



BRITISH LITERATURE

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1

ANGLO-SAXON LITERATURE

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BEOWULF

While there is no consensus on the date of its composition, *Beowulf* marks the beginning of English literature for most scholars in the field. It was composed somewhere between 608 and 1000 A.D. in Old English (see audio clip at the end of the selection) and tells the story of the hero Beowulf and his dragon-slaying adventures. Interestingly, though it marks the beginning of literature in the language we came to know as English, Beowulf's exploits take place in Scandinavia (mostly the southern parts of modern-day Sweden). The original poem has only one extant manuscript source dating from 1010 A.D., and it has been translated, adapted, and used as inspiration for many scholars and artists throughout the centuries.



from **Beowulf**

translated by **Burton Raffel**

The Monster Grendel

1

... A powerful monster, living down
In the darkness, growled in pain, impatient
As day after day the music rang
Loud in that hall, the harp's rejoicing
5 Call and the poet's clear songs, sung
Of the ancient beginnings of us all, recalling
The Almighty making the earth, shaping
These beautiful plains marked off by oceans,
Then proudly setting the sun and moon
10 To glow across the land and light it;
The corners of the earth were made lovely with trees
And leaves, made quick with life, with each
Of the nations who now move on its face. And then
As now warriors sang of their pleasure:
15 So Hrothgar's men lived happy in his hall
Till the monster stirred, that demon, that fiend,
Grendel, who haunted the moors, the wild
Marshes, and made his home in a hell
Not hell but earth. He was spawned in that slime,
20 Conceived by a pair of those monsters born
Of Cain, murderous creatures banished

By God, punished forever for the crime
Of Abel's death. The Almighty drove
Those demons out, and their exile was bitter,

25

Shut away from men; they split
Into a thousand forms of evil—spirits
And fiends, goblins, monsters, giants,
A brood forever opposing the Lord's
Will, and again and again defeated.

2

30

Then, when darkness had dropped, Grendel
Went up to Herot, wondering what the warriors
Would do in that hall when their drinking was done.
He found them sprawled in sleep, suspecting

35

Nothing, their dreams undisturbed. The monster's
Thoughts were as quick as his greed or his claws:
He slipped through the door and there in the silence
Snatched up thirty men, smashed them
Unknowing in their beds, and ran out with their bodies,
The blood dripping behind him, back

40

To his lair, delighted with his night's slaughter.
At daybreak, with the sun's first light, they saw
How well he had worked, and in that gray morning
Broke their long feast with tears and laments
For the dead. Hrothgar, their lord, sat joyless

45

In Herot, a mighty prince mourning
The fate of his lost friends and companions,
Knowing by its tracks that some demon had torn

His followers apart. He wept, fearing
 The beginning might not be the end. And that night
 50 Grendel came again, so set
 On murder that no crime could ever be enough,
 No savage assault quench his lust
 For evil. Then each warrior tried
 To escape him, searched for rest in different
 55 Beds, as far from Herot as they could find,
 Seeing how Grendel hunted when they slept.
 Distance was safety; the only survivors
 Were those who fled him. Hate had triumphed.
 So Grendel ruled, fought with the righteous,
 60 One against many, and won; so Herot
 Stood empty, and stayed deserted for years,
 Twelve winters of grief for Hrothgar, king
 Of the Danes, sorrow heaped at his door
 By hell-forged hands. His misery leaped
 65 The seas, was told and sung in all
 Men's ears: how Grendel's hatred began,
 How the monster relished his savage war
 On the Danes, keeping the bloody feud
 Alive, seeking no peace, offering
 70 No truce, accepting no settlement, no price
 In gold or land, and paying the living
 For one crime only with another. No one
 Waited for reparation from his plundering claws:
 That shadow of death hunted in the darkness,
 75 Stalked Hrothgar's warriors, old

And young, lying in waiting, hidden
 In mist, invisibly following them from the edge
 Of the marsh, always there, unseen.
 So mankind's enemy continued his crimes,
 80 Killing as often as he could, coming
 Alone, bloodthirsty and horrible. Though he lived
 In Herot, when the night hid him, he never
 Dared to touch king Hrothgar's glorious
 Throne, protected by God—God,
 85 Whose love Grendel could not know. But Hrothgar's
 Heart was bent. The best and most noble
 Of his council debated remedies, sat
 In secret sessions, talking of terror
 And wondering what the bravest of warriors could do.
 90 And sometimes they sacrificed to the old stone gods,
 Made heathen vows, hoping for Hell's
 Support, the Devil's guidance in driving
 Their affliction off. That was their way,
 And the heathen's only hope, Hell
 95 Always in their hearts, knowing neither God
 Nor His passing as He walks through our world, the
 Lord
 Of Heaven and earth; their ears could not hear
 His praise nor know His glory. Let them
 Beware, those who are thrust into danger,
 100 Clutched at by trouble, yet can carry no solace
 In their hearts, cannot hope to be better! Hail

To those who will rise to God, drop off
Their dead bodies, and seek our Father's peace!

3

105 So the living sorrow of Healfdane's son
Simmered, bitter and fresh, and no wisdom
Or strength could break it: That agony hung
On king and people alike, harsh
And unending, violent and cruel, and evil.
In his far-off home Beowulf, Higlac's
110 Follower and the strongest of the Geats—greater
And stronger than anyone anywhere in this world—
Heard how Grendel filled nights with horror
And quickly commanded a boat fitted out,
Proclaiming that he'd go to that famous king,
115 Would sail across the sea to Hrothgar,
Now when help was needed. None
Of the wise ones regretted his going, much
As he was loved by the Geats: The omens were good,
And they urged the adventure on. So Beowulf
120 Chose the mightiest men he could find,
The bravest and best of the Geats, fourteen
In all, and led them down to their boat;
He knew the sea, would point the prow
Straight to that distant Danish shore. . . .

The Arrival of the Hero

4

125 . . . Then Wulfgar went to the door and addressed
The waiting seafarers with soldier's words:
“My lord, the great king of the Danes, commands me
To tell you that he knows of your noble birth
And that having come to him from over the open
130 Sea you have come bravely and are welcome.
Now go to him as you are, in your armor and helmets,
But leave your battle-shields here, and your spears,
Let them lie waiting for the promises your words
May make.”
Beowulf arose, with his men
135 Around him, ordering a few to remain
With their weapons, leading the others quickly
Along under Herot's steep roof into Hrothgar's
Presence. Standing on that prince's own hearth,
Helmeted, the silvery metal of his mail shirt
140 Gleaming with a smith's high art, he greeted
The Danes' great lord:
“Hail, Hrothgar!
Higlac is my cousin and my king; the days
Of my youth have been filled with glory. Now
Grendel's
Name has echoed in our land: Sailors
145 Have brought us stories of Herot, the best

Of all mead-halls, deserted and useless when the moon
 Hangs in skies the sun had lit,
 Light and life fleeing together.
 My people have said, the wisest, most knowing
 150 And best of them, that my duty was to go to the Danes'
 Great king. They have seen my strength for
 themselves,
 Have watched me rise from the darkness of war,
 Dripping with my enemies' blood. I drove
 Five great giants into chains, chased
 155 All of that race from the earth. I swam
 In the blackness of night, hunting monsters
 Out of the ocean, and killing them one
 By one; death was my errand and the fate
 They had earned. Now Grendel and I are called
 160 Together, and I've come. Grant me, then,
 Lord and protector of this noble place,
 A single request! I have come so far,
 Oh shelterer of warriors and your people's loved friend,
 That this one favor you should not refuse me—
 165 That I, alone and with the help of my men,
 May purge all evil from this hall. I have heard,
 Too, that the monster's scorn of men
 Is so great that he needs no weapons and fears none.
 Nor will I. My lord Higlac
 170 Might think less of me if I let my sword
 Go where my feet were afraid to, if I hid
 Behind some broad linden shield: My hands

Alone shall fight for me, struggle for life
 Against the monster. God must decide
 175 Who will be given to death's cold grip.
 Grendel's plan, I think, will be
 What it has been before, to invade this hall
 And gorge his belly with our bodies. If he can,
 If he can. And I think, if my time will have come,
 180 There'll be nothing to mourn over, no corpse to prepare
 For its grave: Grendel will carry our bloody
 Flesh to the moors, crunch on our bones,
 And smear torn scraps of our skin on the walls
 Of his den. No, I expect no Danes
 185 Will fret about sewing our shrouds, if he wins.
 And if death does take me, send the hammered
 Mail of my armor to Higlac, return
 The inheritance I had from Hrethel,^o and he
 From Wayland. Fate will unwind as it must!"

5

190 Hrothgar replied, protector of the Danes:
 "Beowulf, you've come to us in friendship, and
 because
 Of the reception your father found at our court.
 Edgetho had begun a bitter feud,
 Killing Hathlaf, a Wulfing warrior:
 195 Your father's countrymen were afraid of war,
 If he returned to his home, and they turned him away.
 Then he traveled across the curving waves

To the land of the Danes. I was new to the throne,
 Then, a young man ruling this wide
 200 Kingdom and its golden city: Hergar,
 My older brother, a far better man
 Than I, had died and dying made me,
 Second among Healfdane's sons, first
 In this nation. I bought the end of Edgeth's
 205 Quarrel, sent ancient treasures through the ocean's
 Furrows to the Wulfings; your father swore
 He'd keep that peace. My tongue grows heavy,
 And my heart, when I try to tell you what Grendel
 Has brought us, the damage he's done, here
 210 In this hall. You see for yourself how much smaller
 Our ranks have become, and can guess what we've lost
 To his terror. Surely the Lord Almighty
 Could stop his madness, smother his lust!
 How many times have my men, glowing
 215 With courage drawn from too many cups
 Of ale, sworn to stay after dark
 And stem that horror with a sweep of their swords.
 And then, in the morning, this mead-hall glittering
 With new light would be drenched with blood, the
 benches
 220 Stained red, the floors, all wet from that fiend's
 Savage assault—and my soldiers would be fewer
 Still, death taking more and more.
 But to table, Beowulf, a banquet in your honor:
 Let us toast your victories, and talk of the future."

225 Then Hrothgar's men gave places to the Geats,
 Yielded benches to the brave visitors,
 And led them to the feast. The keeper of the mead
 Came carrying out the carved flasks,
 And poured that bright sweetness. A poet
 230 Sang, from time to time, in a clear
 Pure voice. Danes and visiting Geats
 Celebrated as one, drank and rejoiced.

Unferth's Challenge

6
 Unferth spoke, Ecglaf's son,
 Who sat at Hrothgar's feet, spoke harshly
 235 And sharp (vexed by Beowulf's adventure,
 By their visitor's courage, and angry that anyone
 In Denmark or anywhere on earth had ever
 Acquired glory and fame greater
 Than his own):
 "You're Beowulf, are you—the same
 240 Boastful fool who fought a swimming
 Match with Brecca, both of you daring
 And young and proud, exploring the deepest
 Seas, risking your lives for no reason
 But the danger? All older and wiser heads warned you
 245 Not to, but no one could check such pride.

With Brecca at your side you swam along
 The sea-paths, your swift-moving hands pulling you
 Over the ocean's face. Then winter
 Churned through the water, the waves ran you
 250 As they willed, and you struggled seven long nights
 To survive. And at the end victory was his,
 Not yours. The sea carried him close
 To his home, to southern Norway, near
 The land of the Brondings, where he ruled and was
 loved,
 255 Where his treasure was piled and his strength protected
 His towns and his people. He'd promised to outswim
 you:
 Bonstan's son made that boast ring true.
 You've been lucky in your battles, Beowulf, but I think
 Your luck may change if you challenge Grendel,
 260 Staying a whole night through in this hall,
 Waiting where that fiercest of demons can find you."
 Beowulf answered, Edgeth's great son:
 "Ah! Unferth, my friend, your face
 Is hot with ale, and your tongue has tried
 265 To tell us about Brecca's doings. But the truth
 Is simple: No man swims in the sea
 As I can, no strength is a match for mine.
 As boys, Brecca and I had boasted—
 We were both too young to know better—that we'd
 risk
 270 Our lives far out at sea, and so

We did. Each of us carried a naked
 Sword, prepared for whales or the swift
 Sharp teeth and beaks of needlefish.
 He could never leave me behind, swim faster
 275 Across the waves than I could, and I
 Had chosen to remain close to his side.
 I remained near him for five long nights,
 Until a flood swept us apart;
 The frozen sea surged around me,
 280 It grew dark, the wind turned bitter, blowing
 From the north, and the waves were savage. Creatures
 Who sleep deep in the sea were stirred
 Into life—and the iron hammered links
 Of my mail shirt, these shining bits of metal
 285 Woven across my breast, saved me
 From death. A monster seized me, drew me
 Swiftly toward the bottom, swimming with its claws
 Tight in my flesh. But fate let me
 Find its heart with my sword, hack myself
 290 Free; I fought that beast's last battle,
 Left it floating lifeless in the sea.

 7
 "Other monsters crowded around me,
 Continually attacking. I treated them politely,
 Offering the edge of my razor-sharp sword.
 295 But the feast, I think, did not please them, filled
 Their evil bellies with no banquet-rich food,

Thrashing there at the bottom of the sea;
 By morning they'd decided to sleep on the shore,
 Lying on their backs, their blood spilled out
 300 On the sand. Afterwards, sailors could cross
 That sea-road and feel no fear; nothing
 Would stop their passing. Then God's bright beacon
 Appeared in the east, the water lay still,
 And at last I could see the land, wind-swept
 305 Cliff-walls at the edge of the coast. Fate saves
 The living when they drive away death by themselves!
 Lucky or not, nine was the number
 Of sea-huge monsters I killed. What man,
 Anywhere under Heaven's high arch, has fought
 310 In such darkness, endured more misery, or been harder
 Pressed? Yet I survived the sea, smashed
 The monsters' hot jaws, swam home from my journey.
 The swift-flowing waters swept me along
 And I landed on Finnish soil. I've heard
 315 No tales of you, Unferth, telling
 Of such clashing terror, such contests in the night!
 Brecca's battles were never so bold;
 Neither he nor you can match me—and I mean
 No boast, have announced no more than I know
 320 To be true. And there's more: You murdered your
 brothers,
 Your own close kin. Words and bright wit
 Won't help your soul; you'll suffer hell's fires,
 Unferth, forever tormented. Ecglaf's

Proud son, if your hands were as hard, your heart
 325 As fierce as you think it, no fool would dare
 To raid your hall, ruin Herot
 And oppress its prince, as Grendel has done.
 But he's learned that terror is his alone,
 Discovered he can come for your people with no fear
 330 Of reprisal; he's found no fighting, here,
 But only food, only delight.
 He murders as he likes, with no mercy, gorges
 And feasts on your flesh, and expects no trouble,
 No quarrel from the quiet Danes. Now
 335 The Geats will show him courage, soon
 He can test his strength in battle. And when the sun
 Comes up again, opening another
 Bright day from the south, anyone in Denmark
 May enter this hall: That evil will be gone!"
 340 Hrothgar, gray-haired and brave, sat happily
 Listening, the famous ring-giver sure,
 At last, that Grendel could be killed; he believed
 In Beowulf's bold strength and the firmness of his
 spirit.
 There was the sound of laughter, and the cheerful
 clanking
 345 Of cups, and pleasant words. Then Welthow,
 Hrothgar's gold-ringed queen, greeted
 The warriors; a noble woman who knew
 What was right, she raised a flowing cup
 To Hrothgar first, holding it high

350 For the lord of the Danes to drink, wishing him
 Joy in that feast. The famous king
 Drank with pleasure and blessed their banquet.
 Then Welthow went from warrior to warrior,
 Pouring a portion from the jeweled cup
 355 For each, till the bracelet-wearing queen
 Had carried the mead-cup among them and it was
 Beowulf's
 Turn to be served. She saluted the Geats'
 Great prince, thanked God for answering her prayers,
 For allowing her hands the happy duty
 360 Of offering mead to a hero who would help
 Her afflicted people. He drank what she poured,
 Edgeth's brave son, then assured the Danish
 Queen that his heart was firm and his hands
 Ready:
 "When we crossed the sea, my comrades
 365 And I, I already knew that all
 My purpose was this: to win the good will
 Of your people or die in battle, pressed
 In Grendel's fierce grip. Let me live in greatness
 And courage, or here in this hall welcome
 My death!"
 370 Welthow was pleased with his words,
 His bright-tongued boasts; she carried them back
 To her lord, walked nobly across to his side.
 The feast went on, laughter and music
 And the brave words of warriors celebrating

375 Their delight. Then Hrothgar rose, Healfdane's
 Son, heavy with sleep; as soon
 As the sun had gone, he knew that Grendel
 Would come to Herot, would visit that hall
 When night had covered the earth with its net
 380 And the shapes of darkness moved black and silent
 Through the world. Hrothgar's warriors rose with him.
 He went to Beowulf, embraced the Geats'
 Brave prince, wished him well, and hoped
 That Herot would be his to command. And then
 He declared:
 385 "No one strange to this land
 Has ever been granted what I've given you,
 No one in all the years of my rule.
 Make this best of all mead-halls yours, and then
 Keep it free of evil, fight
 390 With glory in your heart! Purge Herot
 And your ship will sail home with its treasure-holds
 full." . . .

The Battle with Grendel

8

Out from the marsh, from the foot of misty
 Hills and bogs, bearing God's hatred,
 Grendel came, hoping to kill

395 Anyone he could trap on this trip to high Herot.
 He moved quickly through the cloudy night,
 Up from his swampland, sliding silently
 Toward that gold-shining hall. He had visited
 Hrothgar's
 Home before, knew the way —
 400 But never, before nor after that night,
 Found Herot defended so firmly, his reception
 So harsh. He journeyed, forever joyless,
 Straight to the door, then snapped it open,
 Tore its iron fasteners with a touch,
 405 And rushed angrily over the threshold.
 He strode quickly across the inlaid
 Floor, snarling and fierce: His eyes
 Gleamed in the darkness, burned with a gruesome
 Light. Then he stopped, seeing the hall
 410 Crowded with sleeping warriors, stuffed
 With rows of young soldiers resting together.
 And his heart laughed, he relished the sight,
 Intended to tear the life from those bodies
 By morning; the monster's mind was hot
 415 With the thought of food and the feasting his belly
 Would soon know. But fate, that night, intended
 Grendel to gnaw the broken bones
 Of his last human supper. Human
 Eyes were watching his evil steps,
 420 Waiting to see his swift hard claws.
 Grendel snatched at the first Geat

He came to, ripped him apart, cut
 His body to bits with powerful jaws,
 Drank the blood from his veins, and bolted
 425 Him down, hands and feet; death
 And Grendel's great teeth came together,
 Snapping life shut. Then he stepped to another
 Still body, clutched at Beowulf with his claws,
 Grasped at a strong-hearted wakeful sleeper
 430 —And was instantly seized himself, claws
 Bent back as Beowulf leaned up on one arm.
 That shepherd of evil, guardian of crime,
 Knew at once that nowhere on earth
 Had he met a man whose hands were harder;
 435 His mind was flooded with fear—but nothing
 Could take his talons and himself from that tight
 Hard grip. Grendel's one thought was to run
 From Beowulf, flee back to his marsh and hide there:
 This was a different Herot than the hall he had emptied.
 440 But Higlac's follower remembered his final
 Boast and, standing erect, stopped
 The monster's flight, fastened those claws
 In his fists till they cracked, clutched Grendel
 Closer. The infamous killer fought
 445 For his freedom, wanting no flesh but retreat,
 Desiring nothing but escape; his claws
 Had been caught, he was trapped. That trip to Herot
 Was a miserable journey for the writhing monster!
 The high hall rang, its roof boards swayed,

450 And Danes shook with terror. Down
 The aisles the battle swept, angry
 And wild. Herot trembled, wonderfully
 Built to withstand the blows, the struggling
 Great bodies beating at its beautiful walls;
 455 Shaped and fastened with iron, inside
 And out, artfully worked, the building
 Stood firm. Its benches rattled, fell
 To the floor, gold-covered boards grating
 As Grendel and Beowulf battled across them.
 460 Hrothgar's wise men had fashioned Herot
 To stand forever; only fire,
 They had planned, could shatter what such skill had put
 Together, swallow in hot flames such splendor
 Of ivory and iron and wood. Suddenly
 465 The sounds changed, the Danes started
 In new terror, cowering in their beds as the terrible
 Screams of the Almighty's enemy sang
 In the darkness, the horrible shrieks of pain
 And defeat, the tears torn out of Grendel's
 470 Taut throat, hell's captive caught in the arms
 Of him who of all the men on earth
 Was the strongest.

9

That mighty protector of men
 Meant to hold the monster till its life
 Leaped out, knowing the fiend was no use

475 To anyone in Denmark. All of Beowulf's
 Band had jumped from their beds, ancestral
 Swords raised and ready, determined
 To protect their prince if they could. Their courage
 Was great but all wasted: They could hack at Grendel
 480 From every side, trying to open
 A path for his evil soul, but their points
 Could not hurt him, the sharpest and hardest iron
 Could not scratch at his skin, for that sin-stained
 demon
 Had bewitched all men's weapons, laid spells
 485 That blunted every mortal man's blade.
 And yet his time had come, his days
 Were over, his death near; down
 To hell he would go, swept groaning and helpless
 To the waiting hands of still worse fiends.
 490 Now he discovered—once the afflictor
 Of men, tormentor of their days—what it meant
 To feud with Almighty God: Grendel
 Saw that his strength was deserting him, his claws
 Bound fast, Higlac's brave follower tearing at
 495 His hands. The monster's hatred rose higher,
 But his power had gone. He twisted in pain,
 And the bleeding sinews deep in his shoulder
 Snapped, muscle and bone split
 And broke. The battle was over, Beowulf
 500 Had been granted new glory: Grendel escaped,
 But wounded as he was could flee to his den,

His miserable hole at the bottom of the marsh,
 Only to die, to wait for the end
 Of all his days. And after that bloody
 505 Combat the Danes laughed with delight.
 He who had come to them from across the sea,
 Bold and strong-minded, had driven affliction
 Off, purged Herot clean. He was happy,
 Now, with that night's fierce work; the Danes
 510 Had been served as he'd boasted he'd serve them;
 Beowulf,
 A prince of the Geats, had killed Grendel,
 Ended the grief, the sorrow, the suffering
 Forced on Hrothgar's helpless people
 By a bloodthirsty fiend. No Dane doubted
 515 The victory, for the proof, hanging high
 From the rafters where Beowulf had hung it, was the
 monster's
 Arm, claw and shoulder and all.

10

And then, in the morning, crowds surrounded
 Herot, warriors coming to that hall
 520 From faraway lands, princes and leaders
 Of men hurrying to behold the monster's
 Great staggering tracks. They gaped with no sense
 Of sorrow, felt no regret for his suffering,
 Went tracing his bloody footprints, his beaten
 525 And lonely flight, to the edge of the lake

Where he'd dragged his corpselike way, doomed
 And already weary of his vanishing life.
 The water was bloody, steaming and boiling
 In horrible pounding waves, heat
 530 Sucked from his magic veins; but the swirling
 Surf had covered his death, hidden
 Deep in murky darkness his miserable
 End, as hell opened to receive him.
 Then old and young rejoiced, turned back
 535 From that happy pilgrimage, mounted their hard-
 hooved
 Horses, high-spirited stallions, and rode them
 Slowly toward Herot again, retelling
 Beowulf's bravery as they jogged along.
 And over and over they swore that nowhere
 540 On earth or under the spreading sky
 Or between the seas, neither south nor north,
 Was there a warrior worthier to rule over men.
 (But no one meant Beowulf's praise to belittle
 Hrothgar, their kind and gracious king!) . . .

11

545 . . . "They live in secret places, windy
 Cliffs, wolf-dens where water pours
 From the rocks, then runs underground, where mist
 Steams like black clouds, and the groves of trees
 Growing out over their lake are all covered

550 With frozen spray, and wind down snakelike
 Roots that reach as far as the water
 And help keep it dark. At night that lake
 Burns like a torch. No one knows its bottom,
 No wisdom reaches such depths. A deer,
 555 Hunted through the woods by packs of hounds,
 A stag with great horns, though driven through the
 forest
 From faraway places, prefers to die
 On those shores, refuses to save its life
 In that water. It isn't far, nor is it
 560 A pleasant spot! When the wind stirs
 And storms, waves splash toward the sky,
 As dark as the air, as black as the rain
 That the heavens weep. Our only help,
 Again, lies with you. Grendel's mother
 565 Is hidden in her terrible home, in a place
 You've not seen. Seek it, if you dare! Save us,
 Once more, and again twisted gold,
 Heaped-up ancient treasure, will reward you
 For the battle you win!"

The Monster's Mother

12

570 . . . He leaped into the lake, would not wait for
 anyone's

Answer; the heaving water covered him
 Over. For hours he sank through the waves;
 At last he saw the mud of the bottom.
 And all at once the greedy she-wolf
 575 Who'd ruled those waters for half a hundred
 Years discovered him, saw that a creature
 From above had come to explore the bottom
 Of her wet world. She welcomed him in her claws,
 Clutched at him savagely but could not harm him,
 580 Tried to work her fingers through the tight
 Ring-woven mail on his breast, but tore
 And scratched in vain. Then she carried him, armor
 And sword and all, to her home; he struggled
 To free his weapon, and failed. The fight
 585 Brought other monsters swimming to see
 Her catch, a host of sea beasts who beat at
 His mail shirt, stabbing with tusks and teeth
 As they followed along. Then he realized, suddenly,
 That she'd brought him into someone's battle-hall,
 590 And there the water's heat could not hurt him,
 Nor anything in the lake attack him through
 The building's high-arching roof. A brilliant
 Light burned all around him, the lake
 Itself like a fiery flame.

Then he saw

595 The mighty water witch, and swung his sword,
 His ring-marked blade, straight at her head;
 The iron sang its fierce song,

Sang Beowulf's strength. But her guest
 Discovered that no sword could slice her evil
 600 Skin, that Hrunting could not hurt her, was useless
 Now when he needed it. They wrestled, she ripped
 And tore and clawed at him, bit holes in his helmet,
 And that too failed him; for the first time in years
 Of being worn to war it would earn no glory;
 605 It was the last time anyone would wear it. But Beowulf
 Longed only for fame, leaped back
 Into battle. He tossed his sword aside,
 Angry; the steel-edged blade lay where
 He'd dropped it. If weapons were useless he'd use
 610 His hands, the strength in his fingers. So fame
 Comes to the men who mean to win it
 And care about nothing else! He raised
 His arms and seized her by the shoulder; anger
 Doubled his strength, he threw her to the floor.
 615 She fell, Grendel's fierce mother, and the Geats'
 Proud prince was ready to leap on her. But she rose
 At once and repaid him with her clutching claws,
 Wildly tearing at him. He was weary, that best
 And strongest of soldiers; his feet stumbled
 620 And in an instant she had him down, held helpless.
 Squatting with her weight on his stomach, she drew
 A dagger, brown with dried blood and prepared
 To avenge her only son. But he was stretched
 On his back, and her stabbing blade was blunted
 625 By the woven mail shirt he wore on his chest.

The hammered links held; the point
 Could not touch him. He'd have traveled to the bottom
 of the earth,
 Edgeth's son, and died there, if that shining
 Woven metal had not helped—and Holy
 630 God, who sent him victory, gave judgment
 For truth and right, Ruler of the Heavens,
 Once Beowulf was back on his feet and fighting.

13

Then he saw, hanging on the wall, a heavy
 Sword, hammered by giants, strong
 635 And blessed with their magic, the best of all weapons
 But so massive that no ordinary man could lift
 Its carved and decorated length. He drew it
 From its scabbard, broke the chain on its hilt,
 And then, savage, now, angry
 640 And desperate, lifted it high over his head
 And struck with all the strength he had left,
 Caught her in the neck and cut it through,
 Broke bones and all. Her body fell
 To the floor, lifeless, the sword was wet
 645 With her blood, and Beowulf rejoiced at the sight.
 The brilliant light shone, suddenly,
 As though burning in that hall, and as bright as
 Heaven's
 Own candle, lit in the sky. He looked
 At her home, then following along the wall

650 Went walking, his hands tight on the sword,
 His heart still angry. He was hunting another
 Dead monster, and took his weapon with him
 For final revenge against Grendel's vicious
 Attacks, his nighttime raids, over
 655 And over, coming to Herot when Hrothgar's
 Men slept, killing them in their beds,
 Eating some on the spot, fifteen
 Or more, and running to his loathsome moor
 With another such sickening meal waiting
 660 In his pouch. But Beowulf repaid him for those visits,
 Found him lying dead in his corner,
 Armless, exactly as that fierce fighter
 Had sent him out from Herot, then struck off
 His head with a single swift blow. The body
 665 Jerked for the last time, then lay still. . . .

The Final Battle

14

. . . Then he said farewell to his followers,
 Each in his turn, for the last time:
 "I'd use no sword, no weapon, if this beast
 Could be killed without it, crushed to death
 670 Like Grendel, gripped in my hands and torn
 Limb from limb. But his breath will be burning

Hot, poison will pour from his tongue.
 I feel no shame, with shield and sword
 And armor, against this monster: When he comes to me
 675 I mean to stand, not run from his shooting
 Flames, stand till fate decides
 Which of us wins. My heart is firm,
 My hands calm: I need no hot
 Words. Wait for me close by, my friends.
 680 We shall see, soon, who will survive
 This bloody battle, stand when the fighting
 Is done. No one else could do
 What I mean to, here, no man but me
 Could hope to defeat this monster. No one
 685 Could try. And this dragon's treasure, his gold
 And everything hidden in that tower, will be mine
 Or war will sweep me to a bitter death!"
 Then Beowulf rose, still brave, still strong,
 And with his shield at his side, and a mail shirt on his
 breast,
 690 Strode calmly, confidently, toward the tower, under
 The rocky cliffs: No coward could have walked there!
 And then he who'd endured dozens of desperate
 Battles, who'd stood boldly while swords and shields
 Clashed, the best of kings, saw
 695 Huge stone arches and felt the heat
 Of the dragon's breath, flooding down
 Through the hidden entrance, too hot for anyone
 To stand, a streaming current of fire

And smoke that blocked all passage. And the Geats'
 700 Lord and leader, angry, lowered
 His sword and roared out a battle cry,
 A call so loud and clear that it reached through
 The hoary rock, hung in the dragon's
 Ear. The beast rose, angry,
 705 Knowing a man had come—and then nothing
 But war could have followed. Its breath came first,
 A steaming cloud pouring from the stone,
 Then the earth itself shook. Beowulf
 Swung his shield into place, held it
 710 In front of him, facing the entrance. The dragon
 Coiled and uncoiled, its heart urging it
 Into battle. Beowulf's ancient sword
 Was waiting, unsheathed, his sharp and gleaming
 Blade. The beast came closer; both of them
 715 Were ready, each set on slaughter. The Geats'
 Great prince stood firm, unmoving, prepared
 Behind his high shield, waiting in his shining
 Armor. The monster came quickly toward him,
 Pouring out fire and smoke, hurrying
 720 To its fate. Flames beat at the iron
 Shield, and for a time it held, protected
 Beowulf as he'd planned; then it began to melt,
 And for the first time in his life that famous prince
 Fought with fate against him, with glory
 725 Denied him. He knew it, but he raised his sword
 And struck at the dragon's scaly hide.

The ancient blade broke, bit into
 The monster's skin, drew blood, but cracked
 And failed him before it went deep enough, helped him
 730 Less than he needed. The dragon leaped
 With pain, thrashed and beat at him, spouting
 Murderous flames, spreading them everywhere.
 And the Geats' ring-giver did not boast of glorious
 Victories in other wars: His weapon
 735 Had failed him, deserted him, now when he needed it
 Most, that excellent sword. Edgeth's
 Famous son stared at death,
 Unwilling to leave this world, to exchange it
 For a dwelling in some distant place—a journey
 740 Into darkness that all men must make, as death
 Ends their few brief hours on earth.
 Quickly, the dragon came at him, encouraged
 As Beowulf fell back; its breath flared,
 And he suffered, wrapped around in swirling
 745 Flames—a king, before, but now
 A beaten warrior. None of his comrades
 Came to him, helped him, his brave and noble
 Followers; they ran for their lives, fled
 Deep in a wood. And only one of them
 750 Remained, stood there, miserable, remembering,
 As a good man must, what kinship should mean.

15

His name was Wiglaf, he was Wexstan's son
And a good soldier; his family had been Swedish,
Once. Watching Beowulf, he could see
755 How his king was suffering, burning. Remembering
Everything his lord and cousin had given him,
Armor and gold and the great estates
Wexstan's family enjoyed, Wiglaf's
Mind was made up; he raised his yellow
760 Shield and drew his sword. . . .
And Wiglaf, his heart heavy, uttered
The kind of words his comrades deserved:
"I remember how we sat in the mead-hall, drinking
And boasting of how brave we'd be when Beowulf
765 Needed us, he who gave us these swords
And armor: All of us swore to repay him,
When the time came, kindness for kindness
— With our lives, if he needed them. He allowed us to
join him,
Chose us from all his great army, thinking
770 Our boasting words had some weight, believing
Our promises, trusting our swords. He took us
For soldiers, for men. He meant to kill
This monster himself, our mighty king,
Fight this battle alone and unaided,
775 As in the days when his strength and daring dazzled
Men's eyes. But those days are over and gone
And now our lord must lean on younger

Arms. And we must go to him, while angry
Flames burn at his flesh, help
780 Our glorious king! By almighty God,
I'd rather burn myself than see
Flames swirling around my lord.
And who are we to carry home
Our shields before we've slain his enemy
785 And ours, to run back to our homes with Beowulf
So hard-pressed here? I swear that nothing
He ever did deserved an end
Like this, dying miserably and alone,
Butchered by this savage beast: We swore
790 That these swords and armor were each for us all!" . . .

16

. . . Then Wiglaf went back, anxious
To return while Beowulf was alive, to bring him
Treasure they'd won together. He ran,
Hoping his wounded king, weak
795 And dying, had not left the world too soon.
Then he brought their treasure to Beowulf, and found
His famous king bloody, gasping
For breath. But Wiglaf sprinkled water
Over his lord, until the words
800 Deep in his breast broke through and were heard.
Beholding the treasure he spoke, haltingly:
"For this, this gold, these jewels, I thank

Our Father in Heaven, Ruler of the Earth—
 For all of this, that His grace has given me,
 805 Allowed me to bring to my people while breath
 Still came to my lips. I sold my life
 For this treasure, and I sold it well. Take
 What I leave, Wiglaf, lead my people,
 Help them; my time is gone. Have
 810 The brave Geats build me a tomb,
 When the funeral flames have burned me, and build it
 Here, at the water's edge, high
 On this spit of land, so sailors can see
 This tower, and remember my name, and call it
 815 Beowulf's tower, and boats in the darkness
 And mist, crossing the sea, will know it."
 Then that brave king gave the golden
 Necklace from around his throat to Wiglaf,
 Gave him his gold-covered helmet, and his rings,
 820 And his mail shirt, and ordered him to use them well:
 "You're the last of all our far-flung family.
 Fate has swept our race away,
 Taken warriors in their strength and led them
 To the death that was waiting. And now I follow them."
 825 The old man's mouth was silent, spoke
 No more, had said as much as it could;
 He would sleep in the fire, soon. His soul
 Left his flesh, flew to glory.

17

. . . And then twelve of the bravest Geats
 830 Rode their horses around the tower,
 Telling their sorrow, telling stories
 Of their dead king and his greatness, his glory,
 Praising him for heroic deeds, for a life
 As noble as his name. So should all men
 835 Raise up words for their lords, warm
 With love, when their shield and protector leaves
 His body behind, sends his soul
 On high. And so Beowulf's followers
 Rode, mourning their beloved leader,
 840 Crying that no better king had ever
 Lived, no prince so mild, no man
 So open to his people, so deserving of praise.

AUDIO 1.1 Beowulf in Old English



INTERACTIVE 1.1 Side-by-Side: Old English and Translation



BALLADS

Derived from a French word for “dancing song,” a ballad was a popular verse form disseminated across the British Isles by wandering minstrels. Consequently, the authorship and origin of many ballads is murky at best. Ballads remained a key part of oral tradition until the 19th century, when lyric poetry came to dominate and recorded music and the printed word became more prevalent.



Lord Randall

Anonymous

“Oh where ha’e ye been, Lord Randall my son?

O where ha’e ye been, my handsome young man?”

“I ha’e been to the wild wood: mother, make my bed soon,
For I’m weary wi’ hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“Where gat ye your dinner, Lord Randall my son?

Where gat ye your dinner, my handsome young man?”

“I dined wi’ my true love; mother, make my bed soon,
For I’m weary wi’ hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“What gat ye to your dinner, Lord Randall my son?

What gat ye to your dinner, my handsome young man?”

“I gat eels boiled in broo: mother, make my bed soon,
For I’m weary wi’ hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“What became of your bloodhounds, Lord Randall my son?

What became of your bloodhounds, my handsome young
man?”

“O they swelled and they died: mother, make my bed soon,
for I’m weary wi’ hunting, and fain wald lie down.”

