

# ***AP Literature Summer Reading Poetry Packet***

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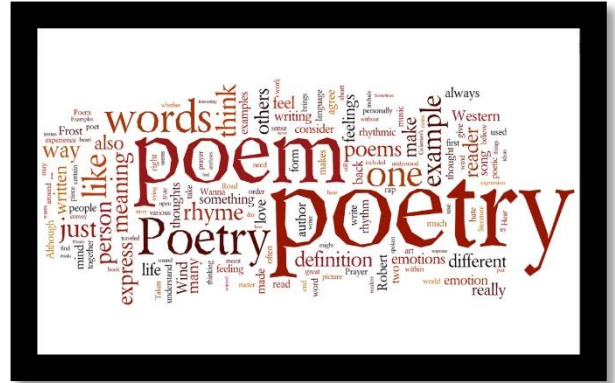
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## How to Read a Poem

- The key to reading a poem is to take your time.
- Don't panic if you don't understand it immediately; some poetry is so dense and layered that if you do grasp it in an instant, you're a) overlooking something; b) reading a bad poem; or c) a genius.
- Read it through several times out loud. The ancient oral tradition of poetry still applies today; good poetry is intended to be spoken. It is the only way to truly comprehend the poet's intention, and to begin the process of grasping a poem in a deeply personal way, which is, of course, the purpose of reading poetry.
- After you have read it several times, begin to analyze. First apply the 5 “S” strategies.

### **An Annotated Guide to the Five-S Strategy Analysis for Passages and Poetry**

- ❖ **Underline the first and last sentences.** Preview the passage by reading the first sentence, the last sentence, and by skimming the text in between to determine the scope of the work. By carrying out this step first, you gain an overview that allows for effective pacing. *You also have a road map on which to base predictions and questions about the text.*
- ❖ **Find all different or “funky” punctuation or syntax and circle it.** Discover obvious concentrations of unusual or otherwise significant **syntax** and their purpose. Look for changes in sentence length, sentence order, use of punctuation, and typographical elements such as italics, sentence inversion that creates rhetorical questions, etc. Mark this predominant syntax. *This marking provides visual cues throughout the passage which will often guide the reader to the part of the passage that conveys the most meaning—the **crux**.*
- ❖ **Discover the speaker; write the name and point of view label at the top of the passage.** Look for such things as the number of speakers and the narrator's point of view—this is most often either first person (narrator as major character, narrator as minor character) or third person (omniscient, limited omniscient or objective). Unless otherwise specified, analyze from the speaker's vantage point. Note anything that gives a clue about the speaker's *attitude*. *Be able to specify who is talking and how that person(s) feels about what is happening in the passage.*
- ❖ **Discover the situation; write one clear sentence about what happens in the passage at the top of the passage.** (Be sure to examine the title of the piece if it has one.) *All passages have a conflict of some kind. Be able to answer the questions: What is the conflict? How is it resolved?*
- ❖ **Draw a line in the passage where the major shifts occur.** *Look for diction or word choice changes in time, speed, or character attitude/speech to find the shift.* Shifts are often indicated by changes in structure, syntax, or diction, such as wording that evokes certain connotations and sudden changes in tone, sentence length, rhythm, punctuation, or patterns of imagery. Find areas of the passage where you can locate the most changes, and closely annotate them.

- Then, answer these questions as well: (*If you are not sure how to answer some of these questions right now, don't worry. We'll get there.*)
  - Who is the author? When did he/she write the poem? What's the historical context?
  - Don't forget to examine what can sometimes be the most important clue to a poem's meaning: the title
  - What literary devices does the poet use? What is the effect of those devices?
  - How has the poet arranged the stanzas on the page? How do the lines look on the page?
  - Where do the lines break and what is the meter?
  - Is there a rhyme scheme? Does the poem seem to follow a pattern or have specific form?

