

Poet's Palette Poem Samples

In a Station of the Metro

Ezra Pound, 1885 - 1972

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

The Wind

James Stephens, 1882-1950

The wind stood up and gave a shout.
He whistled on his fingers and
Kicked the withered leaves about
And thumped the branches with his hand
And said that he'd kill and kill,
And so he will and so he will.

from Romeo & Juliet

William Shakespeare

"Why, then, O brawling love! O loving hate!
O anything, of nothing first create!
O heavy lightness! Serious vanity!
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms!
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire,
sick health!
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
Dost thou not laugh?"

(Romeo confronts love of an inaccessible woman prompting internal conflict)

The Red Wheelbarrow

William Carlos Williams, 1883 - 1963

so much depends
upon

a red wheel
barrow

glazed with rain
water

beside the white
chickens.

Acquainted with the Night

Robert Frost, 1874-1963

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night.

Wedding Wind

Philip Larkin

The wind blew all my wedding-day,
And my wedding-night was the night of the high
wind;
And a stable door was banging, again and again,
That he must go and shut it, leaving me
Stupid in candlelight, hearing rain,
Seeing my face in the twisted candlestick,
Yet seeing nothing. When he came back
He said the horses were restless, and I was sad
That any man or beast that night should lack
The happiness I had.

Now in the day
All's ravelled under the sun by the wind's blowing.
He has gone to look at the floods, and I
Carry a chipped pail to the chicken-run,
Set it down, and stare. All is the wind
Hunting through clouds and forests, thrashing
My apron and the hanging cloths on the line.
Can it be borne, this bodying-forth by wind
Of joy my actions turn on, like a thread
Carrying beads? Shall I be let to sleep
Now this perpetual morning shares my bed?
Can even death dry up
These new delighted lakes, conclude
Our kneeling as cattle by all-generous waters?

from I Am Waiting

Lawrence Ferlinghetti

I am waiting for my case to come up
and I am waiting
for a rebirth of wonder
and I am waiting for someone
to really discover America
and wail
and I am waiting
for the discovery
of a new symbolic western frontier
and I am waiting
for the American Eagle
to really spread its wings
and straighten up and fly right
and I am waiting
for the Age of Anxiety
to drop dead
and I am waiting
for the war to be fought
which will make the world safe
for anarchy
and I am waiting
for the final withering away
of all governments
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost, 1874-1963

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

(Buffalo Bill 's)

e.e. cummings

Buffalo Bill 's
defunct
 who used to
 ride a watersmooth-silver
 stallion
and break onetwothreefourfive pigeonsjustlikethat
 Jesus
he was a handsome man
 and what i want to know is
how do you like your blue-eyed boy
Mister Death

from America

Allen Ginsberg

America I've given you all and now I'm nothing.
America two dollars and twenty-seven cents January 17, 1956.
I can't stand my own mind.
America when will we end the human war?
Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb
I don't feel good don't bother me.
I won't write my poem till I'm in my right mind.
America when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?
When will you be worthy of your million Trotskyites?
America why are your libraries full of tears?
America when will you send your eggs to India?
I'm sick of your insane demands.
When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need with my good looks?
America after all it is you and I who are perfect not the next world.
Your machinery is too much for me.
You made me want to be a saint.
There must be some other way to settle this argument.

Cynthia in the Snow

Gwendolyn Brooks

It SUSHES.
It hushes
The loudness in the road.
It flitter-twitters,
And laughs away from me.
It laughs a lovely whiteness,
And whitely whirs away,
To be,
Some otherwhere,
Still white as milk or shirts.
So beautiful it hurts.

The Road Not Taken

Robert Frost, 1874-1963

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

The Pitcher

Robert Francis

His art is eccentricity, his aim
How not to hit the mark he seems to aim at,
His passion how to avoid the obvious,
His technique how to vary the avoidance.

The others throw to be comprehended. He
Throws to be a moment misunderstood.
Yet not too much. Not errant, arrant, wild,
But every seeming aberration willed.

Not to, yet still, still to communicate
Making the batter understand too late.

Metaphors

Sylvia Plath

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

She

Pedro Xistro



We Wear the Mask

Paul Lawrence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies.
It shades our cheeks and hides our eyes.
This debt we pay to human guile
With torn and bleeding hearts...
We smile and mouth the myriad subtleties.
Why should the world think otherwise
In counting all our tears and sighs.
Nay let them only see us while
We wear the mask.
We smile but oh my God
Our tears to thee from tortured souls arise
And we sing Oh Baby doll, now we sing...
The clay is vile beneath our feet
And long the mile
But let the world think otherwise.
We wear the mask.

My Papa's Waltz

Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.

For Old Black Men

Maya Angelou

When I think about myself
I almost laugh myself to death.
My life has been one great big joke!
A dance that's walked a song that's spoke.
I laugh so hard HA! HA! I almos' choke
When I think about myself.
Seventy years in these folks' world
The child I works for calls me girl
I say "HA! HA! HA! Yes ma'am!"
For workin's sake
I'm too proud to bend and
Too poor to break
So...I laugh! Until my stomach ache
When I think about myself.
My folks can make me split my side
I laugh so hard, HA! HA! I nearly died
The tales they tell sound just like lying
They grow the fruit but eat the rind.
Hmm huh! I laugh uhuh huh huh...
Until I start to cry when I think about myself
And my folks and the children.
My fathers sit on benches,
Their flesh count every plank,
The slats leave dents of darkness
Deep in their withered flank.
And they gnarled like broken candles,
All waxed and burned profound.
They say, but sugar, it was our submission
that made your world go round.
There in those pleated faces
I see the auction block
The chains and slavery's coffles
The whip and lash and stock.
My fathers speak in voices
That shred my fact and sound
They say, but sugar, it was our submission
that made your world go round.
They laugh to conceal their crying,
They shuffle through their dreams
They stepped 'n fetched a country
And wrote the blues in screams.
I understand their meaning,
It could an did derive
From living on the edge of death
They kept my race alive
By wearing the mask! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Pleasurable Pursuits

Michael Metzler

I took my son to see the men
re-paving the parking lot.
Big men and big machines.
We sat for nearly an hour

as the steamroller rolled to our
side and then back again to the
side by the field where
the big kids practice football.

We watched them all,
the dump trucks and bulldozers,
or “bull-ba-doze” to his two-year-old lips.
Each with a purpose.

Some for a paycheck, I suppose,
to make ends meet.
But then the very large man
who had found a spot of shade,

waiting to grade
the next row of boiling blacktop,
descended slowly from the top
of his powerful machinery.

As if to case the scorched scenery,
he squatted his formidable frame to my son’s height.
We could see his mirage image
through waves of black desert heat.

Such a treat
to see this man sweat,
and with his hard, firebrick fingers pick tiny
hot rocks from the asphalt surface,

where only he would notice
the bumps banished,
the rain drained well,
the job well done.

Here my son
would find pleasure in a paved parking lot,
and I solace that even the mighty among us,
though rarely required, can pursue perfection.