



# POETRY FOUNDATION

[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [A Red, Red Rose](#)

## A Red, Red Rose

BY ROBERT BURNS

O my Luve is like a red, red rose

That's newly sprung in June;

O my Luve is like the melody

That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonnie lass,

So deep in luve am I;

And I will luve thee still, my dear,

Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,

And the rocks melt wi' the sun;

I will love thee still, my dear,

While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only luve!

And fare thee weel awhile!

And I will come again, my luve,

Though it were ten thousand mile.

### RELATED CONTENT

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POET



# POETRY FOUNDATION

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## Accident, Mass. Ave.

BY JILL MCDONOUGH

I stopped at a red light on Mass. Ave.  
in Boston, a couple blocks away  
from the bridge, and a woman in a beat-up  
old Buick backed into me. Like, cranked her wheel,  
rammed right into my side. I drove a Chevy  
pickup truck. It being Boston, I got out  
of the car yelling, swearing at this woman,  
a little woman, whose first language was not English.  
But she lived and drove in Boston, too, so she knew,  
we both knew, that the thing to do  
is get out of the car, slam the door  
as hard as you fucking can and yell things like *What the fuck  
were you thinking? You fucking blind? What the fuck  
is going on? Jesus Christ!* So we swore  
at each other with perfect posture, unnaturally angled  
chins. I threw my arms around, sudden  
jerking motions with my whole arms, the backs  
of my hands toward where she had hit my truck.

But she hadn't hit my truck. She hit  
the tire; no damage done. Her car  
was fine, too. We saw this while  
we were yelling, and then we were stuck.  
The next line in our little drama should have been

*Look at this fucking dent! I'm not paying for this  
shit. I'm calling the cops, lady. Maybe we'd throw in a  
You're in big trouble, sister, or I just hope for your sake  
there's nothing wrong with my fucking suspension, that  
sort of thing. But there was no fucking dent. There  
was nothing else for us to do. So I  
stopped yelling, and she looked at the tire she'd  
backed into, her little eyebrows pursed  
and worried. She was clearly in the wrong, I was enormous,  
and I'd been acting as if I'd like to hit her. So I said*

*Well, there's nothing wrong with my car, nothing wrong  
with your car . . . are you OK? She nodded, and started  
to cry, so I put my arms around her and I held her, middle  
of the street, Mass. Ave., Boston, a couple blocks from the bridge.  
I hugged her, and I said *We were scared, weren't we?*  
and she nodded and we laughed.*

## RELATED CONTENT

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### POET

[Jill McDonough](#)

### SUBJECTS

[Social Commentaries, Cities & Urban Life](#)

### POET'S REGION

[U.S., New England](#)

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[Home](#) > [Poetry Magazine](#) > [Poems](#) > [Anecdote of the Jar](#)

# POETRY

[Current Issue Table of Contents](#)  
[Browse All Issues Back to 1912](#)  
[About Poetry Magazine](#)

## Anecdote of the Jar

BY WALLACE STEVENS

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

The wilderness rose up to it,  
And sprawled around, no longer wild.  
The jar was round upon the ground  
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,  
Like nothing else in Tennessee.



# POETRY FOUNDATION

[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Dulce et Decorum Est](#)

## Dulce et Decorum Est

BY WILFRED OWEN

Audio Player

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—  
Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,

And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: *Dulce et decorum est*  
*Pro patria mori.*

## RELATED CONTENT

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### POET

Wilfred Owen

### SUBJECTS

Living, Death, Social Commentaries, War & Conflict

### POET'S REGION

England

### SCHOOL / PERIOD

Georgian

### POETIC TERMS

Rhymed Stanza

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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Holy Sonnets: Batter my heart, three-person'd God](#)

## Holy Sonnets: Batter my heart, three-person'd God

BY JOHN DONNE

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,  
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end:  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

### RELATED CONTENT

Discover this poem's context and related poetry, articles, and media

#### POET

John Donne

#### SUBJECTS

Religion, Christianity, Faith & Doubt, God & the Divine

#### POET'S REGION



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[Home](#) > [Poetry Magazine](#) > [Poems](#) > [In a Station of the Metro](#)

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[Current Issue Table of Contents](#)  
[Browse All Issues Back to 1912](#)  
[About Poetry Magazine](#)

## In a Station of the Metro

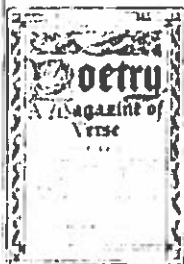
BY EZRA POUND

[Audio Player](#)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

### MORE FROM THIS ISSUE

This poem originally appeared in the April 1913 issue of Poetry magazine



## Mother Earth

BY HARRIET MONROE

[A Pact](#)

[April 1913 Table of Contents](#)  
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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Lady Lazarus](#)

## Lady Lazarus

BY SYLVIA PLATH

I have done it again.  
One year in every ten  
I manage it—

A sort of walking miracle, my skin  
Bright as a Nazi lampshade,  
My right foot

A paperweight,  
My face a featureless, fine  
Jew linen.

