns aren't lawful;
Nooses give;
Gas smells awful;
You might as well live.

4. Ladybug (tr. by Isaac Taylor Headland)

Ladybug, ladybug, fly away, do,
Fly to the mountain, and feed upon dew,
Feed upon dew and sleep on a rug,
And then run away like a good little bug.
蟲蟲蟲蟲飛，飛到南山喝露水
露水喝飽了，回頭就跑了。

5. Limerick: (Five lines, 3A-3A-2B-2B-3A, usually dactylic; almost always silly, often obscene)
I once knew a spinster of Staines,
And a spinster that lady remains;
She's no figure, no looks,
Neither dances nor cooks –
And, most ghastly of all, she has brains.

6. Alas! The Love of Women

George Gordon Byron (Don Juan) (English 1788-1824)

Alas! The love of women! it is known
To be a lovely and a fearful thing;
For all of theirs upon that die is thrown,
And if 'tis lost, life hath no more to bring
To them but mockeries of the past alone,
And their revenge is as the tiger's spring,
Deadly, and quick, and crushing; yet, as real
Torture is theirs, what they inflict they feel.

7. Like Angels' Visits

John Norris (English 1657-1711)

How fading are the joys we dote upon:
Like apparitions seen and gone.
But those which soonest take their flight
Are the most exquisite and strong,—
Like angels' visits, short and bright;
Mortality's too weak to bear them long.

8. From: Love Me Little, Love Me Long
Anonymous (1569-70)

Love me little, love me long,
Is the burden of my song:
Love that is too hot and strong
Burneth soon to waste.
Still I would not have thee cold,
Not too backward nor too bold;
Love that lastest till 'tis old
Fadeth not in haste.
Love me little, love me long
Is the burden of my song.

9. Epigrams

Robert Nugent (English 1702-1788)

I I lov'd thee beautiful and kind,
And plighted an eternal vow.
So alter'd are thy face and mind,
'Twere perjury to love thee now.

II My heart still hovering round about you,
I thought I could not live without you;
Now we have liv'd three months asunder,
How I liv'd with you is the wonder.

10. Barter Sara Teasdale
American (1884-1933)

Life has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things;
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up,
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell;
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And, for the Spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Give all you have for loveliness;
Buy it, and never count the cost!
For one white, singing hour of peace
Count many a year of strife well lost;
And for a breath of ecstasy,
Give all you have been, or could be.

11. She At His Funeral
Thomas Hardy English (1840-1928)

They bear him to his resting-place -
In slow procession sweeping by;
I follow at a stranger's space;
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
Though sable-sad is their attire;
But they stand round with griefless eye,
Whilst my regret consumes like fire!

12. Time, You Old Gypsy Man
Ralph Hodgson (English b. 1871)

Time, you old gypsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your jennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,

Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing,
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may.
Time, you old gypsy,
Why hasten away?

Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,
Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein—
Only a moment,
And off once again;
Off to some city
Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.

Time, you old gypsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

13. Tell All the Truth
Emily Dickinson (US 1830-1886)

Tell all the truth but tell it slant
Success in circuit lies,
Too bright for our infirm delight
The truth's superb surprise;

As lightning to the children eased
With explanation kind,
The truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind.

14. Jenny Kiss'd Me
Leigh Hunt (English 1784-1859)

Jenny kiss'd me when we met,
Jumping from the chair she sat in;
Time, you thief, who love to get
Sweets into your list, put that in!
Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,
Say that health and wealth have miss'd
me,
Say I'm growing old, but add,
Jenny kiss'd me.

15. This Be The Verse

Philip Arthur Larkin (English 1922-1985)

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.
 They may not mean to, but they do.
 They fill you with the faults they had
 And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn
 By fools in old-style hats and coats,
 Who half the time were sappy-stern
 And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.
 It deepens like a coastal shelf.
 Get out as early as you can,
 And don't have any kids yourself.

16. Sorrow Edna St. Vincent Millay
American (1892-1950)

Sorrow like a ceaseless rain
 Beats upon my heart.
 People twist and scream in pain,—
 Dawn will find them still again;
 This has neither wax nor wane,
 Neither stop nor start.

People dress and go to town;
 I sit in my chair.
 All my thoughts are slow and brown:
 Standing up or sitting down
 Little matters, or what gown
 Or what shoes I wear.

17. Cross Langston Hughes
American (1902-1967)

My old man's a white old man
 And my old mother's black.
 If ever I cursed my white old man
 I take my curses back.
 If ever I cursed my black old mother
 And wished she were in hell,
 I'm sorry for that evil wish
 And now I wish her well.
 My old man died in a fine big house.
 My ma died in a shack.
 I wonder where I'm gonna die,
 Being neither white nor black?

18. Elect Philip Appleman American
(1926-)Compare: Mother Goose: Georgie, Porgie,
Puddin' and Pie

O Karma, Dharma, pudding and pie,
 gimme a break before I die:
 grant me wisdom, will, & wit,
 purity, probity, pluck, & grit.
 Trustworthy, loyal, helpful, kind,
 gimme great abs & a steel-trap mind,
 and forgive, Ye Gods, some humble advice -
 these little blessings would suffice
 to beget an earthly paradise:
 make the bad people good -
 and the good people nice;
 and before our world goes over the brink,
 teach the believers how to think.

19. Advice to a Girl

Sara Teasdale American (1884-1933)

No one worth possessing
 Can be quite possessed;
 Lay that on your heart,
 My young angry dear;
 This truth, this hard and precious stone,
 Lay it on your hot cheek,
 Let it hide your tear.
 Hold it like a crystal
 When you are alone
 And gaze in the depths of the icy stone.
 Long, look long and you will be blessed:
 No one worth possessing
 Can be quite possessed.

20. Daddy Fell into the Pond

Alfred Noyes English (1880-1958)

Everyone grumbled. The sky was gray.
 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 it sounded as if the old drake laughed.

Oh, there wasn't a thing that didn't respond
 WHEN Daddy fell into the pond!