*But, really... the goal is NOT to be the students in this poem:*

### **1. "Introduction to Poetry"**

By Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

## 2. A Study of Reading Habits

*Philip Larkin*

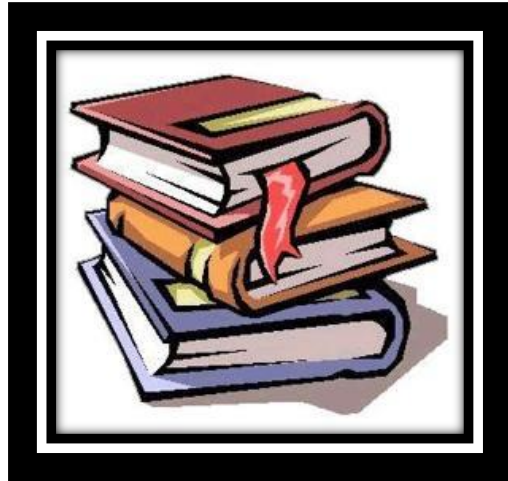
When getting my nose in a book  
cured most things short of school,  
It was worth ruining my eyes  
to know I could still keep cool,  
And deal out the old right hook  
To dirty dogs twice my size.

Later, with inch-thick specs,  
Evil was just my lark:  
Me and my cloak and fangs  
Had ripping ties in the dark.  
The women I clubbed with sex!  
I broke them up like meringues.

Don't read much now: the dude  
Who lets the girl down before  
The hero arrives, the chap  
Who's yellow and keeps the store,  
Seem far too familiar. Get stewed:  
Books are a load of crap.

### *Questions for A Study of Reading Habits*

1. The three stanzas delineate three stages in the speaker's life. Describe each.
2. What kind of person is the speaker? What kinds of books does he read?
3. May we assume that the speaker and the poet are the same person? Why or why not?



### **3. My Last Duchess**

*Robert Browning*

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Fra Pandolf" by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek; perhaps  
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat." Such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?— too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each

Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but  
 thanked  
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
 In speech—which I have not—to make your will  
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
 Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let  
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—  
 E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count your master's known munificence  
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

#### *Questions for My Last Duchess*

1. The speaker is the arrogant, art-collecting Duke of Ferrara. How does Browning force us to place our sympathies with so objectionable a *persona*?
2. In view of the probable fate of the former duchess, why may we describe the Duke's taking the Count's envoy into his confidence situationally ironic?
3. The statue of Neptune ("a rarity") taming a seahorse may be regarded as a symbol of brutal male domination of the beautiful and natural. How might we regard this statue as representing the Duke?

#### 4. The Sun Rising

John Donne

Busy old fool, unruly sun,  
Why dost thou thus  
Through windows and through curtains call on us?  
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?  
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide  
Late schoolboys and sour 'prentices,  
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,  
Call country ants to harvest offices;  
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,  
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams so reverend and strong  
Why shouldst thou think?  
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,  
But that I would not lose her sight so long;  
If her eyes have not blinded thine,  
Look, and tomorrow late tell me  
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine  
Be where thou left'st them, or lie here with me.  
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,  
And thou shalt hear, "all here in one bed lay."

She's all states, and all princes I;  
Nothing else is.  
Princes do but play us, compared with this,  
All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.  
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,  
In that the world's contracted thus;  
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be  
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.  
Sine here to us, and thou art everywhere;  
This bed thy center is, these walls thy sphere.



#### Questions for *The Sun Rising*

1. As precisely as possible, identify the time of day and the locale. What three "persons" does the poem involve?
2. What is the speaker's attitude toward the sun in stanzas 1 and 2? How and why does it change in stanza 3?
3. Does the speaker understate or overstate the actual qualities of the sun? Point out specific examples. What does the under / overstatement accomplish?
4. What is the speaker's purpose? What is the poem's purpose?

## 5. A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

John Donne

As virtuous men pass mildly away,  
    And whisper to their souls to go,  
While some of their sad friends do say,  
    The breath goes now, and some say, no.

So let us melt, and make no noise,  
    No tear-floods, nor sigh-tempests move;  
'Twere profanation of our joys  
    To tell the laity our love.

Moving of th' earth brings harms and fears,  
    Men reckon what it did and meant  
But trepidation of the spheres,  
    Though greater far, is innocent.

Dull sublunary lovers' love  
    (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit  
Absence, because it doth remove  
    Those things which elemented it.

But we by a love so much refined,  
    That ourselves know not what it is  
Inter-assured of the mind,  
    Care less, eyes, lips, and hands to miss.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,  
    Though I must go, endure not yet  
A breach, but an expansion,  
    Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so  
    As stiff twin compasses are two;  
Thy soul be fixed foot, makes now show  
    To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the center sit,  
    Yet when the other far doth roam  
It leans, and hearkens after it,  
    And grows erect, as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must  
    Like th' other foot, obliquely run;  
Thy firmness makes my circle just,  
    And makes me end, where I begun.