“O I fear ye are poisoned, Lord Randall my son!

O I fear ye are poisoned, my handsome young man!”

“O yes, I am poisoned: mother, make my bed soon,
For I’m sick at the heart, and I fain wald lie down.”

Edward

Anonymous

Why dois your brand sae drap wi bluid,

Edward, Edward,

Why dois your brand sae drap wi bluid,

And why sae sad gang yee O?"

"O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,

Mither, mither,

O I hae killed my hauke sae guid,

And I had nae mari bot hee O."

"Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,

Edward, Edward,

Your haukis bluid was nevir sae reid,

My deir son I tell thee O."

"O I hae killed my reid-roan stied,

Mither, mither,

O I hae killed my reid-roan steid,

That erst was sae fair and frie O."

"Your steid was auld, and ye hae gat mair,

Sum other dule ye drie O."

O I hae killed my fadir deir,

Mither, mither,

O I hae killed my fadir deir,

Alas, and wae is mee O!"

"And whatten penance wul ye drie for that,

Edward, Edward,

And whatten penance will ye drie for that?

My deir son, now tell me O."

"Ile set my feit in yonder boat,

Mither, mither,

Ile set my feit in yonder boat,
And Ile fare ovir the sea O."

"And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,
Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye doe wi your towirs and your ha,
That were sae fair to see O?

"Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,
Mither, mither,

Ile let thame stand tul they doun fa,
For here nevir mair maun I bee O."

"And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye leive to your bairns and your wife,
Whan ye gang ovir the sea O?"

"The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,
Mither, mither,

The warldis room, late them beg thrae life,
For thame nevir mair wul I see O."

"And what wul ye leive to your ain mither dear,
Edward, Edward?

And what wul ye lieve to your ain mither deir?
My deir son, now tell me O."

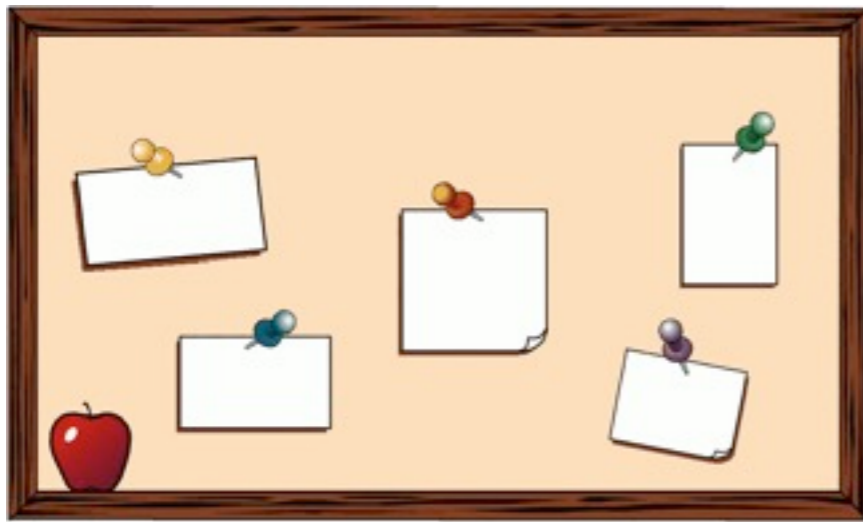
"The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Mither, mither

The curse of hell frae me sall ye beir,
Sic counseils ye gave to me O."

AUDIO 1.2 Edward



RESOURCES 1 Early English Literature



#13,560 (1899)
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2

MEDIEVAL LITERATURE

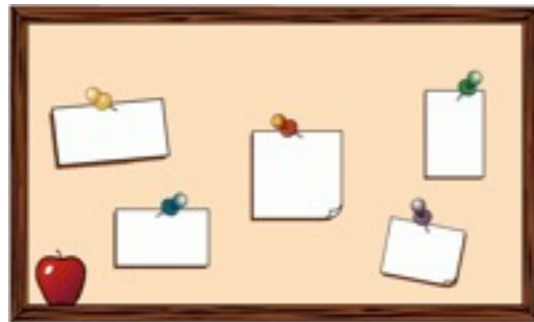
GEOFFREY CHAUCER

Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 - 1400) has been called the “Father of English Literature” for his role in popularizing vernacular English for poetry at a time when the learned were using French and Latin. Though best known for his *Canterbury Tales* today, Chaucer had a successful civil service career, authored works on astronomy and philosophy, and was an accomplished diplomat. He was the first poet buried in “Poet’s Corner” in Westminster Abbey.

MOVIE 2.1 Chaucer
Biography



RESOURCES 2 Canterbury
Tales



General Prologue

When April's gentle rains have pierced the drought
Of March right to the root, and bathed each sprout
Through every vein with liquid of such power
It brings forth the engendering of the flower;
When Zephyrus too with his sweet breath has blown 5
Through every field and forest, urging on
The tender shoots, and there's a youthful sun,
His second half course through the Ram now run,
And little birds are making melody
And sleep all night, eyes open as can be 10
(So Nature pricks them in each little heart),
On pilgrimage then folks desire to start.
The palmers long to travel foreign strands
To distant shrines renowned in sundry lands;
And specially, from every shire's end 15
In England, folks to Canterbury wend:
To seek the blissful martyr is their will,
The one who gave such help when they were ill.
Now in that season it befell one day
In Southwark at the Tabard where I lay, 20
As I was all prepared for setting out
To Canterbury with a heart devout,
That there had come into that hostelry

At night some twenty-nine, a company
 Of sundry folk whom chance had brought to fall 25
 In fellowship, for pilgrims were they all
 And onward to Canterbury would ride.
 The chambers and the stables there were wide,
 We had it easy, served with all the best;
 And by the time the sun had gone to rest 30
 I'd spoken with each one about the trip
 And was a member of the fellowship.
 We made agreement, early to arise
 To take our way, of which I shall advise.
 But nonetheless, while I have time and space, 35
 Before proceeding further here's the place
 Where I believe it reasonable to state
 Something about these pilgrims--to relate
 Their circumstances as they seemed to me,
 Just who they were and each of what degree 40
 And also what array they all were in.
 And with a Knight I therefore will begin.
 There with us was a KNIGHT, a worthy man
 Who, from the very first time he began
 To ride about, loved honor, chivalry, 45
 The spirit of giving, truth and courtesy.
 He was a valiant warrior for his lord;
 No man had ridden farther with the sword

Through Christendom and lands of heathen creeds,
 And always he was praised for worthy deeds. 50
 He helped win Alexandria in the East,
 And often sat at table's head to feast
 With knights of all the nations when in Prussia.
 In Lithuania as well as Russia
 No other noble Christian fought so well. 55
 When Algaciras in Granada fell,
 When Ayas and Attalia were won,
 This Knight was there. Hard riding he had done
 At Benmarin. Along the Great Sea coast
 He'd made his strikes with many a noble host. 60
 His mortal battles numbered then fifteen,
 And for our faith he'd fought at Tramissene
 Three tournaments and always killed his foe.
 This worthy Knight was ally, briefly so,
 Of the lord of Palathia (in work 65
 Performed against a fellow heathen Turk).
 He found the highest favor in all eyes,
 A valiant warrior who was also wise
 And in deportment meek as any maid.
 He never spoke unkindly, never played 70
 The villain's part, but always did the right.
 He truly was a perfect, gentle knight.
 But now to tell of his array, he had

Good horses but he wasn't richly clad;
His fustian tunic was a rusty sight 75
Where he had worn his hauberk, for the Knight
Was just back from an expedition when
His pilgrimage he hastened to begin.
There with him was his son, a youthful SQUIRE,
A lover and knight bachelor to admire. 80
His locks were curled as if set by a press.
His age was twenty years or so, I guess.
In stature he was of an average height
And blest with great agility and might.
He'd ridden for a time with cavalry 85
In Flanders and Artois and Picardy,
Performing well in such a little space
In hopes of standing in his lady's grace.
He was embroidered like a flowerbed
Or meadow, full of flowers white and red. 90
He sang or else he fluted all the day;
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
His gown was short, his sleeves were long and wide.
And well upon a horse the lad could ride;
Good verse and songs he had composed, and he 95
Could joust and dance, drew well, wrote gracefully.
At night he'd love so hotly, without fail,
He slept no more than does a nightingale.

He was a courteous, humble lad and able,
 And carved meat for his father at the table. 100
 Now he had brought one servant by his side,
 A YEOMAN--with no more he chose to ride.
 This Yeoman wore a coat and hood of green.
 He had a sheaf of arrows, bright and keen,
 Beneath his belt positioned handily-- 105
 He tended to his gear most yeomanly,
 His arrow feathers never drooped too low--
 And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
 His head was closely cropped, his face was brown.
 The fellow knew his woodcraft up and down. 110
 He wore a bracer on his arm to wield
 His bolts. By one side were his sword and shield,
 And on the other, mounted at the hip,
 A dagger sharply pointed at the tip.
 A Christopher of silver sheen was worn 115
 Upon his breast; a green strap held his horn.
 He must have been a forester, I guess.
 There also was a Nun, a PRIORESS,
 Her smile a very simple one and coy.
 Her greatest oath was only "By Saint Loy!" 120
 Called Madam Eglantine, this Nun excelled
 At singing when church services were held,
 Intoning through her nose melodiously.

And she could speak in French quite fluently,
After the school of Stratford at the Bow 125
(The French of Paris wasn't hers to know).
Of table manners she had learnt it all,
For from her lips she'd let no morsel fall
Nor deeply in her sauce her fingers wet;
She'd lift her food so well she'd never get 130
A single drop or crumb upon her breast.
At courtesy she really did her best.
Her upper lip she wiped so very clean
That not one bit of grease was ever seen
Upon her drinking cup. She was discreet 135
And never reached unseemly for the meat.
And certainly she was good company,
So pleasant and so amiable, while she
Would in her mien take pains to imitate
The ways of court, the dignity of state, 140
That all might praise her for her worthiness.
To tell you of her moral consciousness,
Her charity was so great that to see
A little mouse caught in a trap would be
Enough to make her cry, if dead or bleeding. 145
She had some little dogs that she was feeding
With roasted meat or milk and fine white bread;
And sorely she would weep if one were dead

Or if someone should smite it with a stick.
She was all tender heart right to the quick. 150
Her pleated wimple was of seemly class,
She had a well formed nose, eyes gray as glass,
A little mouth, one that was soft and red.
And it's for sure she had a fair forehead--
It must have been a handbreadth wide, I own, 155
For hardly was the lady undergrown.
The beauty of her cloak I hadn't missed.
She wore a rosary around her wrist
Made out of coral beads all colored green,
And from it hung a brooch of golden sheen 160
On which there was an A crowned with a wreath,
With Amor vincit omnia beneath.
She brought along another NUN, to be
Her chaplain, and her PRIEST, who made it three.
A MONK there was, a fine outrider of 165
Monastic lands, with venery his love;
A manly man, to be an abbot able.
He had some dainty horses in the stable,
And when he rode, his bridle might you hear
Go jingling in the whistling wind as clear 170
And loud as might you hear the chapel bell
Where this lord not too often kept his cell.
Because Saint Maurus and Saint Benedict

Had rules he thought were old and rather strict,
 This mounted Monk let old things pass away 175
 So that the modern world might have its day.
 That text he valued less than a plucked hen
 Which says that hunters are not holy men,
 Or that a monk ignoring rules and order
 Is like a flapping fish out of the water 180
 (That is to say, a monk out of his cloister).
 He held that text not worth a single oyster,
 And his opinion, I declared, was good.
 Why should he study till he's mad? Why should
 He pore through books day after day indoors, 185
 Or labor with his hands at all the chores
 That Austin bids? How shall the world be served?
 Let such works be to Austin then reserved!
 And so he was a pricker and aright;
 Greyhounds he had as swift as birds in flight, 190
 For tracking and the hunting of the hare
 Were all his pleasure, no cost would he spare.
 His sleeves, I saw, were fur-lined at the hand
 With gray fur of the finest in the land,
 And fastening his hood beneath his chin 195
 There was a golden, finely crafted pin,
 A love knot in the greater end for class.
 His head was bald and shinier than glass.

His face was shiny, too, as if anointed.
 He was a husky lord, one well appointed. 200
 His eyes were bright, rolled in his head and glowed
 Just like the coals beneath a pot. He rode
 In supple boots, his horse in great estate.
 Now certainly he was a fine prelate,
 He wasn't pale like some poor wasted ghost. 205
 Fat swan he loved the best of any roast.
 His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.
 A FRIAR there was, a wanton one and merry,
 Who begged within a certain limit. None
 In all four orders was a better one 210
 At idle talk, or speaking with a flair.
 And many a marriage he'd arranged for fair
 And youthful women, paying all he could.
 He was a pillar of his brotherhood.
 Well loved he was, a most familiar Friar 215
 To many franklins living in his shire
 And to the worthy women of the town;
 For he could hear confessions and played down
 The parish priest. To shrive in every quarter
 He had been given license by his order. 220
 He'd sweetly listen to confession, then
 As pleasantly absolve one of his sin.
 He easily gave penance when he knew

Some nice gift he'd receive when he was through.
 For when to a poor order something's given, 225
 It is a sign the man is truly shriven.
 If someone gave, the Friar made it clear,
 He knew the man's repentance was sincere.
 For many men are so hard of the heart
 They cannot weep, though grievous be the smart; 230
 Instead of tears and prayers, they might therefore
 Give silver to the friars who are poor.
 He kept his cape all packed with pins and knives
 That he would give away to pretty wives.
 At merriment he surely wasn't middling; 235
 He sang quite well and also did some fiddling,
 And took the prize with all his balladry.
 His neck was white as any fleur-de-lis,
 His strength like any wrestler's of renown.
 He knew the taverns well in every town, 240
 Each hosteler and barmaid, moreso than
 He knew the leper and the beggarman.
 For anyone as worthy as the Friar
 Had faculties that called for something higher
 Than dealing with those sick with leprosy. 245
 It wasn't dignified, nor could it be
 Of profit, to be dealing with the poor,
 What with the rich and merchants at the store.

Above all where some profit might arise
 Was where he'd be, in courteous, humble guise. 250
 No man had greater virtue than did he,
 The finest beggar in the friary.
 (He paid a fee for his exclusive right: 252a
 No brethren might invade his begging site.) 252B
 And though a widow shoeless had to go,
 So pleasant was his "In principio"
 He'd have a farthing when he went away. 255
 He gained much more than what he had to pay,
 And he could be as wanton as a pup.
 He'd arbitrate on days to settle up
 In law disputes, not like a cloisterer
 Dressed in a threadbare cope as students were, 260
 But rather like a master or a pope.
 He wore a double-worsted semicope
 As rounded as a church bell newly pressed.
 He lisped somewhat when he was at his best,
 To make his English sweet upon his tongue. 265
 And when he fiddled and his songs were sung,
 His eyes would twinkle in his head as might
 The stars themselves on any frosty night.
 Now Hubert was this worthy Friar's name.
 A MERCHANT with a forked beard also came, 270
 Dressed in a motley. Tall and proud he sat

Upon his horse. A Flemish beaver hat
 He wore, and boots most elegantly wrought.
 He spoke with pomp on everything he thought,
 And boasted of the earnings he'd collected. 275
 He felt the trade route had to be protected
 Twixt Middleburgh and Orwell by the sea.
 He speculated in French currency.
 He used his wits so well, with such finesse,
 That no one guessed the man's indebtedness, 280
 So dignified he was at managing
 All of his bargains and his borrowing.
 He was a worthy fellow all the same;
 To tell the truth, I do not know his name.
 There also was an Oxford STUDENT, one 285
 Whose logic studies long since had begun.
 The horse he rode was leaner than a rake,
 And he was hardly fat, I undertake,
 But looked quite hollow, far from debonair.
 And threadbare was the cloak he had to wear; 290
 He had no benefice as yet and, most
 Unworldly, wouldn't take a secular post.
 For he would rather have at his bed's head
 Some twenty books, all bound in black or red,
 Of Aristotle and his philosophy 295
 Than finest robes, fiddle or psaltery.

Philosopher he was, and yet his coffer
 Had little of the gold that it should offer.
 But all that from his friends he could acquire
 He spent on books and learning, didn't tire 300
 Of praying for the souls of all those who
 Would give to help him see his schooling through,
 For study was the foremost thing he heeded.
 He never spoke one word more than was needed,
 And then he spoke with formal reverence; 305
 He'd make it short but make a lot of sense.
 Of highest moral virtue was his speech,
 And gladly he would learn and gladly teach.
 A wise and prudent SERGEANT OF THE LAW,
 One who at Saint Paul's porch one often saw, 310
 Was with us too, a man of excellence.
 Discreet he was, deserving reverence
 (Or so it seemed, his sayings were so wise).
 He often was a judge in the assize
 By virtue of his patent and commission. 315
 He had with his renown and erudition
 Gained many fees and robes in his career.
 A purchaser of land without a peer,
 His holdings were fee simple in effect;
 No one could prove one purchase incorrect. 320
 Nowhere was there a busier man, yet he

Seemed busier than even he could be.
 He knew each court decision, every crime
 Adjudicated from King William's time.
 He'd execute a deed with such perfection 325
 No man could call its writing into question,
 And every statute he could state by rote.
 He wore a simple multicolored coat
 Girt by a striped silk belt. Enough to tell,
 On what he wore I will no longer dwell. 330
 There was a FRANKLIN in his company
 Whose beard was lily-white as it could be,
 Though his complexion was a healthy red.
 In wine he loved to sop his morning bread;
 A devotee of all delights that lure us, 335
 He truly was a son of Epicurus
 (Who thought the life that's pleasure-filled to be
 The only one of true felicity).
 He was a great householder, and his bounty
 Made him Saint Julian to those in his county. 340
 His bread and ale were always fresh and fine,
 And no one had a better stock of wine.
 Baked meat was always in his house, the best
 Of fish and flesh, so much that to each guest
 It almost seemed to snow with meat and drink 345
 And all the dainties of which one could think.

His meals would always vary, to adhere
 To all the changing seasons of the year.
 The coop was partridge-filled, birds fat as any,
 And in the pond the breams and pikes were many. 350
 Woe to the cook unless his sauce was tart
 And he had all utensils set to start!
 His table would stay mounted in the hall
 All set and ready at a moment's call.
 In county sessions he was lord and sire, 355
 And often he had been Knight of the Shire.
 A dagger and a purse made out of silk
 Hung from his belt, as white as morning milk.
 A sheriff he'd been, and county auditor.
 There wasn't a more worthy vavasor. 360
 A HABERDASHER, DYER, CARPENTER,
 TAPESTRY MAKER, and a WEAVER were
 All there as well, clothed in the livery
 Of guildsmen, of one great fraternity.
 Their gear was polished up till it would pass 365
 For new. Their knives were mounted not with brass
 But all with silver. Finely wrought array
 Their belts and pouches were in every way.
 Each one looked like a burgess, one whose place
 Would be before the whole guild on a dais. 370
 They had the means and wits, were it their plan,

Each of them to have been an alderman;
 They had enough income and property
 And wives who would to such a plan agree,
 Or else they'd have to blame themselves alone. 375
 It's very nice as "Madam" to be known,
 And lead processions on a holy day
 And have one's train borne in a royal way.
 They brought along a COOK with them to fix
 Their meals. He boiled their chicken in a mix 380
 Of marrowbones, tart herbs and galingale.
 He knew right off a draught of London ale,
 Knew how to boil and roast and broil and fry,
 Whip up a stew as well as bake a pie.
 It seemed a shame, and caused me some chagrin, 385
 To see he had an ulcer on his shin.
 He made blancmange that I'd rank with the best.
 There was a SKIPPER hailing from the west,
 As far away as Dartmouth, I'd allow.
 He rode a nag as best as he knew how. 390
 A woolen gown down to his knees he wore,
 And round his neck and neath his arm he bore
 A strap from which a dagger dangled down.
 The summer sun had turned his color brown.
 He surely was a festive sort of fellow; 395
 Many a pilfered wine draught made him mellow

While sailing from Bordeaux, the merchant snoring.
 He had no use for conscience, thought it boring.
 In battle, when he gained the upper hand,
 By plank he'd send them home to every land. 400
 As for his skill in reckoning the tides
 And all the dangers of the sea besides,
 By zodiac and moon to navigate,
 From Hull to Carthage there was none as great.
 Hardy and shrewd in all he'd undertaken, 405
 His beard by many tempests had been shaken;
 And he knew well the havens everywhere
 From Gotland to the Cape of Finisterre,
 And every creek in Brittany and Spain.
 The Skipper's ship was called the Maudelayne. 410
 There also was among us a PHYSICIAN,
 None like him in this world, no competition,
 To speak of medicine and surgery.
 He was well grounded in astrology:
 He tended patients specially in hours 415
 When natural magic had its greatest powers,
 For he could tell by which stars would ascend
 What talisman would help his patient mend.
 He knew the cause of every malady
 Whether from hot, cold, wet, or dry it be, 420
 And of each humor what the symptoms were.

He truly was a fine practitioner.
 And once he knew a malady's root cause
 He'd give the cure without a further pause,
 For readily apothecaries heeded 425
 When there were drugs or medicines he needed,
 That profit might be shared by everyone
 (Their fellowship not recently begun).
 The ancient Aesculapius he knew,
 And Dioscorides and Rufus too, 430
 Hali and Galen, old Hippocrates,
 Serapion, Avicenna, Rhazes,
 Gaddesden, Damascenus, Constantine,
 Bernard and Averroes and Gilbertine.
 His diet was as measured as could be, 435
 Being not one of superfluity
 But greatly nourishing as well as prudent.
 He hardly could be called a Bible student.
 He decked himself in scarlet and in azure,
 With taffeta and silk. Yet he'd demure 440
 If something might necessitate expense;
 He saved his gains from times of pestilence,
 For gold's a cordial, so the doctors say.
 That's why he loved gold in a special way.
 From near the town of BATH a good WIFE came; 445
 She was a little deaf, which was a shame.

She was a clothier, so excellent
Her work surpassed that of Ypres and Ghent.
When parish wives their gifts would forward bring,
None dared precede her to the offering-- 450
And if they did, her wrath would surely be
So mighty she'd lose all her charity.
The kerchiefs all were of the finest texture
(And must have weighed ten pounds, that's no conjecture)
That every Sunday she had on her head. 455
The fine hose that she wore were scarlet red
And tightly laced, she had a nice new pair
Of shoes. Her face was ruddy, bold and fair.
She was a worthy woman all her life:
At church door with five men she'd been a wife, 460
Not counting all the company of her youth.
(No need to treat that now, but it's the truth.)
She'd journeyed to Jerusalem three times;
Strange rivers she had crossed in foreign climes;
She'd been to Rome and also to Boulogne, 465
To Galicia for Saint James and to Cologne,
And she knew much of wandering by the way.
She had the lover's gap teeth, I must say.
With ease upon an ambling horse she sat,
Well wimpled, while upon her head her hat 470
Was broad as any buckler to be found.

About her ample hips a mantle wound,
And on her feet the spurs she wore were sharp.
In fellowship she well could laugh and carp.
Of remedies of love she had good notions, 475
For of that art's old dance she knew the motions.

There was a good man of religion, too,
A PARSON of a certain township who
Was poor, but rich in holy thought and work.
He also was a learned man, a clerk; 480
The Christian gospel he would truly preach,
Devoutly his parishioners to teach.

Benign he was, in diligence a wonder,
And patient in adversity, as under
Such he'd proven many times. And loath 485
He was to get his tithes by threatening oath;
For he would rather give, without a doubt,
To all the poor parishioners about
From his own substance and the offerings.
Sufficiency he found in little things. 490

His parish wide, with houses wide asunder,
He'd never fail in either rain or thunder,
Though sick or vexed, to make his visitations
With those remote, regardless of their stations.
On foot he traveled, in his hand a stave. 495
This fine example to his sheep he gave:

He always did good works before he taught them.
 His words were from the gospel as he caught them,
 And this good saying he would add thereto:
 "If gold should rust, then what will iron do?" 500
 For if a priest be foul in whom we trust,
 No wonder that the ignorant goes to rust.
 And it's a shame (as every priest should keep
 In mind), a dirty shepherd and clean sheep.
 For every priest should an example give, 505
 By his own cleanness, how his sheep should live.
 He never set his benefice for hire,
 To leave his sheep encumbered in the mire
 While he ran off to London and Saint Paul's
 To seek a chantry, singing in the stalls, 510
 Or be supported by a guild. Instead
 He dwelt at home, and he securely led
 His fold, so that the wolf might never harry.
 He was a shepherd and no mercenary.
 A holy, virtuous man he was, and right 515
 In showing to the sinner no despite.
 His speech was never haughty or indignant,
 He was a teacher modest and benignant;
 To draw folks heavenward to life forever,
 By good example, was his great endeavor. 520
 But if some person were too obstinate,

Whether he be of high or low estate,
 He would be sharply chided on the spot.
 A better priest, I wager, there is not.
 He didn't look for pomp or reverence 525
 Nor feign a too self-righteous moral sense;
 What Christ and his apostles had to tell
 He taught, and he would follow it as well.
 With him his brother came, a PLOWMAN who
 Had carted many a load of dung. A true 530
 And well-intentioned laborer was he,
 Who lived in peace and perfect charity.
 The Lord his God with whole heart he loved best,
 When times were good as well as when distressed,
 And loved his neighbor as himself, for which 535
 He'd gladly thresh, or dig to make a ditch,
 For love of Christ, to help the poor in plight
 Without a wage, if it lay in his might.
 He paid his proper tithes religiously,
 Both of his labor and his property. 540
 He wore a tunic and he rode a mare.
 A MILLER and a REEVE also were there,
 A SUMMONER, also a PARDONER,
 A MANCIPLE and me, no more there were.
 The MILLER was as stout as any known, 545
 A fellow big in brawn as well as bone.

It served him well, for everywhere he'd go
 He'd win the ram at every wrestling show.
 Short-shouldered, broad he was, a husky knave;
 No door could keep its hinges once he gave 550
 A heave or ran and broke it with his head.
 His beard like any sow or fox was red,
 And broad as any spade it was, at that.
 He had a wart upon his nose, right at
 The tip, from which a tuft of hairs was spread 555
 Like bristles on a sow's ears, just as red;
 The nostrils on the man were black and wide.
 He had a sword and buckler at his side.
 Great as a furnace was his mouth. And he
 Could tell some jokes and stories, though they'd be 560
 Mostly of sin and lechery. He stole
 Much corn, charged three times over for a toll;
 Yet he'd a golden thumb, I do declare.
 A white coat and a blue hood were his wear.
 He blew the bagpipe, knew it up and down, 565
 And played it as he brought us out of town.
 From an Inn of Court a gentle MANCIPLE
 Was with us, one who set a fine example
 In buying victuals wisely. Whether he
 Would buy with credit or with currency, 570
 He took such care in purchases he made

He'd come out well ahead for what he paid.
 Now is that not a sign of God's fair grace,
 That such a simple man's wit can displace
 The wisdom of a heap of learned men? 575
 His masters numbered more than three times ten,
 All lawyers of a very skillful sort;
 A dozen of them in that Inn of Court
 Were worthy to be stewards of the treasure
 Of any lord in England, that in pleasure 580
 He might live, enjoying all that he had
 Without a debt (unless he had gone mad),
 Or live as simply as he might desire;
 If need be, they could help an entire shire
 Through any circumstance that might befall. 585
 And yet this Manciple could shame them all.
 The REEVE was a slender, choleric man.
 He shaved his beard as closely as one can;
 His hair was shortly clipped around the ears
 And cropped in front just like a priest's appears. 590
 The fellow's legs were very long and lean,
 Each like a staff, no calf was to be seen.
 Well could he keep a granary and bin
 (No auditor could challenge that and win),
 And he could augur by the drought and rain 595
 The true yield of his seed and of his grain.

His master's sheep, his cattle, milk cows, horses,
His poultry, swine, and all his stored resources
Were wholly left to this Reeve's governing,
For by contract his was the reckoning 600
Since first his lord had grown to twenty years.
No man could ever put him in arrears;
There was no bailiff, herdsman, not one servant
With sleight unknown--the Reeve was too observant,
And feared like death itself by all beneath. 605
He had a lovely dwelling on a heath
Where green trees stood to shade it from the sun.
In gaining goods his lord he had outdone,
He stored up many riches privately.
To please his lord, he'd give him subtly 610
A gift or loan out of the lord's own goods,
Receiving thanks and things like coats and hoods.
He'd learnt a good trade as a youth, for he
Was quite a gifted man at carpentry.
He rode a steed with quite a sturdy frame, 615
A dapple gray (the horse was Scot by name).
He wore a long surcoat of bluish shade,
And at his side he had a rusty blade.
From Norfolk was this Reeve of whom I tell,
Nearby a town that's known as Bawdeswell. 620
His coat was tucked up like a friar's. He

Rode always last among our company.

A SUMMONER was with us in the place
Who like a cherub had a fire-red face,
So pimply was the skin, eyes puffed and narrow. 625

He was as hot and lecherous as a sparrow.
With black and scabby brows and scanty beard,
He had a face that all the children feared;
There's no quicksilver, litharge or brimstone,
Borax, ceruse, no tartar oil that's known-- 630

No ointment that could cleanse, to keep it simple,
And rid his face of even one white pimple
Among the welks that sat upon his cheeks.
He loved his garlic, onions and his leeks,
And strong wine red as blood once he had eaten. 635

Then he would speak and cry out like a cretin,
And when with wine he was quite well infused,
Some Latin words were all the words he used.
He knew a few good phrases, two or three,
Which he had learnt to say from some decree. 640

(No wonder, what with hearing it all day;
And after all, as you well know, a jay
Can call out "Walt!" as well as any pope.)
But once a question came to test his scope,
He had no learning left to make reply, 645
So "Questio quid juris!" was his cry.

He was a gentle, kindly rascal, though;
A better fellow men may never know.
Why, he'd be willing, for a quart of wine,
To let some rascal have his concubine 650
For one whole year, excusing him completely.
He well could "pluck a bird" (always discreetly),
And if he found a fellow rogue wherever
He'd teach him that he should in his endeavor
Not be afraid of the archdeacon's curse-- 655
Unless the fellow's soul was in his purse,
For that is where his punishment would be.
"The purse is the archdeacon's hell," said he.
(I know that was a lie; a guilty man
Should be in dread of Holy Church's ban, 660
It slays as absolution saves. He best
Beware also a writ for his arrest.)
The Summoner controlled, himself to please,
All of the young girls of the diocese;
He knew their secrets, counseled them and led. 665
A garland he had set upon his head
As great as any ale sign on a stake.
He'd made himself a buckler out of cake.
With him there rode a gentle PARDONER
Of Runcivale (comrades and friends they were), 670
Who'd come straight from the court of Rome. And he

Would loudly sing "Come hither, love, to me!"
The Summoner bore him a stiff bass staff;
No trumpet ever sounded so by half.
The Pardoner's hair was as yellow as wax, 675
But hung as smoothly as a hank of flax;
In little strands the locks ran from his head
Till over both his shoulders they were spread
And thinly lay, one here, another there.
In jolly spirit, he chose not to wear 680
His hood but kept it packed away. He rode
(Or so he thought) all in the latest mode;
But for a cap his long loose hair was bare.
Such glaring eyes he had, just like a hare!
A veronica was sewn upon his cap. 685
He had his bag before him in his lap,
Brimming with pardons hot from Rome. He'd speak
In voice as dainty as a goat's. From cheek
To cheek he had no beard and never would,
So smooth his face you'd think he'd shaved it good. 690
I think he was a gelding or a mare.
But speaking of his craft, Berwick to Ware
There was no pardoner could take his place.
For in his bag he had a pillowcase
That used to be, he said, Our Lady's veil; 695
He claimed he had a fragment of the sail

That took Saint Peter out upon the sea
Before Christ called him to his ministry;
He had a cross of latten set with stones,
And in a glass he had some old pig's bones; 700
And with these relics, when he saw at hand
A simple parson from the hinterland,
He'd make more money in one day alone
Than would the parson two months come and gone.
So he made apes, with all the tricks he'd do, 705
Of parson and of congregation too.
And yet I should conclude, for all his tactic,
In church he was a fine ecclesiastic,
So well he read a lesson or a story,
And best of all intoned the offertory. 710
For well he knew that when the song was sung,
He then must preach, and not with awkward tongue.
He knew how one gets silver from the crowd;
That's why he sang so merrily and loud.
As briefly as I could I've told you now 715
Degree, array, and number, and of how
This company of pilgrims came to be
In Southwark at that pleasant hostelry
Known as the Tabard, which is near the Bell.
And so with that, it's time for me to tell 720
Exactly what we did that very night

When at this inn we'd all come to alight;
And after that I'll tell you of our trip,
Of all that's left about our fellowship.
But first I pray that by your courtesy 725
You will not judge it my vulgarity
If I should plainly speak of this assortment,
To tell you all their words and their deportment,
Though not a word of theirs I modify.
For this I'm sure you know as well as I: 730
Who tells the tale of any other man
Should render it as nearly as he can,
If it be in his power, word for word,
Though from him such rude speech was never heard.
If he does not, his tale will be untrue, 735
The words will be invented, they'll be new.
One shouldn't spare the words of his own brother,
He ought to say one word just like another.
Christ spoke broad words himself in Holy Writ,
And you know well no villainy's in it. 740
And Plato says, to all those who can read
Him, that words must be cousin to the deed.
I also pray that you'll forgive the fact
That in my tale I haven't been exact
To set folks in their order of degree; 745
My wit is short, as clearly you may see.

Our HOST made welcome each and every one,
 And right away our supper was begun.
 He served us with the finest in good food;
 The wine was strong to fit our festive mood. 750
 Our Host performed, so it seemed to us all,
 As well as any marshal in a hall.
 A robust man he was, and twinkle-eyed,
 As fine as any burgess in Cheapside,
 Bold in his speech, one wise and educated, 755
 A man whose manhood could not be debated.
 He also was a merry sort of bloke,
 As after supper he began to joke
 And spoke to us of mirth and other things
 When we had finished with our reckonings. 760
 "My lords," he then addressed us, "from the start
 You've been most welcome here, that's from the heart.
 In faith, this year I've truly yet to see
 Here at this inn another company
 As merry as the one that's gathered now. 765
 I'd entertain you more if I knew how.
 Say, here's a thought that just occurred to me,
 A way to entertain you, and it's free.
 "You go to Canterbury--may God speed,
 The blissful martyr bless you for the deed! 770
 And well I know as you go on your way,

You plan to tell some tales, to have some play.
There won't be much amusement going on
If everybody rides dumb as a stone.
So as I said, I would propose a game 775
To give you some diversion, that's the aim.
If it's agreed, by everyone's assent,
That you'll stand by the judgment I present,
And strive to do exactly as I say
Tomorrow when you're riding on your way, 780
Then by my father's soul, who now is dead,
You'll have some fun or you can have my head!
Let's have a show of hands, no more to say."
We let our will be known then right away;
We didn't think it worth deliberation 785
And gave him leave without a hesitation
To tell us what his verdict was to be.
"My lords," he said, "then listen well to me,
And may this not, I pray, meet your disdain.
Now here's the point, speaking short and plain: 790
Each one of you, to pass the time of day,
Shall tell two tales while you are on the way
To Canterbury; then each one of you
On the return shall tell another two,
About adventures said once to befall. 795
And he who bears himself the best of all--

That is to say, the one who's judged to tell
The tales that in both aim and wit excel--
Shall win a supper paid for by the lot,
Here in this place, right at this very spot, 800
When we return again from Canterbury.
For in my wish to make your journey merry,
I will myself most gladly with you ride--
And at my own expense--to be your guide;
And if my judgment one disputes, he'll pay 805
For all that we shall spend along the way.
If you will grant me that it's to be so,
Then tell me in a word that I may know
To make my preparations for the start."
It was so granted, each with happy heart 810
Gave him his oath. We therefore asked our Host
To vouchsafe that indeed he'd take the post
And function as our governor, to hear
Our tales and judge, and make his judgment clear,
And set the supper at a certain price; 815
Then we would all be ruled by his device,
Come high or low. And so it was agreed
By one assent, his judgment we would heed.
With that, more wine was fetched for every guest.
We drank it, then were ready for some rest 820
And went to bed with no more tarrying.

Next morning, when the day began to spring,
Up rose our Host and roused us like a cock.
He gathered us together in a flock,
Then forth we rode at but a walking pace 825
Out to Saint Thomas's watering place.
Our Host there checked his horse and said to all:
"My lords, now listen, if you will. Recall
The pact, as I remind you, made with me.
If evensong and matins both agree, 830
Let's see now who shall tell us the first tale.
And if I've ever drunk of wine or ale,
Whoso resists the judgment I present
Shall pay along the way all that is spent.
Draw lots before we travel farther, then, 835
And he who draws the shortest shall begin.
Sir Knight," he said, "my master and my lord,
Now draw a lot, to keep with our accord.
Come here," said he, "my Lady Prioress,
And you, Sir Student--quit your bashfulness 840
And studies too. Lay hand to, everyone!"
And so the drawing was at once begun.
I'll keep it short and tell you how it went:
Whether by chance or fate or accident,
The truth is that the lot fell to the Knight-- 845
A fact in which the rest all took delight.

