

**“I’m Nobody! Who are you?”**

I’m Nobody! Who are you? Are  
you – Nobody – too?  
Then there’s a pair of us!  
Don’t tell! they’d advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody! How  
public – like a Frog –  
To tell one’s name – the livelong June – To an  
admiring Bog!

Emily Dickinson (1891)

Source: Poets.org

**“Hope is the thing with feathers”**

“Hope” is the thing with feathers - That  
perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words - And  
never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard - And  
sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird That  
kept so many warm -

I’ve heard it in the chillest land - And on  
the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity, It  
asked a crumb - of me.

Emily Dickinson (1861)

Source: Poets.org

## **“Hope”**

Sometimes when I'm lonely,  
Don't know why,  
Keep thinkin' I won't be lonely  
By and by.

Langston Hughes (2002)

Source: Poetry Foundation

**“The Red Wheelbarrow”**

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel bar-  
row

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

Source: Poetry Foundation

William Carlos Williams (1923)

## **“This Is Just to Say”**

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

by William Carlos Williams (1962)

Source: Poets.org

## **“Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night”**

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 that 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.

Dylan Thomas (1951)

## “Blowin' In The Wind”

How many roads must a man walk down Before you  
call him a man?

How many seas must a white dove sail Before  
she sleeps in the sand?

Yes, and how many times must the cannon balls fly Before  
they're forever banned?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind The an-  
swer is blowin' in the wind.

Yes, and how many years can a mountain exist Before it's  
washed to the sea?

Yes, and how many years can some people exist Before  
they're allowed to be free?

Yes, and how many times can a man turn his head And pre-  
tend that he just doesn't see?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind The an-  
swer is blowin' in the wind.

Yes, and how many times must a man look up Before  
he can see the sky?

Yes, and how many ears must one man have Before  
he can hear people cry?

Yes, and how many deaths will it take 'til he knows That  
too many people have died?

The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind The an-  
swer is blowin' in the wind.

Bob Dylan (1962)

## **“A Birthday Poem”**

*for Rachel*

For every year of life we light a  
candle on your cake  
to mark the simple sort of progress anyone  
can make,  
and then, to test your nerve or give a  
proper view of death,  
you're asked to blow each light, each year, out with  
your own breath.

By James Simmons (1969)

Source: [Blissfullyeccentric.co.uk](http://Blissfullyeccentric.co.uk)



## “Mid-Term Break”

I sat all morning in the college sick bay  
Counting bells knelling classes to a close.  
At two o'clock our neighbors drove me home.

In the porch I met my father crying--  
He had always taken funerals in his stride--  
And Big Jim Evans saying it was a hard blow.

The baby cooed and laughed and rocked the pram  
When I came in, and I was embarrassed  
By old men standing up to shake my hand

And tell me they were 'sorry for my trouble,'  
Whispers informed strangers I was the eldest,  
Away at school, as my mother held my hand

In hers and coughed out angry tearless sighs.  
At ten o'clock the ambulance arrived  
With the corpse, stanced and bandaged by the nurses.

Next morning I went up into the room. Snowdrops  
And candles soothed the bedside; I saw him  
For the first time in six weeks. Paler now,

Wearing a poppy bruise on his left temple,  
He lay in the four foot box as in his cot.  
No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.  
A four foot box, a foot for every year.

Seamus Heaney (1966)

## **“Maybe Alone on My Bike”**

I listen, and the mountain lakes  
hear snowflakes come on those winter wings only the  
owls are awake to see,  
their radar gaze and furred ears  
alert. In that stillness a meaning shakes;

And I have thought (maybe alone on my  
bike, quaintly on a cold evening pedaling  
home), Think! —  
the splendor of our life, its current unknown as those  
mountains, the scene no one sees.

O citizens of our great amnesty:  
we might have died. We live. Marvels coast  
by, great veers and swoops of air so bright  
the lamps waver in tears,  
and I hear in the chain a chuckle I like to hear.

By William Stafford (1999)

Source: Poetrynook

## **“Traveling through the Dark”**

Traveling through the dark I found a deer dead on  
the edge of the Wilson River road.  
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:  
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car and stood  
by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;  
she had stiffened already, almost cold.  
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason— her side  
was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,  
alive, still, never to be born.  
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights; under  
the hood purred the steady engine.  
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red; around  
our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all—my only swerving—, then  
pushed her over the edge into the river.

