

## 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

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*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.