As was required, then tell his tale he must,
By the agreement that was made in trust
As you have heard. What more is there to know?
And when this good man saw that it was so, 850
As one with wisdom and obedient
To that to which he'd given free assent,
He said, "Since I'm the one to start the game,
The lot I drew is welcome, in God's name!
Now let us ride, and hear what I've to say." 855
And with that word we rode forth on our way,
As he began at once with merry cheer
To tell his tale, and spoke as you may hear.

The Wife of Bath -- Prologue

"Experience, though no authority
Were in this world, would be enough for me
To speak of woe that married life affords;
For since I was twelve years of age, my lords,
Thanks be to God eternally alive, 5
Of husbands at the church door I've had five
(If I have wed that often legally),
And all were worthy men in their degree.
But I was told not very long ago

That as but once did Jesus ever go 10
To a wedding (in Cana, Galilee),
By that example he was teaching me
That only once in life should I be wed.
And listen what a sharp word, too, was said
Beside a well by Jesus, God and man, 15
In a reproof of the Samaritan:
'Now you have had five husbands,' Jesus said,
'But he who has you now, I say instead,
Is not your husband.' That he said, no doubt,
But what he meant I haven't figured out; 20
For I must ask, why is it the fifth man
Wasn't husband to the Samaritan?
How many men was she allowed to wed?
In all my years I've never heard it said
Exactly how this number is defined; 25
Men may surmise and gloss how it's divined,
But I expressly know it's not a lie
God bade us to increase and multiply--
That noble text I well appreciate.
I also know the Lord said that my mate 30
Should leave for me his father and his mother,
But mentioned not one number or another,
Not bigamy nor yet octogamy.
Why should men speak, then, disapprovingly?

"Look, here's the wise king, lordly Solomon:	35
I do believe his wives were more than one.	
Would that the Lord permitted me to be	
Refreshed as half as often as was he.	
A gift from God he had for all his wives,	
No man will ever have such in our lives.	40
God knows, this noble king, if I am right,	
Had many a merry bout on that first night	
With each of them, he was so much alive.	
And God be blest that I have married five,	
Of which I have picked out the very best,	44A
Both for their hanging purse and for their chest.	
As many different schools make perfect clerks,	
So practice that's diverse in sundry works	
Will make a perfect workman certainly;	
Five-husband schooling's done the same for me.	44F
The sixth is welcome when he comes along;	45
I won't be keeping myself chaste for long,	
For when one husband from this world is gone	
Some Christian man will wed me early on--	
For as the Apostle says, then I am free	
To wed in God's name when it pleases me.	50
It's no sin to be married, he has said,	
For if you're burning, better to be wed.	
What do I care if folks speak evilly	

Of curséd Lamech and his bigamy?
 A holy man was Abraham, I know, 55
 And Jacob, too, as far as that may go,
 Yet each with more than two wives came to dwell,
 Like many other holy men as well.
 And where in any age can it be said
 That God on high forbade that we be wed 60
 By any word express? Please answer me.
 Or when did he command virginity?
 I know as well as you, for there's no doubt,
 When maidenhood the Apostle spoke about
 He said he had no precept. To be sure, 65
 A woman may be counseled to be pure,
 But counsel and commandment aren't the same.
 To leave it to our judgment was his aim.
 For if God did command virginity,
 Then marriage he condemned concurrently; 70
 And surely if no seed were ever sown,
 From where then would virginity be grown?
 Paul wouldn't dare command, would least invoke
 A thing on which his Master never spoke.
 A prize is set up for virginity: 75
 Who runs the best may have it, let us see.
 "But not for all is this word seen as right,
 It's only as God wills it in his might.

The Apostle was a virgin, well I note;
But nonetheless, although he said and wrote 80
That he wished everyone would be as he,
It was but to advise virginity.
He allows I be a wife, if that's my place,
In his indulgence, so it's no disgrace
To marry if my latest mate should die-- 85
Without the 'bigamy' that some would cry.
'It's best a man should not a woman touch';
He meant in bed or on the couch or such.
In mixing fire and tinder danger lies;
What this example means you realize. 90
And that's the sum: he held virginity
Was better than to wed in frailty.
(I call it 'frailty' unless the two
Would chaste remain till both their lives were through.)
"I grant it well, but envy I do not, 95
That maidenhood may be the better lot.
In soul and body some like being clean,
And I can make no boasts. But have you seen
Among possessions that the nobles hold
If each and every vessel is of gold? 100
Some are of service though they be of wood.
In sundry ways God calls us to his good,
Each by his own God-given gift sustained,

Why else should men into their ledgers set
That every man yield to his wife her debt? 130
And how can he pay this emolument
Unless he use his simple instrument?
That's why upon all creatures these are set,
To urinate and also to beget.

"But I don't say that everyone possessing 135
Equipment such as this as I was stressing
Must go and use it for engendering,
Lest chastity be held a worthless thing.
Christ was a virgin though shaped as a man,
And many a saint since this world first began 140
Has also lived in perfect chastity.

I don't begrudge them their virginity;
They're bread from finest wheat, so be it said,
And let us wives be known as barley bread.
And yet with barley bread, as Mark can tell, 145
Was many a man by Jesus nourished well.

In such estate as God calls each of us
I'll persevere. I'm not fastidious,
In wifehood I will use my instrument
As freely as my Maker has it sent. 150

If I hold back, God bring me misery!
My spouse shall have it day and night, when he
Desires he may come forth and pay his debt.

I'll have a husband--I'm not quitting yet--
 And he will be my debtor and my slave, 155
 And in the flesh his troubles will be grave
 As long as I continue as his wife;
 For I will have the power all my life
 Over his body, I and never he.
 It's just as the Apostle said to me 160
 And bade them love us well, which I must say
 Are teachings to my liking all the way."
 The Pardoner spoke up immediately.
 "Now dame, by God and by Saint John," said he,
 "As a noble preacher on the case you'll pass. 165
 I almost wed a wife, but then, alas,
 Why buy it with my flesh, a price so dear?
 I'd rather not get married, not this year."
 "Abide," she said, "my tale is not begun!
 No, you'll be drinking from another tun, 170
 Before I'm through, that tastes much worse than ale.
 And when I'm finished telling you my tale
 Of tribulation known to man and wife--
 Of which I've been an expert all my life
 (That is to say, of which I've been the whip)-- 175
 Then make your choice whether you would sip
 From this same tun that I'm about to broach.
 Be wary lest too near it you approach.

They gave me so much of their treasury
I didn't need to practice diligence 205
To win their love or show them reverence.
For they loved me so well, by God above,
That I put little value in their love.
The woman's wise who's busy till she's won
The love she wants, or she'll be left with none. 210
But since I had them wholly in my hand
And they had given to me all their land,
Why should I pay them heed and try to please,
Unless it were for profit and for ease?
But by my faith, I worked them for so long 215
That many a night they sang a plaintive song.
The bacon wasn't fetched for them, I know,
Like for some men in Essex at Dunmow.
I governed them so strictly by my law
That each of them was happy to a flaw 220
To bring me back some nice things from the fair,
And glad when I would speak with pleasant air,
For God knows I would chide them spitefully.
"Now hear how well I bore myself, and see,
The wise among you wives who understand, 225
How you should speak: accuse them out of hand.
There's no man who can falsely swear and lie
As half as boldly as a woman. I

Don't say this to those wives already wise,
Save when they've made mistakes--then I advise 230
That she who knows what's good for her and bad
Must prove the chough has gone stark raving mad
And call as witness her assenting maid.
Now listen to my typical tirade:
 "Old sluggard, you would have me dress this way? 235
Why does my neighbor's wife have fine array?
She is so honored everywhere she goes;
I sit at home, I have no nifty clothes.
What are you up to at my neighbor's house?
Is she so fair? So amorous are you, spouse? 240
What do you whisper with our maid? Ah, bless me!
Sir Lecher, will you stop your treachery!
Yet if I have a confidant or friend
In innocence, you chide me to no end
If I so much as walk into his house. 245
You come home just as drunken as a mouse
And preach upon your bench. Bad luck to you!
You say to me that it's a mighty rue
To marry one who's poor, for the expense;
And if she's rich and highborn, you commence 250
To talk about the torment and the folly
Of suffering all her pride and melancholy.
And if she's fair, you thorough knave, you say

That every lecher wants her right away,
That she'll not long in chastity abide 255
When she's assailed on each and every side.

"You say that some desire us for our fortunes,
Some for our looks, some for our good proportions,
And some because she either sings or dances,
Some for her noble blood and flirty glances, 260
Her hands and arms so graceful--without fail
All go right to the devil by your tale.

You say that men can't keep a castle wall
That's swarmed upon as long, that it will fall.
"If she looks foul, then you declare that she 265

Will lust for every fellow she may see,
Leap on him like a spaniel in a trice
Until she finds the man who'll pay her price.
In all the lake there's not one goose so gray
That it will be without a mate, you say. 270

Yet it's a hard thing, you would have it known,
To have what no man willingly would own
(You say it, loafer, when you go to bed),
And that a wise man has no need to wed
Nor any man whose aim is heaven's wonder. 275
May lightning and a bolt of wildest thunder
Come break your withered neck with fiery stroke!

"You say a house that leaks, and also smoke,

And wives who scold, cause men to run away
 From their own homes. Ah, benedicite! 280
 What ails such an old fellow so to chide?
 "You say we wives all of our vices hide
 Until we wed, and then we let them show.
 The proverb of a rascal whom I know!
 "You say the ox, the ass, the hound, the horse 285
 At various times are tested, as, of course,
 Are bowls and basins ere a buy is made,
 And spoons and stools, and other household trade
 Like pots and clothes, and other such array;
 But menfolk never test their wives, you say, 290
 Till they are wed--old dotard, ne'er do well!--
 And then we show our vices, so you tell.
 "And it displeases me, you also say,
 If you don't praise my beauty all the day
 And aren't forever poring on my face 295
 And calling me "fair dame" in every place;
 If you don't hold a feast upon the day
 When I was born, dress me in rich array;
 If you don't honor with all due respect
 My nurse and chambermaid, nor deem select 300
 All of my father's kinfolk and allies--
 You say it, you old barrel full of lies!
 "And our apprentice Jenkin, by his hair--

Those curly, golden, shining locks so fair--
 And by the fact he squires me where I go, 305
 Gives you a false suspicion. Kindly know
 I wouldn't want him if you died tomorrow.
 "But tell me this, why hide (be it your sorrow!)
 The keys from me that lock your chest? I'll tell
 You this, your property is mine as well. 310
 Am I an idiot like some other dames?
 I tell you by that lord they call Saint James,
 You won't be--you can rave mad in the woods!--
 Master of both my body and my goods;
 You'll forgo one, I tell you to your eye. 315
 What help is it to ask around and spy?
 I think that you would lock me in your chest.
 To say, "Go where you please, wife," would be best,
 "Have fun, I won't believe tales told in malice,
 For I know you to be a good wife, Alice." 320
 We love no man who keeps such watchful eyes
 On where we go, our liberty we prize.
 "Above all men may he most blessed be,
 That wise astronomer Ptolemy,
 Who wrote this proverb in his Almagest: 325
 "He has much higher wisdom than the rest
 Who doesn't care who has the world in hand."
 And by this proverb you should understand

That if you have enough, why should you care
 How merrily some other people fare? 330
 For by your leave, old dotard, of my stuff
 Tonight you surely will have quite enough.
 How great a niggard is he who refuses
 A candlelight from the lantern that he uses;
 He'd have no less light than he did before. 335
 You have enough, so don't complain for more.
 "And if in finest clothes, you also say,
 In jewelry and other fine display,
 We dress ourselves, we risk our chastity;
 To back up what you say, you quote to me 340
 The following in the Apostle's name:
 "Clothes chastely made with proper sense of shame
 Is what your women's dress should always be--
 No fancy hairdos, no bright jewelry
 Like pearls and gold, nor other rich array." 345
 About your text and rubric, let me say
 I'd follow them as much as would a gnat.
 "You also say that I am like a cat,
 For if somebody singes a cat's fur
 She'll be content to stay inside and purr, 350
 But if her fur is sleek and fine she'll stay
 Inside the house not more than half a day;
 Before the dawn can break she's to her calling,

She's showing off her fur and caterwauling--
In other words, Sir Rascal, if well dressed 355
I run out to be sure I'm well assessed.

"Old fool, what help to you are all your spies?
If you asked Argus with his hundred eyes
To be my bodyguard--what better measure?--
He'd guard me only if it were my pleasure; 360
As I may thrive, I'd really tweak his beard!

"You also speak of three things to be feared
For troubling all the earth, and that for sure
The fourth one there's no man could long endure.
Sir Rascal dear, may Christ cut short your life, 365
For still you preach and say a hateful wife
Is one of these misfortunes. Sir, are there
No other things to speak of and compare
In telling all your parables? Must you
Always include a poor wife ere you're through? 370

"You also liken woman's love to hell,
To barren land without a stream or well,
And also to a wildly raging fire--
The more it burns, the stronger its desire
To consume all that will burn. You say to me 375
That just as little worms destroy a tree
A wife destroys her husband. "They have found
This to be true, those who to wives are bound."

"My lords, just so, as you now understand,
 I accused all my old husbands out of hand 380
 Of saying such while they were drunk. And all
 Was false, but as my witnesses I'd call
 On Jenkin and my niece to say, 'It's so.'
 O Lord, the pain I gave them and the woe!
 Their guilt? By God's sweet grief, they hadn't any; 385
 And yet just like a horse I'd bite and whinny,
 Complaining well when I myself had guilt,
 For they'd have killed me had the beans been spilt.
 Who comes first to the mill is first to grind;
 I'd be first to complain, and always find 390
 Our war was quickly over--gladly they
 Repented things they didn't do or say.
 On wenches I would give them reprimand
 When they were so sick they could hardly stand.
 "Yet each was tickled in his heart to see 395
 What he thought was such love for him in me.
 I swore that all my walking out by night
 Was just to keep his wenches in my sight.
 With that excuse I had me lots of mirth.
 For we are given such keen wits at birth 400
 To cheat and weep and spin; these God will give
 To women naturally long as they live.
 So one thing I can speak of boastfully,

The one who came out best was always me,
By sleight or force, or by some other thing 405
Like long complaint and constant bickering.
Especially in bed were they undone,
For there I'd scold them and deny them fun;
I would no longer in the bed abide,
Once I could feel his arm upon my side, 410
Until he paid his ransom as he must--
Then I would suffer him to do his lust.
And so to every man I tell this tale:
Gain what you can, for everything's for sale,
And no hawk by an empty hand is lured. 415
For profit all his lust I so endured
And feigned for him a lusty appetite;
In bacon, though, I never took delight,
And that is why I would forever chide.
For even had the pope sat down beside 420
Them there, I wouldn't spare them at the table,
To pay back word for word I was so able.
So help me God who is omnipotent,
Were I to make right now my testament
I'd owe them not a word that's not repaid. 425
I did this by the wits that I displayed
So that they had to give up and be bested
Or else we never would have finally rested.

Though like a raging lion he would look,
 Yet he would fail at every tack he took. 430
 "Then I would say, 'Good dear, just take a peep
 At how meek-looking Wilkin is, our sheep;
 Come here, my spouse, and let me kiss your cheek;
 You should always be patient, always meek,
 And have a good man's conscience, as so much 435
 You like to preach of patient Job and such.
 Be always patient, since so well you preach--
 If not, a lesson we will have to teach,
 How fair it is to have a wife in peace,
 For there's no doubt that one of us must cease; 440
 Since woman's less reasonable than the male,
 You must therefore be patient. What can ail
 You, husband, that so much you gripe and groan?
 Is it my thing? You'd have it yours alone?
 Why, take it all, here, take it every bit. 445
 By Peter, curse you! such a love for it.
 If I were selling some of my belle chose
 I then could walk fresh-looking as a rose,
 But I will keep it for your own sweet tooth.
 You are to blame, by God, and that's the truth.' 450
 "The words we'd have were always of that sort.
 And now on my fourth husband I'll report.
 "A reveler was husband number four,

That is to say, he had a paramour.
And I was young and wanton, passionate, 455
As jolly as a magpie, obstinate
And strong. How I could dance to a small harp, too,
And sing like any nightingale can do
When I had drunk a draught of good sweet wine!
Metellius, that dirty churl, the swine, 460
Picked up a staff and took his spouse's life
For drinking wine. If I had been his wife,
He never would have daunted me from drinking!
And after wine, on Venus I'd be thinking,
For as surely as cold engenders hail 465
A lustful mouth will have a lustful tail.
A tipsy woman is without defense,
As lechers know by their experience.
"But Lord Christ! when it all comes back to me,
Remembrance of my youth and jollity, 470
It warms the cockles of my heart. Today
It still does my heart good that I can say
I've had the world, what time's been mine to pass.
But age that poisons everything, alas,
Bereft me of my beauty and my pith. 475
Well, let it go, the devil go therewith!
The flour is gone, there is no more to tell;
The bran as best I can I now must sell

And strive to be as merry as before.
 And now I'll tell of husband number four. 480
 "I had within my heart a great despite
 That he in any other took delight.
 I paid him back, by God and by Saint Joyce,
 With a hard staff from wood of his own choice;
 Not with my body, not by sinful means, 485
 But entertaining folks in merry scenes,
 I made him fry in his own grease till he
 Was quite consumed with angry jealousy.
 By God, on earth I was his purgatory,
 For which I hope his soul is now in glory. 490
 God knows how often he would sit and sing
 While his shoe pinched him, such a painful thing;
 For there was none save God and me who knew
 The many torments that I put him through.
 He died when I came from Jerusalem; 495
 Beneath the rood-beam where we buried him,
 His tomb was surely not as finely done
 As was great King Darius's, the one
 Built by Apelles with such skill and taste.
 A costly burial would have been a waste. 500
 May he fare well and God give his soul rest,
 For he's now in his grave, his wooden chest.
 "Of husband number five I now will tell.

God grant his soul may never go to hell!
And yet he was to me the very worst; 505
I feel it in my ribs from last to first
And always will until the day I die.
But in our bed he was so fresh and spry,
To gloss away so able, heaven knows,
Whenever he was wanting my belle chose, 510
That though each bone he'd beaten was in pain,
At once he'd win back all my love again.
I swear I loved him best of all, for he
Was always playing hard to get with me.
We women have--the truth, so help me God-- 515
In this regard a fancy that is odd;
That which we can't get in an easy way
Is what we'll crave and cry for all the day.
Forbid us something and then we'll desire it,
But press it on us and we'll not require it. 520
With coyness we trade in our affairs;
Great market crowds make more expensive wares
And what's too cheap will not be held a prize.
This every woman knows if she is wise.
"My husband number five, God bless his soul, 525
I took for love, no riches were my goal.
He once had been an Oxford clerk, but then
Had left school and gone home, and boarded in

Our town with a good friend of mine, the one,
God bless her soul, whose name was Alison. 530
She knew my heart, each of my secrets well,
Much better than the parish priest. I'd tell
Her everything, disclosing to her all;
For had my husband pissed upon a wall
Or done something that could have cost his life, 535
To her and to another worthy wife--
And also to my niece, whom I loved well--
His every secret I would fully tell.
God knows, I did this so much, to his dread,
It often made his face get hot and red. 540
He felt ashamed, but blamed himself that he
Had told to me so great a privy.
"It so befell that one time during Lent,
As often to this close friend's house I went
(And I so loved to dress up anyway 545
And take my walks in March, April, and May
From house to house, to hear what tales were spun),
This clerk named Jenkin, my friend Alison,
And I myself into the meadows went.
My husband was in London all that Lent, 550
So I had much more leisure time to play,
To see and to be seen along the way
By lusty folks. How could I know when there

Would come good fortune meant for me, or where?
 And so I made my visits, I'd attend 555
 Religious vigils and processions, wend
 With pilgrims, hear the sermons preached; also
 To miracle plays and weddings I would go.
 The clothes that I would wear were scarlet bright;
 There never was a worm or moth or mite, 560
 As I may live, could bring to them abuse.
 Do you know why? They always were in use.
 "I'll tell you now what happened next to me.
 I've said we walked into the fields, we three;
 And there we really had a chance to flirt, 565
 This clerk and I. My foresight to assert,
 While we were talking I suggested he,
 If I wound up a widow, marry me.
 For certainly--I say it not to boast--
 Of good purveyance I have made the most 570
 In marriages and other things as well.
 A mouse's heart's not worth a leek in hell
 If he has just one hole for which to run,
 For if that one hole fails then all is done.
 "I made pretense that he enchanted me 575
 (My mother taught to me this subtlety);
 I dreamt of him all night, I also said,
 And dreamt he slew me as I lay in bed,

My bed as full of blood as it could be.
 'But still I hope that you'll bring good to me, 580
 For blood betokens gold, or so I'm taught.'
 And all was false, for I'd been dreaming naught,
 I only followed all my mother's lore
 (On that as well as on a few things more).
 "And now, sirs--let me see, what was I saying? 585
 Aha! by God, I have it, no more straying.
 "When my fourth husband lay upon the bier,
 I wept, of course, grief-stricken to appear,
 As wives must do (the custom of the land),
 And hid my face with the kerchief in my hand. 590
 But as I'd be provided with a mate,
 I wept but little, I can truly state.
 "Now as my husband to the church was borne
 That morning, neighbors went along to mourn,
 With our clerk Jenkin being one. As God 595
 May help me, when I saw him trod
 Behind the bier, I thought that he had feet
 And legs as fair as ever I could meet,
 And all my heart was then in his dear hold.
 He was, I think, then twenty winters old, 600
 And I was forty, telling you the truth;
 But I have always had a coltish tooth.
 Gap-toothed I was, and that was for the best;

The birthmark of Saint Venus I possessed.
 So help me God, I was a lusty one 605
 And fair and rich and young and full of fun;
 And truly, as my husbands said to me,
 I had the finest what's-it there could be.
 My feelings come from Venus and my heart
 Is full of Mars; for Venus did impart 610
 To me all of my lecherousness and lust,
 And Mars gave me a hard and sturdy crust.
 My ascendant sign was Taurus, Mars therein.
 Alas, alas, that ever love was sin!
 For I have always followed inclination 615
 By virtue of my taurine constellation;
 That made me so that I could not deny
 A good fellow my Venus chamber. I
 Still have the mark of Mars upon my face
 (And also in another, private place). 620
 As truly as the Lord is my salvation,
 My love was never by discrimination;
 I always catered to my appetite,
 Though he be short or long or black or white.
 I didn't care, just so he pleased me, 625
 How poor he was or what was his degree.
 "What shall I say except, when that month ended,
 This jolly Jenkin whom I thought so splendid

Had married me midst great solemnity.
 I gave him all the land and property 630
 That ever had been given me. And yet
 It was thereafter much to my regret;
 Of nothing that I wanted he would hear.
 By God, he struck me so once on the ear
 (Because I tore a page out of his book) 635
 That it went deaf from that one blow it took.
 But I was stubborn like a lioness
 And lashed him with my tongue without redress.
 And I'd go walking as I'd done before
 From house to house (though I would not, he swore), 640
 For which he oftentimes would start to preach
 To me. Old Roman stories he would teach,
 Like how Simplicius Gallus left his wife,
 Forsaking her the remainder of his life,
 Because he caught her looking out the door 645
 One day bareheaded--that and nothing more.
 "A Roman, too, he told me of by name
 Whose wife had gone out to a summer's game
 Without his knowledge; he forsook her too.
 And then he'd go and search his Bible through 650
 For a proverb of Ecclesiasticus
 Wherein he gives a firm command to us:
 No man should let his wife go roam about.

And after that he'd quote without a doubt:
 'Whoever builds his house by using fallows 655
 And goes and pricks his blind horse over fallows
 And lets his wife seek any shrine one hallows
 Is worthy to be hung upon the gallows!'

But all for naught, for I cared not a straw
 For all his proverbs or for his old saw. 660
 I'd not correct myself by his advices.
 I hate a man who tells me of my vices,
 And so do more of us, God knows, than I.
 So mad with me this made him he could die,
 But I would not forbear in any case. 665

"I'll tell you, by Saint Thomas, face-to-face
 The reason I tore from his book a page,
 Why he gave me a deaf ear in his rage.

"He had a book that he read night and day
 For his amusement. He would laugh away 670
 At this book, which he called 'Valerius
 And Theophrastus,' with its various
 Selections: there was once a clerk in Rome,
 A cardinal whose name was Saint Jerome,
 Who wrote a book against Jovinian; 675
 This book also contained Tertullian,
 Chrysippus, Trotula, and Heloise,
 An abbess who once lived near Paris; these

Along with parables of Solomon
 And Ovid's Art--the books were many a one, 680
 And all of them in this one volume bound.
 And day and night he always could be found,
 When he had leisure or was on vacation
 From any sort of worldly occupation,
 Reading some passage about wicked wives. 685
 Of them he knew more legends and more lives
 Than of the best of wives in Holy Writ.
 It is impossible, no doubting it,
 For any clerk to speak some good of wives
 Unless it deals with saints, their holy lives; 690
 No woman not a saint he's kindly to.
 Who painted, though, the lion, tell me who?
 By God, if women ever wrote some stories
 As clerks have done in all their oratories,
 They would have told of men more wickedness 695
 Than all the sons of Adam could redress.
 Children of Venus and of Mercury
 Have always worked in great polarity;
 For Mercury loves wisdom, science pure,
 While Venus loves good times, expenditure. 700
 Because their dispositions are divergent,
 One's descendant, the other one emergent;
 So Mercury, God knows, has desolation

When Venus has in Pisces exaltation,
 And Venus falls when Mercury is raised. 705
 So by no clerk is woman ever praised.
 The clerk, when he is old and cannot do
 For Venus any work worth his old shoe,
 Will in his dotage sit and write of how
 A woman cannot keep her marriage vow! 710
 "Now let me tell the reason why I say
 That I was beaten for a book, I pray.
 One night this Jenkin, who was my fifth sire,
 Was reading in his book beside the fire.
 He read of Eve, who by her wickedness 715
 Had brought all of mankind to wretchedness,
 The reason Jesus Christ himself was slain
 To bring us back with his heart's blood again.
 'Of women here expressly you may find
 That woman was the ruin of all mankind.' 720
 "He read to me how Samson lost his hair,
 Sheared by his mistress, sleeping unaware,
 And how by this he lost both of his eyes.
 "He read then to me--I will tell no lies--
 Of Dejanira, she who was to blame 725
 That Hercules had set himself aflame.
 "He left out not a whit about the woe
 That Socrates' two wives caused him to know;

When Xantippe poured piss upon his head,
The hapless man sat there as still as dead, 730
Then wiped his head and dared not to complain,
But said, 'Ere thunder stops, there comes a rain.'

"The tale of Pasiphaë, the queen of Crete,
For cursedness he thought was really sweet.
Fie on it! I'll not speak in any measure 735
About her horrid lust, her grisly pleasure.

"Of Clytemnestra, who for lechery
Brought to her husband death by treachery,
With greatest fervor then to me he read.

"He told me, too, the circumstance that led 740
Amphiaraus at Thebes to lose his life;
My husband had a legend of his wife
Eriphyle, who for a brooch of gold
Had gone in secret to the Greeks and told
Of where her husband had his hiding place, 745
For which he met at Thebes with sorry grace.

"He told of Livia, Lucilia too,
Who made their husbands die, albeit true
One was for love, the other was for hate.
For Livia, one evening very late, 750
Gave poison to her husband as a foe;
But lecherous Lucilia loved hers so
That, so he might forever of her think,

She gave him such a love potion to drink
 That he was dead before the morning sun. 755
 And therefore husbands always are undone.
 "He told me then how one Latumius
 Complained one day to his friend Arrius
 That growing in his garden was a tree
 On which, he said, his wives (who numbered three) 760
 Had hung themselves out of their hearts' despite.
 Said Arrius, 'Dear brother, if you might,
 Give me a cutting from that blessed tree,
 And in my garden planted shall it be.'
 "Of later date, of wives to me he read 765
 Who sometimes slew their husbands while in bed,
 Then with their lechers screwed the night away
 While flat upon the floor the bodies lay.
 Some others would drive nails into the brain
 While they were sleeping, that's how they were slain. 770
 Still others gave them poison in their drink.
 Of evil more than any heart can think
 About he read, and he knew more proverbs
 Than in this world there's growth of grass or herbs.
 'It's better that your dwelling place,' said he, 775
 'With a foul dragon or a lion be
 Than with a woman who is wont to chide.
 High on the roof it's better to abide

Than with an angry wife down in the house.
 Each wicked and contrary to her spouse, 780
 They hate all that their husbands love.' He'd say,
 'A woman casts all of her shame away
 When she casts off her smock.' He'd further tell,
 'A woman fair, if she's not chaste as well,
 Is like a golden ring in a sow's nose.' 785
 Who could have thought, whoever would suppose
 The woe and torment that was in my heart?
 "And when I saw that he would never part
 With reading in this curséd book all night,
 Three leaves all of a sudden I tore right 790
 Out of his book while he was reading it,
 Then with my fist I gave his cheek a hit
 And he fell backwards right into the fire.
 He jumped up like a lion full of ire
 And with his fist he hit me in the head, 795
 And I lay on the floor then as if dead.
 And when he saw how stilly there I lay,
 He was aghast and would have run away,
 But then at last out of my swoon I woke.
 'O false thief, have you slain me?' then I spoke. 800
 'You've murdered me for all my land, that's why,
 Yet let me kiss you now before I die.'
 "Then near he came and knelt down by my side,

Words between the Summoner and the Friar

The Friar laughed when he had heard all this.
He said, "If ever I have joy or bliss, 830
Your tale has quite a long preamble, dame!"
And when the Summoner heard the Friar exclaim,
The Summoner said, "Behold, by God's two arms!
See how a meddling friar ever swarms.
A fly and friar, good men, will fall into 835
Each dish, into all kinds of matter. You
Speak of preambulation? Amble or
Go trot, shut up, or go sit down! No more,
You're spoiling all our fun, the way you act."
The Friar said, "Summoner, is that a fact? 840
Now by my faith, I will, before I'm through,
Tell of a summoner such a tale or two
That everyone will laugh throughout the place."
"Now, Friar, damn your bloody eyes and face!"
The Summoner said. "And damn myself as well 845
If two tales, or if three, I do not tell
Of friars ere I come to Sittingbourne.
And with them I will cause your heart to mourn,
For I can see your patience now is gone."
Our Host said, "Peace! No more such goings on!" 850

He said, "Now let this woman tell her tale.
You act like people who are drunk with ale.
Now, madam, tell your tale, for that is best."
"I'm ready, sir," she said, "as you request,
With license from this worthy Friar here." 855
"Yes, dame," said he, "speak on, you'll have my ear."

The Wife of Bath's Tale

In the old days of King Arthur, today
Still praised by Britons in a special way,
This land was filled with fairies all about.
The elf-queen with her jolly little rout 860
In many a green field often danced. Indeed
This was the old belief of which I read;
I speak of many hundred years ago.
But now such elves no one is seeing. No,
For now the prayers and charitable desires 865
Of limiters and other holy friars
Who wander all the land, by every stream,
As thick as specks of dust in a sunbeam,
To bless our halls, chambers, kitchens, bowers,
Boroughs, cities, castles, lofty towers, 870
Villages, granaries, stables, dairies,

Have made sure that no longer are there fairies.
For where there once was wont to walk an elf
There's walking now the limiter himself,
Early and late, to give his auspices, 875
Say matins and his other offices,
Go all about the limit where he's found.
Now women may go safely all around;
In every bush and under every tree
He is the only incubus, and he 880
Won't do a thing except dishonor them.

It happened that King Arthur had with him
A bachelor in his house; this lusty liver,
While riding from his hawking by the river,
Once chanced upon, alone as she was born, 885
A maiden who was walking--soon forlorn,
For he, despite all that she did or said,
By force deprived her of her maidenhead.
Because of this, there was such clamoring
And such demand for justice to the king, 890
This knight was all but numbered with the dead
By course of law, and should have lost his head
(Which may have been the law in that milieu).
But then the queen and other ladies too
Prayed so long that the king might grant him grace, 895
King Arthur spared him for at least a space;

He left him to the queen to do her will,
To choose to save or order them to kill.
The queen then thanked the king with all her might,
And after this the queen spoke with the knight 900
When she saw opportunity one day.
"For you," she said, "things stand in such a way
You can't be sure if you're to live or not.
I'll grant you life if you can tell me what
It is that women most desire. Beware 905
The iron ax, your neckbone now to spare!
And if you cannot tell me right away,
I'll give you leave, a twelvemonth and a day,
That you may go to seek, that you might find
An answer that is of sufficient kind. 910
I want your word before you take a pace:
You'll bring yourself back to this very place."
This knight with sorrow sighed, was full of woe.
What could he do? Not as he pleased, and so
To go away was what he finally chose, 915
To come back when his year was at its close
With such an answer as God might provide.
He took his leave and forth he went to ride.
He sought in every house and every place
In hopes he could secure the promised grace 920
By learning that which women love the most.

But he did not arrive at any coast
 Where he could find two people on the matter
 Who might agree, if judging by their chatter.
 Some said that women all love riches best, 925
 While some said honor, others jolly zest,
 Some rich array; some said delights in bed,
 And many said to be a widow wed;
 Some others said that our hearts are most eased
 When we are flattered and when we are pleased-- 930
 And he was nigh the truth, if you ask me.
 A man shall win us best with flattery;
 With much attendance, charm, and application
 Can we be caught, whatever be our station.
 Some said our love to which we all aspire 935
 Is to be free to do as we desire,
 With no reproof of vice but with the rule
 That men should say we're wise, not one a fool.
 For truly there is none among us all
 Who, if a man should claw us on the gall, 940
 Won't kick for being told the truth; he who
 Does an assay will find out that it's true.
 But though we may have vices kept within,
 We like to be called wise and clean of sin.
 And some say that we take the most delight 945
 In keeping secrets, keeping our lips tight,

To just one purpose striving to adhere:
Not to betray one thing that we may hear.
That tale's not worth the handle of a rake.
We women can't keep secrets, heaven's sake! 950
Just look at Midas--would you hear the tale?

Ovid, among the trifles he'd detail,
Said Midas had long hair, for it appears
That on his head had grown two ass's ears.
This defect he had tried as best he might 955
To keep well as he could from others' sight,
And save his wife there was none who could tell.
He loved her much and trusted her as well
And prayed that not one living creature she
Would ever tell of his deformity. 960

She swore she'd not, though all the world to win,
Be guilty of such villainy and sin
And make her husband have so foul a name.
To tell it would as well bring her to shame.
But nonetheless she all but nearly died, 965
So long to have a secret she must hide.
She thought it swelled so sorely in her heart
Some word from out of her was bound to start;
And since she dared to tell it to no man,
Down close beside a marsh the lady ran-- 97
She had to rush, her heart was so afire.

970

Then like a bittern booming in the mire,
She put her mouth down to the water, saying,
"Water, make no sound, don't be betraying,
For I will tell this to no one but you. 975
My husband has long ass's ears--it's true!"
She thought, "My heart is cured now, it is out;
I couldn't keep it longer, there's no doubt."
So as you see, we may awhile abide
But it must out, no secret we can hide. 980
(As for the tale, if you would hear the rest,
Read Ovid, for that's where you'll learn it best.)
This knight of whom my tale is all about,
When seeing that he couldn't find it out--
That is to say, what women love the most-- 985
Felt in his breast already like a ghost;
For home he headed, he could not sojourn,
The day had come when homeward he must turn.
And in this woeful state he chanced to ride
While on his way along a forest side, 990
And there he saw upon the forest floor
Some ladies dancing, twenty-four or more.
Toward these dancers he was quick to turn
In hope that of some wisdom he might learn;
But all at once, before he'd gotten there, 995
The dancers disappeared, he knew not where.

He didn't see one creature bearing life,
Save sitting on the green one single wife.
An uglier creature no mind could devise.
To meet him this old wife was to arise, 1000
And said, "You can't get there from here, Sir Knight.
What are you seeking, by your faith? It might
Well be to your advantage, sir, to tell;
Old folks like me know many things, and well."
"Dear mother," said the knight, "it is for sure 1005
That I am dead if I cannot secure
What thing it is that women most desire.
If you could teach me, gladly I would hire."
"Give me your word here in my hand," said she,
"The next thing I request you'll do for me 1010
If it's a thing that lies within your might,
And I will tell you then before it's night."
The knight said, "Here's my oath, I guarantee."
"Then certainly I dare to boast," said she,
"Your life is safe, for I'll be standing by; 1015
Upon my life, the queen will say as I.
Let's see who is the proudest of them all,
With kerchief or with headdress standing tall,
Who shall deny that which I have to teach.
Now let us go, no need to make a speech." 1020
She whispered then a message in his ear

And bade him to be glad and have no fear.

When they had come to court, the knight declared,
"I've come back to the day, and to be spared,
For I am now prepared to give reply." 1025

The noble wives and maidens stood nearby,
And widows too (who were considered wise);
The queen sat like a justice in her guise.
All these had been assembled there to hear,
And then the knight was summoned to appear. 1030

Full silence was commanded in the court
So that the knight might openly report
The thing that worldly women love the best.
He stood not like a beast at one's behest
But quickly gave his answer loud and clear, 1035
With manly voice that all the court might hear.

