**Poem 1**

**The Definition of Love** by Andrew Marvell

My love is of a birth as rare

As ’tis for object strange and high;

It was begotten by Despair

Upon Impossibility.

Magnanimous Despair alone

Could show me so divine a thing

Where feeble Hope could ne’er have flown,

But vainly flapp’d its tinsel wing.

And yet I quickly might arrive

Where my extended soul is fixt,

But Fate does iron wedges drive,

And always crowds itself betwixt.

For Fate with jealous eye does see

Two perfect loves, nor lets them close;

Their union would her ruin be,

And her tyrannic pow’r depose.

And therefore her decrees of steel

Us as the distant poles have plac’d,

(Though love’s whole world on us doth wheel)

Not by themselves to be embrac’d;

Unless the giddy heaven fall,

And earth some new convulsion tear;

And, us to join, the world should all

Be cramp’d into a planisphere.

As lines, so loves oblique may well

Themselves in every angle greet;

But ours so truly parallel,

Though infinite, can never meet.

Therefore the love which us doth bind,

But Fate so enviously debars,

Is the conjunction of the mind,

And opposition of the stars.

**Poem 2**

**Song: Spring** (from Love's Labours Lost) by William Shakespeare

When daisies pied and violets blue

   And lady-smocks all silver-white

And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue

   Do paint the meadows with delight,

The cuckoo then, on every tree,

Mocks married men; for thus sings he,

                         Cuckoo;

Cuckoo, cuckoo: Oh word of fear,

Unpleasing to a married ear!

When shepherds pipe on oaten straws,

   And merry larks are plowmen’s clocks,

When turtles tread, and rooks, and daws,

   And maidens bleach their summer smocks,

The cuckoo then, on every tree,

Mocks married men; for thus sings he,

                         Cuckoo;

Cuckoo, cuckoo: Oh word of fear,

Unpleasing to a married ear!

**Poem 3**

**The almanac of time by** Dylan Thomas

The almanac of time, hangs in the brain;

The seasons numbered, by the inward sun,

The winter years, move in the pit of man;

His graph is measured as the page of pain

Shifts to the redwombed pen.

The calendar of age hangs in the heart,

A lover’s thought tears down the dated sheet,

The inch of time’s protracted to a foot

By youth and age, the mortal state and thought

Ageing both day and night.

The word of time lies on the chaptered bone,

The seed of time is sheltered in the loin:

The grains of life must seethe beneath the sun,

The syllables be said and said again:

Time shall belong to man.

**Poem 4**

**I Hear America Singing** by Walt Whitman

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,

Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,

The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,

The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,

The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand singing on the steamboat deck,

The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as he stands,

The wood-cutter’s song, the ploughboy’s on his way in the morning, or at noon intermission or at sundown,

The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work, or of the girl sewing or washing,

Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,

The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows, robust, friendly,

Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

**Poem 5**

**Time to Come** by Walt Whitman

O, Death! a black and pierceless pall

    Hangs round thee, and the future state;

No eye may see, no mind may grasp

    That mystery of fate.

This brain, which now alternate throbs

    With swelling hope and gloomy fear;

This heart, with all the changing hues,

    That mortal passions bear—

This curious frame of human mould,

    Where unrequited cravings play,

This brain, and heart, and wondrous form

    Must all alike decay.

The leaping blood will stop its flow;

    The hoarse death-struggle pass; the cheek

Lay bloomless, and the liquid tongue

    Will then forget to speak.

The grave will take me; earth will close

    O’er cold dull limbs and ashy face;

But where, O, Nature, where shall be

    The soul’s abiding place?

Will it e’en live? For though its light

*Must* shine till from the body torn;

Then, when the oil of life is spent,

    Still shall the taper burn?

O, powerless is this struggling brain

    To rend the mighty mystery;

In dark, uncertain awe it waits

    The common doom, to die.

**Poem 6**

**Beat! Beat! Drums!** by Walt Whitman

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless force,

Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,

Into the school where the scholar is studying,

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have now with his bride,

Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or gathering his grain,

So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the streets;

Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers must sleep in those beds,

No bargainers’ bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—would they continue?

Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?

Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!

Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,

Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,

Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,

Let not the child’s voice be heard, nor the mother’s entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles blow.

**Poem 7**

**Nick and the Candlestick** by Sylvia Plath

I am a miner. The light burns blue.

Waxy stalactites

Drip and thicken, tears

The earthen womb

Exudes from its dead boredom.

Black bat airs

Wrap me, raggy shawls,

Cold homicides.

They weld to me like plums.

Old cave of calcium

Icicles, old echoer.

Even the newts are white,

Those holy Joes.

And the fish, the fish—

Christ! they are panes of ice,

A vice of knives,

A piranha

Religion, drinking

Its first communion out of my live toes.

The candle

Gulps and recovers its small altitude,

Its yellows hearten.

O love, how did you get here?

O embryo

Remembering, even in sleep,

Your crossed position.

The blood blooms clean

In you, ruby.

The pain

You wake to is not yours.

Love, love,

I have hung our cave with roses,

With soft rugs—

The last of Victoriana.

Let the stars

Plummet to their dark address,

Let the mercuric

Atoms that cripple drip

Into the terrible well,

You are the one

Solid the spaces lean on, envious.

You are the baby in the barn.

**Poem 8**

**One Art** by Elizabeth Bishop

The art of losing isn’t hard to master;

so many things seem filled with the intent

to be lost that their loss is no disaster.

