

Staff Favorite Poetry Picks

Do not go gentle into that good night

By: Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Megan M. Green Write Up

This is one of my favorites, a classic that gets mentioned in other poems, books, and movies. The poet Dylan Thomas wrote this poem with his dying father in mind. This is not just a poem but also a loving letter to Thomas's sickly father to keep trying to hold onto life despite knowing death is near. This poem gives hope and strength to those who may feel hopeless. The point is not to easily give in to your fate but to keep living life to the fullest until the very end. Live your best life, the best way you can especially when it gets hard.

Hey Black Child

By: Useni Eugene Perkins

Do you know who you are
Who you really are
Do you know you can be
What you want to be
If you try to be
What you can be

Hey black child
Do you know where you are going
Where you're really going
Do you know you can learn
What you want to learn
If you try to learn
What you can learn

Hey black child
Do you know you are strong
I mean really strong
Do you know you can do
What you want to do
If you try to do
What you can do

Hey Black Child
Be what you can be
Learn what you must learn
Do what you can do
And tomorrow your nation
Will be what you want it to be

Essie Levy Write Up

Because it tell that black child they can BE what you want to BE,, GO where you want to GO.
LEARN what they want to LEARN. and TOMORROW your NATION will be what YOU want it to be.

Phenomenal Woman

BY MAYA ANGELOU

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.
I say,
It's in the reach of my arms
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

I walk into a room
Just as cool as you please,
And to a man,
The fellows stand or
Fall down on their knees.
Then they swarm around me,
A hive of honey bees.
I say,
It's the fire in my eyes,
And the flash of my teeth,
The swing in my waist,
And the joy in my feet.
I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered
What they see in me.
They try so much
But they can't touch
My inner mystery.
When I try to show them
They say they still can't see.
I say,
It's in the arch of my back,
The sun of my smile,
The ride of my breasts,
The grace of my style.
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Now you understand
Just why my head's not bowed.
I don't shout or jump about
Or have to talk real loud.
When you see me passing
It ought to make you proud.
I say,
It's in the click of my heels,
The bend of my hair,
the palm of my hand,
The need of my care,
'Cause I'm a woman
Phenomenally.
Phenomenal woman,
That's me.

Samantha Gaston

Review of Phenomenal Woman by Dr. Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's "Phenomenal Woman" asserts the theme that 'Beauty is more than skin deep. She refutes the theory that beautiful women should have well-proportioned physique. She disapproves the distorted view of beauty, which emphasizes more on outer beauty than inner beauty. Phenomenal Woman is a lyrical poem that sends out an important message that empowerment comes from being confident in your own female skin.

Donna Robinson Write Up

Phenomenal Woman is a lyrical poem that sends out an important message to the world of convention and stereotype: empowerment comes from being confident in your own female skin, no matter if you are not seen as cute or fashionable by the masses.

Maya Angelou published this poem in 1978. It has gone on to be adapted and by groups of women world-wide, as it speaks to political issues and inequality of women everywhere. This poem is passionate and plants seeds of self-knowing and self-confidence. It's a poem that asks women not to conform to the pressures of society but to recognize inner belief, value and self-worth.

In short, this poem brings to life that a woman is more than the sum of her parts. She is style, grace, class, intuitive, bold, helpful, free, classy, intelligent, educated, and capable of defining her own beauty. Yes, she's, "a woman Phenomenally. Phenomenal woman, That's me".

Underface

By: Shel Silverstein

Underneath my outside face

There's a face that none can see.

A little less smiley,

A little less sure,

But a whole lot more like me.

Aston Hayes Write Up

The Poem I selected is one by Shel Silverstein, an author who accidentally became a children's author. He wrote many books including *Where The Sidewalk Ends*, *The Giving Tree* and *A Light in The Attic*. The poem i chose is a short one titled *Underface*.

The poem is a metaphor, about depression, maybe. But as a kid, I thought the poem was a metaphor for who you are behind the mask or who you are when the lights are off. I still receive it the same way today. Maybe, this poem can help people understand that the smile on the outside, doesn't match the "under face" but that's okay. It's best to rock that smile.