"My liege and lady, generally," said he,
"What women most desire is sovereignty
Over their husbands or the ones they love,
To have the mastery, to be above. 1040

This is your most desire, though you may kill
Me if you wish. I'm here, do as you will."
No wife or maid or widow in the court
Saw fit to contradict the knight's report;
They all agreed, "He's worthy of his life." 1045
And with that word up started the old wife,

The one the knight had seen upon the green.
"Mercy," she said, "my sovereign lady queen!
Before your court departs, grant me my right.
It's I who taught this answer to the knight, 1050
For which he gave a solemn oath to me:
The first thing I request he'd do for me
If it's a thing that lies within his might.
Before the court I therefore pray, Sir Knight,"
She said, "that you will take me as your wife; 1055
For well you know that I have saved your life.
If I speak falsely, by your faith accuse me."
The knight replied, "Alas, how woes abuse me!
I know I made the promise you've expressed.
For love of God, please choose a new request. 1060
Take all my goods and let my body go."
"No, damn us both then!" she replied. "For though
I may be ugly, elderly, and poor,
I'd give all of the metal and the ore
That lies beneath the earth and lies above 1065
If only I could be your wife and love."
"My love?" he said. "No, rather my damnation!
Alas! that there is any of my nation
Who ever could so foully be disgraced."
But all for naught, the end was that he faced 1070
Constrainment, for he now would have to wed

And take his gray old wife with him to bed.

Now there are some men who might say perhaps

That it's my negligence or else a lapse

That I don't tell you of the joyous way 1075

In which the feast took place that very day.

I'll answer briefly should the question fall:

There wasn't any joy or feast at all,

Just lots of sorrow, things went grievously.

He married her that morning privately, 1080

Then all that day he hid just like an owl,

So woeful, for his wife looked really foul.

Great was the woe the knight had in his head

When with his wife he'd been brought to the bed;

He tossed and then he turned both to and fro. 1085

His old wife lay there smiling at him, though,

And said, "Dear husband, benedicite!

Acts every knight toward his wife this way?

Is this the law of great King Arthur's house?

Is every knight of his so distant? Spouse, 1090

I am your own true love and I'm your wife

And I'm the one as well who saved your life,

And I have never done you wrong or spite.

Why do you treat me so on our first night?

You act just like a man who's lost his wit. 1095

What is my guilt? For God's love, tell me it,

And it shall be amended if I may."

"Amended?" asked the knight. "Whatever way?

There's no way it could ever be amended.

You are so old and loathsome--and descended, 1100

To add to that, from such a lowly kind--

No wonder that I toss and turn and wind.

I wish to God my heart would burst, no less!"

"Is this," she said, "the cause of your distress?"

"Why, yes," said he, "and is there any wonder?" 1105

She said, "I could amend the stress you're under,

If you desire, within the next three days,

If you'll treat me more kindly in your ways.

"But when you talk about gentility

Like old wealth handed down a family tree, 1110

That this is what makes of you gentlemen,

Such arrogance I judge not worth a hen.

Take him who's always virtuous in his acts

In public and in private, who exacts

Of himself all the noble deeds he can, 1115

And there you'll find the greatest gentleman.

Christ wills we claim nobility from him,

Not from our elders or the wealth of them;

For though they give us all their heritage

And we claim noble birth by parentage, 1120

They can't bequeath--all else theirs for the giving--

To one of us the virtuous way of living
That made the nobles they were known to be,
The way they bade us live in like degree.

"How well the poet wise, the Florentine 1125
Named Dante, speaks about just what I mean,
And this is how he rhymes it in his story:
'Of men who climb their family trees for glory,
Few will excel, for it is by God's grace
We gain nobility and not by race.' 1130

No, from our elders all that we can claim
Are temporal things such as may hurt and maim.

"All know as I, that if gentility
Were something that was planted naturally
Through all a certain lineage down the line, 1135
In private and in public they'd be fine
And noble people doing what is nice,
Completely free of villainy and vice.

"Take fire into the darkest house or hut
Between here and Mount Caucasus, then shut 1140
The doors, and all men leave and not return;
That fire will still remain as if the burn
Were being watched by twenty thousand souls.
Its function will not cease, its nature holds,
On peril of my life, until it dies. 1145

"Gentility, you then should realize,

Is not akin to things like property;
For people act with much variety,
Not like the fire that always is the same.
God knows that men may often find, for shame, 1150
A lord's son who's involved in villainy.
Who prides himself to have gentility
Because it happens he's of noble birth,
With elders virtuous, of noble worth,
But never tries to do a noble deed 1155
Nor follow in his dead ancestors' lead,
Is not a noble, be he duke or earl;
For bad and sinful deeds just make a churl.
Sir, your gentility is but the fame
Of your ancestors, who earned their good name 1160
With qualities quite foreign to your own.
Gentility can come from God alone,
So true gentility's a thing of grace,
Not something that's bequeathed by rank or place.
"For nobleness, as says Valerius, 1165
Consider Tullius Hostilius:
Though poor, he rose to noble heights. Look in
Boethius or Seneca, and when
You do, don't doubt the truth of what you read:
The noble is the man of noble deed. 1170
And so, dear husband, thus I will conclude:

If it's true my ancestors were so rude,
Yet may the Lord, as I do hope, grant me
The grace to live my life most virtuously;
For I'm a noble when I so begin 1175
To live in virtue and avoid sin.

"For poverty you scold me. By your leave,
The God on high, in whom we both believe,
Chose willfully to live a poor man's life;
And surely every man, maiden, or wife 1180
Can understand that Jesus, heaven's King,
Would not choose sinful living. It's a thing
Of honor to be poor without despair,
As Seneca and other clerks declare.

To be poor yet contented, I assert, 1185
Is to be rich, though having not a shirt.
The one who covets is the poorer man,
For he would have that which he never can;
But he who doesn't have and doesn't crave
Is rich, though you may hold him but a knave. 1190

True poverty's been sung of properly;
As Juvenal said of it, 'Merrily
The poor man, as he goes upon his way,
In front of every thief can sing and play.'
It is a hateful good and, as I guess, 1195
A great promoter of industriousness.

A source of greater wisdom it can be
For one who learns to bear it patiently.
Though it seem wearisome, poverty is
Possession none will take from you as his. 1200

Poverty often makes a fellow know
Himself as well as God when he is low.
Poverty is an eyeglass, I contend,
Through which a man can see a truthful friend.
I bring no harm at all to you, therefore 1205
Do not reprove me, sire, for being poor.

"For being old you've also fussed at me;
Yet surely, sire, though no authority
Were in a book, you gentlemen select
Say men should treat an elder with respect 1210
And call him father, by your courtesy.
I think I could find authors who agree.

"If I am old and ugly, as you've said,
Of cuckoldry you needn't have a dread;
For filthiness and age, as I may thrive, 1215
Are guards that keep one's chastity alive.
But nonetheless, since I know your delight,
I shall fulfill your worldly appetite.

"Choose now," she said, "one of these two: that I
Be old and ugly till the day I die, 1220
And be to you a true and humble wife,

One never to displease you all your life;
 Or if you'd rather, have me young and fair,
 And take your chance on those who will repair
 To your house now and then because of me 1225
 (Or to some other place, it may well be).
 Choose for yourself the one you'd rather try."
 The knight gave it some thought, then gave a sigh,
 And finally answered as you are to hear:
 "My lady and my love and wife so dear, 1230
 I leave to your wise governance the measure;
 You choose which one would give the fullest pleasure
 And honor to you, and to me as well.
 I don't care which you do, you best can tell.
 What you desire is good enough for me." 1235
 "You've given me," she said, "the mastery?
 The choice is mine and all's at my behest?"
 "Yes, surely, wife," said he, "I think it best."
 "Then kiss me, we'll no longer fight," she said,
 "For you've my oath that I'll be both instead-- 1240
 That is to say, I'll be both good and fair.
 I pray to God I die in mad despair
 Unless I am to you as good and true
 As any wife since this old world was new.
 Come dawn, if I'm not as fair to be seen 1245
 As any lady, empress, any queen

Who ever lived between the east and west,
Then take my life or do whatever's best.
Lift up the curtains now, see how it is."

And when the knight had truly seen all this, 1250
How she was young and fair in all her charms,
In utter joy he took her in his arms;
His heart was bathing in a bath of bliss,
A thousand kisses he began to kiss,
And she obeyed in each and every way, 1255
Whatever was his pleasure or his play.

And so they lived, till their lives' very end,
In perfect joy. And may Christ Jesus send
Us husbands meek and young and fresh abed,
And then the grace to outlive those we wed; 1260
I also pray that Jesus shorten lives
Of those who won't be governed by their wives;
As for old niggards angered by expense,
God send them soon a mighty pestilence!

The Pardoner's Tale -- Introduction

Our Host began to swear as if gone mad.
"Harrow," said he, "by nails and blood! How bad,
How false a judge, how false a churl! Demise

As shameful as the heart may so devise 290
Come to these judges and their advocates!
This simple maiden's slain, as he relates,
She for her beauty paid, alas, too dearly!
I've always said what men may see so clearly,
That gifts of Fortune and of Nature bring 295
About the death of many a living thing.
Her beauty was her death, I dare to say.
She's slain, alas, in such a piteous way!
Both gifts of which I speak, as I maintain,
Have often brought men more to harm than gain. 300
But truthfully, my only master dear,
This is a tale that's pitiful to hear.
It can't be helped, let's move along our way.
God save your noble body, that I pray,
Your urinals and every chamber pot, 305
Each galen and hippocrates you've got,
Each flask full of the medicine you carry--
God bless them, and Our Lady, too, Saint Mary!
"As I may thrive, you are a proper man
And, by Saint Ronyan, like a prelate! Can 310
I say it right? I can't speak learnedly
But well I know you've caused this heart in me
To grieve till I am near a cardiac.
By corpus bones! if remedy I lack,

And then show all my bulls, not only some.
 My patent with the bishop's seal I show
 To help safeguard my person as I go,
 That no man be so bold, though priest or clerk,
 As to obstruct me in Christ's holy work. 340
 And after that my tales I start to tell,
 And bulls of popes, of cardinals as well,
 Of patriarchs and bishops, I display.
 A few words in the Latin tongue I say
 To add a little spice to what I preach 345
 And stir men to devotion as I teach.
 "And then I show to them like precious stones
 My long glass cases crammed with rags and bones,
 For these are relics (so they think). And set
 In metal I've a shoulderbone I let 350
 Them see, from the sheep of a holy Jew.
 'Good men,' say I, 'pay heed to me. When you
 Shall take this bone and wash it in a well,
 If cow or calf or sheep or ox should swell
 Because it ate a worm or it's been stung, 355
 Take water from that well and wash its tongue
 And right away it's whole. And furthermore,
 From pox and scab and every other sore
 Shall every sheep be whole that of this well
 Drinks but a draught. Pay heed to what I tell. 360

If every farmer owning stock will go
Each week before the cock's had time to crow
And, fasting, from this well will take a drink
(This Jew once taught our elders so to think),
His beasts will be assured of progeny. 365
And, sirs, it also heals of jealousy;
For though a man by jealousy be wroth,
Use water from this well to make his broth
And nevermore shall he mistrust his wife,
Despite the truth about her sinful life, 370
With even priests as lovers, two or three.
"Here also is a mitten you may see.
Whose hand goes in this mitten will thereby
Find that his grain will greatly multiply
When he has sown, whether it's wheat or oats 375
(Provided he has offered pence or groats).
"Good men and women, of one thing I warn:
If in this church there's any fellow born
Who's done some horrid sin and who for shame
Does not dare to be shriven for the same, 380
Or any woman young or elderly
Who's done her husband wrong by cuckoldry,
Such folk shall have no power and no grace
To offer to my relics in this place.
But whoso finds himself without such blame, 385

Let him come forth and offer in God's name
And I'll absolve him by authority
That has by papal bull been granted me.'
 "And with this trick I've won each year about
A hundred marks since first I started out. 390
I stand there in my pulpit like a clerk,
These ignorants sit down, and right to work
I go, I preach as you have heard before
And tell a hundred silly stories more.
And I take pains to get my neck to stretch, 395
To nod both east and west to every wretch
Just like a dove that's sitting on the barn.
My tongue and hands go spinning such a yarn
That it's a joy to see my craftiness.
Of avarice and all such cursedness 400
I always preach, to make them ever free
To give their pence (and give only to me);
For my concern is only with collection
And not with any sin that needs correction.
Once buried, they don't mean a thing to me 405
Though their souls pick blackberries. Certainly
Many a sermon seemingly well meant
Has often come from less than good intent:
To please the folks, to offer flattery,
To get promoted by hypocrisy, 410

Some for vainglory, some for simple hate.
For if I dare not otherwise debate,
My tongue in preaching will a sting impart
That no man can escape, he'll feel the smart
And falsely be defamed if ever he 415
Has done wrong to my brethren or to me;
For though I may not call him by his name,
All men shall be aware that he's the same
By signs or by what chances may permit.
Thus folks who wrong us I repay, I spit 420
My venom under holiness's hue,
That truthful I may seem and holy too.
"But briefly my intent I'll summarize:
It's greed alone that makes me sermonize.
And so my theme is yet and ever was: 425
Radix malorum est Cupiditas.
Yes, I myself can preach against the vice
Of avarice that is my own device;
For though I'm guilty of that very sin,
These other folks I'm able still to win 430
From avarice and sorely they'll repent.
But that is not my principal intent,
I only preach to satisfy my greed.
Enough of that, for more there's not a need.
"I tell them many moral tales I know, 435

Old stories set in times of long ago;
The ignorant find in these tales much pleasure,
Such things as they can well repeat and treasure.
Do you believe, as long as I can preach,
Acquiring gold and silver while I teach, 440
That willfully I'd live in poverty?
It's never crossed my mind, quite truthfully!
No, I will preach and beg in sundry lands
And never will I labor with my hands
Or take up basketweaving for a living. 445
I won't be begging idly, they'll be giving.
Apostles I'll not try to counterfeit;
I'll have my money, wool, and food, though it
Be from some page whose poverty is dire
Or from the poorest widow in the shire; 450
Although her kids be starving, I'll be fine,
For I will drink the liquor of the vine
And have a jolly wench in every town.
But listen, lords, we'll set that matter down,
Your pleasure is that I should tell a tale. 455
Now that I've had my draught of corny ale,
By God, I hope to tell you something striking
That with good reason will be to your liking.
Though I'm a man of vices through and through,
I still can tell a moral tale to you, 460

One that I preach to bring the money in.
Now hold your peace, my tale I will begin."

The Pardoner's Tale

In Flanders some time back there was a troop
Of youths who were a folly-loving group,
What with their parties, gambling, brothels, bars, 465
Where with their harps and lutes and their guitars
They'd dance and play at dice both day and night.
They also ate and drank beyond their might,
So that they gave the devil sacrifice
Within the devil's temple by the vice 470
Of gluttony, which is abomination.
Their oaths were great, so worthy of damnation
It was a grisly thing to hear them swear;
The body of our blessed Lord they'd tear
As if the Jews had not torn him enough. 475
Each laughed at every other's sinful stuff
And right away came dancing girls to boot,
All neat and trim, and young girls selling fruit,
Singers with harps, then bawds, girls selling cake--
All agents of the devil, no mistake, 480
All kindlers of the fire of lechery

That goes so hand in hand with gluttony.
My witness is God's Holy Writ, no less,
That lechery's in wine and drunkenness.

Behold how drunken Lot unnaturally 485
Lay with his daughters both, unwittingly,
So drunk he was unconscious of the deed.

King Herod, about whom one well should read,
When at a feast much wine he had been swilling,
Gave orders at the table for the killing 490
Of John the Baptist, guiltless as could be.

Seneca says good things undoubtedly;
He said that not one difference could he find
Between a man who's gone out of his mind
And one who's drunk (except that madness will, 495
In one whose nature is already ill,
Be longer lasting than will drunkenness).

O gluttony, so full of cursedness!
O first cause of our trial and tribulation,
O origin of all our souls' damnation 500
Till we were purchased back by blood of Christ!
How dearly, I'll say briefly, it was priced,
How much was paid for this depravity!
Corrupt was all the world with gluttony.

Our father Adam and his wife also 505
From Paradise to labor and to woe

Were driven by that vice, and do not doubt it.
While Adam fasted, as I read about it,
He was in Paradise, but then when he
Ate of the fruit forbidden on the tree 510
He was at once cast out to woe and pain.
O gluttony, with reason we complain!
O if one knew how many a malady
Must follow such excess and gluttony,
To eat with moderation he'd be able 515
Whenever he is sitting at his table.
Alas! the short throat and so tender mouth
Make men both east and west, both north and south,
In water, earth, and air, work to produce
Fine meat and beverage for a glutton's use! 520
How well this matter, O Saint Paul, you treat:
"Meat's for the belly, belly's for the meat,
God shall destroy both"--so Paul is heard.
Alas! for by my faith it is a word
So foul to have to say (but foul's the deed) 525
That so much white and red a man should need
He makes his throat his privy hole, no less,
Because of such accurst excessiveness.
The Apostle has with so much pity mourned:
"So many walk that way whom I have warned-- 530
I say this weeping, with piteous voice--

Foes of the cross of Christ, if that's their choice,
For which the end is death. Their god's the belly."
O gut, O bag, O belly foul and smelly,
So full of dung and of corruption found! 535
From either end of you foul is the sound.
By what great cost and labor you have dined!
These cooks, how they must pound and strain and grind,
And transform substance into accident,
Until your glutton's appetite is spent! 540
From hard bones they knock marrow for one's taste,
For there is nothing they let go to waste
That's soft and sweet and might the gullet suit.
With spices of the leaf, the bark and root,
His sauces will be made for such delight 545
He'll wind up with a whole new appetite.
But he who lets such pleasures so entice
Is dead while he is living in such vice.
A lecherous thing is wine, and drunkenness
Is full of striving and of wretchedness. 550
O drunken man, disfigured is your face,
Sour your breath, you're foul to the embrace!
And through your drunken nose it seems the sound
Is "Samson, Samson" that you would expound,
Though, God knows, Samson never drank of wine. 555
You fall as if you were a stricken swine;

Your tongue is lost, your self-respect you gave
 To drunkenness, which is the very grave
 Of man's discretion and intelligence.
 When drink in him has taken dominance 560
 One cannot keep a secret, truly said.
 So keep yourself away from white and red,
 Especially from Lepe white wine bought
 In Cheapside or Fish Street. This wine that's brought
 From Spain is known to creep up subtly 565
 In other wines grown in proximity,
 From which there then arise such heady fumes
 That when a man three draughts of it consumes,
 Though he thinks he's in Cheapside at his home,
 He'll find to Lepe, Spain, he's come to roam 570
 And not off to Bordeaux or La Rochelle--
 And "Samson, Samson" he'll be saying well.
 But listen, lords, to this one word, I pray:
 All of the sovereign actions, I daresay,
 All victories in God's Old Testament, 575
 Through grace of him who is omnipotent,
 Were all achieved in abstinence and prayer.
 Look in the Bible and you'll learn it there.
 Behold Attila: that great warrior died
 While in a shameful sleep, unglorified, 580
 His nostrils pouring blood, a drunken sot.

A captain's life should be a sober lot.
 You should above all else consider well
 The wise commandment given Lemuel
 (Not Samuel but Lemuel I said), 585
 Expressly in the Bible to be read,
 On serving wine to justices at court.
 That should suffice, no more need I report.
 On gluttony I've said a thing or two,
 And now from gambling I'd prohibit you. 590
 For gambling is the source of every lie,
 Of all deceit that curses men to die.
 It's blasphemy of Christ, manslaughter, waste
 Of time and property. To be disgraced,
 That's what it is, dishonorable, defaming, 595
 To be held one who takes to common gaming.
 The higher one might be in social station
 The more he'll be accused of depravation;
 If there's a prince who gambles constantly,
 On all his governance and policy 600
 The judgment of opinion will be such
 His reputation's bound to suffer much.
 A wise ambassador named Stillbon, sent
 From Sparta, in great pomp to Corinth went
 To arrange for an alliance. When he came, 605
 It happened that by chance he found, for shame,

That all the greatest who were of that land
 Were at the game of hazard, dice in hand.
 With that, as soon as Stillbon could get started,
 Back home to his own country he departed, 610
 And said, "In Corinth I'll not lose my name
 Nor take upon myself so great a shame,
 I'll not ally you with such hazarders.
 Send to them other wise ambassadors,
 For on my oath I'd perish in defiance 615
 Before I'd make for you such an alliance.
 For you, with honors that have been so glorious,
 Shall not ally with gamblers so notorious--
 Not by my will or treaty anyway."
 That's what this wise philosopher had to say. 620
 At King Demetrius now take a look:
 Parthia's king, so we're told in the book,
 Sent him in scorn a pair of golden dice;
 For playing hazard long had been his vice,
 For which Demetrius's fame and glory 625
 To Parthia's king were a worthless story.
 Cannot lords find some other forms of play
 Honest enough to pass the time of day?
 And now on oaths, when false or indiscreet,
 A word or two, such as the old books treat. 630
 Strong swearing is an awful thing to do

And worse yet when you swear what isn't true.
The Lord on high forbade we swear at all,
As Matthew tells. Especially recall
What holy Jeremiah says about it: 635
"Speak truth, not lies, in oaths, that none should doubt it;
Swear but for justice and for righteousness."
But idle swearing is a cursedness.
Behold and see in that first table of
The worthy laws God gave us from above: 640
The second of these laws is very plain
To say, "Thou shalt not take my name in vain."
The Lord forbids such swearing sooner, then,
Than homicide and many a curséd sin.
I tell it in the order that it stands-- 645
As he who God's commandments understands
Is well aware, the second one is that.
And furthermore I now will tell you flat
That vengeance on his house will be unsparing
When one engages in such awful swearing 650
As "By God's precious heart," and "By his nails,"
And "By the blood of Christ that is in Hales,
My chance is seven, yours is five and three!"
"By God's arms, if you play deceitfully
You'll see how well your heart this dagger hones!" 655
This is the fruit of those two curséd bones:

Forswearing, ire, deceit, and homicide.
So for the love of Christ who for us died,
Leave off your oaths, the small ones and the great.
Now, sirs, my tale I further will relate. 660
 These three young revelers of whom I tell
Much earlier than nine by any bell
Were sitting in a tavern and were drinking.
And as they sat, they heard a bell go clinking:
A corpse was being carried to its grave. 665
Then one of them called over to his knave
And said, "Go quickly, ask without delay
What corpse that is that's passing by the way,
And see that you report his name correctly."
 "No need for that," the boy replied directly, 670
"Two hours before you came here, sir, they told
Me who he was. The fellow was an old
Comrade of yours, one who was slain at night
With suddenness. While he sat drunk, upright,
There came a stealthy thief that's known as Death, 675
Throughout this country robbing folks of breath;
And with his spear he smote his heart in two,
Then went his way without a word. And through
This plague he's slain a thousand. Master, ere
You come into his presence anywhere, 680
I think that it is very necessary

That you beware of such an adversary.
 To meet him, sire, be ready evermore.
 My mother taught me this. I say no more."
 "By Saint Mary," the tavern keeper said, 685
 "The child is right! This year he's left for dead
 In just one town (a mile from here, I'd gauge)
 Both man and woman, child and knave and page--
 I think his habitation must be there.
 It would be very wise, then, to beware 690
 Lest he should do a fellow a dishonor."
 "Yea, by God's arms!" declared this rioter,
 "Is he so very perilous to meet?
 I'll seek him in the by-ways and the street,
 I vow it by the worthy bones of God! 695
 My friends, are we not three peas in a pod?
 Let's each hold up a hand to one another,
 Each of us will become the others' brother.
 With this false traitor Death we'll do away;
 The slayer of so many we shall slay 700
 Before it's night, by God's sweet dignity!"
 Together then they made their pledge, the three,
 To live and die each of them for the others
 As if they'd been born naturally as brothers.
 Then up they jumped in drunken agitation 705
 And headed down the road, their destination

The village they had just been told about.
And many a grisly oath they shouted out
And tore Christ's blessed body limb from limb--
Death shall be dead if they get hold of him! 710
When they had gone not fully half a mile,
And were about to step across a stile,
They met a poor old man. Upon their meeting,
The old man very meekly gave them greeting:
"My lords," he said, "may God watch over you." 715
To which the proudest of this rowdy crew
Replied, "What's that, you churl of sorry grace?
Why are you all wrapped up except your face?
Why live to be so ancient? Tell us why!"
The old man looked the fellow in the eye 720
And said, "Because I'd never find a man,
Were I to walk as far as Hindustan,
In any town or village, who would give
His youth for my old age. So I must live,
I'm destined to remain an old man still, 725
As long a time as it may be God's will.
And Death, alas! won't take my life, and so
I walk, a restless wretch, and as I go
I knock with this my staff early and late
Upon the ground, which is my mother's gate, 730
And say, 'Beloved Mother, let me in!

Look how I vanish, flesh and blood and skin!
 Alas! when will these old bones be at rest?
 How gladly, Mother, I'd exchange my chest,
 Which has so long a time been on my shelf, 735
 For haircloth in which I could wrap myself!
 And yet she won't allow me such a grace,
 That's why so pale and withered is my face.
 "But, sirs, you show a lack of courtesy
 To speak to an old man so brutishly, 740
 Unless he has trespassed in word or deed.
 In Holy Writ you may yourself well read:
 'Before an old man with a hoary head
 You should arise.' I counsel as it's said,
 No harm to an old fellow you should do, 745
 No more than you would have men do to you
 When in old age, should you so long abide.
 Now God be with you where you go or ride,
 I must go on to where I have to go."
 "No, you old churl, by God, that isn't so!" 750
 The gambler said at once. "You won't be gone
 So lightly on your way, no, by Saint John!
 What of that traitor Death were you just saying?
 Our friends in all this country he is slaying.
 I promise you--since you're a spy of his-- 755
 You'll pay if you don't tell us where he is,

By God and by the holy sacrament!
For truly you and he have one intent,
To kill us who are young, you thief and liar!"
 "Now, sirs," said he, "if you have such desire 760
To find Death, then turn up this crooked way--
I left him in that grove. I truly say,
Beneath a tree he was; there he'll abide,
Your boasting will not make him run and hide.
See yonder oak? He's there, as you will find. 765
God save you, as he ransomed all mankind,
And mend you!" So replied this aged man.
And each of these three revelers then ran
Until he reached the tree, and there they found
Some florins, coined of gold and fine and round-- 770
Well nigh eight bushels, that was their impression.
To seek Death was no longer their obsession,
As each of them, so gladdened by the sight
Of golden florins, all so fair and bright,
Sat down beside the hoard that they had found. 775
The worst of them was first to speak a sound.
 He said, "My brothers, heed what I've to say,
My wits are keen although I joke and play.
It's Fortune that has given us this treasure
That we may live our lives in mirth and pleasure. 780
As easy as it comes we'll spend it. Aye!

Who would have thought this very morning, by
 God's dignity, we'd have so fair a grace?
 And if this gold be carried from this place
 Home to my house, or else to yours--be it 785
 Well understood, it's our gold every bit--
 Then we'll be in a high and happy way.
 But truly it cannot be done by day,
 We'd be accused of brazen thievery
 And for our gold they'd hang us from a tree. 790
 This treasure we must carry home by night,
 As cleverly and slyly as we might.
 So I advise that lots among us all
 Be drawn, and let's see where the lot will fall;
 And he who draws the lot then cheerfully 795
 Shall run to town, and do that speedily,
 To bring some bread and wine back on the sly,
 While two of us shall carefully stand by
 To guard this treasure. If he doesn't tarry,
 When it is night this treasure we will carry 800
 To where we all agree it would be best."
 In that one's fist were lots held for the rest,
 He bade them draw to see where it would fall.
 It fell upon the youngest of them all,
 Who started off to town immediately. 805
 No sooner had he left their company

When that one of those staying told the other,
"Now you know well that you are my sworn brother;
Here's something that will profit you to know.
Our friend back into town has had to go, 810
And here is gold in plentiful degree
That is to be divided by us three.
But nonetheless, if I could work it so
Between us two we split it when we go,
Would I have not done you a friendly turn?" 815
 "But how?" the other answered with concern.
"For he will know the gold is with us two.
What shall we say to him? What shall we do?"
 "Shall it be kept our secret?" said the first.
"Then in a few short words you shall be versed 820
In what we'll do to bring it all about."
 "I grant it," said the other, "do not doubt,
You have my oath, I'll not be false to you."
 "Now," said the first, "you know that we are two,
And two of us are stronger than is one. 825
As soon as he sits down, as if for fun
Arise as though you'd have with him some play,
Then in both sides I'll stab him right away
While you and he are struggling as in game.
And with your dagger see you do the same. 830
Then all this gold, dear friend, when we are through

Shall be divided up twixt me and you;
The two of us can then our lusts fulfill
And play at dice as often as we will."
So these two rogues agreed they would betray 835
And slay the third, as you have heard me say.
 Meanwhile the youngest, who had gone to town,
In his mind's eye saw rolling up and down
The beauty of those florins new and bright.
"O Lord," said he, "if only that I might 840
Have all this treasure for myself alone!
There is no man who lives beneath God's throne
Who could then live as I, so merrily!"
And then at last hell's fiend, our enemy,
Put in his mind that poison he should buy 845
And give to his two mates and let them die.
The fiend had found this man's life so profane
He used his leave to bring the man to pain,
For it was plainly this man's full intent
To slay them both and never to repent. 850
So forth he went--no longer would he tarry--
Into the town to an apothecary,
Whom he asked that he sell to him if willing
Some poison: he had rats that needed killing,
And in his yard a polecat, so he said, 855
Was reason why his capons now were dead,

And he'd wreak eager vengeance if he might
 On vermin that were ruining him by night.
 The apothecary answered, "Let me tell you,
 So help me God, here's something I will sell you, 860
 And there is not a creature anywhere
 That eats or drinks this mixture I prepare,
 Though in amount as little as a kernel,
 That will not go at once to the eternal--
 Yea, he will die, and in a shorter while 865
 Than it would take you, sir, to walk a mile,
 This poison is so strong and virulent."
 With this in hand, this curséd fellow went
 (He took it in a box), and then he ran
 Up the adjoining street to see a man 870
 Who loaned him three large bottles. Of the three,
 He poured his poison into two, for he
 Would keep the third one clean for his own drinking.
 "I'll be at work all night," so he was thinking,
 "To carry all the gold out from that place." 875
 And when this ne'er do well of such disgrace
 Had filled with wine three bottles to the brim,
 He went back to his mates awaiting him.
 What need is there to preach about it more?
 For just as they had planned his death before, 880
 So by them he was slain right on the spot.

Then that one, when they'd carried out the plot,
 Said, "Let us sit and drink and make us merry,
 And afterwards his body we will bury."
 It happened then by chance that with that word 885
 He took the bottle poisoned by the third
 And drank from it, then gave some to his mate,
 And both of them met promptly with their fate.
 But surely Avicenna, I suppose,
 Did not include in all his canon's prose 890
 More wondrous symptoms of a poisoned state
 Than these two wretches suffered in their fate.
 So these two killers met with homicide,
 And also their false poisoner has died.
 O curséd sin, so full of wretchedness! 895
 O homicidal traitors! Wickedness!
 O gluttony! O gambling! Lechery!
 You blasphemers of Christ with villainy,
 With mighty oaths from habit and from pride!
 Alas, mankind, how can it so betide 900
 That to the Lord who made you, your Creator,
 Who with his dear heart's blood redeemed you later,
 You are so false and so unkind? Alas!
 Now, good men, God forgive you your trespass
 And guard you from the sin of avarice. 905
 My holy pardon saves you from all this;

If you will offer nobles, sterlings, rings,
 Some brooches, spoons or other silver things,
 Just bow your head beneath this holy bull.
 Come up, you wives, and offer of your wool; 910
 Your name I'll here enroll, then you may know
 Into the bliss of heaven you will go.
 My high power will absolve you, to be sure,
 If you will give. You'll be as clean and pure
 As when first born.--And, sirs, that's how I preach. 915
 Now Christ, physician to the soul of each
 Of us, grant you his pardon to receive,
 For that is best, and you I'll not deceive.
 But, sirs, one thing that slipped my memory when
 I spoke my tale: I've relics, pardons in 920
 My pouch, in England none could finer be,
 The pope's own hand entrusted them to me.
 If anyone devoutly has resolved
 To make a gift and by me be absolved,
 Come forth at once and meekly on your knees 925
 Receive my pardon. Or, if you so please,
 Take for yourself a pardon as you go--
 One fresh and new at every town--just so
 You offer to me, all the while we ride,
 Some pence and nobles that are bonafide. 930
 It is an honor for each one who's here

To have a competent pardoner near
 To absolve you in the country as you ride,
 In view of all the things that may betide.
 There may be one (if not two) on the trek 935
 Who falls down off his horse and breaks his neck;
 Look what security it is for all
 That in your fellowship I chanced to fall,
 Who can absolve you all from first to last
 Before your soul has from your body passed. 940
 Let me advise our Host here to begin,
 For he's the one enveloped most in sin.
 Come forth, Sir Host, and offer first right now,
 And kiss then each and every relic. How?
 For just a groat! Unbuckle now your purse." 945
 "Nay, nay," said he, "then I would have Christ's curse!
 It shall not be, if I should live in bliss!
 Your breeches, I am sure, you'd have me kiss
 And swear they were the relic of a saint,
 Though of your foul behind they bear the taint. 950
 But by the cross that Saint Helena found,
 Your balls I'd like to have my hand around
 Instead of relics or a reliquary!
 Let's cut them off, I'll even help to carry,
 We'll find a hog, enshrine them in his turd." 955
 The Pardoner then answered not a word,

He was too mad to have a thing to say.

"Now," said our Host, "I will no longer play

This game with you, or any angry man."

And right away the worthy Knight began,

960

When he saw all were laughing at the spat:

"Now quite enough, let's have no more of that!

Sir Pardoner, be merry, of good cheer.

And you, Sir Host, who are to me so dear,

I pray that you will kiss the Pardoner;

965

And, Pardoner, I pray, draw near him, sir,

And as we did now let us laugh and play."

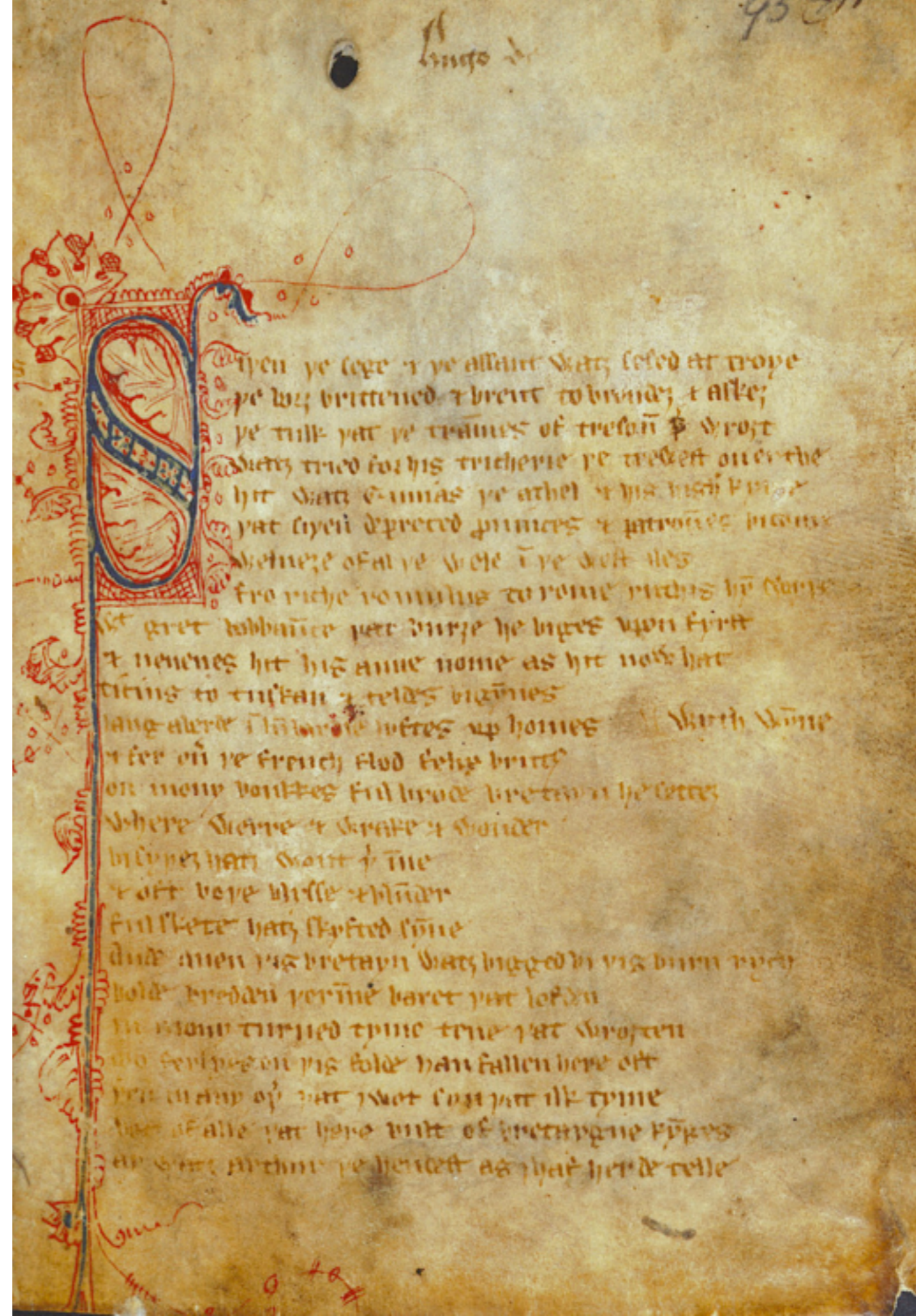
They kissed at once and rode along their way.

