

**Poems and Prose for Memorization and Reading Aloud**  
**Fall 2007**

**1. (a) Limerick**

There was a young lady named Harris  
Whom nothing could ever embarrass  
Till the salts that she shook  
In the bath that she took  
Turned out to be plaster of paris.

**(b) Mother Goose Rhyme**

Molly, my sister, and I fell out,  
And what do you think it was all about?  
She loved coffee and I loved tea,  
And that was the reason we couldn't agree.

**2. (a) We outgrow love like other things**

Emily Dickinson American (1830-1886)

We outgrow love like other things  
And put it in the drawer,  
Till it an antique fashion shows  
Like costumes grandsires wore.

**(b) You left me, sweet, two legacies**

Emily Dickinson American (1830-1886)

You left me, sweet, two legacies,—  
A legacy of love  
A Heavenly Father would content,  
Had He the offer of;

You left me boundaries of pain  
Capacious as the sea,  
Between eternity and time,  
Your consciousness and me.

**3. The Junk Man**

Carl Sandburg American (1878 - 1967)

I am glad God saw Death  
And gave Death a job taking care of all who are tired  
of living:

When all the wheels in a clock are worn and slow and  
the connections loose  
And the clock goes on ticking and telling the wrong time  
from hour to hour  
And people around the house joke about what a bum  
clock it is,  
How glad the clock is when the big Junk Man drives  
his wagon  
Up to the house and puts his arms around the clock and  
says:  
"You don't belong here,  
You gotta come  
Along with me,"  
How glad the clock is then, when it feels the arms of the  
Junk Man close around it and carry it away.

**4. The Computation**

John Donne English (1572-1631)

For the first twenty years since yesterday  
I scarce believed thou couldst be gone away;  
For forty more I fed on favors past,  
And forty on hopes that thou wouldst they might last.  
Tears drowned one hundred, and sighs blew out two,  
A thousand, I did neither think nor do,  
Or not divide, all being one thought of you,  
Or in a thousand more forgot that too.  
Yet call not this long life, but think that I  
Am, by being dead, immortal. Can ghosts die?

**5. Listening**

Marshall Goldsmith American (1949- )

From: Marshall Goldsmith, *What Got You Here Won't Get You There*, Hyperion, Copyright 2007 by Marshall Goldsmith, pp. 148-156.

"To learn from people, you have to listen to them with respect. [It is] not as easy as you might imagine. ... The trouble with listening for many of us is that while we're supposedly doing it, we're actually busy composing what we're going to say next. ... [During] your next personal encounter, try to employ the tactics we've outlined here:

- \* Listen.
- \* Don't interrupt.
- \* Don't finish the other person's sentences.
- \* Don't say 'I knew that.'
- \* Don't even agree with the other person (even if he praises you, just say, 'Thank you')
- \* Don't use the words 'no,' 'but,' and 'however.'
- \* Don't be distracted. Don't let your eyes or attention wander elsewhere while the other person is talking.
- \* Maintain your end of the dialogue by asking questions that (a) show you are paying attention, (b) move the dialogue forward, or (c) require the other person to talk (while you listen).
- \* Eliminate any striving to impress the other person with how smart or funny you are. ...

[Y]ou'll uncover a glaring paradox: The more you subsume your desire to shine, the more you will shine in the other person's eyes."

**6. On A Journey**

Hermann Hesse German (1877-1962)

Translated by James Wright

Don't be downcast, soon the night will come,  
When we can see the cool moon laughing in secret  
Over the faint countryside,  
And we rest, hand in hand.

Don't be downcast, the time will soon come  
When we can have rest. Our small crosses will stand  
On the bright edge of the road together,  
And rain fall, and snow fall,  
And the winds come and go.

**Auf Wanderung** (original German)  
Hermann Hesse German (1877-1962)

Sei nicht traurig, bald kommt die Nacht,  
Da sehn wir über dem bleichen Land  
Den kühlen Mond, wie er heimlich lacht  
Und ruhen Hand in Hand.

Sei nicht traurig, bald kommt die Zeit,  
Da haben wir Ruh, unsere Kreuzlein stehn  
Am hellen Strassenrande zu zweit  
Und es regnet und schneit.  
Und die Winde kommen und gehn.

## 7. Child

Sylvia Plath American (1932-1963)

Your clear eye is the one absolutely beautiful thing.  
I want to fill it with color and ducks,  
The zoo of the new

Whose name you meditate –  
April snowdrop, Indian pipe,  
Little

Stalk without wrinkle,  
Pool in which images  
Should be grand and classical

Not this troublous  
Wringing of hands, this dark  
Ceiling without a star.

## 8. The evolutionary basis for increased brain size

David Dobbs American

From: David Dobbs, "The Gregarious Brain," *The New York Times Magazine*, July 8, 2007, p. 46.

"To [compete for] food, some of the newly hungry primate species moved to the forest edge. Their new habitat put more food in reach, but it also placed the primates within reach of big cats, canines and other savanna predators. This predation spurred two key evolutionary changes. The primates became bigger, giving individuals more of a fighting chance, and they started living in bigger groups, which provided more eyes to keep watch and a strength of numbers in defense.

