

Poetry Annotation

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**1. Holy Sonnets: Death, be not proud**

By John Donne

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee  
 Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so; [ 1]  
 For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow [ 4]  
 Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
 From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
 Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow, [ 5]  
 And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
 Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery. [ 7]  
 Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
 And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
 And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well  
 And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then? [ 8]  
 One short sleep past, we wake eternally  
 And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

## **2. Anecdote of the Jar** [ 9]

By Wallace Stevens

I placed a jar in Tennessee,  
 And round it was, upon a hill.  
 It made the slovenly wilderness [ 10]  
 Surround that hill.

The wilderness rose up to it,  
 And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
 The jar [ 11] was round upon the ground [ 12]  
 And tall and of a port in air.

It took dominion everywhere.  
 The jar was gray and bare.  
 It did not give of bird or bush,<sup>[ 13]</sup>  
 Like nothing else in Tennessee.

### 3. Rite of Passage <sup>[ 14]</sup>

By Sharon Olds

As the guests arrive at our son's party  
 they gather in the living room—  
 short men, men in first grade  
 with smooth jaws and chins.  
 Hands in pockets, they stand around  
 Jostling, jockeying for place, small fights  
 breaking out and calming. One says to another  
*How old are you? —Six. —I'm seven. —So?*  
 They eye each other, seeing themselves  
 tiny in the other's pupils. <sup>[ 15]</sup>They clear their  
 throats a lot, a room of small bankers,  
 they fold their arms and frown. <sup>[ 16]</sup> *I could beat you*  
*up*, a seven says to a six,  
 the midnight cake, round and heavy as a  
 turret <sup>[ 17]</sup> behind them on the table <sup>[ 18]</sup>. My son,  
 freckles like specks of nutmeg on his cheeks,  
 chest narrow as the balsa keel of a  
 model boat, long hands  
 cool and thin as the day they guided him  
 out of me, speaks up as a host  
 for the sake of the group.  
*We could easily kill a two-year-old,* <sup>[ 19]</sup>  
 he says in his clear voice. The other  
 men agree, they clear their throats  
 like Generals <sup>[ 20]</sup>, <sup>[ 21]</sup>they relax and get down to  
 playing war, celebrating my son's life.

**4. Fire and Ice** [ 22]By Robert Frost

Some say the world will end in fire [ 23],  
Some [ 24] say in ice [ 25]. [ 26]  
From what I've tasted of desire  
I hold with those who favor fire. [ 27]  
But if it had to perish twice,  
I think I know enough of hate  
To say that for destruction ice  
Is also great [ 28]  
And would suffice. [ 29]

**5. Dreams**By Langston Hughes

Hold fast to dreams  
For if [ dreams [ 30] die [ 31]  
Life is a broken-winged [ 32] bird [ 33]  
That cannot fly.

Hold fast to dreams [ 34]  
For when dreams go  
Life is a barren field  
Frozen with snow [ 35].

**6. Trees**

By 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;  
[39]

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. [40]

## 7. Remember

By Christina Rossetti

Remember me when I am gone away, [41]  
Gone far away into the silent land; [42][43]  
When you can no more hold me by the hand, [44]  
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.  
Remember me when no more day by day  
You tell me of our future that you plann'd: [45][46]  
Only remember [47] me; you understand  
It will be late to counsel then or pray.  
Yet if you should forget me for a while  
And afterwards remember, do not grieve: [48]  
For if the darkness and corruption leave  
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,  
Better by far you should forget and smile [49][50]  
Than that you should remember and be sad.

## 8. The Red Wheelbarrow

**By William Carlos Williams**

so much depends  
upon [ 51]

a red wheel  
barrow [ 52] [ 53] |  
[ 54]

glazed with rain  
water [ 55]

beside the white  
chickens

**9. The New Colossus****By Emma Lazarus**

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame, [ 56]  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land; [ 57]  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset [ 58] gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she [ 59]  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. [ 60]  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, [ 61]  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" |  
[ 62]

**10. Nothing Gold Can Stay [ 63]**

By [Robert Frost](#)

Nature's first green is gold, [64][65][66]  
 Her hardest hue to hold. [67]  
 Her early leaf's a flower; [68]  
 But only so an hour.  
 Then leaf subsides to leaf.  
 So Eden sank to grief,  
 So dawn goes down to day. [69]  
 Nothing gold can stay. [70]

## 11. On the Death of Richard West

By [Thomas Gray](#)

In vain to me the smiling Mornings shine [71],  
 And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire;  
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join;  
 Or cheerful fields resume their green attire;  
 These ears, alas! for other notes repine,  
 A different object do these eyes require;  
 My [72] lonely anguish melts no heart but mine;  
 And in my breast the imperfect joys expire. [73]  
 Yet Morning smiles the busy race to cheer,  
 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men; [74]  
 The fields to all their wonted tribute bear;  
 To warm their little loves [75] the birds complain;  
 I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear, [76]  
 And weep the more because I weep in vain. [77]

## 12. War

By [Mariana Llanos](#)

War  
 War Motive  
 War Marvel  
 War Mother  
 War Martyr

War Mourning  
 War Money  
 War Monger  
 War Murder  
 War Monster  
 War Monster  
 War Monster [ 78] [ 79]  
 Monster

### 13. Poetry is My Underwear

By April Halprin Wayland

*My* [ 80] *sister found them.*

Read them out loud.

She's so proud,

she's [ 81]running to our parents [ 82]  
 waving my poems in the air.

Doesn't she know [ 83]

she's waving my *underwear?* [ 84]

### 14. Harlem

By Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred? [ 85]

Does it dry up

like a raisin in the sun [ 86]?