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster

of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

Then practice losing farther, losing faster:

places, and names, and where it was you meant

to travel. None of these will bring disaster.

I lost my mother’s watch. And look! my last, or

next-to-last, of three loved houses went.

The art of losing isn’t hard to master.

I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,

some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.

I miss them, but it wasn’t a disaster.

—Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture

I love) I shan’t have lied. It’s evident

the art of losing’s not too hard to master

though it may look like (*Write* it!) like disaster.

**Poem 9**

**Sonnet 116: ‘Let me not to the marriage of rue minds…’** by 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.

**Poem 10**

**Sonnet XLIII: How Do I Love Thee?** by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of being and ideal grace.  
I love thee to the level of every day's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for right.  
I love thee purely, as they turn from praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints.  I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life;  and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

**Poem 11**

**Blackberry-Picking** by Seamus Heaney

Late August, given heavy rain and sun

For a full week, the blackberries would ripen.

At first, just one, a glossy purple clot

Among others, red, green, hard as a knot.

You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet

Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it

Leaving stains upon the tongue and lust for

Picking. Then red ones inked up and that hunger

Sent us out with milk cans, pea tins, jam-pots

Where briars scratched and wet grass bleached our boots.

Round hayfields, cornfields and potato-drills

We trekked and picked until the cans were full,

Until the tinkling bottom had been covered

With green ones, and on top big dark blobs burned

Like a plate of eyes. Our hands were peppered

With thorn pricks, our palms sticky as Bluebeard's.

We hoarded the fresh berries in the byre.

But when the bath was filled we found a fur,

A rat-grey fungus, glutting on our cache.

The juice was stinking too. Once off the bush

The fruit fermented, the sweet flesh would turn sour.

I always felt like crying. It wasn't fair

That all the lovely canfuls smelt of rot.

Each year I hoped they'd keep, knew they would not.

**Poem 12**

**The Dead Man Walking** by Thomas Hardy

They hail me as one living,

But don't they know

That I have died of late years,

Untombed although?

I am but a shape that stands here,

A pulseless mould,

A pale past picture, screening

Ashes gone cold.

Not at a minute's warning,

Not in a loud hour,

For me ceased Time's enchantments

In hall and bower.

There was no tragic transit,

No catch of breath,

When silent seasons inched me

On to this death ....

— A Troubadour-youth I rambled

With Life for lyre,

The beats of being raging

In me like fire.

But when I practised eyeing

The goal of men,

It iced me, and I perished

A little then.

When passed my friend, my kinsfolk,

Through the Last Door,

And left me standing bleakly,

I died yet more;

And when my Love's heart kindled

In hate of me,

Wherefore I knew not, died I

One more degree.

And if when I died fully

I cannot say,

And changed into the corpse-thing

I am to-day,

Yet is it that, though whiling

The time somehow

In walking, talking, smiling,

I live not now.

Poem 13

**The Voice** by Matthew Arnold

As the kindling glances,  
Queen-like and clear,  
Which the bright moon lances  
From her tranquil sphere  
At the sleepless waters  
Of a lonely mere,  
On the wild whirling waves, mournfully, mournfully,  
Shiver and die.  
  
As the tears of sorrow  
Mothers have shed -  
Prayers that tomorrow  
Shall in vain be sped  
When the flower they flow for  
Lies frozen and dead -  
Fall on the throbbing brow, fall on the burning breast,  
Bringing no rest.  
  
Like bright waves that fall  
With a lifelike motion  
On the lifeless margin of the sparkling Ocean;  
A wild rose climbing up a mouldering wall -  
A gush of sunbeams through a ruined hall -  
Strains of glad music at a funeral -  
So sad, and with so wild a start  
To this deep-sobered heart,  
So anxiously and painfully,  
So drearily and doubtfully,  
And oh, with such intolerable change  
Of thought, such contrast strange,  
O unforgotten voice, thy accents come,  
Like wanderers from the world's extremity,  
Unto their ancient home!  
  
In vain, all, all in vain,  
They beat upon mine ear again,  
Those melancholy tones so sweet and still.  
Those lute-like tones which in the bygone year  
Did steal into mine ear -  
Blew such a thrilling summons to my will,  
Yet could not shake it;  
Made my tost heart its very life-blood spill,  
Yet could not break it.

Poem 14

**Miracles** by Walt Whitman

Why, who makes much of a miracle?  
As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles,  
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,  
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,  
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of the water,  
Or stand under trees in the woods,  
Or talk by day with anyone I love, or sleep in the bed at night with anyone I love,  
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,  
Or watch honey bees busy around the hive of a summer forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,  
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so quiet and bright,  
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in spring;  
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,  
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
The fishes that swim--the rocks--the motion of the waves--the ships with the men in them,  
What stranger miracles are there?

Poem 15

**A Prayer in Spring** by Robert Frost

Oh, give us pleasure in the flowers to-day;  
And give us not to think so far away  
As the uncertain harvest; keep us here  
All simply in the springing of the year.

Oh, give us pleasure in the orchard white,  
Like nothing else by day, like ghosts by night;  
And make us happy in the happy bees,  
The swarm dilating round the perfect trees.

And make us happy in the darting bird  
That suddenly above the bees is heard,  
The meteor that thrusts in with needle bill,  
And off a blossom in mid air stands still.

For this is love and nothing else is love,  
The which it is reserved for God above  
To sanctify to what far ends He will,  
But which it only needs that we fulfil.