"But the bigger groups imposed a new brain load: the members had to be smart enough to balance their individual needs with those of the pack. This meant cooperating and exercising some individual restraint. It also required understanding the behavior of other group members striving not only for safety and food but also access to mates. And it called for comprehending and managing one's place in an ever-shifting array of alliances that members formed in order not to be isolated within the bigger group. ...

"But as the ... groups grew, tracking and understanding all those relationships required more intelligence.

According to the social-brain theory, it was this need to understand social dynamics – not the need to find food or navigate terrain – that spurred and rewarded the evolution of bigger and bigger primate brains.

"This isn't idle speculation; Robin Dunbar, an evolutionary psychologist and social-brain theorist, and others have documented correlations between brain size and social-group size in many primate species. The bigger an animal's typical group size (20 or so for macaques, for instance, 50 or so for chimps), the larger the percentage of brain devoted to neocortex, the thin but critical outer layer that accounts for most of a primate's cognitive abilities. In most mammals the neocortex accounts for 30 percent to 40 percent of brain volume. In the highly social primates it occupies about 50 percent to 65 percent. In humans, it's 80 percent.

"[N]o such strong correlation exists between neocortex size and tasks like hunting, navigating, or creating shelter. Understanding one another, it seems, is our greatest cognitive challenge."

## 9. What Was Lost

W. B. Yeats Irish (1865-1939)

I sing what was lost and dread what was won,  
I walk in a battle fought over again,  
My king a lost king, and lost soldiers my men;  
Feet to the Rising and Setting may run,  
They always beat on the same small stone.

## 10. The Bottom of the Glass

Stanley Kunitz American (1905-2006)

Not by planning and not by choosing  
I learned the mastery.  
What a damnable trade  
where winning is like losing!  
The wheel keeps spinning,  
the thread gets broken,  
my hand cannot tell  
its work from its loafing.  
Life aims at the tragic:  
what makes it ridiculous?  
In age as in youth  
the joke is preposterous.  
And nothing shall save me  
from meanness and sinning  
but more of the same,  
more losing like winning.

## 11. Exchanges

Ernest Dowson English (1867-1900)

All that I had I brought,  
Little enough I know;  
A poor rhyme roughly wrought,  
A rose to match thy snow:  
All that I had I brought.

Little enough I sought:  
But a word compassionate,  
A passing glance, or thought,  
For me outside the gate:  
Little enough I sought.

Little enough I found:  
All that you had, perchance!  
With the dead leaves on the ground,  
I dance the devil's dance.  
All that you had I found.

## 12. To Sleep

John Keats English (1795-1821)

O soft embalmer of the still midnight!  
Shutting, with careful fingers and benign,  
Our gloom-pleas'd eyes, embower'd from the light,  
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine;  
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,  
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes.  
Or wait the Amen, ere thy poppy throws  
Around my bed its lulling charities;  
Then save me, or the passed day will shine  
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;  
Save me from curious conscience, that still hoards  
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;  
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,  
And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

## 13. Immigration

Jason DeParle American

From: Jason DeParle, "A Good Provider Is One Who Leaves,"  
*The New York Times Magazine*, April 22, 2007, p. 52.

"About 200 million migrants from different countries are scattered across the globe, supporting a population back home that is as big if not bigger. Were these half-billion or so people to constitute a state – migration nation – it would rank as the world's third largest. While some migrants go abroad with Ph.D.'s, most travel ... with modest skills but fearsome motivation. The risks migrants face are widely known, including the risk of death, but the amounts they secure for their families have just recently come into view. Migrants worldwide sent home an estimated \$300 billion last year – nearly three times the world's foreign aid budgets combined. These sums – 'remittances' – bring Morocco more money than tourism does. They bring Sri Lanka more money than tea does.

"The numbers, which have doubled in the past five years, have riveted the attention of development experts who once paid them little mind. ... A growing number of economists see migrants, and the money they send home, as part of the solution to global poverty. ...

"The growth in migration has roiled the West, but demographic logic suggests it will only continue. Aging industrial economies need workers. People in poor countries need jobs. Transportation and communications have made moving easier. And the potential economic gains are at record highs. A Central American laborer who moves to the United States can expect to multiply his earnings about six times after adjusting for the higher cost of living. That pay raise is about twice as large as the one that propelled the last great wave of immigration a century ago. ...

"Yet competing with the literature of gain is a parallel literature of loss. About half the world's migrants are women, many of whom care for children abroad while leaving their own children at home. ... Television novellas plumb the migrants' loneliness. ... [A migrant] does not say he is off to make his fortune. He says, 'I am going to try my luck.' "

## 14. Witch-Wife

Edna St. Vincent Millay American (1892-1950)

She is neither pink nor pale,  
And she never will be all mine;  
She learned her hands in a fairy-tale,  
And her mouth on a valentine.

She has more hair than she needs;  
In the sun 'tis a woe to me!  
And her voice is a string of coloured beads,  
Or steps leading into the sea.

She loves me all that she can,  
And her ways to my ways resign;  
But she was not made for any man,  
And she never will be all mine.

## 15. Soon Our Friends Perish

Robert Louis Stevenson Scottish (1850-1894)

Soon our friends perish,  
Soon all we cherish  
Fades as days darken – goes as flowers go.  
Soon in December  
Over an ember,  
Lonely we hearken, as loud winds blow.