I'm not sure where I first saw this poem but it has been published in his book titled: *Every Thing On It*, 2011. Mr Silverstein passed in 1999 but his works are readily available in most book stores. Not to mention, *The Giving Tree*, is a widely copied work.

Excerpts from poem by Lynn Ungar

Pandemic

Cease from travel

Cease from buying and selling

Give up just for now
On trying to make the world
different than it is
Sing. pray touch only those
to whom you commit your life
Center down.
And when your body is still
reach out with your heart
Know that we are connected
In ways terrifying and beautiful
Know that our lives are in one another's hands
Do not reach out your hands
Reach out your heart
Reach out with tendrils of
compassion that move invisibly
Where we cannot touch
Promise this world your love
For better or for worse
In sickness and in health
So Long as we all shall live

Sandra Robinson Write Up

I think this is a timely poem for what the world is going through and this time. I also think it is self-explanatory. It does give us hope for the future if we try to take care of one another.

“First They Came”

By: Martin Niemöller

First they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out - because I was not a Socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out - because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out - because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me - and there was no one left to speak for me.

Alma Kizziah Write Up

Although it isn't a textbook example of a poem (containing elements such as meter, rhyme, stanzaic structure, etc.) my favorite poem is "First They Came" by German Lutheran pastor Martin Niemöller (1892–1984). Niemöller witnessed the NAZI rise to power throughout Europe during the 1930s and 1940s. "First They Came" is actually the poetic form of a portion of his post-World War II confession (1946).

Among other things, NAZIs were known for murdering people who they thought were undesirable (the intellectually and physically impaired, Jews, blacks, homosexuals, etc). Initially Niemöller was not a target of the NAZIS; however, after expressing his disapproval of Adolf Hitler's insistence that the state was supreme to religion, Niemöller was arrested and sent to a concentration camp (1937). He remained there until 1945 when the camp was liberated by the Allies. After the war, Niemöller expressed repentance for not speaking up for the people the government targeted before him.

"First They Came" examines the dynamics between perpetrators (people who commit immoral or criminal acts against others), victims (people harmed by immoral or criminal acts), and bystanders (people who witness immoral or criminal acts but do nothing to prevent them).

WATER

When they ask you why you love
the rain, the ocean, the river,
tell them
it is because
unlike the people
who should have
loved you better,
the water was never afraid
to touch you;
even when you were
at your most damaged
and broken

Nikita Gill

LaFratta D. Studivant Write Up

The poem I chose to highlight for National Poetry Month is Water by Nikita Gill. I did not choose this poem because of the poet nor the style of the poem itself, but mainly because the words connect with me at this very moment. I love how the poet titles the poem as Water but goes on to list different examples of water like rain, the ocean, and the river. The poem basically is telling the reader to tell people that you connect and loved a thing (water) that was not human simply because that thing was never afraid to you. Even when you weren't your best, when you were damaged and broken water was never afraid. I find that to be so sad but beautiful. Sad because we as people do miss out on opportunities to touch/i with other, whether it's out of fear or just plain ignorance. But it's beautiful and assuring to know that God has put those creations in life that pass no judgement. They just embrace us.

Kubla Khan

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan

A stately pleasure-dome decree:

Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever

It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,

That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Doug Young Write Up

“Kubla Khan” is one of the most famous poems written by the 18th century English writer Samuel Taylor Coleridge. According to Coleridge, he had taken opium for an illness while reading stories about the legendary Mongol ruler Kubla Khan, and fell asleep. Upon waking from his unusually vivid dreams he set about to feverishly and eagerly write down the lines which ‘appeared’ in his mind following the experience. Unfortunately, he was interrupted in the writing by a visitor, and when he returned to his writing he found that the rest of his inspired vision (which he estimated to contain another 200 to 300 lines) had faded, and he had to be content with the portion he had already written down.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

By Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps on the back
Of the wind and floats downstream
Till the current ends and dips his wing

In the orange suns rays
And dares to claim the sky.

But a BIRD that stalks down his narrow cage
Can seldom see through his bars of rage
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied
So he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with a fearful trill
Of things unknown but longed for still
And his tune is heard on the distant hill for
The caged bird sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
And the trade winds soft through
The sighing trees
And the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright
Lawn and he names the sky his own.