*Note: Line 11 is a reference to the spheres of Ptolemaic cosmology, whose movements caused no such disturbance as does a movement of the earth – that is, an earthquake.*

### Questions for A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning

1. Is the speaker in the poem about to die? Or about to leave on a journey? (The answer may be found in careful analysis of the simile in the last three stanzas and by noticing that the idea of dying in stanza 1 is introduced in a simile.)
2. Find and explain three similes and one metaphor used to describe the parting of true lovers.



## 6. This Is Just To Say

*William Carlos Williams*

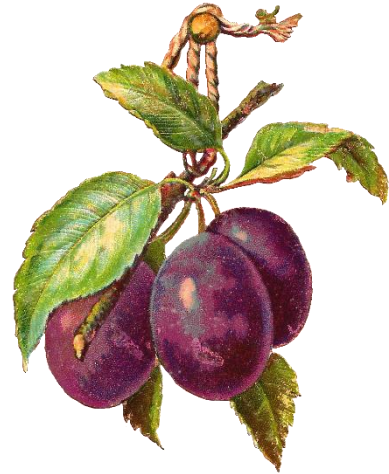
I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet  
and so cold

### *Questions for This is Just to Say*

1. Who is the speaker in this poem? Can we say that the speaker and the author are the same person?
2. Where might one find these words written in everyday life? How does that impact the meaning?
3. William Carlos Williams, the author of this poem, subscribed to a modern view of poetry known as imagism. Williams believed that, rather than focusing on conveying ideas and deeper truths, a poet's job was to create a powerful and concise sensory experience for the reader through one's writings. Does he live up to this task in this poem?



## **7. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock**

*T. S. Eliot*

Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;  
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...  
Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  
Let us go and make our visit.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo.

And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair —

(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin —  
(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")  
Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.

For I have known them all already, known them all:  
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,  
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  
I know the voices dying with a dying fall  
Beneath the music from a farther room.  
So how should I presume?

And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  
Then how should I begin  
To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?  
And how should I presume?

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
(But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!)  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.  
And should I then presume?  
And how should I begin?

Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...

I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  
Smoothed by long fingers,  
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers,  
Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  
Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,

I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid.

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball  
To roll it towards some overwhelming question,  
To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—  
If one, settling a pillow by her head  
Should say: "That is not what I meant at all;  
That is not it, at all."

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worth while  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
"That is not it at all,  
That is not what I meant, at all."

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,  
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  
Deferential, glad to be of use,  
Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  
Almost, at times, the Fool.

I grow old ... I grow old ...  
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.  
We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown  
Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

*Questions for The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

1. There are SO many allusions in this poem – choose one and explicate its function.
2. Discuss three examples of imagery in the poem and their relation to theme.

## 8. Still I Rise

*Maya Angelou*

You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?  
Why are you beset with gloom?  
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells  
Pumping in my living room.

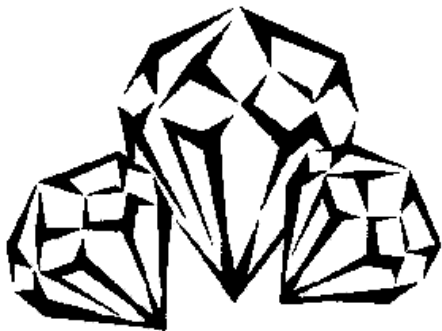
Just like moons and like suns,  
With the certainty of tides,  
Just like hopes springing high,  
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?  
Bowed head and lowered eyes?  
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,  
Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?  
Don't you take it awful hard  
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines  
Diggin' in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,  
You may cut me with your eyes,  
You may kill me with your hatefulness,  
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?  
Does it come as a surprise  
That I dance like I've got diamonds  
At the meeting of my thighs?



Out of the huts of history's shame  
I rise  
Up from a past that's rooted in pain  
I rise  
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,  
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear  
I rise  
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear  
I rise  
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,  
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.  
I rise  
I rise  
I rise.

### *Questions for Still I Rise*

1. Who do you think the speaker/narrator of the poem is? Is it a person? A cultural group?
2. To whom do you think the poem is directed? What is the message to that audience?
3. To what "gifts that my ancestors gave" is the narrator referring?

## **9. This is a Photograph of Me**

*Margaret Atwood*

It was taken some time ago.  
At first it seems to be  
a smeared  
print: blurred lines and grey flecks  
blended with the paper;

then, as you scan  
it, you see in the left-hand corner  
a thing that is like a branch: part of a tree  
(balsam or spruce) emerging  
and, to the right, halfway up  
what ought to be a gentle  
slope, a small frame house.