Peel off the napkin  
O my enemy.  
Do I terrify?—

The nose, the eye pits, the full set of teeth?  
The sour breath  
Will vanish in a day.

Soon, soon the flesh  
The grave cave ate will be  
At home on me

And I a smiling woman.  
I am only thirty.  
And like the cat I have nine times to die.

This is Number Three.  
What a trash  
To annihilate each decade.

What a million filaments.  
The peanut-crunching crowd  
Shoves in to see

Them unwrap me hand and foot —  
The big strip tease.  
Gentlemen, ladies

These are my hands  
My knees.  
I may be skin and bone,

Nevertheless, I am the same, identical woman.  
The first time it happened I was ten.  
It was an accident.

The second time I meant  
To last it out and not come back at all.  
I rocked shut

As a seashell.  
They had to call and call  
And pick the worms off me like sticky pearls.

Dying  
Is an art, like everything else.  
I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.  
I do it so it feels real.  
I guess you could say I've a call.

It's easy enough to do it in a cell.  
It's easy enough to do it and stay put.  
It's the theatrical

Comeback in broad day  
To the same place, the same face, the same brute  
Amused shout:

'A miracle!'  
That knocks me out.  
There is a charge

For the eyeing of my scars, there is a charge  
For the hearing of my heart—  
It really goes.

And there is a charge, a very large charge  
For a word or a touch  
Or a bit of blood

Or a piece of my hair or my clothes.  
So, so, Herr Doktor.  
So, Herr Enemy.

I am your opus,  
I am your valuable,  
The pure gold baby

That melts to a shriek.  
I turn and burn.

Do not think I underestimate your great concern.

Ash, ash—

You poke and stir.

Flesh, bone, there is nothing there—

A cake of soap,

A wedding ring,

A gold filling.

Herr God, Herr Lucifer

Beware

Beware.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

## RELATED CONTENT

Discover this poem's context and related poetry, articles, and media.

### POET

**Sylvia Plath**

### SUBJECTS

**Living, Death, Social Commentaries, Gender & Sexuality, Mythology & Folklore, Heroes & Patriotism**

### SCHOOL / PERIOD

**Confessional**

### POETIC TERMS

**Persona**

**Confessional**



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FOUNDATION

[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [London](#)

## London

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

I wander thro' each charter'd street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infants cry of fear,  
In every voice: in every ban,  
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry  
Every blackning Church appalls,  
And the hapless Soldiers sigh  
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful Harlots curse  
Blasts the new-born Infants tear  
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

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Discover this poem's context and related poetry, articles, and media.

POET



# POETRY FOUNDATION

[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Persimmons](#)

## Persimmons

BY LI-YOUNG LEE

In sixth grade Mrs. Walker  
slapped the back of my head  
and made me stand in the corner  
for not knowing the difference  
between *persimmon* and *precision*.  
How to choose

persimmons. This is precision.  
Ripe ones are soft and brown-spotted.  
Sniff the bottoms. The sweet one  
will be fragrant. How to eat:  
put the knife away, lay down newspaper.  
Peel the skin tenderly, not to tear the meat.  
Chew the skin, suck it,  
and swallow. Now, eat  
the meat of the fruit,  
so sweet,  
all of it, to the heart.

Donna undresses, her stomach is white.  
In the yard, dewy and shivering  
with crickets, we lie naked,  
face-up, face-down.  
I teach her Chinese.

Crickets: *chuu chuu*. Dew: I've forgotten.

Naked: I've forgotten.

*Ni, wo*: you and me.

I part her legs,

remember to tell her

she is beautiful as the moon.

Other words

that got me into trouble were

*fight* and *fright*, *wren* and *yarn*.

Fight was what I did when I was frightened,

Fright was what I felt when I was fighting.

Wrens are small, plain birds,

yarn is what one knits with.

Wrens are soft as yarn.

