“To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time” by Robert Herrick

GATHER ye rosebuds while ye may,

Old time is still a-flying;

And the same flower that smiles today

Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven the sun,

The higher he's a-getting,

The sooner will his race be run,

And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,

When youth and blood are warmer;

But being spent, the worse, and worst

Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,

And, while ye may, go marry;

For, having lost but once your prime,

You may forever tarry

“The Constant Lover” by Sir John Suckling

Out upon it, I have lov'd  
Three whole days together;  
And am like to love three more,  
If it prove fair weather.  
  
Time shall molt away his wings  
Ere he shall discover  
In such whole wide world again  
Such a constant lover.  
  
But the spite on't is, no praise  
Is due at all to me:  
Love with me had made no stays  
Had it any been but she.  
  
Had it any been but she  
And that very face,  
There had been at least ere this  
A dozen dozen in her place.

“She Walks in Beauty” by George Gordon, Lord Byron (That’s one person, not two.)

She walks in Beauty, like the night  
    Of cloudless climes and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
    Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
    Which Heaven to gaudy day denies.  
  
One shade the more, one ray the less,  
    Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
    Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express,  
    How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.  
  
And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
    So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
    But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
    A heart whose love is innocent!

“Ode to a Grecian Urn” by John Keats

1.  
Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,   
      Thou foster-child of silence and slow time,  
  Sylvan historian, who canst thus express  
      A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:  
  What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape  
      Of deities or mortals, or of both,  
          In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?  
      What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?  
  What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?  
          What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?  
  
2.  
  Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
      Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;  
  Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,  
      Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:  
  Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave  
      Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;  
          Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,  
  Though winning near the goal yet, do not grieve;  
      She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,  
          For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!  
  
3.  
  Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed  
      Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;  
  And, happy melodist, unwearied,  
      For ever piping songs for ever new;  
  More happy love! more happy, happy love!  
      For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,  
          For ever panting, and for ever young;  
  All breathing human passion far above,  
      That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd,  
          A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.  
  
4.  
  Who are these coming to the sacrifice?  
      To what green altar, O mysterious priest,  
  Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,  
      And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?  
  What little town by river or sea shore,  
      Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,  
          Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?  
  And, little town, thy streets for evermore  
      Will silent be; and not a soul to tell  
          Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.  
  
5.  
  O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede  
      Of marble men and maidens overwrought,  
  With forest branches and the trodden weed;  
      Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought  
  As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!  
      When old age shall this generation waste,  
          Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe  
  Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,  
      "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all  
          Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."

This Ode is mentioned by Lord Houghto

“Ode to Autumn” by John Keats

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,   
        Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
    Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
        With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
    To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
        And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
          To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
        With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
    And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
  Until they think warm days will never cease,  
          For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.  
  
Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?  
      Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find  
  Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,  
      Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;  
  Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,  
      Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook  
          Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:  
  And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep  
      Steady thy laden head across a brook;  
      Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,  
          Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.  
  
Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
      Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—  
  While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
      And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;  
  Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn  
      Among the river sallows, borne aloft  
          Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
  And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;  
      Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
      The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;  
          And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

“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 grieve 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.

“Dulce Et Decorum Est” by Wilfred Owen

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  
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.

*Note: Dulce et decorum est Pro Patria mori is from Horace. Owen wrote in a letter to his mother: "The famous Latin tag means of course It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country. Sweet! and decorous!"   
  
Written in 1917 and first published in 1920.*

*“The Man He Killed” by Thomas Hardy*

Had he and I but met  
    By some old ancient inn,  
We should have set us down to wet  
    Right many a nipperkin!  
  
    But ranged as infantry,  
    And staring face to face,  
I shot at him as he at me,  
    And killed him in his place.  
  
    I shot him dead because—  
    Because he was my foe,  
Just so: my foe of course he was;  
    That's clear enough; although  
  
    He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,  
    Off-hand like—just as I—  
Was out of work—had sold his traps—  
    No other reason why.  
  
    Yes; quaint and curious war is!  
    You shoot a fellow down  
You'd treat, if met where any bar is,  
    Or help to half a crown.

*“Are You Digging on My Grave”* by Thomas Hardy

"Ah, are you digging on my grave,  
            My loved one? — planting rue?"  
— "No: yesterday he went to wed  
One of the brightest wealth has bred.  
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,  
            'That I should not be true.'"   
  
"Then who is digging on my grave,  
            My nearest dearest kin?"  
— "Ah, no: they sit and think, 'What use!  
What good will planting flowers produce?  
No tendance of her mound can loose  
            Her spirit from Death's gin.'"   
  
"But someone digs upon my grave?  
            My enemy? — prodding sly?"  
— "Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate  
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,  
She thought you no more worth her hate,  
            And cares not where you lie.   
  
"Then, who is digging on my grave?  
            Say — since I have not guessed!"  
— "O it is I, my mistress dear,  
Your little dog , who still lives near,  
And much I hope my movements here  
            Have not disturbed your rest?"   
  
"Ah yes! You dig upon my grave…  
            Why flashed it not to me  
That one true heart was left behind!  
What feeling do we ever find  
To equal among human kind  
            A dog's fidelity!"   
  
"Mistress, I dug upon your grave  
            To bury a bone, in case  
I should be hungry near this spot  
When passing on my daily trot.  
I am sorry, but I quite forgot  
            It was your resting place."

“To an Athlete Dying Young” by A.E. Housman

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;   
Man and boy stood cheering by,   
And home we brought you shoulder-high.   
  
To-day, the road all runners come,   
Shoulder-high we bring you home,   
And set you at your threshold down,   
Townsman of a stiller town.   
  
Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.   
  
Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,   
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears:   
  
Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honours out,   
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.   
  
So set, before its echoes fade,   
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,   
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.   
  
And round that early-laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,   
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

“No Man is an island” from Meditation 17 by John Donne

No man is an island,

Entire of itself;

Every man is a piece of the continent,

A part of the main.  
  
If a clod be washed away by the sea,

Europe is the less,

As well as if a promontory were:

As well as if a manor of thy friend's

Or of thine own were.  
  
Any man's death diminishes me,

Because I am involved in mankind.

And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;

It tolls for thee.

“Sonnet 75” by Edmund Spencer

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,  
But came the waves and washed it away:  
Agayne I wrote it with a second hand,  
But came the tyde, and made my paynes his pray.  
"Vayne man," sayd she, "that doest in vaine assay.  
A mortall thing so to immortalize,  
For I my selve shall lyke to this decay,  
and eek my name bee wyped out lykewize."  
"Not so," quod I, "let baser things devize,  
To dy in dust, but you shall live by fame:  
My verse your vertues rare shall eternize,  
And in the heavens wryte your glorious name.  
Where whenas death shall all the world subdew,  
Our love shall live, and later life renew."

“When I consider how my light is spent” (On his blindness) by John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent,  
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,  
And that one talent which is death to hide  
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
My true account, lest He returning chide,  
"Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"  
I fondly ask; But patience, to prevent  
That murmur, soon replies "God doth not need  
Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best  
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state  
Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed  
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
They also serve who only stand and wait."

“Sonnet 18” 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.