In the background there is a lake,  
and beyond that, some low hills.

(The photograph was taken  
the day after I drowned.

I am in the lake, in the center  
of the picture, just under the surface.

It is difficult to say where  
precisely, or to say  
how large or small I am:  
the effect of water  
on light is a distortion

but if you look long enough,  
eventually  
you will be able to see me.)

### *Questions for This is a Photograph of Me*

1. How does the detail of the narrator's surroundings impact the meaning of the poem?
2. Discuss this line: "the effect of water/ on light is a distortion" in terms of metaphorical analysis.
3. Reread the title. How does the title reveal meaning?

**10. XVIII - Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?**

*William Shakespeare*

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

*Questions for Sonnet XVIII*

1. State the rhyme scheme and the type of meter used in this poem.
2. How does Foster's approach to sonnets in *How to Read Literature like a Professor* impact your understanding of this poem?
3. What is the effect of the break in the rhyme scheme during the last two lines? What ideas are emphasized by this rhyming couplet?



## **11. CXXX – My mistress' eye are nothing like the sun**

*William Shakespeare*

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red, than her lips red:  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;  
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.  
I have seen roses damasked, red and white,  
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;  
And in some perfumes is there more delight  
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.  
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know  
That music hath a far more pleasing sound:  
I grant I never saw a goddess go,  
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:  
And yet by heaven, I think my love as rare,  
As any she belied with false compare.

### *Questions for Sonnet CXXX*

1. State the rhyme scheme and the type of meter used in this poem.
2. How does Foster's approach to sonnets in *How to Read Literature like a Professor* impact your understanding of this poem?
3. What ideas are emphasized by this rhyming couplet? How is the reader expected to connect the shift in thought of the couplet with the rest of the sonnet?

## **12. CXVI - Let me not to the marriage of true minds...**

*William Shakespeare*

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

### *Questions for CXVI*

1. How does this sonnet compare and contrast with the above two?
2. Which explication of love suits you best as reader?

**13. London, 1802**  
*William Wordsworth*

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:  
England hath need of thee: she is a fen  
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;  
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,  
So didst thou travel on life's common way,  
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart  
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.



*Questions for London, 1802*

1. How does this poem function as an elegy? For whom and what does it say?
2. Without getting into the exact politics of Romanticism as a reaction to the Industrial Age, how do we know that Wordsworth finds 1802 a problematic time for England?

## 14. Sonnet

Billy Collins (2008)

All we need is fourteen lines, well, thirteen now,  
and after this next one just a dozen  
to launch a little ship on love's storm-tossed seas,  
then only ten more left like rows of beans.  
How easily it goes unless you get Elizabethan  
and insist the iambic bongos must be played  
and rhymes positioned at the ends of lines,  
one for every station of the cross.  
But hang on here while we make the turn  
into the final six where all will be resolved,  
where longing and heartache will find an end,  
where Laura will tell Petrarch to put down his pen,  
take off those crazy medieval tights,  
blow out the lights, and come at last to bed.

### *Questions for Sonnet*

1. How does Collins effectively satirize the structure of the sonnet?
2. How do the details he uses support his satire?

## 15. When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

By Walt Whitman

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,  
and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with  
much applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

### *Questions for When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer*

1. How does the series of details impact the meaning of the poem?
2. What is at conflict in this poem? What larger literary/intellectual movement of the early 1800s does this reflect?



## 16. Ode to a Nightingale

John Keats

I.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,           5  
But being too happy in thine happiness,--  
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees  
In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
Singest of summer in full-throated ease.           10

II.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
And purple-stained mouth;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

III.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
And leaden-eyed despairs,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.



IV.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

V.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

VI.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain--  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

VII.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

VIII

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:--Do I wake or sleep?

*Questions for Ode to Nightingale*

1. In lines 19-20, what does Keats wish? What differences does Keats see between the bird's life and his?
2. How does the speaker's viewpoint in Stanza V reflect his wish from line 20?
3. How does stanza VII "answer" stanza VI?
4. How does ending the poem with a rhetorical question serve the purpose of Keats' overall theme?