But a caged BIRD stands on the grave of dreams
His shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
His wings are clipped and his feet are tied
So he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings with
A fearful trill of things unknown
But longed for still and his
Tune is heard on the distant hill
For the caged bird sings of freedom.

Jerrylene Hawkins Write Up

Published in 1983, "I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings" is a poem written by Dr. Maya Angelou. Through this poem, she shows the sufferings of African-Americans. This is how it was for many blacks back in the day. We suffered through many things and never knew what to expect from day to day. Through the years, there have been many champions for the equality, freedom and truth. We have accomplished many things but still have many more things to achieve.

The poem is direct and does not hide the points made by the free bird or caged bird. In the poem, it talks about the free bird and how it flies through the sky. It eats fat worms and lives a great life. In my day, that's how segregation was and many people suffered as a result of it. On the other hand, the caged bird was just that – locked up, feet tied and no fat worms to eat. This is a description of how it was for blacks back in the day too. Many were put in jail for no cause, or a cause that went against white society.

I like this poem because I feel like it teaches a lesson. It reminds us to keep pushing, keep moving closer to the things that we want. When you can help people, help people.

We Wear the Mask

By Paul Laurence Dunbar

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile
And mouth with myriad subtleties,

Why should the world be over-wise,

In counting all our tears and sighs?

Nay, let them only see us, while

We wear the mask.

We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries

To thee from tortured souls arise.

We sing, but oh the clay is vile

Beneath our feet, and long the mile,

But let the world dream otherwise,

We wear the mask!

Deidre P. Sims Write Up

Analysis: During a time where racial tensions were high and written by an African American Man, "We Wear the Mask" is a poem that depicts the "mask" worn by African Americans and how they hide their inner feelings in an effort to just get along in life. However, here it is 2020 and not to diminish this poem's meaning, but to show these words and feelings are timeless. To some degree we all wear a "mask" as mothers, wives, women, men, husbands, fathers, children, employees, supervisors, no one is exempt. Our lives would be altered, if we didn't have the capability to put on our mask when we needed them. As humans we have so many struggles: weight, race, hair, depression, experiences, failures, secrets, yet most times life doesn't permit us to show our hurt and pain. Furthermore, we prefer people to see us with our mask, so that we appear strong and "okay". This poem is just confirmation that whatever it is that you may be going through in life, you are not alone. It is motivation to keep going through whatever hurt and pain that one may be dealing with in their life.

Equipment

by Edgar Albert Guest

Figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You've all that the greatest of men have had,
Two arms, two hands, two legs, two eyes,
And a brain to use if you would be wise.
With this equipment they all began,
So start for the top and say 'I can.'

Look them over, the wise and great,
They take their food from a common plate
And similar knives and forks they use,
With similar laces they tie their shoes,
The world considers them brave and smart.
But you've all they had when they made their start.

You can triumph and come to skill,
You can be great if only you will,
You're well equipped for what fight you choose,
You have legs and arms and a brain to use,
And the man who has risen, great deeds to do
Began his life with no more than you.

You are the handicap you must face,
You are the one who must choose your place,
You must say where you want to go.
How much you will study the truth to know,
God has equipped you for life, But He
Lets you decide what you want to be.

Courage must come from the soul within,
The man must furnish the will to win,
So figure it out for yourself, my lad,
You were born with all that the great have had,
With your equipment they all began.
Get hold of yourself, and say: 'I can.'

Deidre P. Sims Write Up

Although a classic, "Equipment" is a new favorite of mine. "Equipment" is the type of poem that will stick with you a lifetime--simple, yet powerful. In this poem Poe rallies the individual to take control of their destiny. He stresses the fact that every person is "equipped" with greatness. He asserts that there is no man that is greater than the next because we were all created equally; it is just a matter of a saying "I can" that distinguishes individuals. Poe begins the poem by drawing the readers' attention to the anatomy of man. We are all born with the same parts. He goes on to

prompt the reader to take a closer look at the men that are considered great. He takes daily nuances such as eating and tying shoes to emphasize the point that we are all the same. According to Poe you are the only thing that can prevent you from being and living the type of life that you desire. This poem is a powerful reminder that the God who created us equipped us with everything that we need in this life; we just have to use our equipment.