My mother made birds out of yarn.

I loved to watch her tie the stuff;

a bird, a rabbit, a wee man.

Mrs. Walker brought a persimmon to class

and cut it up

so everyone could taste

a *Chinese apple*. Knowing

it wasn't ripe or sweet, I didn't eat

but watched the other faces.

My mother said every persimmon has a sun

inside, something golden, glowing,

warm as my face.

Once, in the cellar, I found two wrapped in newspaper,

forgotten and not yet ripe.

I took them and set both on my bedroom windowsill,

where each morning a cardinal

sang, *The sun, the sun*.

Finally understanding  
he was going blind,  
my father sat up all one night  
waiting for a song, a ghost.  
I gave him the persimmons,  
swelled, heavy as sadness,  
and sweet as love.

This year, in the muddy lighting  
of my parents' cellar, I rummage, looking  
for something I lost.  
My father sits on the tired, wooden stairs,  
black cane between his knees,  
hand over hand, gripping the handle.  
He's so happy that I've come home.  
I ask how his eyes are, a stupid question.  
*All gone*, he answers.

Under some blankets, I find a box.  
Inside the box I find three scrolls.  
I sit beside him and untie  
three paintings by my father:  
Hibiscus leaf and a white flower.  
Two cats preening.  
Two persimmons, so full they want to drop from the cloth.

He raises both hands to touch the cloth,  
asks, *Which is this?*

*This is persimmons, Father.*

*Oh, the feel of the wolftail on the silk,  
the strength, the tense  
precision in the wrist.*



*I painted them hundreds of times  
eyes closed. These I painted blind.  
Some things never leave a person:  
scent of the hair of one you love,  
the texture of persimmons,  
in your palm, the ripe weight.*

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## RELATED CONTENT

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### POET

Li-Young Lee

### SUBJECTS

Living, Marriage & Companionship, Love, Desire, Heartache & Loss, Activities, Eating & Drinking, School & Learning, Relationships, Family & Ancestors, Home Life, Philosophy

### POETIC TERMS

Free Verse

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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Sonnet 18 Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?](#)

## Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

BY 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 dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;  
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.

### RELATED CONTENT

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#### POET

[William Shakespeare](#)

#### SUBJECTS

[Love](#), [Classic Love](#), [Romantic Love](#), [Relationships](#), [Nature](#), [Summer](#)

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[Anniversary](#), [Engagement](#), [Weddings](#)



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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Sonnet 130 My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun](#)

## Sonnet 130: My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun

BY 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.

### RELATED CONTENT

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#### POET

[William Shakespeare](#)

#### SUBJECTS

[Love](#), [Classic Love](#), [Realistic & Complicated](#), [Romantic Love](#), [Relationships](#)



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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [Tell all the truth but tell it slant — \(1263\)](#)

## Tell all the truth but tell it slant — (1263)

BY EMILY DICKINSON

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise  
As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind —

### RELATED CONTENT

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#### POET

Emily Dickinson

#### SUBJECTS

Arts & Sciences, Philosophy

#### POET'S REGION

U.S., New England



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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [The Second Coming](#)

## The Second Coming

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Audio Player

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
The darkness drops again; but now I know  
That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

## RELATED CONTENT

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### POET

[William Butler Yeats](#)

### SUBJECTS

[Religion, God & the Divine](#), [Social Commentaries](#), [History & Politics](#)

### POET'S REGION

[Ireland](#)

### SCHOOL / PERIOD

[Modern](#)

### POETIC TERMS

[Allusion](#)

[Mixed](#)

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[June 2016 Table of Contents](#)

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[Home](#) > [Poems & Poets](#) > [Browse Poems](#) > [This Is Just To Say](#)

## This Is Just To Say

BY 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

### RELATED CONTENT

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POET



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## To My Dear and Loving Husband

Turn annotations off

BY ANNE BRADSTREET

Audio Player

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee.  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me, ye women, if you can.  
I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.  
Thy love is such I can no way repay;  
The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let's so persevere,  
That when we live no more, we may live ever.

### RELATED CONTENT





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[Home](#) > [Poetry Magazine](#) > [Poems](#) > [We Real Cool](#)

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[Current Issue Table of Contents](#)  
[Browse All Issues Back to 1912](#)  
[About Poetry Magazine](#)

## We Real Cool

BY GWENDOLYN BROOKS

Audio Player

*The Pool Players.*  
*Seven at the Golden Shovel.*

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.