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SIR GAWAIN...

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is an anonymous poem of Middle English dating from the 14th century. It is the most notable of the Arthurian chivalric romances, recounting the exploits of King Arthur, Merlin, Lancelot, and the associated characters from Camelot. Its alliterative verse uses a “bob and wheel” rhyme at the end of its stanzas, a notable feature of Middle English poetry.



Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

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The following are excerpts from the full translation. The comments in bold have been added by KMHS. “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight” is by an unknown author who most scholars believe was a contemporary of Chaucer’s. As the story begins, King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table are celebrating the Christmas season when an unexpected guest arrives and issues a challenge.

3
This king lay at Camelot nigh on Christmas
with many lovely lords, of leaders the best, reckoning of the
Round Table all the rich brethren, with right ripe revel and
reckless mirth.

There tourneyed tykes by times full many,
jousted full jollily these gentle knights,
then carried to court, their carols to make.
For there the feast was alike full fifteen days,
with all the meat and mirth men could devise: such clamour
and glee glorious to hear,
dear din in the daylight, dancing of nights;

all was happiness high in halls and chambers
with lords and ladies, as liked them all best.

With all that’s well in the world were they together, the
knights best known under the Christ Himself, and the
loveliest ladies that ever life honoured, and he the comeliest
king that the court rules.

For all were fair folk and in their first age
still,

the happiest under heaven, king noblest in his will;
that it were hard to reckon so hardy a host on hill.

4

While New Year was so young it was new come in, that day
double on the dais was the dole served, for the king was
come with knights into the hall, and chanting in the chapel
had chimed to an end. Loud cry was there cast of clerics and
others,

Noel nurtured anew, and named full oft;
and see the rich run forth to render presents,
yelled their gifts on high, yield them to hand,
argued busily about those same gifts.

Ladies laughed out loud, though they had lost,
while he that won was not wrath, that you’ll know. All this
mirth they made at the meal time.

When they had washed well they went to be seated,
the best of the barons above, as it seemed best; with
Guinevere, full gaily, gracing their midst, dressed on the dais

there, adorned all about – splendid silk by her sides, and
sheer above
of true Toulouse, of Tartar tapestries plenty,
that were embroidered, bright with the best gems that
might be price-proved with pennies
any a day.

the comeliest to descry
glanced there with eyen grey;
a seemlier ever to the sight,
sooth might no man say.

5
But Arthur would not eat till all were served,
he was so joyous a youth, and somewhat boyish: he liked his
life lively, he loved the less
either to long lie idle or to long sit,
so busied him his young blood and his brain wild. And also
another matter moved him so,
that he had nobly named he would never eat
on such dear days, before he had been advised,
of some adventurous thing, an unknown tale,
of some mighty marvel, that he might believe,
of ancestors, arms, or other adventures;
or else till someone beseeched for some sure knight to join
with him in jousting, in jeopardy to lay,
lay down life for life, allow each to the other,
as fortune might favour them, a fair advantage.
This was the king's custom when he in court was,

at each fine feast among his many friends
in hall.

Therefore with fearless face
he stands straight and tall;
full lively at that New Year
much mirth he makes with all.

7

Now will I of their service say you no more,
for each man may well know no want was there another
noise full new neared with speed,
that would give the lord leave to take meat.
For scarce was the noise not a while ceased, and the first
course in the court duly served, there hales in at the hall
door a dreadful man, the most in the world's mould of
measure high, from the nape to the waist so swart and so
thick, and his loins and his limbs so long and so great half
giant on earth I think now that he was;
but the most of man anyway I mean him to be, and that the
finest in his greatness that might ride, for of back and breast
though his body was strong, both his belly and waist were
worthily small,
and his features all followed his form made
and clean.
Wonder at his hue men displayed,
set in his semblance seen;
he fared as a giant were made,
and over all deepest green.

8

And all garbed in green this giant and his gear:
a straight coat full tight that stuck to his sides,
a magnificent mantle above, masked within
with pelts pared pertly, the garment a gleam
with blithe ermine full bright, and his hood both,
that was left from his locks and laid on his shoulders; neat,
well-hauled hose of that same green
that clung to his calves and sharp spurs under of bright gold,
on silk stockings rich-barred,
and no shoes under sole where the same rides. And all his
vesture verily was bright verdure, both the bars of his belt
and other bright stones, that were richly rayed in his bright
array
about himself and his saddle, on silk work,
it were tortuous to tell of these trifles the half, embroidered
above with birds and butterflies, with gay gaudy of green,
the gold ever inmost. The pendants of his harness, the
proud crupper, his bridle and all the metal enamelled was
then; the stirrups he stood on stained with the same, and his
saddle bows after, and saddle skirts, ever glimmered and
glinted all with green stones. The horse he rode on was also
of that hue, certain:
A green horse great and thick,
a steed full strong to restrain,
in brodered bridle quick –
to the giant he brought gain.

9

Well garbed was this giant geared in green,
and the hair of his head like his horse's mane.
Fair fanned-out flax enfolds his shoulders;
A beard big as a bush over his breast hangs,
that with the haul of hair that from his head reaches was
clipped all round about above his elbows,
that half his hands thereunder were hid in the wise
of a king's broad cape that's clasped at his neck. The mane
of that mighty horse was much alike, well crisped and
combed, with knots full many plaited in thread of gold
about the fair green, here a thread of the hair, and there of
gold.
The tail and his forelock twinned, of a suit,
and bound both with a band of a bright green, dressed with
precious stones, as its length lasted; then twined with a
thong, a tight knot aloft,
where many bells bright of burnished gold ring. Such a man
on a mount, such a giant that rides, was never before that
time in hall in sight of human eye.
He looked as lightning bright,
said all that him descried;
it seemed that no man might
his mighty blows survive.
10
And yet he had no helm nor hauberk, neither, nor
protection, nor no plate pertinent to arms,

nor no shaft, nor no shield, to strike and smite, but in his
 one hand he held a holly branch,
 that is greatest in green when groves are bare, and an axe in
 his other, one huge, monstrous,
 a perilous spar to expound in speech, who might. The head
 of an ell-rod its large length had,
 the spike all of green steel and of gold hewn,
 the blade bright burnished with a broad edge
 as well shaped to sheer as are sharp razors. The shaft of a
 strong staff the stern man gripped, that was wound with
 iron to the wand's end,
 and all engraved with green in gracious workings; a cord
 lapped it about, that linked at the head, and so around the
 handle looped full oft,
 with tried tassels thereto attached enough
 on buttons of the bright green broidered full rich. This
 stranger rides in and the hall enters,
 driving to the high dais, danger un-fearing. Hailed he never a
 one, but high he overlooked. The first word that he spoke:
 'Where is,' he said, 'the governor of this throng? Gladly I
 would
 see that soul in sight and with himself speak reason.'
 On knights he cast his eyes,
 And rolled them up and down.
 He stopped and studied ay who was of most renown.

II

There was a looking at length the man to behold, for each
 man marvelled what it might mean
 for a rider and his horse to own such a hue
 as grew green as the grass and greener it seemed, than green
 enamel on gold glowing the brighter.
 All studied that steed, and stalked him near,
 with all the wonder of the world at what he might do. for
 marvels had they seen but such never before; and so of
 phantom and fairie the folk there it deemed. Therefore to
 answer was many a knight afraid,
 and all stunned at his shout and sat stock-still
 in a sudden silence through the rich hall;
 as all had slipped into sleep so ceased their noise
 and cry.
 I think it not all in fear,
 but some from courtesy; to let him all should revere speak
 to him firstly.
 12
 Then Arthur before the high dais that adventure beholds,
 and, gracious, him reverenced, a-feared was he never, and
 said: 'Sir, welcome indeed to this place,
 the head of this house, I, Arthur am named.
 Alight swiftly adown and rest, I thee pray,
 and what thy will is we shall wait after.'
 'Nay, so help me,' quoth the man, 'He that on high sits: to
 wait any while in this way, it was not my errand.
 But as the light of thee, lord, is lifted so high,

and thy burg and thy barons the best, men hold, strongest
under steel gear on steeds to ride,
the wisest and worthiest of the world's kind,
proof to play against in other pure sports,
and here is shown courtesy, as I have heard said,
so then I wandered hither, indeed, at this time.
You may be sure by this branch that I bear here
that I pass by in peace and no plight seek.
For were I found here, fierce, and in fighting wise,
I had a hauberk at home and a helm both,
a shield and a sharp spear, shining bright,
and other weapons to wield, I well will, too;
but as I wish no war, I wear the softer.
But if you be as bold as all bairns tell,
you will grant me goodly the gift that I ask
by right.' Arthur answered there,
and said: 'Sir courteous knight, if you crave battle bare,
here fails you not the fight.'

13

'Nay, follow I no fight, in faith I thee tell.
About on these benches are but beardless children;
if I were clasped in armour on a high steed,
here is no man to match me, his might so weak.
From thee I crave in this court a Christmas gift,
for it is Yule and New Year, and here many young men. If
any so hardy in this house holds himself,
is so bold of blood, hot-brained in his head,

that dare staunchly strike a stroke for another,
I shall give him as gift this weapon so rich,
this blade, that is heavy enough to handle as he likes, and I
will bear the first blow, as bare as I sit.
If any friend be so fell as to fare as I say,
Leap lightly to me; latch on to this weapon –
I quit claim for ever, he keeps it, his own.
And I will stand his stroke straight, on this floor,
if you will grant me the gift to give him another,
again;
and yet give him respite
a twelvemonth and a day. Now hurry, let's see aright dare any
herein aught say.'

14

If he had stunned them at first, stiller were then all the host
in the hall, the high and the low. The man on his mount he
turned in his saddle, and roundly his red eyes he rolled
about,
bent his bristling brows, burning green,
waving his beard about waiting who would rise.
When none would come to his call he coughed full high, and
cleared his throat full richly, ready to speak:
'What, is this Arthur's house,' quoth the horseman then,
'that all the rumour runs of, through realms so many? Where
now your superiority and your conquests,
your grinding down and your anger, your great words? Now
is the revel and the renown of the Round Table overthrown

with the word of a wanderer's speech,
for all duck down in dread without dint of a blow!
With this he laughed so loud that the lord grieved;
the blood shot for shame into his fair face
and there, he waxed as wrath as wind;
so did all that there were.
The king, so keen by kind,
then stood that strong man near.

15

And said: 'Horseman, by heaven you ask as a fool, and as a
folly you fain, to find it me behoves.

I know no guest that's aghast at your great words. Give me
now your weapon, upon God's name, and I shall bear you
the boon you'd be having.' lightly he leaped to him and
caught at his hand; then fiercely the other fellow on foot
alighted.

Now has Arthur his axe, and the helm grips,
and strongly stirs it about, to strike with a thought. The man
before him drew himself to full height, higher than any in
the house by a head and more. With stern face where he
stood he stroked his beard, and with fixed countenance
tugged at his coat,
no more moved or dismayed by mighty blows
than if any man to the bench had brought him a drink
of wine. Gawain, that sat by the queen,
to the king he did incline: 'I beseech in plain speech that
this mêlée be mine'

16

'Would you, worthiest lord,' quoth Gawain to the king, 'bid
me bow from this bench and stand by you there, that I
without villainy might void this table,
and if my liege lady liked it not ill,
I would come counsel you before your court rich. For I
think it not seemly, as it is true known,
that such an asking is heaved so high in your hall, that you
yourself are tempted, to take it to yourself, while so many
bold men about you on benches sit, that under heaven, I
hope, are none higher of will, nor better of body on fields
where battle is raised.

I am the weakest, I know, and of wit feeblest.
least worth the loss of my life, who'd learn the truth. Only
inasmuch as you are my uncle, am I praised: No bounty but
your blood in my body I know.

And since this thing is folly and naught to you falls, and I
have asked it of you first, grant it to me;
and if my cry be not comely, let this court be free
of blame.'

Nobles whispered around,
and after counselled the same,
to free the king and crown,
and give Gawain the game.

17

Then commanded the king the knight for to rise, and he
readily up-rose and prepared him fair,

knelt down before the king, and caught the weapon; and he lightly left it him, and lifted up his hand and gave him God's blessing, and gladly him bade that his heart and his hand should hardy be, both. 'Take care, cousin,' quoth the king, 'how you set on, and if you read him aright, readily I trow, that you shall abide the blow he shall bring after.' Gawain goes to the giant, with weapon in hand, and boldly abides him, never bothered the less. Then to Sir Gawain says the knight in the green: 'Re-affirm we our oaths before we go further. First I entreat you, man, how are you named, that tell me truly, then, so trust it I may.' 'In God's faith,' quoth the good knight, 'Gawain am I, that bear you this buffet, whatever befalls after, and at this time twelvemonth take from thee another with what weapon you wilt, and no help from any alive.' The other replies again: 'Sir Gawain, may I so thrive, if I am not wondrous fain for you this blow to drive.'

18

'By God,' quoth the green knight, 'Sir Gawain, I like That I'll face first from your fist what I found here. And you have readily rehearsed, with reason full true, clearly all the covenant that I the king asked, save that you shall secure me, say, by your troth, that you shall seek me yourself, where so you think I may be found upon field, and fetch you such wages

as you deal me today before this dear company.' 'Where should I seek,' quoth Gawain, 'where is your place? I know nothing of where you walk, by Him that wrought me, nor do I know you, knight, your court or your name. But teach me truly the track, tell me how you are named, and I shall wind all my wit to win me thither; and that I swear you in truth, and by my sure honour.' 'That is enough this New Year, it needs no more,' quoth the giant in the green to courteous Gawain: 'if I shall tell you truly, when you have tapped me and you me smoothly have smitten, I swiftly you teach, of my house and my home and my own name. Then may you find how I fare, and hold to your word; and if I spend no speech, then it speeds you the better, for you may linger in your land and seek no further – but oh!

Take now your grim steel to thee, and see how you fell oaks.' 'Gladly, sir, indeed,' quoth Gawain; his axe he strokes.

19

The green knight on his ground graciously stands: with a little lean of the head, flesh he uncovers; his long lovely locks he laid over his crown, and let the naked neck to the stroke show. Gawain gripped his axe and glanced it on high, his left foot on the field before him he set,

letting it down lightly light on the naked,
that the sharp of the steel sundered the bones,
and sank through the soft flesh, sliced it in two,
that the blade of the bright steel bit in the ground.
The fair head from the frame fell to the earth,
that folk flailed it with their feet, where it forth rolled; the
blood burst from the body, the bright on the green. Yet
nevertheless neither falters nor falls the fellow, but stoutly
he started forth on strong shanks,
and roughly he reached out, where the ranks stood, latched
onto his lovely head, and lifted it so;
and then strode to his steed, the bridle he catches, steps
into stirrup and strides him aloft,
and his head by the hair in his hand holds.
and as steady and staunch him in his saddle sat
as if no mishap had him ailed, though headless now
instead. He twined his trunk about,
that ugly body that bled; many of him had doubt,
ere ever his speech was said.

20

For the head in his hand he holds up even,
towards the dearest on dais addresses the face;
and it lifted its eyelids, and looked full wide,
and made this much with its mouth, as you may now hear;
‘Look, Gawain, be you geared to go as you promised,
and look out loyally till you me, lord, find,
as you swore oath in this hall, these knights hearing.

To the green chapel you go, I charge you, to find
such a dint as you dealt – deserved you have –
to be readily yielded on New Year’s morn.
The knight of the green chapel, men know me as, many;
therefore to find me, if you fain it, you’ll fail never.
Come then, or be called recreant it behoves you.’
With a rough rasping the reins he twists,
hurled out the hall door, his head in his hand,
that the fire of the flint flew from fleet hooves.
to what land he came no man there knew,
no more than they knew where he had come from
what then? The king and Gawain there
at that green man laugh and grin; yet broadcast it was
abroad
as a marvel among those men.

21

Though Arthur the high king at heart had wonder, he let no
semblance be seen, but said aloud
to the comely queen, with courteous speech: ‘Dear dame,
today dismay you never;
well become us these crafts at Christmas,
larking at interludes, to laugh and to sing
among the courtly carols of lords and ladies. Nevertheless
my meat I may now me address,
for I have seen my marvel, I may not deny.’
He glanced at Sir Gawain and graciously said: ‘Now sir, hang

up your axe that has hewn enough.' And it adorned the dais,
hung on display,
where all men might marvel and on it look,
and by true title thereof to tell the wonder.
Then they went to the board these two together,
the king and the godly knight, and keen men them served of
all dainties double, as dearest might fall,
with all manner of meat and minstrelsy both.
Full well they whiled that day till it worked its end
on land Now think well, Sir Gawain,
lest by peril unmanned, this adventure to sustain, you have
taken in hand.

As the year comes to an end, Gawain goes off in search of
the Green Knight. He comes across a lord who offers
Gawain a place to stay and makes an unusual arrangement
with him.

44

Then was Gawain full glad, and gleefully he laughed: 'Now I
thank you thoroughly beyond all things;
now achieved is my goal, I shall at your will
dwell here, and do what else you deem fit.'
Then the lord seized him and set him beside,
and the ladies had fetched, to please him the better.
There was seemly solace by themselves still.
The lord lofted for love notes so merry,
as one that wanted his wits, nor knew what he did. Then he
cried to the knight, calling aloud:

'You have deemed to do the deed that I bid.
Will you hold to this promise here and now?'
'Yes, sire, indeed,' said the knight and true,
'While I bide in your burg, I'm at your behest.'
'As you have travelled,' quoth the lord, 'from afar,
and since then waked with me, you are not well served
neither of sustenance nor of sleep, surely I know.
You shall linger in your room and lie there at ease tomorrow
till Mass, and then to meat wend
when you will, with my wife, that with you shall sit
and comfort you with company, till I come to court:
time spend, And I shall early rise;
a-hunting will I wend.' Gawain thinks it wise,
as is fitting to him bends.

45

'And further,' quoth the lord, 'a bargain we'll make:
whatsoever I win in the wood is worthily yours;
and whatever here you achieve, exchange me for it. Sweet
sir, swap we so – swear it in truth –
whether, lord, that way lies worse or better.'
'By God,' quoth Gawain the good, 'I grant it you,
and that you lust for to play, like it methinks.'
'Who'll bring us a beverage, this bargain to make?' so said
the lord of that land. They laughed each one, they drank and
dallied and dealt in trifles,
these lords and ladies, as long as they liked;
and then with Frankish faring, full of fair words,

they stopped and stood and softly spoke,
kissing full comely and taking their leave.
By many lively servants with flaming torches,
each brave man was brought to his bed at last
full soft.

To bed yet ere they sped,
repeating the contract oft; the old lord of that spread could
keep a game aloft.

When the lord goes hunting, the lord's wife tries to seduce
Gawain with kisses and a gift.

72

'These words,' said the lady, 'are the worst words of all; but I
am answered forsooth, so that it grieves me.

Kiss me now gently, and I shall go hence;

I may but mourn upon earth, a maid that loves much.'

Sighing she stooped down, and sweetly him kissed, and then
she severs from him, and says as she stands: 'Now, dear, at
this our parting set me at ease:

give me something, a gift, if only your glove,

that I may think of you, man, my mourning to lessen.' 'Now
indeed,' quoth the knight, 'I would I had here the dearest

thing, for your sake, I own in the world, for you have
deserved, forsooth, and in excess,

a richer reward, by rights, than I might reckon;

but as a love-token, this would profit you little.

It is not to your honour to have at this time
a glove of Gawain's giving to treasure;

and I am here on an errand in lands unknown,
and have no servants with sacks of precious things.

I dislike this, my lady, for your sake, at this time;

but each man must do as he must, take it not ill

nor pine.' 'Nay, knight of high honours,'

quoth that love-some lady fine, 'though I shall have naught
of yours, yet shall you have of mine.'

73

She proffered him a rich ring of red gold work,
with a sparkling stone glittering aloft,

that blazed brilliant beams like the bright sun;

know you well that it's worth was full huge.

But the knight refused it and he readily said:

'I'll no gifts, before God, my dear, at this time;

I have none to give you, nor naught will I take.'

She offered it him eagerly, yet he her gift spurned, and swore
swiftly his oath that he would not seize it; and she grieved

he refused her, and said thereafter: 'Since you reject my ring,
too rich it may seem,

for you would not be so high beholden to me,

I shall give you my girdle: that profits you less.'

She loosed a belt lightly that lay round her sides, looped
over her kirtle beneath her bright mantle. Gear it was of
green silk and with gold trimmed,

at the edges embroidered, with finger-stitching;

and that she offered the knight, and blithely besought that
he would take it though it were unworthy.

but he said he might have nigh him in no wise neither gold
nor treasure, ere God sent him grace,
to achieve the errand he had chosen there.
'And therefore, I pray you, be not displeased,
and let your gift go, for I swear it I can never you grant.
To you I am deeply beholden,
your kindness is so pleasant,
and ever in heat and cold, then I'll be your true servant.'

74

'Now do you shun this silk,' said the lady,
'because it is simple in itself? And so it may seem. Lo! It is
slight indeed, and so is less worthy.
But whoso knew the worth woven therein
he would hold it in higher praise, perchance;
for whatever man is girt with this green lace,
while he has it closely fastened about him,
there is no man under heaven might hew him,
for he may not be slain by any sleight upon earth.' Then the
knight thought, and it came to his heart,
it was a jewel for the jeopardy judged upon him, when he
gained the Green Chapel, his fate to find;
if he might slip past un-slain, the sleight were noble. Then
he indulged her suit, and told her to speak. And she pressed
the belt on him urging it eagerly; and he granted it, and she
gave it him with goodwill, and besought him, for her sake,
never to reveal it, but loyally conceal it from her lord. The

knight agrees that no one should know of it, indeed, but
they two,
betimes.

He thanked her as he might,
with all his heart and mind. By then the gallant knight, she
had kissed three times.

Gawain finally encounters the Green Knight once more –
who once again surprises him.

89

Then the knight called out loud on high;
'Who stands in this stead, my tryst to uphold?
For now is good Gawain grounded right here.
If any man wills aught, wind hither fast,
either now or never his needs to further.'
'Abide,' quoth one on the bank above his head,
'and you shall have all in haste I promised you once.' Yet he
then turned to his tumult swiftly a while,
and at whetting he worked, ere he would alight.
And then he thrust by a crag and came out by a hole,
whirling out of the rocks with a fell weapon,
a Danish axe new honed, for dealing the blow,
with a biting blade bow-bent to the haft,
ground on a grindstone, four feet broad –
no less, by that love-lace gleaming full bright.
And the giant in green was garbed as at first,
both the looks and the legs, the locks and the beard, save
that firm on his feet he finds his ground,

sets the haft to the stones and stalks beside it. When he came to the water, he would not wade, he hopped over on his axe and boldly he strides, blazing with wrath, on a bit of field broad about in snow.

Sir Gawain the man did greet, he bowed to him, nothing low; the other said: 'Now, Sir Sweet, men may trust your word, I owe.'

90

'Gawain,' quoth the green man, 'God may you guard! Indeed you are welcome, knight, to my place, and you have timed your travel as true man should. And you know the covenant pledged between us:

at this time twelvemonth gone you took what befell, that I should at this New Year promptly requite.

And we are in this valley verily alone;

here are no ranks to sever us, serve as you will.

Heft your helm off your head, and have here your pay. Ask no more debate than I did of you then

when you whipped off my head at a single blow.' 'Nay, by God,' quoth Gawain, 'who lent me a soul, I shall bear you no grudge for the grief that befalls. Strike but the one stroke, and I shall stand still and offer no hindrance, come work as you like,

I swear.'

He leant down his neck, and bowed,

and showed the white flesh all bare, as if he were no way cowed;

for to shrink he would not dare.

91

Then the man in green readies him swiftly, girds up his grim blade, to smite Gawain; with all the strength in his body he bears it aloft, manages it mightily as if he would mar him.

Had he driven it down as direly as he aimed, one had been dead of the deed who was dauntless ever. But Gawain glanced at the grim blade sideways, as it came gliding down on him to destroy him, and his shoulders shrank a little from the sharp edge. The other man with a shrug the slice withholds, and then reproves the prince with many proud words: 'You are not Gawain,' quoth the man, 'held so great, that was never afraid of the host by hill or by vale, for now you flinch for fear ere you feel harm.

Such cowardice of that knight have I never heard. I neither flinched nor fled, friend, when you let fly, nor cast forth any quibble in King Arthur's house. My head flew off, at my feet, yet fled I never;

yet you, ere any harm haps, are fearful at heart. And I ought to be branded the better man, I say, therefore.' Quoth Gawain: 'I flinched once,

Yet so will I no more;

Though if my head fall on the stones, I cannot it restore.'

'Be brisk, man, by your faith, and bring me to the point.
Deal me my destiny and do it out of hand,
for I shall stand your stroke, and start no more
till your axe has hit me – have here my troth.'

'Have at you, then,' quoth the other, and heaves it aloft and
glares as angrily as if he were mad.

He menaces him mightily, but touches him not,
swiftly withholding his hand ere it might hurt.

Gawain gravely it bides and moves not a muscle, but stands
still as a stone or the stump of a tree that is riven in rocky
ground with roots a hundred. Then merrily again he spoke,
the man in green:

'So now you have your heart whole, it me behoves. Hold you
safe now the knighthood Arthur gave you, and keep your
neck from this cut, if ever it may!' Gawain full fiercely with
anger then said:

'Why, thrash on, you wild man, threaten no longer; it seems
your heart is warring with your own self.' 'Forsooth,' quoth
the other, 'so fiercely you speak, I'll not a moment longer
delay your errand

I vow.'

Then he takes up his stance to strike
pouts lips and puckers his brow; Nothing there for him to
like who hopes for no rescue now.

Up the weapon lifts lightly, is let down fair,
and the blade's border beside the bare neck.
Though heaved heavily it hurt him not more,
but nicked him on the one side, and severed the skin. The
sharp edge sank in the flesh through the fair fat,
so that bright blood over his shoulders shot to the earth.
And when the knight saw his blood blotting the snow, he
spurted up, feet first, more than a spear-length, seized
swiftly his helm and on his head cast it, shrugged with his
shoulders his fine shield under,
broke out his bright sword, and bravely he spoke – never
since he was a babe born of his mother
had he ever in this world a heart half so blithe – 'Back man,
with your blade, and brandish no more! I have received a
stroke in this place without strife, and if you offer another
I'll readily requite you
and yield it you swiftly again – of that be you sure – as foe.
But one stroke to me here falls; the covenant stated so,
arranged in Arthur's halls,
so lay your weapon, now, low!'

The other then turned away and on his axe rested, set the
haft to the earth and leant on the head, and looked at the
lord who held to his ground, how doughty, and dread-less,
enduring he stands armed, without awe; in his heart he him
liked. Then he spoke merrily in a mighty voice,

and with a ringing roar to the knight he said:
'Bold man be not so fierce in this field.
No man here has mistreated you, been unmannerly, nor
behaved but by covenant at King's court made.
I hit with a stroke, and you have it, and are well paid; I
release you from the rest of all other rights.
If I had been livelier, a buffet perchance
I could have worked more wilfully, to bring you anger. First I
menaced you merrily with a single feint,
and rent you with no riving cut, rightly offered
for the pledge that we made on the very first night; for you
truthfully kept troth and dealt with me true,
all the gain you gave me, as good men should.
The next blow for the morn, man, I proffered;
you kissed my fair wife, the kisses were mine.
For both these days I brought you but two bare feints,
without scathe. Truth for the truth restore,
then man need dread no wraith. On the third you failed for
sure, and so took that blow, in faith.'

95

'For it is mine that you wear, that same woven girdle;
my own wife gave it you, I know it well forsooth. Now,
know I well your kisses and conduct too, and the wooing of
my wife; I wrought it myself. I sent her to test you, and truly
I think you
the most faultless man that was ever afoot.
As a pearl beside whitened pea is more precious,

so is Gawain, in good faith, beside other good knights. But
here sir you lacked a little, wanting in loyalty;
but that was for no wily work, nor wooing neither,
but for love of your life – so I blame you the less.'
The other strong man in study stood a great while,
so aggrieved that for grief he grimaced within.
All the blood of his breast burnt in his face,
that he shrank for shame at all the man said.
The first words the knight could frame on that field: 'Curse
upon cowardice and covetousness both!
In you are villainy and vice that virtue distress.'
Then he caught at the knot and pulled it loose,
and fair flung the belt at the man himself:
'Lo! There's the falseness, foul may it fall!
For fear of your knock cowardice me taught
to accord with covetousness, forsake my kind,
the largesse and loyalty that belongs to knights.
Now am I faulted and false, and ever a-feared;
from both treachery and untruth come sorrow
and care!

I confess to you knight, here, still,
my fault in this affair;
let me understand your will, and henceforth I shall beware.'

96

Then laughed that other lord and lightly said:
'I hold it happily made whole, the harm that I had;
You are confessed so clean, cleared of your faults,

and have done penance plain at the point of my blade,
I hold you absolved of that sin, as pure and as clean,
as though you were never at fault since first you were born.
And I give you, sir, the girdle that is gold-hemmed.
As it is green as my gown, Sir Gawain, you may
think upon this same trial when you throng forth
among princes of price, and this the pure token
of the test at the Green Chapel to chivalrous knights.
And you shall this New Year come back to my castle,
and we shall revel away the remnant of this rich feast
I mean'
Thus urged him hard the lord,
and said: 'With my wife, I ween, we shall bring you in
accord, who was your enemy keen.'

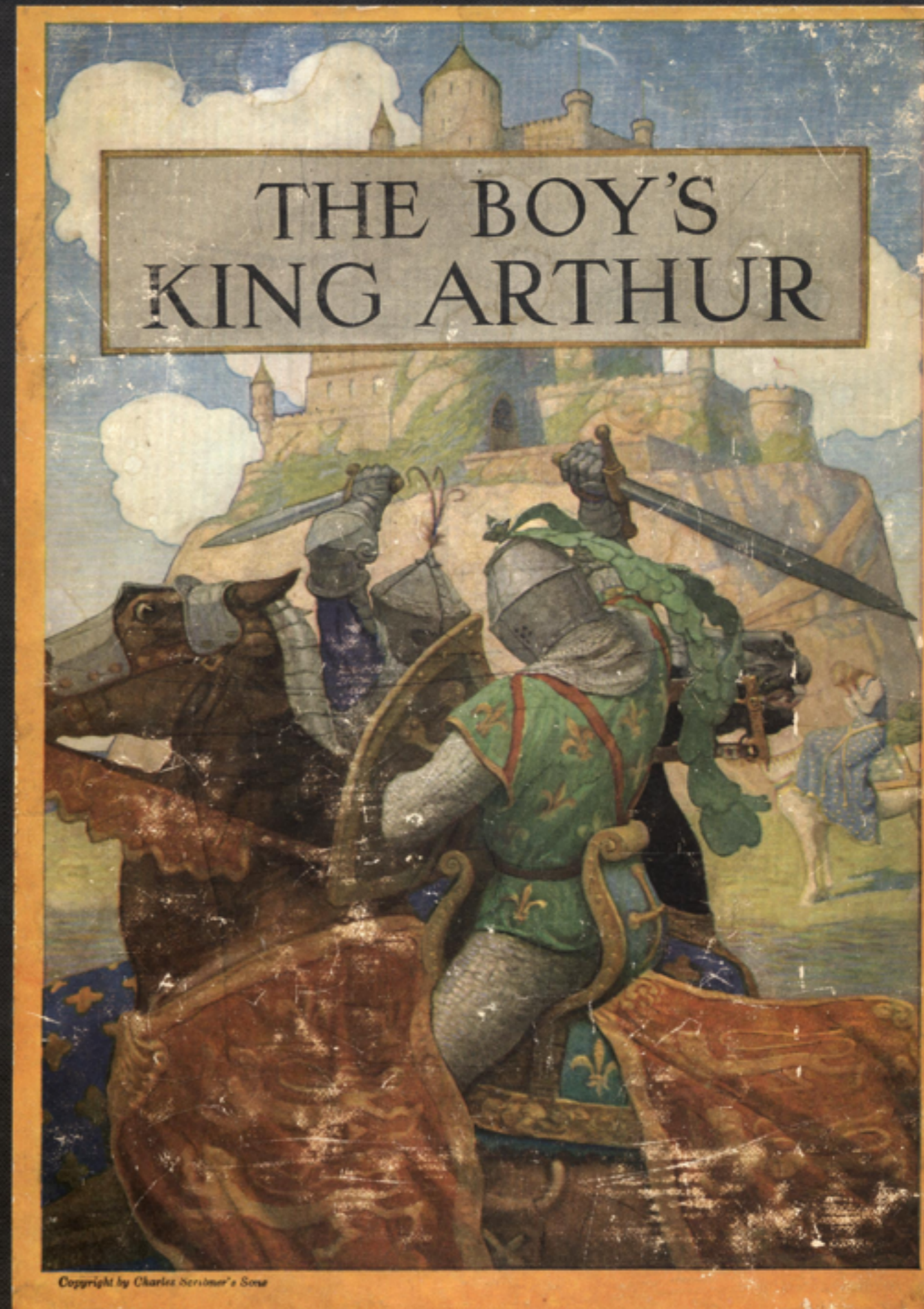
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on "Sir Gawain..."



THOMAS MALORY

Sir Thomas Malory (1415 – 1471) compiled *Le Mort d'Arthur* from various sources (some in French), but doubts still remain as to his true identity and to his claim of genuine authorship. There appear to be five persons known as “Thomas Malory” in 15th century English public life, each with some claim (however faint) to authorship of *Le Mort*. The most likely candidate (and the most widely accepted as author) was Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, who was a knight during the Hundred Years’ War and fought the French at Calais.



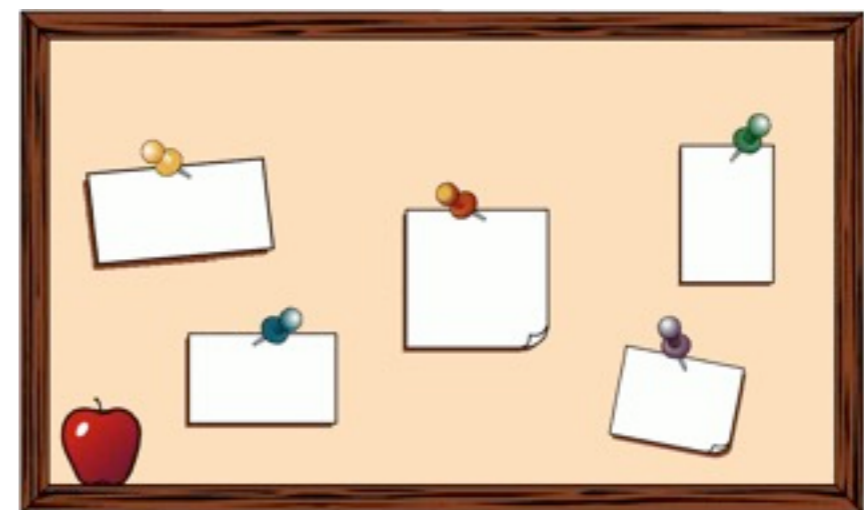
GALLERY 2.1 Artistic Intepretations of Le Morte d'Arthur, through the Ages



Edward Burne-Jones, 1881, "The Last Sleep of Arthur in Avalon"



RESOURCES 3 Le Mort d'Arthur



GET UP AND BAR THE DOOR

“Get up and Bar the Door” is a comical medieval Scots ballad. It offers a glimpse into domestic life in the Middle Ages and pokes fun at the stereotypical married couple, as accurate today as it was centuries ago.



Get Up and Bar the Door

Traditional Ballads

AUDIO 2.1 Ballad
Recording



IT fell about the Martinmas time,

And a gay time it was then,

When our good wife got puddings to make,

And she's boild them in the pan.

The wind sae cauld blew south and north, 5

And blew into the floor;

Quoth our goodman to our goodwife,

“Gae I out and bar the door.”

“My hand is in my hussyfskap,

Goodman, as ye may see; 10

An it shoud nae be barrd this hundred year,

It's no be barrd for me.”

They made a paction tween them twa,

They made it firm and sure,

That the first word whaeer shoud speak, 15

Shoud rise and bar the door.

