

## Poems for memorization and reading aloud Fall 2010

### 1. Limericks

a.

There was a young student of Kent  
Who worked doubled up in a tent.  
When his friends asked "Why so?"  
He replied "I don't know,  
I suppose it's my scholarly bent."

b.

An avid sightseer named Bernie,  
quite sotted set out on a journey.  
Fell asleep at the wheel  
of his automobile  
and took his last trip on a gurney.

### 2. For each ecstatic instant

Emily Dickinson American (1830–86)

For each ecstatic instant  
We must an anguish pay  
In keen and quivering ratio  
To the ecstasy.

For each beloved hour  
Sharp pittances of years,  
Bitter contested farthings  
And coffers heaped with tears.

### 3. That she forgot me was the least

Emily Dickinson American (1830–86)

That she forgot me was the least,  
I felt it second pain,  
That I was worthy to forget  
What most I thought upon.

Faithful, was all that I could boast,  
But Constancy became,  
To her, by her innumerate,  
A something like a shame.

### 4. Debtor

Sara Teasdale American (1884-1933)

<http://www.emule.com/poetry/?page=poem&poem=4268>

So long as my spirit still  
Is glad of breath  
And lifts its plumes of pride  
In the dark face of death;  
While I am curious still  
Of love and fame,  
Keeping my heart too high  
For the years to tame,  
How can I quarrel with fate  
Since I can see  
I am a debtor to life,  
Not life to me?

### 5. LVI. I'm happiest when most away

Emily Brontë English (1818-1848)

I'm happiest when most away  
I can bear soul from its home of clay  
On a windy night when the moon is bright  
And the eye can wander through worlds of light.

When I am not and none beside  
Nor earth nor sea nor cloudless sky  
But only spirit wandering wide  
Through infinite immensity.

### 6. The Dreardest Journey

Percy Bysshe Shelley English (1792-1822)

I never was attached to that great sect,  
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select  
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,  
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend  
To cold oblivion, though it is the code  
Of modern morals, and the beaten road  
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,  
By the broad highway of the world, and so  
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,  
The dreardest and the longest journey go.

### 7. As the Ruin Falls C.S. Lewis (Clive Staples Lewis)

English (1898-1963)

All this flashy rhetoric about loving you.  
I never had a selfless thought since I was born.  
I am mercenary and self-seeking through and through;  
I want God, you, all friends, merely to serve my turn.

Peace, reassurance, pleasure, are the goals I seek,  
I cannot crawl one inch outside my proper skin:  
I talk of love - a scholar's parrot may talk Greek -  
But, self-imprisoned, always end where I begin.

Only that now you have taught me (but how late) my lack.  
I see the chasm. And everything you are was making  
My heart into a bridge by which I might get back  
From exile, and grow man. And now the bridge is  
breaking.

For this I bless you as the ruin falls. The pains  
You give me are more precious than all other gains.

**8. The Nose on Your Face** Susan Browne American

In all your life, you will never see your actual face.  
If you close one eye, you can gaze  
at the side of your nose, but that's it.  
Is that why when looking at group photographs,  
it's yourself you stare at the longest?  
Sometimes you're mistaken for someone else,  
And you want to meet her, see for yourself yourself,  
but even if you met a gang of doppelgangers,  
you will continue searching in hubcaps, sauce pans,  
toasters, the backs of spoons, the bases of lamps,  
in sunglasses, in another person's eyes,  
and if that person is standing in just the right light,  
there you are, trying to get closer.

**9. two nights before my 72nd birthday**  
Charles Bukowski American (1920-1994)

sitting here on a boiling hot night while  
drinking a bottle of cabernet sauvignon  
after winning \$232 at the track.  
there's not much I can tell you except  
if it weren't for my bad right leg  
I don't feel much different than I did  
30 or 40 years ago (except that  
now I have more money and should be able  
to afford a decent  
burial). also,  
I drive better automobiles and have  
stopped carrying a  
switchblade.  
I am still looking for a hero, a role model,  
but can't find one.  
I am no more tolerant of Humanity  
than I ever was.  
I am not bored with myself and find  
that I am the only one I can  
turn to in time of  
crisis.  
I've been ready to die for decades and  
I've been practicing, polishing up  
for that end  
but it's very  
hot tonight  
and I can think of little but  
this fine cabernet,  
that's gift enough for me.  
sometimes I can't  
believe I've come this far,  
this has to be some kind of goddamned  
miracle!  
just another old guy  
blinking at the forces,  
smiling a little,  
as the cities tremble and the left  
hand rises,  
clutching  
something  
real.

**10. Alone With Everybody**  
Charles Bukowski American (1920-1994)

the flesh covers the bone  
and they put a mind  
in there and  
sometimes a soul,  
and the women break  
vases against the walls  
and the men drink too  
much  
and nobody finds the  
one  
but keep  
looking  
crawling in and out  
of beds.  
flesh covers  
the bone and the  
flesh searches  
for more than  
flesh.

there's no chance  
at all:  
we are all trapped  
by a singular  
fate.

nobody ever finds  
the one.

the city dumps fill  
the junkyards fill  
the madhouses fill  
the hospitals fill  
the graveyards fill

nothing else  
fills.

**11. maggie and milly and molly and may**  
E.E. Cummings (Edward Estlin Cummings) American  
(1894-1962)

maggie and milly and molly and may  
went down to the beach(to play one day)

and maggie discovered a shell that sang  
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles,and

milly befriended a stranded star  
whose rays five languid fingers were;

and molly was chased by a horrible thing  
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles:and

may came home with a smooth round stone  
as small as a world and as large as alone.

For whatever we lose(like a you or a me)  
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

**12. On the Ning Nang Nong** Spike Milligan  
(Terence Alan Patrick Seán Milligan) Irish (1918-2002)

On the Ning Nang Nong  
Where the Cows go Bong!  
and the monkeys all say BOO!  
There's a Nong Nang Ning  
Where the trees go Ping!  
And the tea pots jibber jabber joo.  
On the Nong Ning Nang  
All the mice go Clang  
And you just can't catch 'em when they do!  
So its Ning Nang Nong  
Cows go Bong!  
Nong Nang Ning  
Trees go ping  
Nong Ning Nang  
The mice go Clang  
What a noisy place to belong  
is the Ning Nang Ning Nang Nong!!

**13. Alone** Edgar Allan Poe American (1809-1849)

From childhood's hour I have not been  
As others were; I have not seen  
As others saw; I could not bring  
My passions from a common spring.  
From the same source I have not taken  
My sorrow; I could not awaken  
My heart to joy at the same tone;  
And all I loved, I loved alone.  
Then- in my childhood, in the dawn  
Of a most stormy life- was drawn  
From every depth of good and ill  
The mystery which binds me still:  
From the torrent, or the fountain,  
From the red cliff of the mountain,  
From the sun that round me rolled  
In its autumn tint of gold,  
From the lightning in the sky  
As it passed me flying by,  
From the thunder and the storm,  
And the cloud that took the form  
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)  
Of a demon in my view.

**14. Across The Red Sky** Katherine Mansfield  
New Zealander/English (1888-1923)

Across the red sky two birds flying,  
Flying with drooping wings.  
Silent and solitary their ominous flight.  
All day the triumphant sun with yellow banners  
Warred and warred with the earth, and when she yielded  
Stabbed her heart, gathered her blood in a chalice,  
Spilling it over the evening sky.  
When the dark plumaged birds go flying, flying,  
Quiet lies the earth wrapt in her mournful shadow,  
Her sightless eyes turned to the red sky  
And the restlessly seeking birds.