Or fester like a sore [ 87]—

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over—

like a syrupy sweet [ 88] [ 89]?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load [ 90].

*Or does it explode?* [ 91]

**15. Alone”**By Edgar Allan Poe

From childhood’s hour I have not been  
As others were<sup>[ 92]</sup>—I have not seen  
As others<sup>[ 93]</sup>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<sup>[ 94]</sup>  
My heart to joy at the same tone—  
And all I lov’d—*I* lov’d alone—<sup>[ 95]</sup>  
Then—in my childhood—in the dawn  
Of a most stormy life—was drawn  
From ev’ry depth of good and ill  
The mystery which binds me still—  
From the torrent, or the fountain—<sup>[ 96]</sup>  
From the red cliff of the mountain—  
From the sun that ’round me roll’d<sup>[ 97]</sup><sup>[ 98]</sup><sup>[ 99]</sup><sup>[ 100]</sup>  
In its autumn tint of gold—  
From the lightning in the sky  
As it pass’d me flying by—  
From the thunder, and the storm—<sup>[ 101]</sup>  
And the cloud that took the form  
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)<sup>[ 102]</sup>  
Of a demon in my view—

**16. The Nymph’s Reply to the Shepherd**By Sir Walter Raleigh

If all the world and love were young,<sup>[ 103]</sup>  
And truth in every Shepherd’s tongue,<sup>[ 104]</sup>  
These pretty pleasures might me move,  
To live with thee, and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold<sup>[ 105]</sup>,  
When Rivers rage and Rocks grow cold,  
And *Philomel*<sup>[ 106]</sup>becometh<sup>[ 107]</sup>dumb,<sup>[ 108]</sup>  
The rest complains of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton<sup>[ 109]</sup> fields,  
To wayward winter reckoning<sup>[ 110]</sup> yields,<sup>[ 111]</sup>  
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,<sup>[ 112]</sup>

Is fancy' [113]s spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy beds of Roses,

Thy [114] cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies

Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten:

In [folly] [115] ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and Ivy buds,

The Coral clasps and amber studs,

All these in me no means can move

To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last, and love still breed,

Had joys no date, nor age no need,

Then these delights my mind might move [116]

To live with thee, and be thy love.

### 17. A Black Man Talks of Reaping

By Arna Bontemps

I have sown beside all waters in my day.

I planted deep, within my heart the fear [117]

that wind or fowl would take the grain away. [118]

I planted safe against this stark, lean year. [119]

I [scattered seed] [120] enough to plant the land

in rows from Canada to Mexico

but for my reaping only what the hand

can hold at once is all that I can show.

Yet what I sowed and what the orchard yields

my brother's sons are gathering stalk and root;

small wonder then my children glean in fields

they have not sown, and feed on bitter fruit. [121]

### 18. From the Dark Tower

By Countee Cullen

*(To Charles S. Johnson)*

We shall not always plant while others reap [122]

The golden [increment] [123] of bursting fruit,

Not always countenance, abject and mute, [124]

That lesser men should hold their brothers cheap;

Not everlastingly while others sleep

Shall we beguile their limbs with mellow flute,  
Not always bend to some more subtle brute;  
We were not made eternally to weep.

The night whose sable breast relieves the stark,  
White stars is no less lovely being dark,<sup>[ 125]</sup>  
And there are buds that cannot bloom at all  
In light, but crumple, piteous, and fall;  
So in the dark we hide the heart that bleeds,<sup>[ 126]</sup>  
And wait, and tend our agonizing seeds.

## **19. The Adventures of a Turtle**

By Russell Edson

The turtle carries his house<sup>[ 127]</sup> on his back. He<sup>[ 128]</sup> is both the house and the person of that house.  
But actually, under the shell is a little room where the true turtle, wearing long  
underwear, sits at a little table. At one end of the room a series of levers sticks out of slots in  
the floor, like the controls of a steam shovel. It is with these that the turtle<sup>[ 129]</sup> controls the legs of  
his house.

Most of the time the turtle sits under the sloping ceiling of his turtle room reading  
catalogues at the little table where a candle burns. He leans on one elbow, and then the other.  
He crosses one leg, and then the other. Finally he yawns and buries his head in his arms and  
sleeps.

If he feels a child picking up his house he quickly douses the candle and runs to the  
control levers and activates the legs of his house and tries to escape<sup>[ 130]</sup>.

If he cannot escape he retracts the legs and withdraws the so-called head and waits. He  
knows that children are careless, and that there will come a time when he will be free to move  
his house to some secluded place, where he will relight his candle, take out his catalogues and  
read until at last he yawns. Then he'll bury<sup>[ 131]</sup> his head in his arms and sleep.... That is, until  
another child picks up his house....

## **20. From Blossoms**

By Li-Young Lee

From blossoms comes  
this brown paper bag of peaches<sup>[ 132]</sup><sup>[ 133]</sup>  
we bought from the boy  
at the bend in the road where we turned toward  
signs painted *Peaches*.<sup>[ 134]</sup>

From laden boughs, from hands,  
from sweet fellowship in the bins<sup>[ 135]</sup>,  
comes nectar at the roadside, succulent  
peaches we devour, dusty skin and all,  
comes the familiar dust of summer, dust we eat.

O, to take what we love inside,  
to carry within us an orchard, to eat  
not only the skin, but the shade,  
not only the sugar, but the days, to hold [136]  
the fruit in our hands, adore it, then bite into  
the round jubilation of peach. |  
[137]

There are days we live  
as if death were nowhere  
in the background; from joy  
to joy to joy. [138] from wing to wing,  
from blossom to blossom to [139]  
impossible blossom, to sweet impossible blossom.