Then by there came two gentlemen,

At twelve o'clock at night,

And they could neither see house nor hall,

Nor coal nor candle-light. 20

“Now whether is this a rich man's house,

Or whether is it a poor?”

But neer a word wad ane o them speak,

For barring of the door.

And first they ate the white puddings, 25

And then they ate the black;

Tho muckle thought the goodwife to hersel,

Yet neer a word she spake.

Then said the one unto the other,

“Here, man, tak ye my knife; 30

Do ye tak aff the auld man’s beard,

And I’ll kiss the goodwife.”

“But there’s nae water in the house,

And what shall we do than?”

“What ails thee at the pudding-broo, 35

That boils into the pan?”

O up then started our goodman,

An angry man was he:

“Will ye kiss my wife before my een,

And scad 4 me wi pudding-bree?” 40

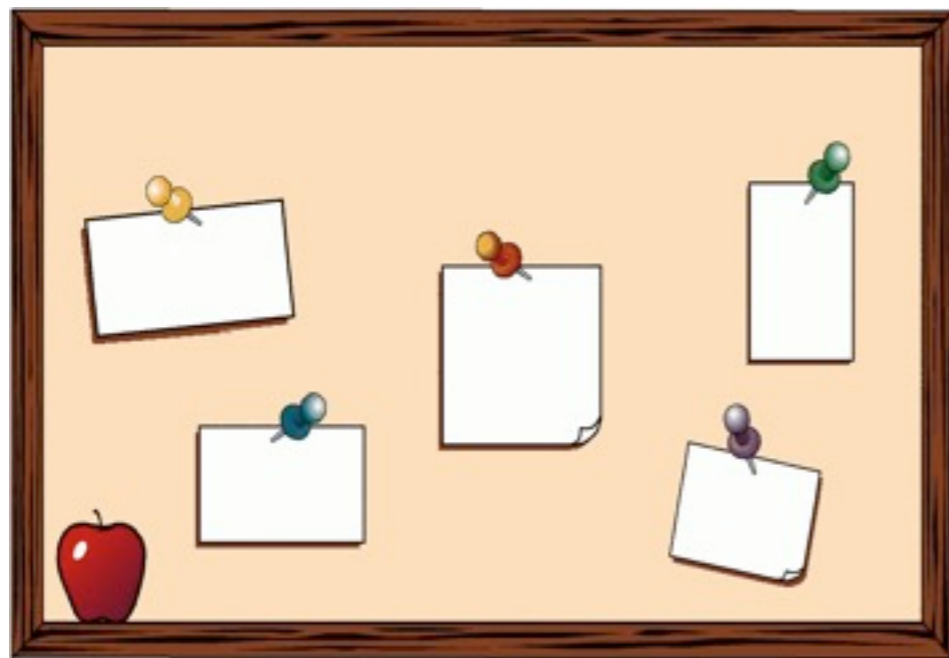
Then up and started our goodwife,

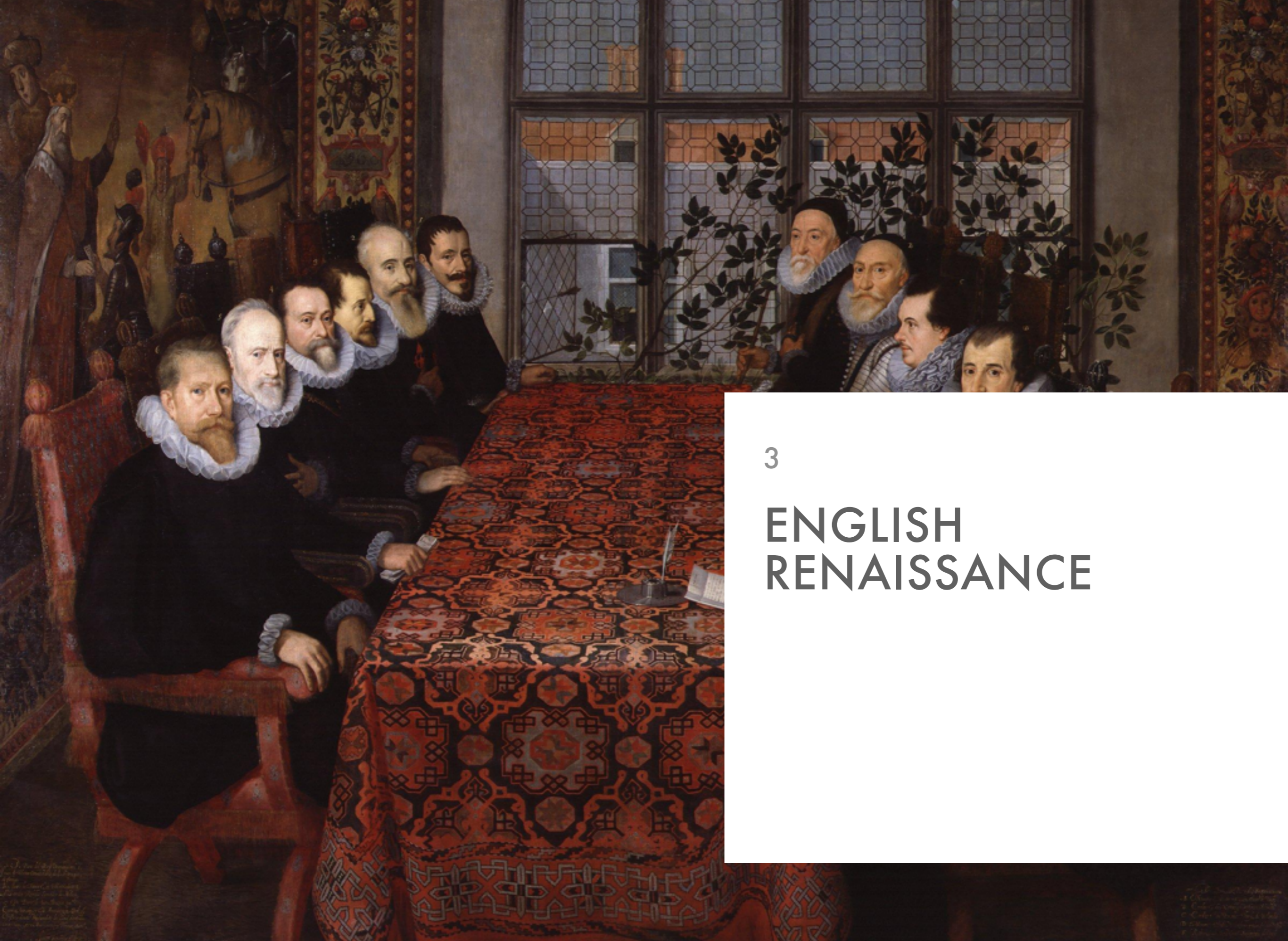
Gied three skips on the floor:

“Goodman, you’ve spoken the foremost word,

Get up and bar the door.”

RESOURCES 4 Medieval Literature





3

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

It becomes incredibly difficult in a short space to outline the vast achievements of William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616) and his contributions to the English language. It may be confidently stated that, after the Bible, Shakespeare has created more unique and popular turns of phrase in the language than any other single source. His life's work consists of 38 plays, 154 sonnets, two long narrative poems, and other verses that are sometimes attributed to him. Indeed, the question of authorship of Shakespeare's works is one

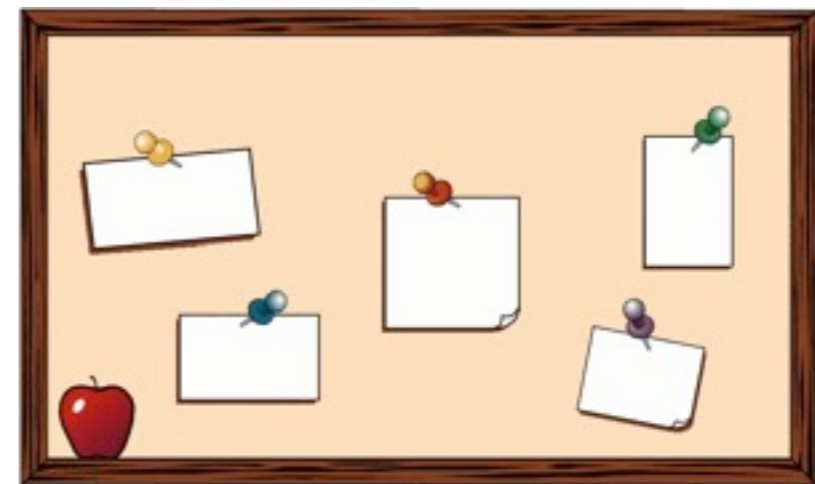
MOVIE 3.1 Shakespeare
Biography



MOVIE 3.2 Royal
Shakespeare
Company's Macbeth



RESOURCES 5 Macbeth resources



SHAKESPEAREAN SONNETS



SHAKE-SPEARES

S O N N E T S.

Neuer before Imprinted.

AT LONDON
By *G. Eld* for *T. T.* and are
to be solde by *William Aspley.*
1609.

Sonnet 116

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 wand'ring 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 prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

Sonnet 130

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 damask'd, 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.

Sonnet 73

That time of year thou may'st in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day,
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by-and-by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire
Consum'd with that which it was nourish'd by.

 This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more
strong,

 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Sonnet 29

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heav'n with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate.

 For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings

 That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

Sonnet 18

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.

Sonnet 30

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.
Then can I drown an eye unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan th' expense of many a vanished sight.
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.

 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
 All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

JOHN MILTON

John Milton (1608 – 1674) wrote at a time of tremendous upheaval and change in English history, most notably during the English Civil War that saw the Oliver Cromwell wrest power from the monarchy. Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*, written in blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) recounts man's fall from grace in the Garden of Eden and, in Milton's words, was designed to “justify the ways of God to men.”

MOVIE 3.3 John Milton
Biography



JOHN DONNE

John Donne (1572 -- 1631) lived a complex and rich life. Known as the preeminent metaphysical poet, Donne was born and raised a Catholic, was ordained a priest, was forcibly converted to Anglicanism, secretly married and raised twelve (yes, 12!) children, and served as a member of Parliament. His wide-ranging works include essays, poetry, translations, religious treatises, and more.

[MOVIE 3.4 John Donne Biography](#)



“A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning”

As virtuous men pass mildly away,
And whisper to their souls to go,
Whilst 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 our selves 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, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if the 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.

“Death Be Not Proud”

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally
And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

Meditation #17 from Devotions upon Emergent Occasions (1623), XVII:

Nunc Lento Sonitu Dicunt, Morieris (Now this bell, tolling softly for another, says to me, Thou must die.)

Perchance, he for whom this bell tolls may be so ill, as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me, and see my state, may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. The church is catholic, universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that body which is my head too, and ingrafted into that body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author, and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated; God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another. As therefore the bell that rings to a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon

the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness.

There was a contention as far as a suit (in which both piety and dignity, religion and estimation, were mingled), which of the religious orders should ring to prayers first in the morning; and it was determined, that they should ring first that rose earliest. If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his, whose indeed it is.

The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit again, yet from that minute that this occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world?

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.

Neither can we call this a begging of misery, or a borrowing of misery, as though we were not miserable enough of ourselves, but must fetch in more from the next house, in taking upon us the misery of our neighbours. Truly it were an excusable covetousness if we did, for affliction is a treasure, and scarce any man hath enough of it. No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction. If a man carry treasure in bullion, or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current money, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it, except we get nearer and nearer our home, heaven, by it. Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels, as gold in a mine, and be of no use to him; but this bell, that tells me of his affliction, digs out and applies that gold to me: if by this consideration of another's danger I take mine own into contemplation, and so secure myself, by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security.

ROBERT HERRICK

Robert Herrick (1591 – 1633) was an English poet and cleric in the Anglican church. He attended Cambridge University and served as vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire. His most famous work, “To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time,” is considered a prime *carpe diem* poem.



“To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time”

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this 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.

AUDIO 3.1 Herrick's poem



ANDREW MARVELL

Andrew Marvell (1621 -- 1678) was a metaphysical poet and member of the House of Commons in Parliament. Aside from his most famous work, "To His Coy Mistress," he was a noted political satirist, producing such work as "The Character of Holland."



“To His Coy Mistress”

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;
Two hundred to adore each breast,
But thirty thousand to the rest;
An age at least to every part,
And the last age should show your heart.
For, lady, you deserve this state,
Nor would I love at lower rate.

But at my back I always hear

AUDIO 3.2 Tom
Hiddleston's Reading



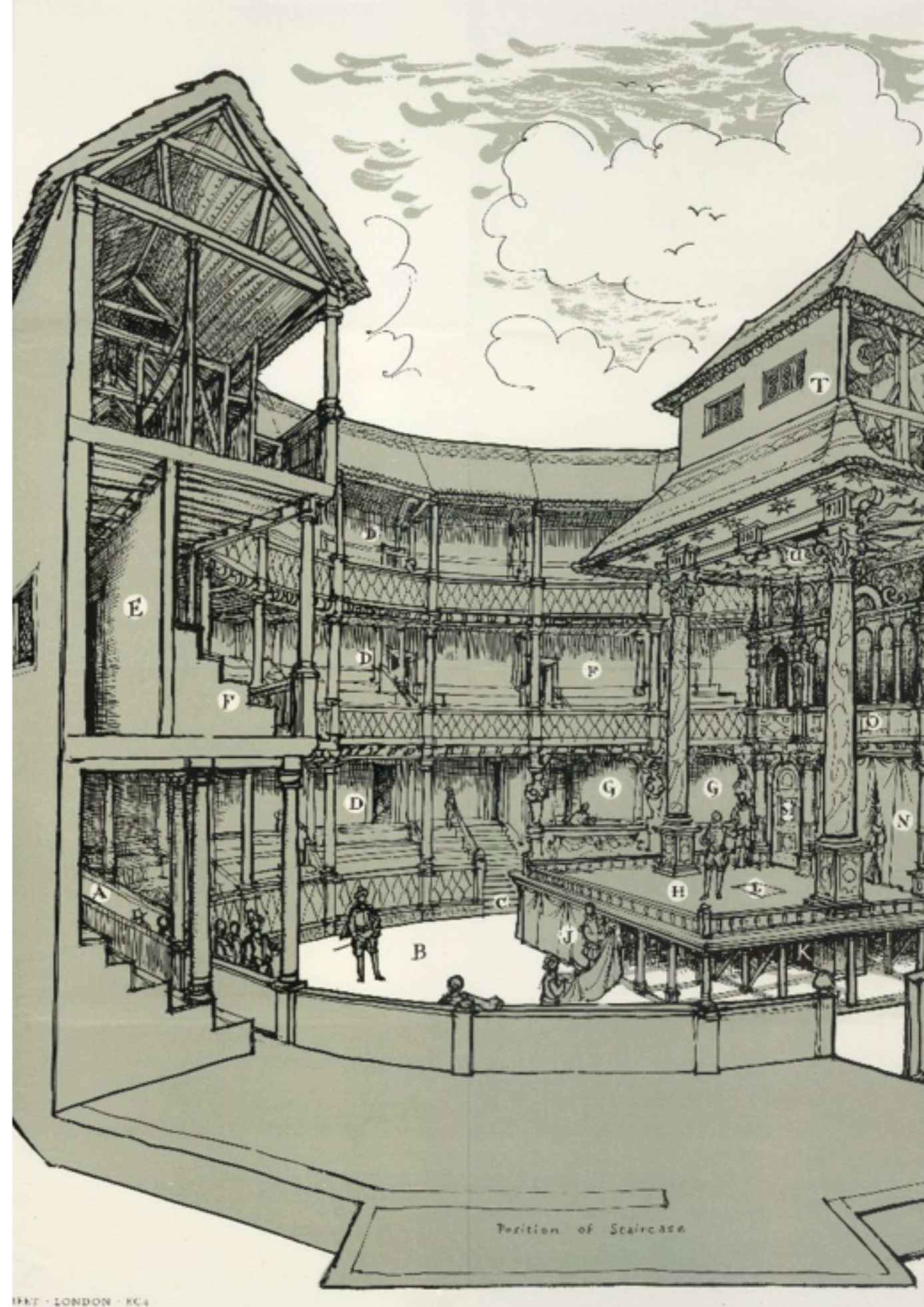
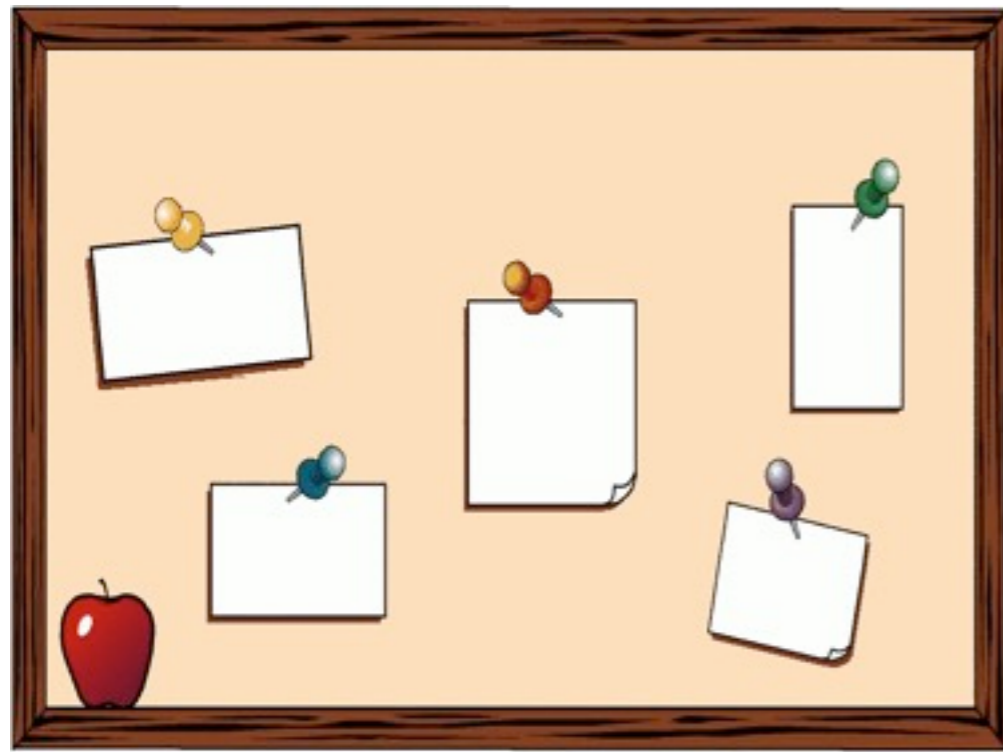
MOVIE 3.5 What this
poem looks like in
1967



Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.
Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.

Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

RESOURCES 6 Renaissance Literature





4

THE RESTORATION & 18TH CENTURY

JONATHAN SWIFT

Jonathan Swift (1667 -- 1745) was an Anglo-Irish satirist and politician in the Whig party. He served as Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin, Ireland, where he spent most of his life. He was noted for his keen wit and irreverent humor.



A MODEST PROPOSAL

For preventing the children of poor people in Ireland,
from being a burden on their parents or country,
and for making them beneficial to the publick.

by Dr. Jonathan Swift

1729

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country, when they see the streets, the roads and cabbin-doors crowded with beggars of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, all in rags, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These mothers instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in stroling to beg sustenance for their helpless infants who, as they grow up, either turn thieves for want of work, or leave their dear native country, to fight for the Pretender in Spain, or sell themselves to the Barbadoes.

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the heels of their mothers, and frequently of their fathers, is in the present deplorable state of the kingdom, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a

fair, cheap and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the common-wealth, would deserve so well of the publick, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of professed beggars: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets.

As to my own part, having turned my thoughts for many years, upon this important subject, and maturely weighed the several schemes of our projectors, I have always found them grossly mistaken in their computation. It is true, a child just dropt from its dam, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year, with little other nourishment: at most not above the value of two shillings, which the mother may certainly get, or the value in scraps, by her lawful occupation of begging; and it is exactly at one year old that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon their parents, or the parish, or wanting food and raiment for the rest of their lives, they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the cloathing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my scheme, that it will prevent those voluntary abortions, and that horrid practice of women murdering their bastard children, alas! too frequent among us, sacrificing the poor innocent babes, I doubt, more to avoid the expence than the shame, which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in this kingdom being usually reckoned one million and a half, of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couple, who are able to maintain their own children, (although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the present distresses of the kingdom) but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand, for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident or disease within the year. There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents annually born. The question therefore is, How this number shall be reared, and provided for? which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible by all the methods hitherto proposed. For we can neither employ them in handicraft or agriculture; they neither build houses, (I mean in the country) nor cultivate land: they can very

seldom pick up a livelihood by stealing till they arrive at six years old; except where they are of towardly parts, although I confess they learn the rudiments much earlier; during which time they can however be properly looked upon only as probationers: As I have been informed by a principal gentleman in the county of Cavan, who protested to me, that he never knew above one or two instances under the age of six, even in a part of the kingdom so renowned for the quickest proficiency in that art.

I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity, and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most, on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or kingdom, the charge of nutriments and rags having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricasie, or a ragoust.

I do therefore humbly offer it to publick consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved for breed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to sheep, black cattle, or swine, and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a circumstance not much regarded by our savages, therefore, one male will be sufficient to serve four females. That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the persons of quality and fortune, through the kingdom, always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends, and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh 12 pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, encreaseth to 28 pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children.

Infant's flesh will be in season throughout the year, but more plentiful in March, and a little before and after; for we are told by a grave author, an eminent French physician, that fish being a prolifick dyet, there are more children born in Roman Catholick countries about nine months after Lent, the markets will be more glutted than usual, because the number of Popish infants, is at least three to one in this kingdom, and therefore it will have one other collateral advantage, by lessening the number of Papists among us. I have already computed the charge of nursing a beggar's child (in which list I reckon all cottagers, labourers, and four-fifths of the farmers) to be about two shillings per annum, rags included; and I believe no gentleman would repine to give ten shillings for the carcass of a good fat child, which, as I have said, will make four dishes of excellent nutritive meat, when he hath only some particular friend, or his own family to dine with him. Thus the squire will learn to be a good landlord, and grow popular among his tenants, the mother will have eight shillings neat profit, and be fit for work till she produces another child.

Those who are more thrifty (as I must confess the times require) may flea the carcass; the skin of which, artificially dressed, will make admirable gloves for ladies, and summer boots for fine gentlemen.

As to our City of Dublin, shambles may be appointed for this purpose, in the most convenient parts of it, and butchers we may be assured will not be wanting; although I rather recommend buying the children alive, and dressing them hot from the knife, as we do roasting pigs.

A very worthy person, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem, was lately pleased, in discoursing on this matter, to offer a refinement upon my scheme. He said, that many gentlemen of this kingdom, having of late destroyed their deer, he conceived that the want of venison might be well supply'd by the bodies of young lads and maidens, not exceeding fourteen years of age, nor under twelve; so great a number of both sexes in every country being now ready to starve for want of work and service: And these to be disposed of by their parents if alive, or otherwise by their nearest relations. But with due deference to so excellent a friend, and so deserving a patriot, I cannot be altogether in his sentiments; for as to the males, my American acquaintance assured me from frequent experience, that their flesh was generally tough and lean, like that of our school-boys, by continual exercise, and their taste disagreeable, and to fatten them would not answer the charge. Then as to the females, it would, I think, with humble submission, be a loss to the publick, because they soon would become breeders themselves: And besides, it is

not improbable that some scrupulous people might be apt to censure such a practice, (although indeed very unjustly) as a little bordering upon cruelty, which, I confess, hath always been with me the strongest objection against any project, how well soever intended.

But in order to justify my friend, he confessed, that this expedient was put into his head by the famous Salmanaazor, a native of the island Formosa, who came from thence to London, above twenty years ago, and in conversation told my friend, that in his country, when any young person happened to be put to death, the executioner sold the carcass to persons of quality, as a prime dainty; and that, in his time, the body of a plump girl of fifteen, who was crucified for an attempt to poison the Emperor, was sold to his imperial majesty's prime minister of state, and other great mandarins of the court in joints from the gibbet, at four hundred crowns. Neither indeed can I deny, that if the same use were made of several plump young girls in this town, who without one single groat to their fortunes, cannot stir abroad without a chair, and appear at a play-house and assemblies in foreign fineries which they never will pay for; the kingdom would not be the worse.

Some persons of a desponding spirit are in great concern about that vast number of poor people, who are aged, diseased, or maimed; and I have been desired to employ my

thoughts what course may be taken, to ease the nation of so grievous an incumbrance. But I am not in the least pain upon that matter, because it is very well known, that they are every day dying, and rotting, by cold and famine, and filth, and vermin, as fast as can be reasonably expected. And as to the young labourers, they are now in almost as hopeful a condition. They cannot get work, and consequently pine away from want of nourishment, to a degree, that if at any time they are accidentally hired to common labour, they have not strength to perform it, and thus the country and themselves are happily delivered from the evils to come. I have too long digressed, and therefore shall return to my subject. I think the advantages by the proposal which I have made are obvious and many, as well as of the highest importance.

For first, as I have already observed, it would greatly lessen the number of Papists, with whom we are yearly over-run, being the principal breeders of the nation, as well as our most dangerous enemies, and who stay at home on purpose with a design to deliver the kingdom to the Pretender, hoping to take their advantage by the absence of so many good Protestants, who have chosen rather to leave their country, than stay at home and pay tithes against their conscience to an episcopal curate.

Secondly, The poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which by law may be made liable to a distress, and help to pay their landlord's rent, their corn and cattle being already seized, and money a thing unknown.

Thirdly, Whereas the maintainance of an hundred thousand children, from two years old, and upwards, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece per annum, the nation's stock will be thereby encreased fifty thousand pounds per annum, besides the profit of a new dish, introduced to the tables of all gentlemen of fortune in the kingdom, who have any refinement in taste. And the money will circulate among our selves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture.

Fourthly, The constant breeders, besides the gain of eight shillings sterling per annum by the sale of their children, will be rid of the charge of maintaining them after the first year.

Fifthly, This food would likewise bring great custom to taverns, where the vintners will certainly be so prudent as to procure the best receipts for dressing it to perfection; and consequently have their houses frequented by all the fine gentlemen, who justly value themselves upon their knowledge in good eating; and a skilful cook, who understands how to oblige his guests, will contrive to make it as expensive as they please.

Sixthly, This would be a great inducement to marriage, which all wise nations have either encouraged by rewards, or enforced by laws and penalties. It would encrease the care and tenderness of mothers towards their children, when they were sure of a settlement for life to the poor babes, provided in some sort by the publick, to their annual profit instead of expence. We should soon see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market. Men would become as fond of their wives, during the time of their pregnancy, as they are now of their mares in foal, their cows in calf, or sow when they are ready to farrow; nor offer to beat or kick them (as is too frequent a practice) for fear of a miscarriage.

Many other advantages might be enumerated. For instance, the addition of some thousand carcasses in our exportation of barrel'd beef: the propagation of swine's flesh, and improvement in the art of making good bacon, so much wanted among us by the great destruction of pigs, too frequent at our tables; which are no way comparable in taste or magnificence to a well grown, fat yearly child, which roasted whole will make a considerable figure at a Lord Mayor's feast, or any other publick entertainment. But this, and many others, I omit, being studious of brevity.

Supposing that one thousand families in this city, would be constant customers for infants flesh, besides others who

might have it at merry meetings, particularly at weddings and christenings, I compute that Dublin would take off annually about twenty thousand carcasses; and the rest of the kingdom (where probably they will be sold somewhat cheaper) the remaining eighty thousand.

I can think of no one objection, that will possibly be raised against this proposal, unless it should be urged, that the number of people will be thereby much lessened in the kingdom. This I freely own, and 'twas indeed one principal design in offering it to the world. I desire the reader will observe, that I calculate my remedy for this one individual Kingdom of Ireland, and for no other that ever was, is, or, I think, ever can be upon Earth. Therefore let no man talk to me of other expedients: Of taxing our absentees at five shillings a pound: Of using neither cloaths, nor household furniture, except what is of our own growth and manufacture: Of utterly rejecting the materials and instruments that promote foreign luxury: Of curing the expensiveness of pride, vanity, idleness, and gaming in our women: Of introducing a vein of parsimony, prudence and temperance: Of learning to love our country, wherein we differ even from Laplanders, and the inhabitants of Topinamboo: Of quitting our animosities and factions, nor acting any longer like the Jews, who were murdering one another at the very moment their city was taken: Of being a

little cautious not to sell our country and consciences for nothing: Of teaching landlords to have at least one degree of mercy towards their tenants. Lastly, of putting a spirit of honesty, industry, and skill into our shop-keepers, who, if a resolution could now be taken to buy only our native goods, would immediately unite to cheat and exact upon us in the price, the measure, and the goodness, nor could ever yet be brought to make one fair proposal of just dealing, though often and earnestly invited to it.

Therefore I repeat, let no man talk to me of these and the like expedients, 'till he hath at least some glimpse of hope, that there will ever be some hearty and sincere attempt to put them into practice.

But, as to my self, having been wearied out for many years with offering vain, idle, visionary thoughts, and at length utterly despairing of success, I fortunately fell upon this proposal, which, as it is wholly new, so it hath something solid and real, of no expence and little trouble, full in our own power, and whereby we can incur no danger in disobliging England. For this kind of commodity will not bear exportation, and flesh being of too tender a consistence, to admit a long continuance in salt, although perhaps I could name a country, which would be glad to eat up our whole nation without it.

After all, I am not so violently bent upon my own opinion, as to reject any offer, proposed by wise men, which shall be found equally innocent, cheap, easy, and effectual. But before something of that kind shall be advanced in contradiction to my scheme, and offering a better, I desire the author or authors will be pleased maturely to consider two points. First, As things now stand, how they will be able to find food and raiment for a hundred thousand useless mouths and backs. And secondly, There being a round million of creatures in humane figure throughout this kingdom, whose whole subsistence put into a common stock, would leave them in debt two million of pounds sterling, adding those who are beggars by profession, to the bulk of farmers, cottagers and labourers, with their wives and children, who are beggars in effect; I desire those politicians who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not at this day think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe, and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes, as they have since gone through, by the oppression of landlords, the impossibility of paying rent without money or trade, the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor cloaths to cover them from the inclemencies of the weather, and

the most inevitable prospect of intailing the like, or greater miseries, upon their breed for ever.

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the publick good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children, by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.

ALEXANDER POPE

Alexander Pope (1688 -- 1744) was a master of satirical verse as well as a renowned translator of Greek and Roman classics. *The Oxford Book of English Quotation* ranks Pope the second most quoted writer in the language, just behind William Shakespeare. His works received both critical acclaim and popular success in his lifetime and beyond.



An Essay on Man: Epistle I

To Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke

Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of kings.
Let us (since life can little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die)
Expatriate free o'er all this scene of man;
A mighty maze! but not without a plan;
A wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous shoot;
Or garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.
Together let us beat this ample field,
Try what the open, what the covert yield;
The latent tracts, the giddy heights explore
Of all who blindly creep, or sightless soar;
Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
And catch the manners living as they rise;
Laugh where we must, be candid where we can;
But vindicate the ways of God to man.

I.

Say first, of God above, or man below,
What can we reason, but from what we know?
Of man what see we, but his station here,

From which to reason, or to which refer?
Through worlds unnumber'd though the God be known,
'Tis ours to trace him only in our own.
He, who through vast immensity can pierce,
See worlds on worlds compose one universe,
Observe how system into system runs,
What other planets circle other suns,
What varied being peoples ev'ry star,
May tell why Heav'n has made us as we are.
But of this frame the bearings, and the ties,
The strong connections, nice dependencies,
Gradations just, has thy pervading soul
Look'd through? or can a part contain the whole?

Is the great chain, that draws all to agree,
And drawn supports, upheld by God, or thee?

II.

Presumptuous man! the reason wouldst thou
find,
Why form'd so weak, so little, and so blind?
First, if thou canst, the harder reason guess,
Why form'd no weaker, blinder, and no less!
Ask of thy mother earth, why oaks are made
Taller or stronger than the weeds they shade?

Or ask of yonder argent fields above,
Why Jove's satellites are less than Jove?

Of systems possible, if 'tis confest
That Wisdom infinite must form the best,
Where all must full or not coherent be,
And all that rises, rise in due degree;
Then, in the scale of reas'ning life, 'tis plain
There must be somewhere, such a rank as man:
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has plac'd him wrong?

Respecting man, whatever wrong we call,
May, must be right, as relative to all.
In human works, though labour'd on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its end produce;
Yet serves to second too some other use.
So man, who here seems principal alone,
Perhaps acts second to some sphere unknown,
Touches some wheel, or verges to some goal;
'Tis but a part we see, and not a whole.

When the proud steed shall know why man
restrains

His fiery course, or drives him o'er the plains:
When the dull ox, why now he breaks the clod,
Is now a victim, and now Egypt's God:
Then shall man's pride and dulness comprehend
His actions', passions', being's, use and end;
Why doing, suff'ring, check'd, impell'd; and why
This hour a slave, the next a deity.

Then say not man's imperfect, Heav'n in fault;
Say rather, man's as perfect as he ought:
His knowledge measur'd to his state and place,
His time a moment, and a point his space.
If to be perfect in a certain sphere,
What matter, soon or late, or here or there?
The blest today is as completely so,
As who began a thousand years ago.

III.

Heav'n from all creatures hides the book of fate,
All but the page prescrib'd, their present state:
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know:
Or who could suffer being here below?
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed today,
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?
Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food,

And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood.
Oh blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n:
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
Atoms or systems into ruin hurl'd,
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.

Hope humbly then; with trembling pinions soar;
Wait the great teacher Death; and God adore!
What future bliss, he gives not thee to know,
But gives that hope to be thy blessing now.
Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
Man never is, but always to be blest:
The soul, uneasy and confin'd from home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

Lo! the poor Indian, whose untutor'd mind
Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind;
His soul, proud science never taught to stray
Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
Yet simple nature to his hope has giv'n,
Behind the cloud-topt hill, an humbler heav'n;
Some safer world in depth of woods embrac'd,
Some happier island in the wat'ry waste,

Where slaves once more their native land behold,
No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
To be, contents his natural desire,
He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
His faithful dog shall bear him company.

IV.

Go, wiser thou! and, in thy scale of sense
Weigh thy opinion against Providence;
Call imperfection what thou fanciest such,
Say, here he gives too little, there too much:
Destroy all creatures for thy sport or gust,
Yet cry, if man's unhappy, God's unjust;
If man alone engross not Heav'n's high care,
Alone made perfect here, immortal there:
Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his justice, be the God of God.

In pride, in reas'ning pride, our error lies;
All quit their sphere, and rush into the skies.
Pride still is aiming at the blest abodes,
Men would be angels, angels would be gods.
Aspiring to be gods, if angels fell,
Aspiring to be angels, men rebel:
And who but wishes to invert the laws

Of order, sins against th' Eternal Cause.

V.

Ask for what end the heav'nly bodies shine,
Earth for whose use? Pride answers, " 'Tis for mine:
For me kind Nature wakes her genial pow'r,
Suckles each herb, and spreads out ev'ry flow'r;
Annual for me, the grape, the rose renew,
The juice nectareous, and the balmy dew;
For me, the mine a thousand treasures brings;
For me, health gushes from a thousand springs;
Seas roll to waft me, suns to light me rise;
My foot-stool earth, my canopy the skies."

But errs not Nature from this gracious end,
From burning suns when livid deaths descend,
When earthquakes swallow, or when tempests sweep
Towns to one grave, whole nations to the deep?
"No, ('tis replied) the first Almighty Cause
Acts not by partial, but by gen'ral laws;
Th' exceptions few; some change since all began:
And what created perfect?"—Why then man?
If the great end be human happiness,
Then Nature deviates; and can man do less?
As much that end a constant course requires

Of show'rs and sunshine, as of man's desires;
As much eternal springs and cloudless skies,
As men for ever temp'rate, calm, and wise.
If plagues or earthquakes break not Heav'n's design,
Why then a Borgia, or a Catiline?
Who knows but he, whose hand the lightning forms,
Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms,
Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar's mind,
Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?
From pride, from pride, our very reas'ning springs;
Account for moral, as for nat'ral things:
Why charge we Heav'n in those, in these acquit?
In both, to reason right is to submit.

Better for us, perhaps, it might appear,
Were there all harmony, all virtue here;
That never air or ocean felt the wind;
That never passion discompos'd the mind.
But ALL subsists by elemental strife;
And passions are the elements of life.
The gen'ral order, since the whole began,
Is kept in nature, and is kept in man.

VI.

What would this man? Now upward will he soar,

And little less than angel, would be more;
Now looking downwards, just as griev'd appears
To want the strength of bulls, the fur of bears.
Made for his use all creatures if he call,
Say what their use, had he the pow'rs of all?
Nature to these, without profusion, kind,
The proper organs, proper pow'rs assign'd;
Each seeming want compensated of course,
Here with degrees of swiftness, there of force;
All in exact proportion to the state;
Nothing to add, and nothing to abate.
Each beast, each insect, happy in its own:
Is Heav'n unkind to man, and man alone?
Shall he alone, whom rational we call,
Be pleas'd with nothing, if not bless'd with all?