William Stafford (1962)

Source: Poetryfoundation

William Stafford, “Traveling through the Dark” from *The Way It Is: New and Selected Poems*.  
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Minnesota, [www.graywolfpress.org](http://www.graywolfpress.org).

## “One Art”

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.

Elizabeth Bishop (1979)

Source: Poetry Foundation

## The Unknown Citizen

(To JS/07 M 378

This Marble Monument Is Erected by the State)

He was found by the Bureau of Statistics to be

One against whom there was no official complaint,

And all the reports on his conduct agree

That, in the modern sense of an old-fashioned word, he was a saint,

For in everything he did he served the Greater Community.

Except for the War till the day he retired

He worked in a factory and never got fired,

But satisfied his employers, Fudge Motors Inc.

Yet he wasn't a scab or odd in his views,

For his Union reports that he paid his dues,

(Our report on his Union shows it was sound)

And our Social Psychology workers found

That he was popular with his mates and liked a drink.

The Press are convinced that he bought a paper every day

And that his reactions to advertisements were normal in every way.

Policies taken out in his name prove that he was fully insured,

And his Health-card shows he was once in hospital but left it cured.

Both Producers Research and High-Grade Living declare

He was fully sensible to the advantages of the Instalment Plan

And had everything necessary to the Modern Man,

A phonograph, a radio, a car and a frigidaire.

Our researchers into Public Opinion are content

That he held the proper opinions for the time of year;

When there was peace, he was for peace: when there was war, he went.

He was married and added five children to the population,

Which our Eugenist says was the right number for a parent of his generation.

And our teachers report that he never interfered with their education.

Was he free? Was he happy? The question is absurd:

Had anything been wrong, we should certainly have heard.

W. H. Auden - 1907-1973

Source: Poet.org

## Out, Out—

The buzz-saw snarled and rattled in the yard  
And made dust and dropped stove-length sticks of wood,  
Sweet-scented stuff when the breeze drew across it.  
And from there those that lifted eyes could count  
Five mountain ranges one behind the other  
Under the sunset far into Vermont.  
And the saw snarled and rattled, snarled and rattled,  
As it ran light, or had to bear a load.  
And nothing happened: day was all but done.  
Call it a day, I wish they might have said  
To please the boy by giving him the half hour  
That a boy counts so much when saved from work.  
His sister stood beside them in her apron  
To tell them "Supper." At the word, the saw,  
As if to prove saws knew what supper meant,  
Leaped out at the boy's hand, or seemed to leap—  
He must have given the hand. However it was,  
Neither refused the meeting. But the hand!  
The boy's first outcry was a rueful laugh,  
As he swung toward them holding up the hand  
Half in appeal, but half as if to keep  
The life from spilling. Then the boy saw all—  
Since he was old enough to know, big boy  
Doing a man's work, though a child at heart—  
He saw all spoiled. "Don't let him cut my hand off—  
The doctor, when he comes. Don't let him, sister!"  
So. But the hand was gone already.  
The doctor put him in the dark of ether.  
He lay and puffed his lips out with his breath.  
And then—the watcher at his pulse took fright.  
No one believed. They listened at his heart.  
Little—less—nothing!—and that ended it.  
No more to build on there. And they, since they  
Were not the one dead, turned to their affairs.

Robert Frost (1916)

## To a Daughter Leaving Home

When I taught you  
at eight to ride  
a bicycle, loping along  
beside you  
as you wobbled away  
on two round wheels,  
my own mouth rounding  
in surprise when you pulled  
ahead down the curved  
path of the park,  
I kept waiting  
for the thud  
of your crash as I  
sprinted to catch up,  
while you grew  
smaller, more breakable  
with distance,  
pumping, pumping  
for your life, screaming  
with laughter,  
the hair flapping  
behind you like a  
handkerchief waving  
goodbye.

Linda Pastan (1998)

Source: Library of Congress

## The Almanac of Last Things

From the almanac of last things  
I choose the spider lily  
for the grace of its brief  
blossom, though I myself  
fear brevity,

but I choose The Song of Songs  
because the flesh  
of those pomegranates  
has survived  
all the frost of dogma.

I choose January with its chill  
lessons of patience and despair--and  
August, too sun-struck for lessons.  
I choose a thimbleful of red wine  
to make my heart race,

then another to help me  
sleep. From the almanac  
of last things I choose you,  
as I have done before.  
And I choose evening

because the light clinging  
to the window  
is at its most reflective  
just as it is ready  
to go out.

Linda Pastan (2004)