## 17. Birches

Robert Frost

When I see birches bend to left and right  
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,  
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.  
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay  
As ice-storms do. Often you must have seen them  
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning  
After a rain. They click upon themselves  
As the breeze rises, and turn many-colored  
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.  
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells  
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust—  
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away  
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.  
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,  
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed  
So low for long, they never right themselves:  
You may see their trunks arching in the woods  
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground  
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair  
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.  
But I was going to say when Truth broke in  
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm  
I should prefer to have some boy bend them  
As he went out and in to fetch the cows—  
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,  
Whose only play was what he found himself,  
Summer or winter, and could play alone.  
One by one he subdued his father's trees  
By riding them down over and over again  
Until he took the stiffness out of them,  
And not one but hung limp, not one was left  
For him to conquer. He learned all there was  
To learn about not launching out too soon  
And so not carrying the tree away



Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise  
To the top branches, climbing carefully  
With the same pains you use to fill a cup  
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.  
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,  
Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.  
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.  
And so I dream of going back to be.  
It's when I'm weary of considerations,  
And life is too much like a pathless wood  
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs  
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping  
From a twig's having lashed across it open.  
I'd like to get away from earth awhile  
And then come back to it and begin over.  
May no fate willfully misunderstand me  
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away  
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:  
I don't know where it's likely to go better.  
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,  
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk  
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,  
But dipped its top and set me down again.  
That would be good both going and coming back.  
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

#### *Questions for Birches*

1. How does the poet characterize childhood in this poem? How does that characterization add to the poem's theme?
2. What commentary does Frost give on balance and timing through this poem?
3. What diction and details lead us to the consideration of isolation as theme? How do we feel about the boy's isolation?

## 18. Do Not Go Gentle into that Good Night

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.

### *Questions for Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night*

1. Scan the poem. What patterns emerge? Where does the poem stray from the basic patterns established?
2. This poem is an example of a French form of poetry known as a **villanelle**. Based on this poem, how would you tentatively define this form of poetry? What characteristics of this poetic form seem to be key?

## 19. Harlem or A Dream Deferred

Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred?

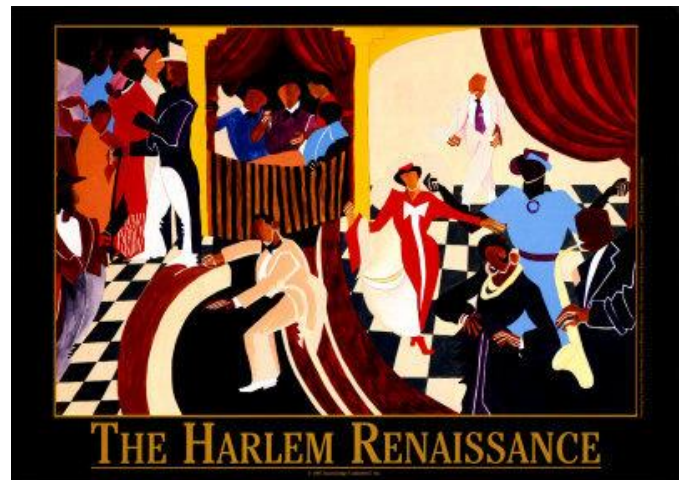
Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore—  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over—  
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*

### Questions for Harlem

1. This poem offers any number of rhetorical questions? Do you think the reader gets any answers to the initial question? Explain your answer.
2. Of the six images, five are similes. Which is a metaphor? Comment on its position and its effectiveness.
3. Since the dream could be any dream, the poem is general in its implication. What happens to your understanding of it on learning that its author was a black American?



## **20. Because I could not stop for Death**

*Emily Dickinson*

Because I could not stop for Death,  
He kindly stopped for me;  
The carriage held but just ourselves  
And Immortality.

We slowly drove; he knew no haste,  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For his civility.

We passed the school, where children strove,  
At recess, in the ring,  
We passed the fields of gazing grain,  
We passed the setting sun,

Or rather, he passed us;  
The dews drew quivering and chill;  
For only gossamer, my gown;  
My tippet, only tulle.

We paused before a house that seemed  
A swelling of the ground;  
The roof was scarcely visible.  
The cornice, in the ground.

Since then, 'tis centuries, and yet  
Feels shorter than the day  
I first surmised the horses' heads  
Were toward eternity.

### *Questions for Because I could not stop for Death*

1. What is the allegorical meaning of this ride?
2. Explain the irony of “kindly” and “civility” (8).
3. As what is death personified?
4. The fourth stanza alters the metrical pattern of the poem. What aspect of this hypothetical experience is emphasized by the alteration?