The bliss of man (could pride that blessing find)
Is not to act or think beyond mankind;
No pow'rs of body or of soul to share,
But what his nature and his state can bear.
Why has not man a microscopic eye?
For this plain reason, man is not a fly.
Say what the use, were finer optics giv'n,
T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?
Or touch, if tremblingly alive all o'er,

To smart and agonize at ev'ry pore?
Or quick effluvia darting through the brain,
Die of a rose in aromatic pain?
If nature thunder'd in his op'ning ears,
And stunn'd him with the music of the spheres,
How would he wish that Heav'n had left him still
The whisp'ring zephyr, and the purling rill?
Who finds not Providence all good and wise,
Alike in what it gives, and what denies?

VII.

Far as creation's ample range extends,
The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:
Mark how it mounts, to man's imperial race,
From the green myriads in the peopled grass:
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam:
Of smell, the headlong lioness between,
And hound sagacious on the tainted green:
Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
To that which warbles through the vernal wood:
The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:
In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
From pois'nous herbs extracts the healing dew:

How instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
Compar'd, half-reas'ning elephant, with thine:
'Twixt that, and reason, what a nice barrier;
For ever sep'rate, yet for ever near!
Remembrance and reflection how allied;
What thin partitions sense from thought divide:
And middle natures, how they long to join,
Yet never pass th' insuperable line!
Without this just gradation, could they be
Subjected, these to those, or all to thee?
The pow'rs of all subdu'd by thee alone,
Is not thy reason all these pow'rs in one?

VIII.

See, through this air, this ocean, and this earth,
All matter quick, and bursting into birth.
Above, how high, progressive life may go!
Around, how wide! how deep extend below!
Vast chain of being, which from God began,
Natures ethereal, human, angel, man,
Beast, bird, fish, insect! what no eye can see,
No glass can reach! from infinite to thee,
From thee to nothing!—On superior pow'rs
Were we to press, inferior might on ours:
Or in the full creation leave a void,

Where, one step broken, the great scale's destroy'd:
From nature's chain whatever link you strike,
Tenth or ten thousandth, breaks the chain alike.

And, if each system in gradation roll
Alike essential to th' amazing whole,
The least confusion but in one, not all
That system only, but the whole must fall.
Let earth unbalanc'd from her orbit fly,
Planets and suns run lawless through the sky;
Let ruling angels from their spheres be hurl'd,
Being on being wreck'd, and world on world;
Heav'n's whole foundations to their centre nod,
And nature tremble to the throne of God.
All this dread order break—for whom? for thee?
Vile worm!—Oh madness, pride, impiety!

IX.

What if the foot ordain'd the dust to tread,
Or hand to toil, aspir'd to be the head?
What if the head, the eye, or ear repin'd
To serve mere engines to the ruling mind?
Just as absurd for any part to claim
To be another, in this gen'ral frame:
Just as absurd, to mourn the tasks or pains,

The great directing Mind of All ordains.

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul;
That, chang'd through all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth, as in th' ethereal frame,
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent,
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns;
To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all.

X.

Cease then, nor order imperfection name:
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
Know thy own point: This kind, this due degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee.
Submit.—In this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear:
Safe in the hand of one disposing pow'r,

Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.

All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony, not understood;
All partial evil, universal good:
And, spite of pride, in erring reason's spite,
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.

An Essay on Man: Epistle II

I.

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a god, or beast;
In doubt his mind or body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:

Chaos of thought and passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of truth, in endless error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!

Go, wondrous creature! mount where science
guides,
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides;
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
Correct old time, and regulate the sun;
Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod,
And quitting sense call imitating God;
As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
And turn their heads to imitate the sun.
Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!

Superior beings, when of late they saw
A mortal Man unfold all Nature's law,
Admir'd such wisdom in an earthly shape,
And showed a Newton as we shew an Ape.

Could he, whose rules the rapid comet bind,
Describe or fix one movement of his mind?
Who saw its fires here rise, and there descend,
Explain his own beginning, or his end?
Alas what wonder! Man's superior part
Uncheck'd may rise, and climb from art to art;
But when his own great work is but begun,
What Reason weaves, by Passion is undone.

Trace science then, with modesty thy guide;
First strip off all her equipage of pride;
Deduct what is but vanity, or dress,
Or learning's luxury, or idleness;
Or tricks to show the stretch of human brain,
Mere curious pleasure, or ingenious pain;
Expunge the whole, or lop th' excrescent parts
Of all our Vices have created Arts;
Then see how little the remaining sum,
Which serv'd the past, and must the times to come!

II.

Two principles in human nature reign;
Self-love, to urge, and reason, to restrain;
Nor this a good, nor that a bad we call,

Each works its end, to move or govern all:
And to their proper operation still,
Ascribe all good; to their improper, ill.

Self-love, the spring of motion, acts the soul;
Reason's comparing balance rules the whole.
Man, but for that, no action could attend,
And but for this, were active to no end:
Fix'd like a plant on his peculiar spot,
To draw nutrition, propagate, and rot;
Or, meteor-like, flame lawless through the void,
Destroying others, by himself destroy'd.

Most strength the moving principle requires;
Active its task, it prompts, impels, inspires.
Sedate and quiet the comparing lies,
Form'd but to check, delib'rate, and advise.
Self-love still stronger, as its objects nigh;
Reason's at distance, and in prospect lie:
That sees immediate good by present sense;
Reason, the future and the consequence.
Thicker than arguments, temptations throng,
At best more watchful this, but that more strong.
The action of the stronger to suspend,
Reason still use, to reason still attend.

Attention, habit and experience gains;
Each strengthens reason, and self-love restrains.

Let subtle schoolmen teach these friends to
fight,
More studious to divide than to unite,
And grace and virtue, sense and reason split,
With all the rash dexterity of wit:
Wits, just like fools, at war about a name,
Have full as oft no meaning, or the same.
Self-love and reason to one end aspire,
Pain their aversion, pleasure their desire;
But greedy that its object would devour,
This taste the honey, and not wound the flow'r:
Pleasure, or wrong or rightly understood,
Our greatest evil, or our greatest good.

III.

Modes of self-love the passions we may call:
'Tis real good, or seeming, moves them all:
But since not every good we can divide,
And reason bids us for our own provide;
Passions, though selfish, if their means be fair,
List under reason, and deserve her care;
Those, that imparted, court a nobler aim,

Exalt their kind, and take some virtue's name.

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast
Their virtue fix'd, 'tis fix'd as in a frost;
Contracted all, retiring to the breast;
But strength of mind is exercise, not rest:
The rising tempest puts in act the soul,
Parts it may ravage, but preserves the whole.
On life's vast ocean diversely we sail,
Reason the card, but passion is the gale;
Nor God alone in the still calm we find,
He mounts the storm, and walks upon the wind.

Passions, like elements, though born to fight,
Yet, mix'd and soften'd, in his work unite:
These 'tis enough to temper and employ;
But what composes man, can man destroy?
Suffice that reason keep to nature's road,
Subject, compound them, follow her and God.
Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasure's smiling train,
Hate, fear, and grief, the family of pain,
These mix'd with art, and to due bounds confin'd,
Make and maintain the balance of the mind:
The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife
Gives all the strength and colour of our life.

Pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes,
And when in act they cease, in prospect, rise:
Present to grasp, and future still to find,
The whole employ of body and of mind.
All spread their charms, but charm not all alike;
On diff'rent senses diff'rent objects strike;
Hence diff'rent passions more or less inflame,
As strong or weak, the organs of the frame;
And hence one master passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

As man, perhaps, the moment of his breath,
Receives the lurking principle of death;
The young disease, that must subdue at length,
Grows with his growth, and strengthens with his strength:
So, cast and mingled with his very frame,
The mind's disease, its ruling passion came;
Each vital humour which should feed the whole,
Soon flows to this, in body and in soul.
Whatever warms the heart, or fills the head,
As the mind opens, and its functions spread,
Imagination plies her dang'rous art,
And pours it all upon the peccant part.

Nature its mother, habit is its nurse;
Wit, spirit, faculties, but make it worse;
Reason itself but gives it edge and pow'r;
As Heav'n's blest beam turns vinegar more sour.
We, wretched subjects, though to lawful sway,
In this weak queen some fav'rite still obey:
Ah! if she lend not arms, as well as rules,
What can she more than tell us we are fools?
Teach us to mourn our nature, not to mend,
A sharp accuser, but a helpless friend!
Or from a judge turn pleader, to persuade
The choice we make, or justify it made;
Proud of an easy conquest all along,
She but removes weak passions for the strong:
So, when small humours gather to a gout,
The doctor fancies he has driv'n them out.

Yes, nature's road must ever be preferr'd;
Reason is here no guide, but still a guard:
'Tis hers to rectify, not overthrow,
And treat this passion more as friend than foe:
A mightier pow'r the strong direction sends,
And sev'ral men impels to sev'ral ends.
Like varying winds, by other passions toss'd,
This drives them constant to a certain coast.

Let pow'r or knowledge, gold or glory, please,
Or (oft more strong than all) the love of ease;
Through life 'tis followed, ev'n at life's expense;
The merchant's toil, the sage's indolence,
The monk's humility, the hero's pride,
All, all alike, find reason on their side.

Th' eternal art educing good from ill,
Grafts on this passion our best principle:
'Tis thus the mercury of man is fix'd,
Strong grows the virtue with his nature mix'd;
The dross cements what else were too refin'd,
And in one interest body acts with mind.

As fruits, ungrateful to the planter's care,
On savage stocks inserted, learn to bear;
The surest virtues thus from passions shoot,
Wild nature's vigor working at the root.
What crops of wit and honesty appear
From spleen, from obstinacy, hate, or fear!
See anger, zeal and fortitude supply;
Ev'n av'rice, prudence; sloth, philosophy;
Lust, through some certain strainers well refin'd,
Is gentle love, and charms all womankind;
Envy, to which th' ignoble mind's a slave,

Is emulation in the learn'd or brave;
Nor virtue, male or female, can we name,
But what will grow on pride, or grow on shame.

Thus nature gives us (let it check our pride)

The virtue nearest to our vice allied:
Reason the byass turns to good from ill,
And Nero reigns a Titus, if he will.
The fiery soul abhorr'd in Catiline,
In Decius charms, in Curtius is divine:
The same ambition can destroy or save,
And make a patriot as it makes a knave.

IV.

This light and darkness in our chaos join'd,
What shall divide? The God within the mind.

Extremes in nature equal ends produce,
In man they join to some mysterious use;
Though each by turns the other's bound invade,
As, in some well-wrought picture, light and shade,
And oft so mix, the diff'rence is too nice
Where ends the virtue, or begins the vice.

Fools! who from hence into the notion fall,

That vice or virtue there is none at all.
If white and black blend, soften, and unite
A thousand ways, is there no black or white?
Ask your own heart, and nothing is so plain;
'Tis to mistake them, costs the time and pain.

V.

Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.
But where th' extreme of vice, was ne'er agreed:
Ask where's the North? at York, 'tis on the Tweed;
In Scotland, at the Orcades; and there,
At Greenland, Zembla, or the Lord knows where:
No creature owns it in the first degree,
But thinks his neighbour farther gone than he!
Ev'n those who dwell beneath its very zone,
Or never feel the rage, or never own;
What happier natures shrink at with affright,
The hard inhabitant contends is right.

VI.

Virtuous and vicious ev'ry man must be,
Few in th' extreme, but all in the degree;

The rogue and fool by fits is fair and wise;
And ev'n the best, by fits, what they despise.
'Tis but by parts we follow good or ill,
For, vice or virtue, self directs it still;
Each individual seeks a sev'ral goal;
But heav'n's great view is one, and that the whole:
That counterworks each folly and caprice;
That disappoints th' effect of ev'ry vice;
That, happy frailties to all ranks applied,
Shame to the virgin, to the matron pride,
Fear to the statesman, rashness to the chief,
To kings presumption, and to crowds belief,
That, virtue's ends from vanity can raise,
Which seeks no int'rest, no reward but praise;
And build on wants, and on defects of mind,
The joy, the peace, the glory of mankind.

Heav'n forming each on other to depend,
A master, or a servant, or a friend,
Bids each on other for assistance call,
'Till one man's weakness grows the strength of all.
Wants, frailties, passions, closer still ally
The common int'rest, or endear the tie:
To these we owe true friendship, love sincere,
Each home-felt joy that life inherits here;

Yet from the same we learn, in its decline,
Those joys, those loves, those int'rests to resign;
Taught half by reason, half by mere decay,
To welcome death, and calmly pass away.

Whate'er the passion, knowledge, fame, or pelf,
Not one will change his neighbour with himself.
The learn'd is happy nature to explore,
The fool is happy that he knows no more;
The rich is happy in the plenty giv'n,
The poor contents him with the care of heav'n.
See the blind beggar dance, the cripple sing,
The sot a hero, lunatic a king;
The starving chemist in his golden views
Supremely blest, the poet in his Muse.

See some strange comfort ev'ry state attend,
And pride bestow'd on all, a common friend;
See some fit passion ev'ry age supply,
Hope travels through, nor quits us when we die.

Behold the child, by nature's kindly law,
Pleas'd with a rattle, tickl'd with a straw:
Some livelier plaything gives his youth delight,
A little louder, but as empty quite:

Scarfs, garters, gold, amuse his riper stage,
And beads and pray'r books are the toys of age:
Pleas'd with this bauble still, as that before;
'Till tir'd he sleeps, and life's poor play is o'er!

Meanwhile opinion gilds with varying rays
Those painted clouds that beautify our days;
Each want of happiness by hope supplied,
And each vacuity of sense by Pride:
These build as fast as knowledge can destroy;
In folly's cup still laughs the bubble, joy;
One prospect lost, another still we gain;
And not a vanity is giv'n in vain;
Ev'n mean self-love becomes, by force divine,
The scale to measure others' wants by thine.
See! and confess, one comfort still must rise,
'Tis this: Though man's a fool, yet God is wise.

Epigrams

MY LORD COMPLAINS

MY Lord complains that Pope, stark mad with gardens,
Has cut three trees, the value of three farthings.

‘But he ’s my neighbour,’ cries the Peer polite:
‘And if he visit me, I ’ll waive the right.’

What! on compulsion, and against my will, 5
A lord's acquaintance? Let him file his bill!

ON MRS. TOFTS.

(A CELEBRATED OPERA SINGER.)

SO bright is thy beauty, so charming thy song,
As had drawn both the beasts and their Orpheus along;
But such is thy avarice, and such is thy pride,
That the beasts must have starved, and the poet have died.

TO A BLOCKHEAD.

You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come;
Knock as you please, there's nobody at home.

THE FOOL AND THE POET.

Sir, I admit your general rule,
That every poet is a fool,
But you yourself may serve to show it,
That every fool is not a poet.

THOMAS GRAY

Thomas Gray (1716 – 1771) was a poet and professor at Cambridge University. His “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” published in 1751, became an instant success and has been quoted and imitated by generations of admirers.



ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

THE Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, 5
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds;

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tow'r
The moping owl does to the moon complain 10
Of such as, wand'ring near her secret bow'r,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, 15
The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,
The swallow twitt'ring from the straw-built shed,

The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn,
Or busy housewife ply her evening care:
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, 25
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke:
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure; 30
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour: 35
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to These the fault,
If Memory o'er their Tomb no Trophies raise,

Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.	40	Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest, Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.	60
Can storied urn or animated bust Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath? Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust, Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of death?		Th' applause of list'ning senates to command, The threats of pain and ruin to despise, To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land, And read their history in a nation's eyes,	
Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire; Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd, Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.	45	Their lot forbade: nor circumscribed alone Their glowing virtues, but their crimes confined; Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne, And shut the gates of mercy on mankind,	65
But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll; Chill Penury repress'd their noble rage, And froze the genial current of the soul.	50	The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide, To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.	70
Full many a gem of purest ray serene The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear: Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its sweetness on the desert air.	55	Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife, Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray; Along the cool sequester'd vale of life They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.	75
Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast The little tyrant of his fields withstood,		Yet ev'n these bones from insult to protect Some frail memorial still erected nigh,	

With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply:
And many a holy text around she strews,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb Forgetfulness a prey, 85
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires; 90
Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
Ev'n in our Ashes live their wonted Fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led, 95
Some kindred spirit shall inquire thy fate,

Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
'Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn

Brushing with hasty steps the dew away
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn. 100

'There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

'Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn, 105
Mutt'ring his wayward fancies he would rove,
Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

'One morn I miss'd him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath and near his fav'rite tree; 110
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he;

'The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him borne.
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay 115
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn:'

THE EPITAPH.

Here rests his head upon the lap of Earth
A Youth to Fortune and to Fame unknown.
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own. 120

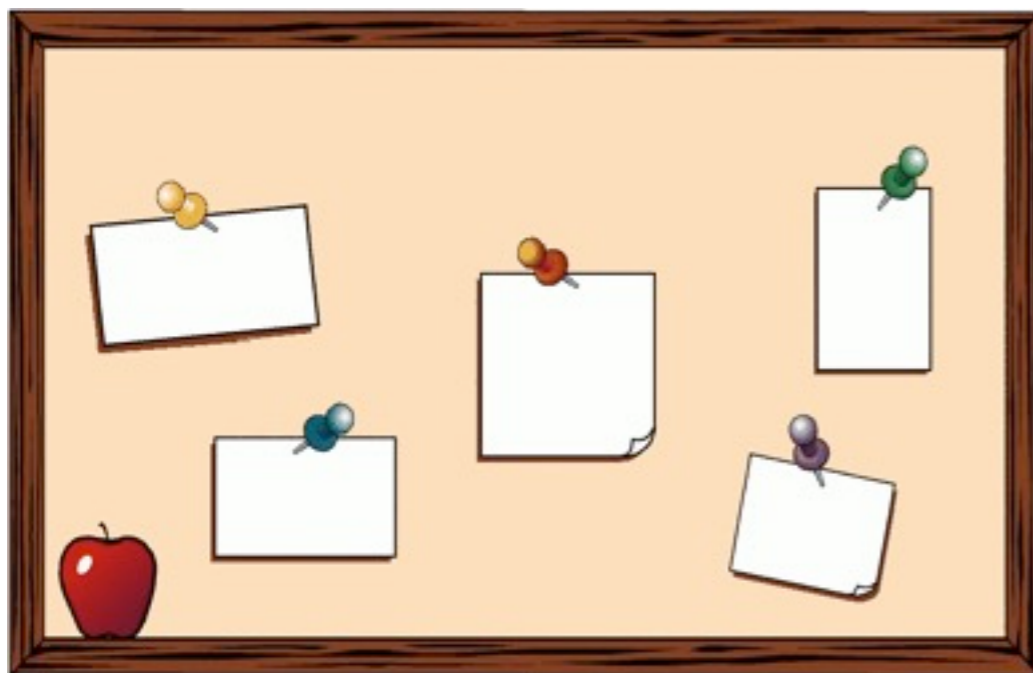
Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere,
Heav'n did a recompense as largely send:
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a tear,
He gain'd from Heav'n ('twas all he wish'd) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose, 125
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

[AUDIO 4.1](#) Reading of the poem



RESOURCES 7 The Restoration





5

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

WILLIAM BLAKE

William Blake (1757 – 1827) was a poet, painter, and printmaker and seminal figure in the Romantic movement. His *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* remains one of the clearest expressions of English Romanticism.



The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee

Dost thou know who made thee

Gave thee life & bid thee feed.

By the stream & o'er the mead;

Gave thee clothing of delight,

Softest clothing wooly bright;

Gave thee such a tender voice,

Making all the vales rejoice!

Little Lamb who made thee

Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,

Little Lamb I'll tell thee!

He is called by thy name,

For he calls himself a Lamb:

He is meek & he is mild,

He became a little child:

I a child & thou a lamb,

We are called by his name.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

Little Lamb God bless thee.

The Tyger

Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?

Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

GALLERY 5.1 William Blake's paintings



The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with Sun, 1805



JANE AUSTEN

Jane Austen (1775 -- 1817) was an English novelist noted for her sharp social criticism, particularly of the landed gentry, England's upper class. Her novels often explore the complex negotiations women of her day endured to move favorably amongst the social elites of her day.



JANE AUSTEN.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850) marked the beginning of the Romantic movement in England with the publication of his *Lyrical Ballads*. From the so-called “Lake District,” Wordsworth celebrated the natural beauty he saw in his immediate surroundings and championed other poets of his day, namely Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He defined his poetry as “emotion, recollected in tranquility.”



**Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,
On Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour.
July 13, 1798**

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire

The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood

Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,

Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, not any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes

The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.—And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:

For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy: for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee: and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured

Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

[MOVIE 5.1](#) See the real
Tintern Abbey



The World Is Too Much with Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;—
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

George Carlin on Wordsworth's Theme

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider Freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.

We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 -- 1834) was a Lake Poet and literary critic who, along with Wordsworth, popularized the Romantic spirit in England. He influenced many other key literary figures throughout the world, most notably the American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson.



Kubla Khan

Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
 Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

 The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,

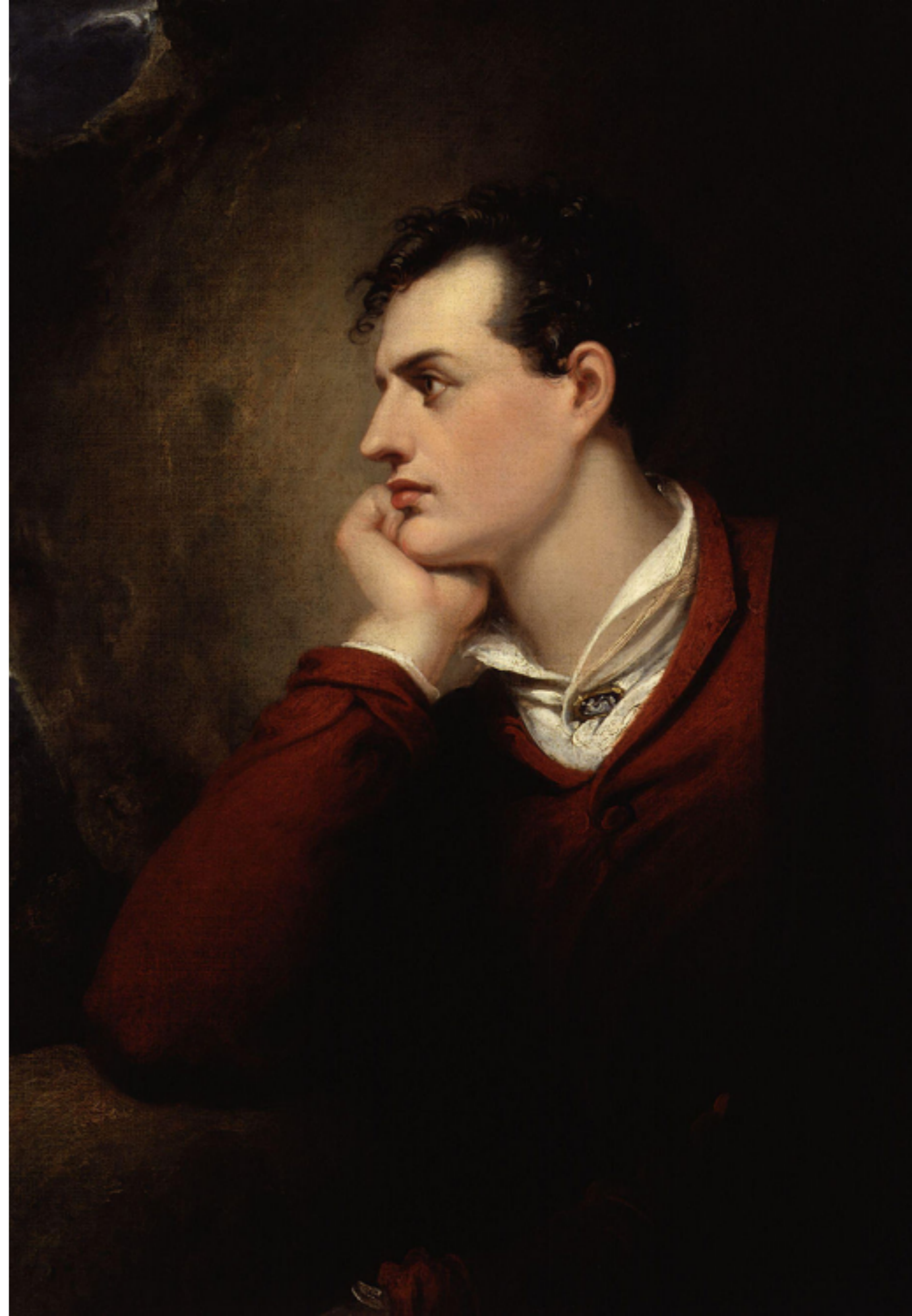
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

MOVIE 5.2 Xanadu



GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

Lord Byron (1788 – 1824) was a member of the English peerage and prominent lyric poet of the Romantic movement. His life is often as celebrated as his verse. He lived abroad for several years in Italy before joining the Greek War for Independence from the Ottoman Empire. He is known for short lyrics, as well as two lengthy narrative poems, *Don Juan* and *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.



She Walks in Beauty

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!

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822) was an iconic Romantic figure and poet, known for his radical social and political views. Though he died young, he left behind some of the most important lyric poetry of his day. His second wife, Mary Shelley, authored *Frankenstein*.



Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said—"Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

JOHN KEATS

John Keats (1795 -- 1821) left behind an impressive body of poet work despite his brief life. Unlike his contemporary Lord Byron, Keats was of humble background, his father running a livery stable. His work highlights extreme emotion filtered through analysis of natural imagery.



La Belle Dame Sans Merci

Ballad

I.

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

II.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms! 5
So haggard and so woe-begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

III.

I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever dew, 10
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

IV.

I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful—a faery's child,

Her hair was long, her foot was light, 15
And her eyes were wild.

V.

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan. 20

VI.

I set her on my pacing steed,
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

VII.

She found me roots of relish sweet, 25
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
“I love thee true.”

VIII.

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd fill sore, 30
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

IX.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd 35
On the cold hill's side.

X.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!" 40

XI.

I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here,
On the cold hill's side.

XII.

And this is why I sojourn here, 45
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

When I have Fears That I May Cease to Be

When I have fears that I may cease to be
 Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high-pilèd books, in charactery,
 Hold like rich garnerers the full ripened grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starred face,
 Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
 Their shadows with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
 That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
 Of unreflecting love—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

Ode on a Grecian Urn

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?

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!

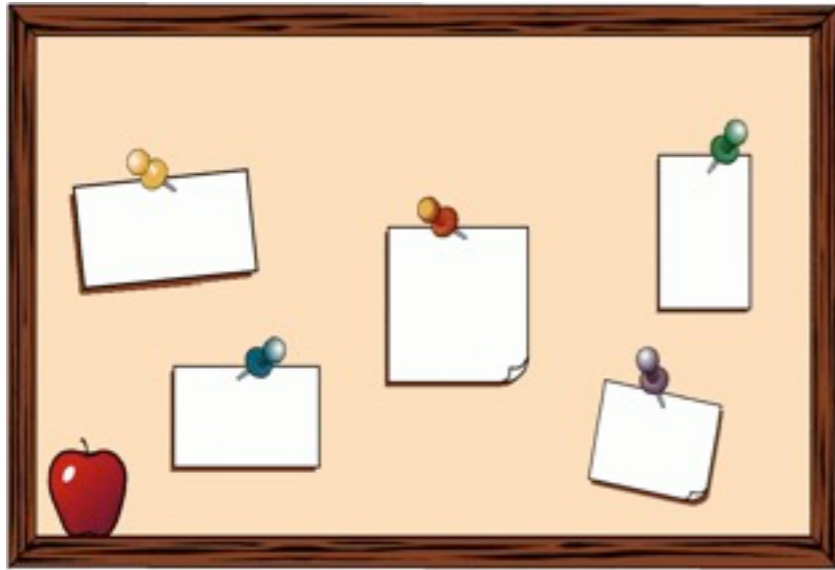
Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,

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.

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.

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."

RESOURCES 8 The Romantics



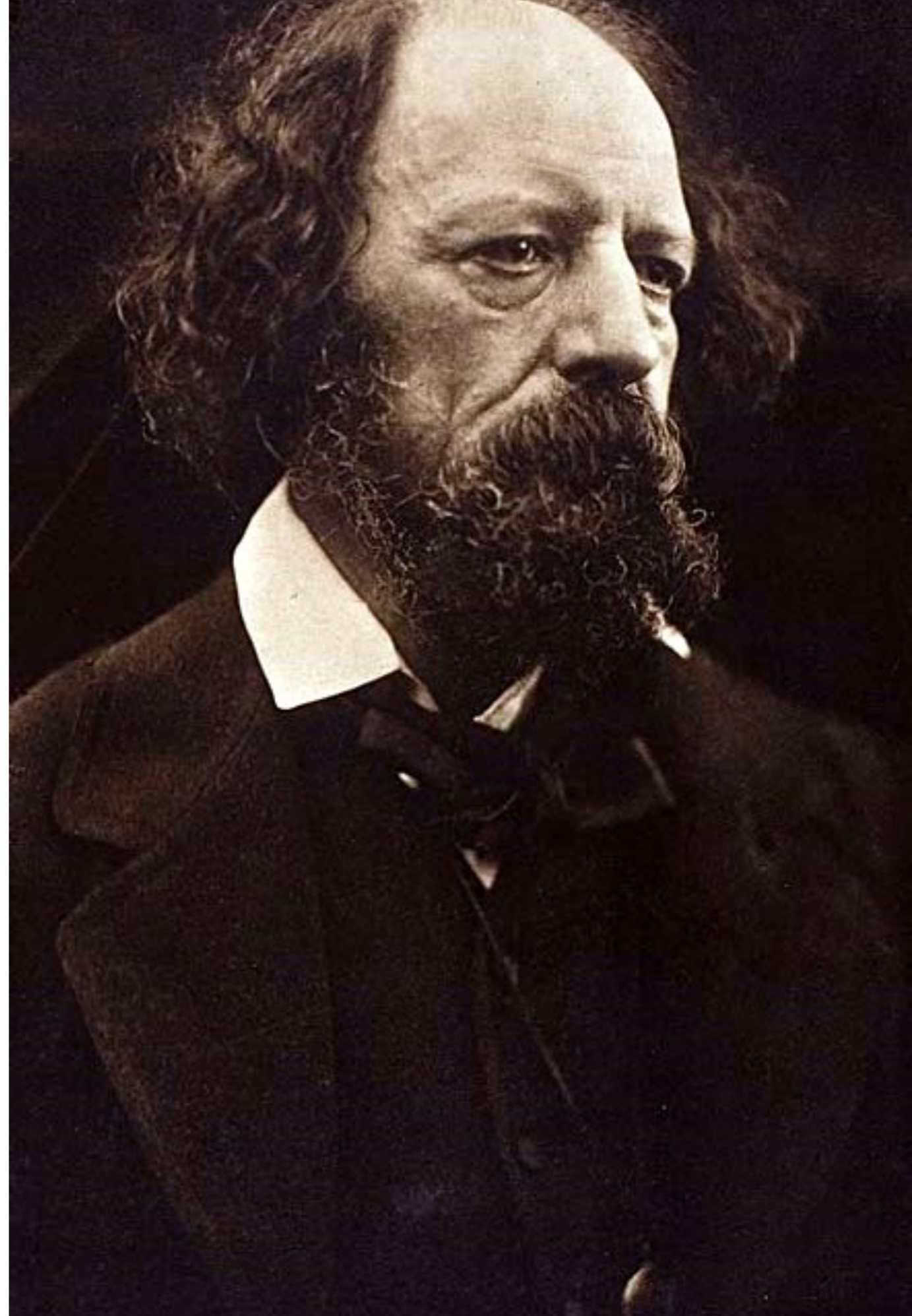


6

THE VICTORIAN AGE

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Lord Tennyson (1809 – 1892) was England's Poet Laureate and one of the most beloved literary figures of Victorian England. Born to a middle-class family with both noble and royal ancestry, Tennyson attended Trinity College, Cambridge and became intimate with the royal family through their admiration of his work.



Ulysses

IT little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known; cities of men

And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met;

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades

For ever and for ever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!

As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,

A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge, like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

This is my son, mine own Telemachus,

To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil

This labour, by slow prudence to make mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good.

Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail

In offices of tenderness, and pay

Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

There lies the port: the vessel puffs her sail:

There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
 Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil; 50
 Death closes all: but something ere the end,
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
 Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep 55
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths 60
 Of all the western stars until I die.
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
 Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho' 65
 We are not now that strength which in old days
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,
 Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

AUDIO 6.1 Two modern interpretations on "Ulysses"



ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

Born in 1806 at Coxhoe Hall, Durham, England, Elizabeth Barrett was an English poet influenced by the Romantic movement. The oldest of 12 children, Elizabeth was the first in her family born in England in over 200 years. For centuries, the Barrett family, who were part Creole, had lived in Jamaica, where they owned sugar plantations and relied on slave labor. Elizabeth's father, Edward Barrett Moulton Barrett, chose to raise his family in England while his fortune grew in Jamaica.

Educated at home, Elizabeth apparently had read passages from *Paradise Lost* and a number of Shakespearean plays, among other great works, before the age of 10. By her 12th year she had written her first "epic" poem, which consisted of four books of rhyming couplets. Two years later, Elizabeth developed a lung ailment that plagued her for the rest of her life. Doctors began treating her with morphine, which she would take until her death. While saddling a pony when she was 15, Elizabeth also suffered a spinal injury. Despite her ailments, her education continued to



Sonnet 43

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 everyday'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.

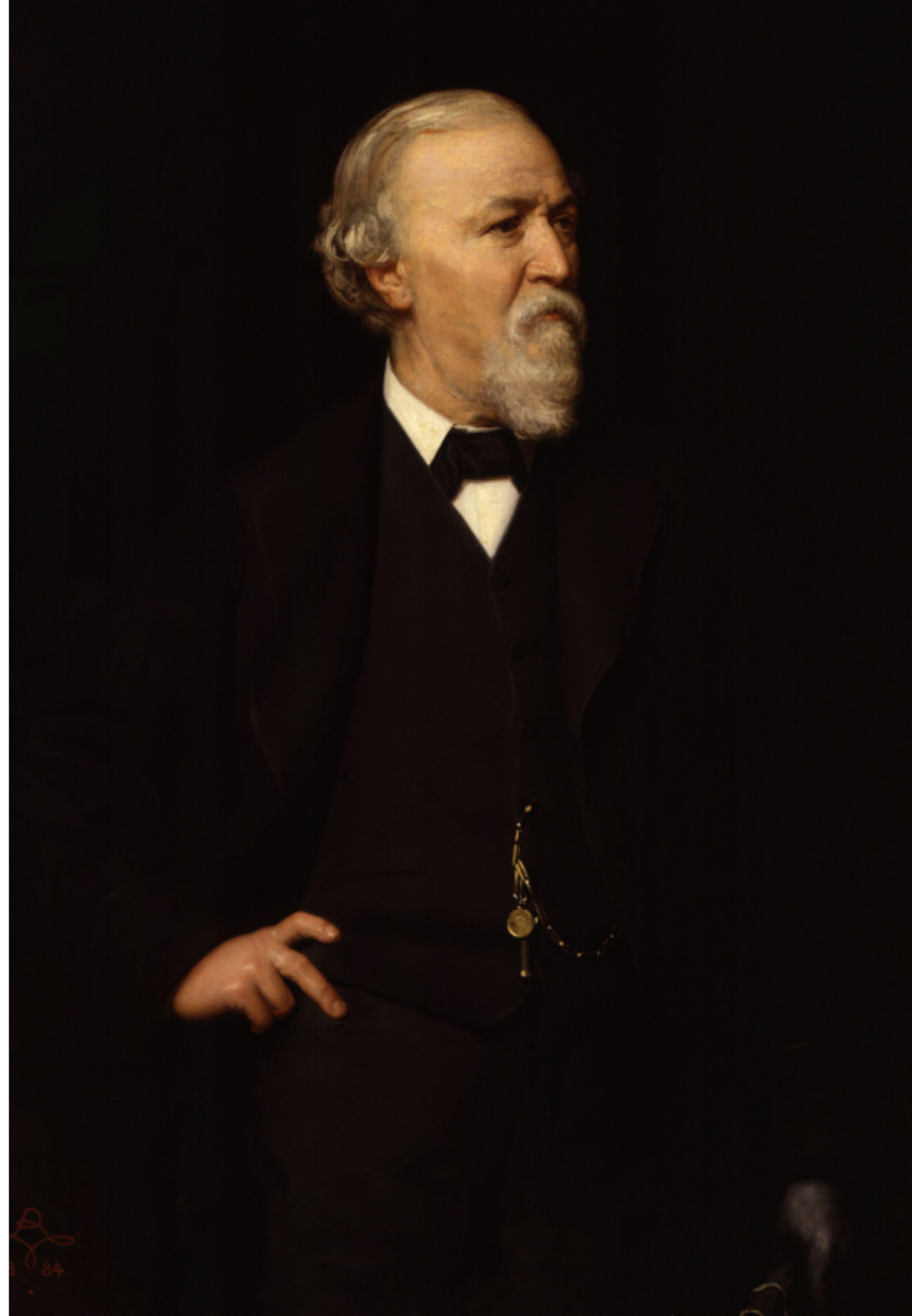
CHARLOTTE BRONTE

Charlotte Brontë (1816 – 1855) was the eldest of the three Brontë sisters who published important novels. Like most women of her day, Brontë was educated at home and did not attend formal school. In addition to her literary output, she worked as a governess. She published under the name “Currer Bell” during her life to conceal her gender from her works.



ROBERT BROWNING

Robert Browning (1812 – 1889) was an English poet and dramatist. Most of his poems are dramatic monologues, and he is considered the master of that particular lyric form. He married Elizabeth Barrett (who was considerably more famous than he at the time).



My Last Duchess

THAT'S my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Frà Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
"Frà 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
Frà 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 favor at her breast, 25
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, 30
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 10
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill 35
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 40
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 pretence
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!

Porphyria's Lover

The rain set early in to-night,
The sullen wind was soon awake,
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,
And did its worst to vex the lake:
I listened with heart fit to break.
When glided in Porphyria; straight
She shut the cold out and the storm,
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;
Which done, she rose, and from her form
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,
And laid her soiled gloves by, untied
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,
And, last, she sat down by my side
And called me. When no voice replied,
She put my arm about her waist,
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,
And all her yellow hair displaced,
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair,
Murmuring how she loved me — she
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,
To set its struggling passion free

From pride, and vainer ties dissever,
And give herself to me for ever.
But passion sometimes would prevail,
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain
A sudden thought of one so pale
For love of her, and all in vain:
So, she was come through wind and rain.
Be sure I looked up at her eyes
Happy and proud; at last I knew
Porphyria worshipped me; surprise
Made my heart swell, and still it grew
While I debated what to do.
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,
Perfectly pure and good: I found
A thing to do, and all her hair
In one long yellow string I wound
Three times her little throat around,
And strangled her. No pain felt she;
I am quite sure she felt no pain.
As a shut bud that holds a bee,
I warily oped her lids: again
Laughed the blue eyes without a stain.
And I untightened next the tress
About her neck; her cheek once more
Blushed bright beneath my burning kiss:

I propped her head up as before,
Only, this time my shoulder bore
Her head, which droops upon it still:
The smiling rosy little head,
So glad it has its utmost will,
That all it scorned at once is fled,
And I, its love, am gained instead!
Porphyria's love: she guessed not how
Her darling one wish would be heard.
And thus we sit together now,
And all night long we have not stirred,
And yet God has not said a word!

CHARLES DICKENS

Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870) was the great popular voice of Victorian England. The best-selling author of this time period, Dickens is memorialized with a burial spot in Poets' Corner. His serialized novels gained popular fame while chronicling Victorian England in a way that few others have.

MOVIE 6.1 The importance of Charles Dickens



MATTHEW ARNOLD

Matthew Arnold (1822 -- 1888) was an English poet, cultural critic, and school reformer. His father had been a famous schoolmaster, and Arnold was appointed Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools. His poetry and essays are known for their understanding of the social and cultural landscape of his day.



Dover Beach

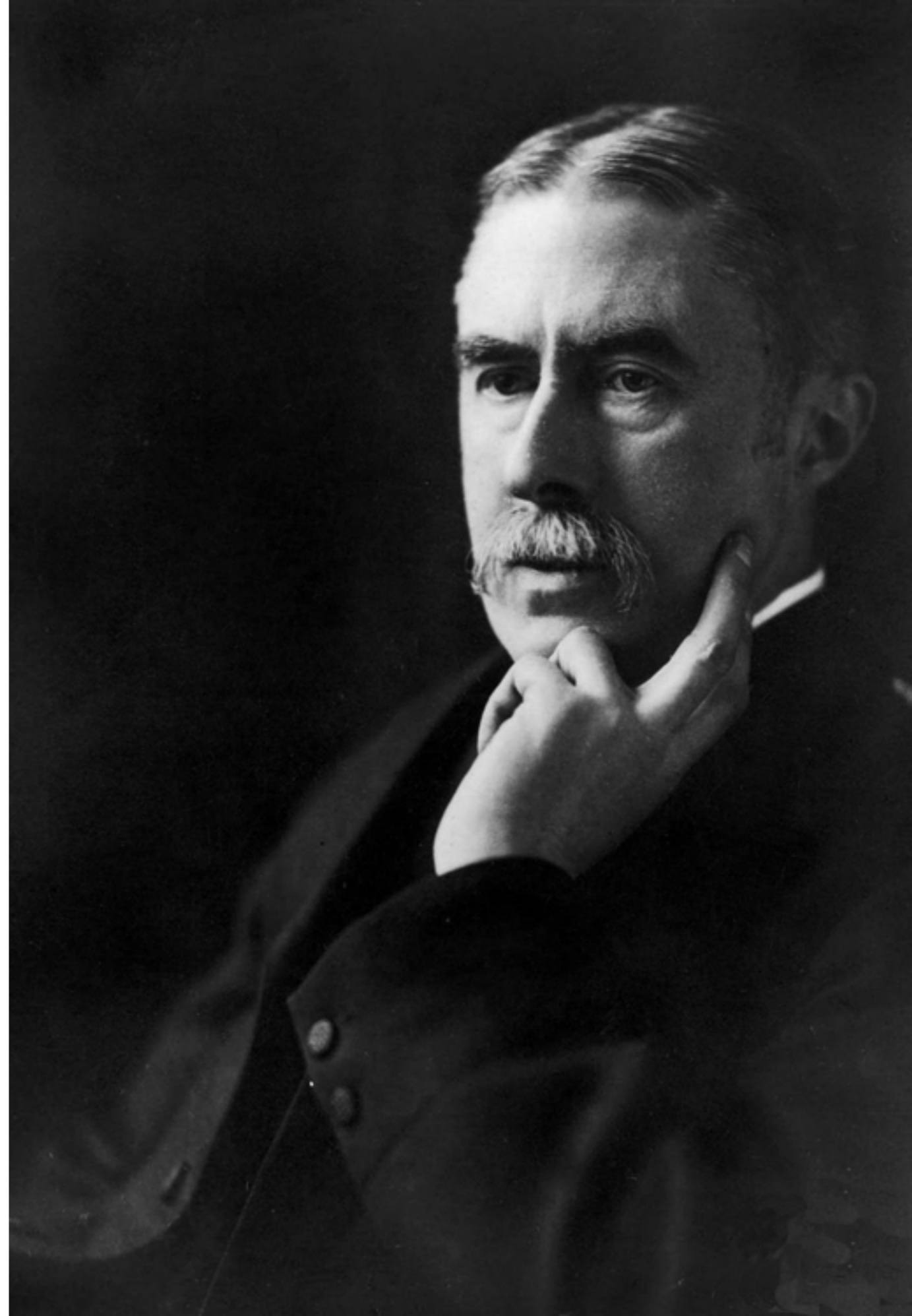
THE SEA is calm to-night,
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. 5
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling, 10
At their return, up the high strand.
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago 15
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow
Of human misery; we
Find also in the sound a thought,
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 20

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, 25
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems 30
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain 35
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

A. E. HOUSMAN

Alfred Edward Housman (1859 -- 1936) was an English poet and classical scholar. His epigrammatic style and emphasis on natural beauty won him many admirers in Victorian and Edwardian England.



To An Athlete Dying Young

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,
Townsmen 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.

When I was one-and-twenty

WHEN I was one-and-twenty

I heard a wise man say,

‘Give crowns and pounds and guineas

But not your heart away;

Give pearls away and rubies

5

But keep your fancy free.’

But I was one-and-twenty,

No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty

I heard him say again,

10

‘The heart out of the bosom

Was never given in vain;

’Tis paid with sighs a plenty

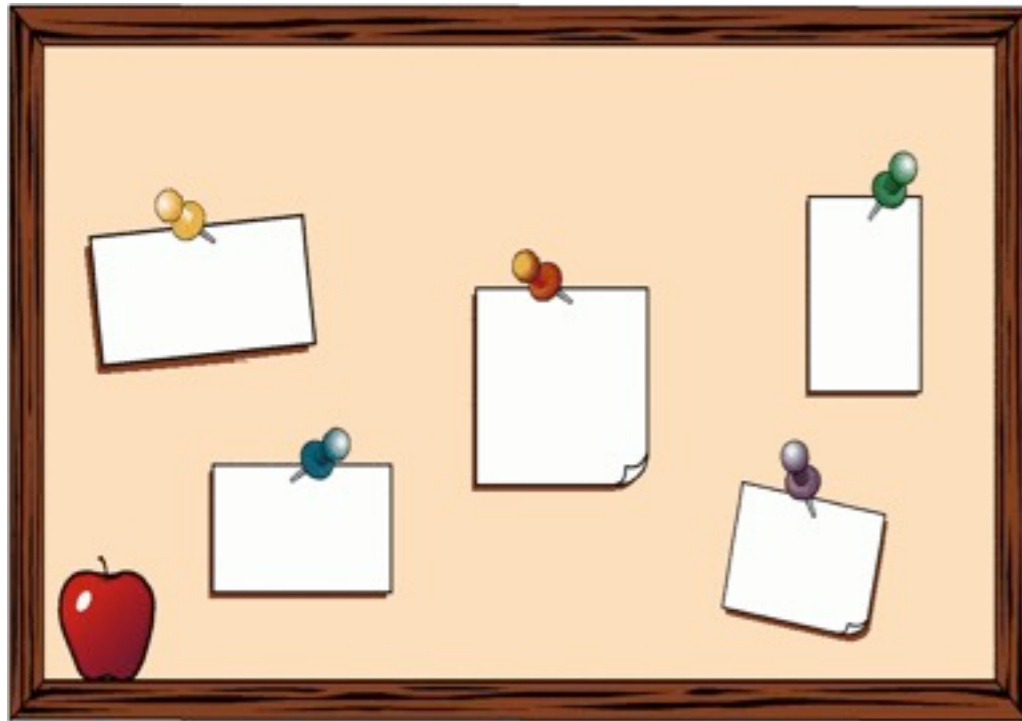
And sold for endless rue.’

And I am two-and-twenty,

15

And oh, ’tis true, ’tis true.

RESOURCES 9 The Victorians



7

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY



Drawn & Engraved

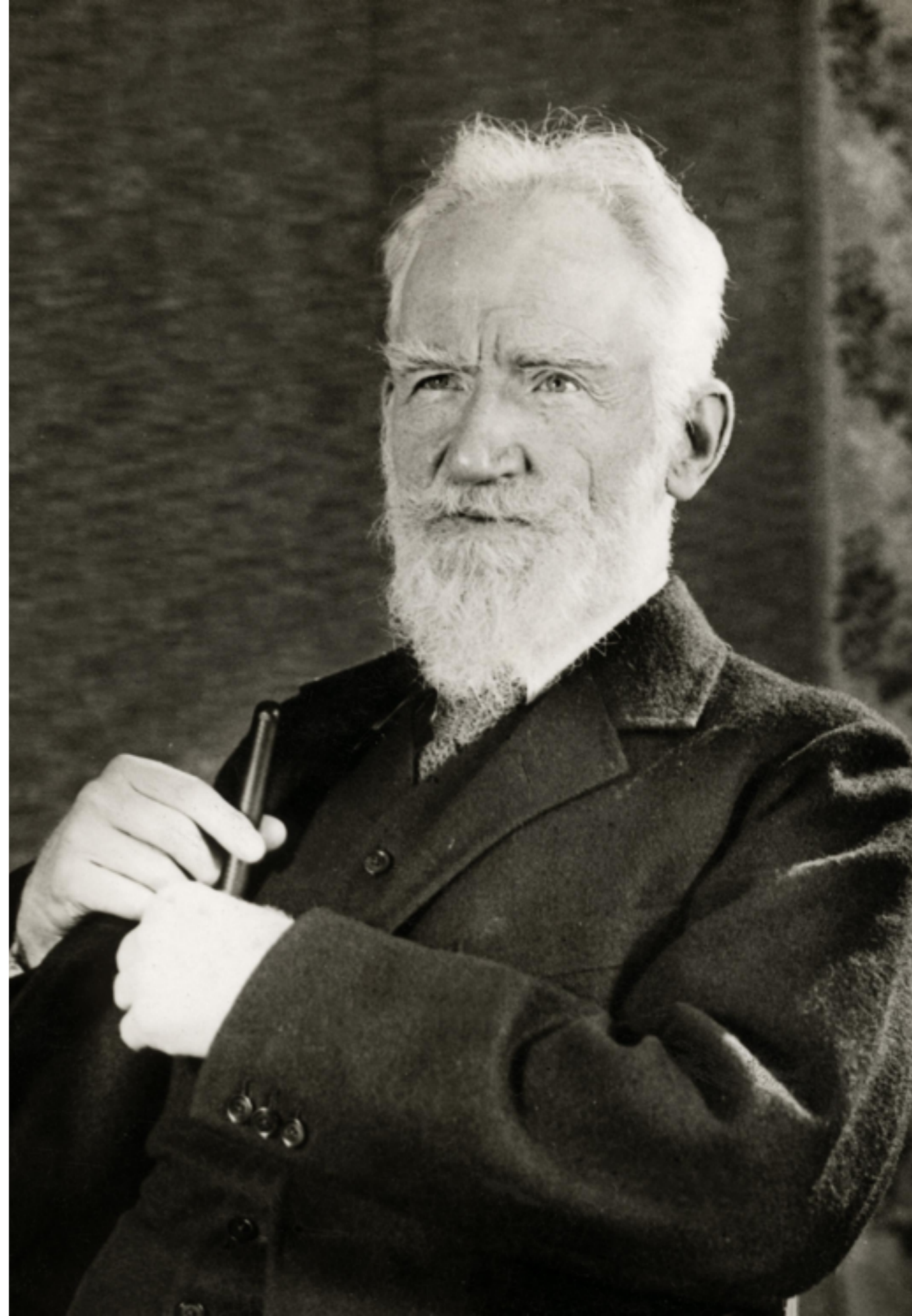
Grand Match between Oxford and Cambridge. April 14th 1841.

by Topham.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

George Bernard Shaw (1856 – 1950) was an Anglo-Irish playwright and polemicist who used theatre to attack the cultural institutions of his day. His influence on modern theatre is hard to overestimate. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1925.

MOVIE 7.1 Why can't the English learn to speak?



WILFRED OWEN

Wilfred Owen (1893 – 1918) chronicled the horrors of World War I and the realities of the trenches in his poetry. Mentored by Siegfried Sassoon, Owen challenged common perceptions of war and the largely patriotic verse surrounding it.



Dulce et Decorum Est

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.

SIEGFRIED SASOON

Siegfried Sassoon (1886 -- 1967) was a poet, writer, and soldier. He was decorated for bravery during his service in World War I. His "Soldier's Declaration" against the continuation of the war met with controversy and led to his institutionalization.



Dreamers

Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land,
Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows.
In the great hour of destiny they stand,
Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.
Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win
Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.
Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin
They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives.

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain,
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,
And mocked by hopeless longing to regain
Bank-holidays, and picture shows, and spats,
And going to the office in the train.

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

William Butler Yeats (1865 – 1939) was an Irish poet and one of the most important figures in 20th century letters. Educated in the English tradition, he later became of a champion of Irish independence and cultural expression, helping to form the Abbey Theatre.



When You Are Old

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

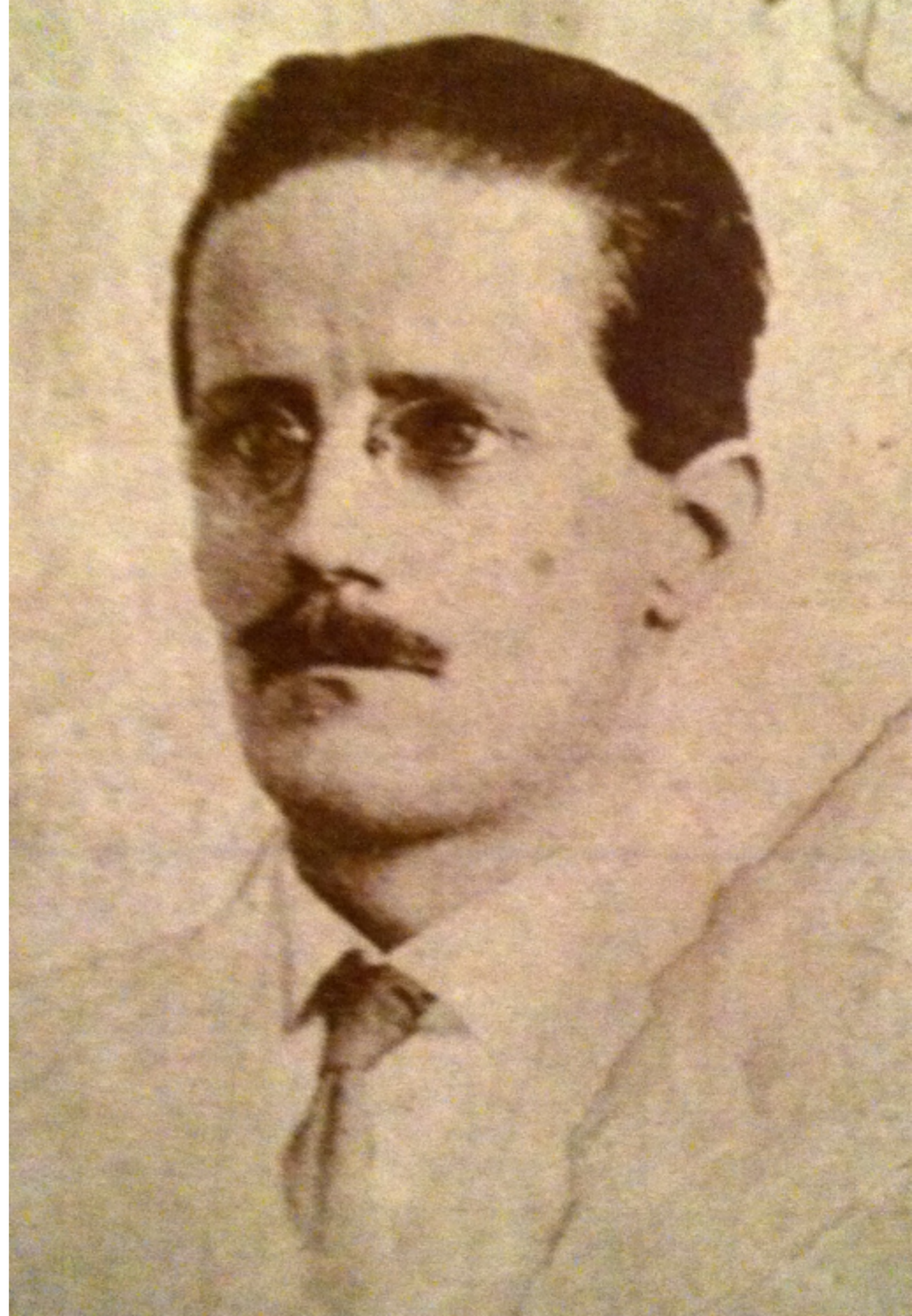
How many loved your moments of glad grace,
And loved your beauty with love false or true,
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled
And paced upon the mountains overhead
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

JAMES JOYCE

Thought by some to be the greatest writer in the English language since Shakespeare, James Joyce (1882 – 1941) was born in Dublin to a large Irish-Catholic family. He lived much of his life on the European continent in self-imposed exile from his homeland. Here he wrote some of the most complex and celebrated fiction of the twentieth century, including *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and the epic novel *Ulysses*.

MOVIE 7.2 An overview of Joyce's life and work



Araby

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: *The Abbot*, by Walter Scott, *The Devout Communicant*, and *The Memoirs of Vidocq*. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes, under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses, where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner, we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea, we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed, and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were

often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar; she said she would love to go.

'And why can't you?' I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps, and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

'It's well for you,' she said.

'If I go,' I said, 'I will bring you something.'

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar

on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised, and hoped it was not some Freemason affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

'Yes, boy, I know.'

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I felt the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of

the house. The high, cold, empty, gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old, garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

'I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.'

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the hall door. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

'The people are in bed and after their first sleep now,' he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

'Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is.'

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' He asked me where I was going and, when I told him a second time, he asked me did I know The Arab's Farewell to his Steed. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to

me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girded at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words Café Chantant were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come, I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

'O, I never said such a thing!'

'O, but you did!'

'O, but I didn't!'

'Didn't she say that?'

'Yes. I heard her.'

'O, there's a... fib!'

Observing me, the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood

like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

'No, thank you.'

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

VIRGINIA WOOLF

Virginia Woolf (1882 – 1941) was one of the foremost modernist voices in the English language. Along with Joyce, she pioneered the technique of “stream of consciousness narrative” in fiction, bringing greater psychological realism to her work.

[MOVIE 7.3](#) Overview of Virginia Woolf’s work



A Room of One's Own

ONE

But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction—what has that got to do with a room of one's own? I will try to explain. When you asked me to speak about women and fiction I sat down on the banks of a river and began to wonder what the words meant. They might mean simply a few remarks about Fanny Burney; a few more about Jane Austen; a tribute to the Brontës and a sketch of Haworth Parsonage under snow; some witticisms if possible about Miss Mitford; a respectful allusion to George Eliot; a reference to Mrs Gaskell and one would have done. But at second sight the words seemed not so simple. The title women and fiction might mean, and you may have meant it to mean, women and what they are like; or it might mean women and the fiction that they write; or it might mean women and the fiction that is written about them; or it might mean that somehow all three are inextricably mixed together and you want me to consider them in that light. But when I began to consider the subject in this last way, which seemed the most interesting, I soon saw that it had one fatal drawback. I should never be able to come to a conclusion. I should never be able to fulfill what is, I

understand, the first duty of a lecturer—to hand you after an hour's discourse a nugget of pure truth to wrap up between the pages of your notebooks and keep on the mantelpiece for ever. All I could do was to offer you an opinion upon one minor point—a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction; and that, as you will see, leaves the great problem of the true nature of woman and the true nature of fiction unsolved. I have shirked the duty of coming to a conclusion upon these two questions—women and fiction remain, so far as I am concerned, unsolved problems. But in order to make some amends I am going to do what I can to show you how I arrived at this opinion about the room and the money. I am going to develop in your presence as fully and freely as I can the train of thought which led me to think this. Perhaps if I lay bare the ideas, the prejudices, that lie behind this statement you will find that they have some bearing upon women and some upon fiction. At any rate, when a subject is highly controversial—and any question about sex is that—one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold. One can only give one's audience the chance of drawing their own conclusions as they observe the limitations, the prejudices, the idiosyncrasies of the speaker. Fiction here is

likely to contain more truth than fact. Therefore I propose, making use of all the liberties and licences of a novelist, to tell you the story of the two days that preceded my coming here—how, bowed down by the weight of the subject which you have laid upon my shoulders, I pondered it, and made it work in and out of my daily life. I need not say that what I am about to describe has no existence; Oxbridge is an invention; so is Fernham; ‘I’ is only a convenient term for somebody who has no real being. Lies will flow from my lips, but there may perhaps be some truth mixed up with them; it is for you to seek out this truth and to decide whether any part of it is worth keeping. If not, you will of course throw the whole of it into the wastepaper basket and forget all about it.

Here then was I (call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please—it is not a matter of any importance) sitting on the banks of a river a week or two ago in fine October weather, lost in thought. That collar I have spoken of, women and fiction, the need of coming to some conclusion on a subject that raises all sorts of prejudices and passions, bowed my head to the ground. To the right and left bushes of some sort, golden and crimson, glowed with the colour, even it seemed burnt with the heat, of fire. On the further bank the willows wept in perpetual

lamentation, their hair about their shoulders. The river reflected whatever it chose of sky and bridge and burning tree, and when the undergraduate had oared his boat through the reflections they closed again, completely, as if he had never been. There one might have sat the clock round lost in thought. Thought—to call it by a prouder name than it deserved—had let its line down into the stream. It swayed, minute after minute, hither and thither among the reflections and the weeds, letting the water lift it and sink it, until—you know the little tug—the sudden conglomeration of an idea at the end of one’s line: and then the cautious hauling of it in, and the careful laying of it out? Alas, laid on the grass how small, how insignificant this thought of mine looked; the sort of fish that a good fisherman puts back into the water so that it may grow fatter and be one day worth cooking and eating. I will not trouble you with that thought now, though if you look carefully you may find it for yourselves in the course of what I am going to say.

But however small it was, it had, nevertheless, the mysterious property of its kind—put back into the mind, it became at once very exciting, and important; and as it darted and sank, and flashed hither and thither, set up such a wash and tumult of ideas that it was impossible to sit still.

It was thus that I found myself walking with extreme rapidity across a grass plot. Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. Nor did I at first understand that the gesticulations of a curious-looking object, in a cut-away coat and evening shirt, were aimed at me. His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and

Scholars are allowed here; the gravel is the place for me. Such thoughts were the work of a moment. As I regained the path the arms of the Beadle sank, his face assumed its usual repose, and though turf is better walking than gravel, no very great harm was done. The only charge I could bring against the Fellows and Scholars of whatever the college might happen to be was that in protection of their turf, which has been rolled for 300 years in succession, they had sent my little fish into hiding.

What idea it had been that had sent me so audaciously trespassing I could not now remember. The spirit of peace descended like a cloud from heaven, for if the spirit of peace dwells anywhere, it is in the courts and quadrangles of Oxbridge on a fine October morning. Strolling through those colleges past those ancient halls the roughness of the present seemed smoothed away; the body seemed contained

in a miraculous glass cabinet through which no sound could penetrate, and the mind, freed from any contact with facts (unless one trespassed on the turf again), was at liberty to settle down upon whatever meditation was in harmony with the moment. As chance would have it, some stray memory of some old essay about revisiting Oxbridge in the long vacation brought Charles Lamb to mind—Saint Charles, said Thackeray, putting a letter of Lamb's to his forehead. Indeed, among all the dead (I give you my thoughts as they came to me), Lamb is one of the most congenial; one to whom one would have liked to say, Tell me then how you wrote your essays? For his essays are superior even to Max Beerbohm's, I thought, with all their perfection, because of that wild flash of imagination, that lightning crack of genius in the middle of them which leaves them flawed and imperfect, but starred with poetry. Lamb then came to Oxbridge perhaps a hundred years ago. Certainly he wrote an essay—the name escapes me—about the manuscript of one of Milton's poems which he saw here. It was Lycidas perhaps, and Lamb wrote how it shocked him to think it possible that any word in Lycidas could have been different from what it is. To think of Milton changing the words in that poem seemed to him a sort of sacrilege. This led me to remember what I could of Lycidas and to amuse myself with guessing which word it could have been that Milton had

altered, and why. It then occurred to me that the very manuscript itself which Lamb had looked at was only a few hundred yards away, so that one could follow Lamb's footsteps across the quadrangle to that famous library where the treasure is kept. Moreover, I recollected, as I put this plan into execution, it is in this famous library that the manuscript of Thackeray's *Esmond* is also preserved. The critics often say that *Esmond* is Thackeray's most perfect novel. But the affectation of the style, with its imitation of the eighteenth century, hampers one, so far as I can remember; unless indeed the eighteenth-century style was natural to Thackeray—a fact that one might prove by looking at the manuscript and seeing whether the alterations were for the benefit of the style or of the sense. But then one would have to decide what is style and what is meaning, a question which—but here I was actually at the door which leads into the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction.

That a famous library has been cursed by a woman is a matter of complete indifference to a famous library. Venerable and calm, with all its treasures safe locked within its breast, it sleeps complacently and will, so far as I am concerned, so sleep for ever. Never will I wake those echoes, never will I ask for that hospitality again, I vowed as I descended the steps in anger. Still an hour remained before luncheon, and what was one to do? Stroll on the meadows? sit by the river? Certainly it was a lovely autumn morning; the leaves were fluttering red to the ground; there was no great hardship in doing either. But the sound of music reached my ear. Some service or celebration was going forward. The organ complained magnificently as I passed the chapel door. Even the sorrow of Christianity sounded in that serene air more like the recollection of sorrow than sorrow itself; even the groanings of the ancient organ seemed lapped in peace. I had no wish to enter had I the right, and this time the verger might have stopped me, demanding perhaps my baptismal certificate, or a letter of introduction from the Dean. But the outside of these magnificent buildings is often as beautiful as the inside. Moreover, it was amusing enough to watch the congregation assembling, coming in and going out again, busying themselves at the door of the chapel like bees at the mouth of a hive. Many were in cap and gown; some had tufts of fur

on their shoulders; others were wheeled in bath-chairs; others, though not past middle age, seemed creased and crushed into shapes so singular that one was reminded of those giant crabs and crayfish who heave with difficulty across the sand of an aquarium. As I leant against the wall the University indeed seemed a sanctuary in which are preserved rare types which would soon be obsolete if left to fight for existence on the pavement of the Strand. Old stories of old deans and old dons came back to mind, but before I had summoned up courage to whistle—it used to be said that at the sound of a whistle old Professor —— instantly broke into a gallop—the venerable congregation had gone inside. The outside of the chapel remained. As you know, its high domes and pinnacles can be seen, like a sailing-ship always voyaging never arriving, lit up at night and visible for miles, far away across the hills. Once, presumably, this quadrangle with its smooth lawns, its massive buildings and the chapel itself was marsh too, where the grasses waved and the swine rootled. Teams of horses and oxen, I thought, must have hauled the stone in wagons from far countries, and then with infinite labour the grey blocks in whose shade I was now standing were poised in order one on top of another, and then the painters brought their glass for the windows, and the masons were busy for centuries up on that roof with putty and cement, spade and

trowel. Every Saturday somebody must have poured gold and silver out of a leathern purse into their ancient fists, for they had their beer and skittles presumably of an evening. An unending stream of gold and silver, I thought, must have flowed into this court perpetually to keep the stones coming and the masons working; to level, to ditch, to dig and to drain. But it was then the age of faith, and money was poured liberally to set these stones on a deep foundation, and when the stones were raised, still more money was poured in from the coffers of kings and queens and great nobles to ensure that hymns should be sung here and scholars taught. Lands were granted; tithes were paid. And when the age of faith was over and the age of reason had come, still the same flow of gold and silver went on; fellowships were founded; lectureships endowed; only the gold and silver flowed now, not from the coffers of the king, but from the chests of merchants and manufacturers, from the purses of men who had made, say, a fortune from industry, and returned, in their wills, a bounteous share of it to endow more chairs, more lectureships, more fellowships in the university where they had learnt their craft. Hence the libraries and laboratories; the observatories; the splendid equipment of costly and delicate instruments which now stands on glass shelves, where centuries ago the grasses waved and the swine rootled. Certainly, as I strolled

round the court, the foundation of gold and silver seemed deep enough; the pavement laid solidly over the wild grasses. Men with trays on their heads went busily from staircase to staircase. Gaudy blossoms flowered in window-boxes. The strains of the gramophone blared out from the rooms within. It was impossible not to reflect—the reflection whatever it may have been was cut short. The clock struck. It was time to find one's way to luncheon.

It is a curious fact that novelists have a way of making us believe that luncheon parties are invariably memorable for something very witty that was said, or for something very wise that was done. But they seldom spare a word for what was eaten. It is part of the novelist's convention not to mention soup and salmon and ducklings, as if soup and salmon and ducklings were of no importance whatsoever, as if nobody ever smoked a cigar or drank a glass of wine. Here, however, I shall take the liberty to defy that convention and to tell you that the lunch on this occasion began with soles, sunk in a deep dish, over which the college cook had spread a counterpane of the whitest cream, save that it was branded here and there with brown spots like the spots on the flanks of a doe. After that came the partridges, but if this suggests a couple of bald, brown birds on a plate you are mistaken. The partridges, many and various, came

with all their retinue of sauces and salads, the sharp and the sweet, each in

its order; their potatoes, thin as coins but not so hard; their sprouts, foliated as rosebuds but more succulent. And no sooner had the roast and its retinue been done with than the silent serving-man, the Beadle himself perhaps in a milder manifestation, set before us, wreathed in napkins, a confection which rose all sugar from the waves. To call it pudding and so relate it to rice and tapioca would be an insult. Meanwhile the wineglasses had flushed yellow and flushed crimson; had been emptied; had been filled. And thus by degrees was lit, halfway down the spine, which is the seat of the soul, not that hard little electric light which we call brilliance, as it pops in and out upon our lips, but the more profound, subtle and subterranean glow, which is the rich yellow flame of rational intercourse. No need to hurry. No need to sparkle. No need to be anybody but oneself. We are all going to heaven and Vandyck is of the company—in other words, how good life seemed, how sweet its rewards, how trivial this grudge or that grievance, how admirable friendship and the society of one's kind, as, lighting a good cigarette, one sunk among the cushions in the window-seat.

If by good luck there had been an ash-tray handy, if one had not knocked the ash out of the window in default, if things

had been a little different from what they were, one would not have seen, presumably, a cat without a tail. The sight of that abrupt and truncated animal padding softly across the quadrangle changed by some fluke of the subconscious intelligence the emotional light for me. It was as if some one had let fall a shade. Perhaps the excellent hock was relinquishing its hold. Certainly, as I watched the Manx cat pause in the middle of the lawn as if it too questioned the universe, something seemed lacking, something seemed different. But what was lacking, what was different, I asked myself, listening to the talk? And to answer that question I had to think myself out of the room, back into the past, before the war indeed, and to set before my eyes the model of another luncheon party held in rooms not very far distant from these; but different. Everything was different. Meanwhile the talk went on among the guests, who were many and young, some of this sex, some of that; it went on swimmingly, it went on agreeably, freely, amusingly. And as it went on I set it against the background of that other talk, and as I matched the two together I had no doubt that one was the descendant, the legitimate heir of the other. Nothing was changed; nothing was different save only—here I listened with all my ears not entirely to what was being said, but to the murmur or current behind it. Yes, that was it—the change was there. Before the war at a luncheon party

like this people would have said precisely the same things but they would have sounded different, because in those days they were accompanied by a sort of humming noise, not articulate, but musical, exciting, which changed the value of the words themselves. Could one set that humming noise to words? Perhaps with the help of the poets one could. A book lay beside me and, opening it, I turned casually enough to Tennyson. And here I found Tennyson was singing:

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate.
She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, ‘She is near, she is near’; And the white
rose weeps, ‘She is late’; The larkspur listens, ‘I hear, I hear’;
And the lily whispers, ‘I wait.’

Was that what men hummed at luncheon parties before the war? And the women?

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water’d shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit, My heart is like
a rainbow shell

That paddles in a halcyon sea; My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Was that what women hummed at luncheon parties before the war?

There was something so ludicrous in thinking of people humming such things even under their breath at luncheon parties before the war that I burst out laughing, and had to explain my laughter by pointing at the Manx cat, who did look a little absurd, poor beast, without a tail, in the middle of the lawn. Was he really born so, or had he lost his tail in an accident? The tailless cat, though some are said to exist in the Isle of Man, is rarer than one thinks. It is a queer animal, quaint rather than beautiful. It is strange what a difference a tail makes—you know the sort of things one says as a lunch party breaks up and people are finding their coats and hats.

This one, thanks to the hospitality of the host, had lasted far into the afternoon. The beautiful October day was fading and the leaves were falling from the trees in the avenue as I walked through it. Gate after gate seemed to close with gentle finality behind me. Innumerable beadles were fitting innumerable keys into well-oiled locks; the treasure-house was being made secure for another night. After the avenue one comes out upon a road—I forget its name—which leads

you, if you take the right turning, along to Fernham. But there was plenty of time. Dinner was not till half-past seven. One could almost do without dinner after such a luncheon. It is strange how a scrap of poetry works in the mind and makes the legs move in time to it along the road. Those words——

There has fallen a splendid tear
From the passion-flower at the gate. She is coming, my dove,
my dear——

sang in my blood as I stepped quickly along towards Headingley. And then, switching off into the other measure, I sang, where the waters are churned up by the weir:

My heart is like a singing bird Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree . . .

What poets, I cried aloud, as one does in the dusk, what poets they were!

In a sort of jealousy, I suppose, for our own age, silly and absurd though these comparisons are, I went on to wonder if honestly one could name two living poets now as great as Tennyson and Christina Rossetti were then. Obviously it is impossible, I thought, looking into those foaming waters, to compare them. The very reason why that poetry excites one to such abandonment, such rapture, is that it celebrates

some feeling that one used to have (at luncheon parties before the war perhaps), so that one responds easily, familiarly, without troubling to check the feeling, or to compare it with any that one has now. But the living poets express a feeling that is actually being made and torn out of us at the moment. One does not recognize it in the first place; often for some reason one fears it; one watches it with keenness and compares it jealously and suspiciously with the old feeling that one knew. Hence the difficulty of modern poetry; and it is because of this difficulty that one cannot remember more than two consecutive lines of any good modern poet. For this reason—that my memory failed me—the argument flagged for want of material. But why, I continued, moving on towards Headingley, have we stopped humming under our breath at luncheon parties? Why has Alfred ceased to sing

She is coming, my dove, my dear? Why has Christina ceased to respond

My heart is gladder than all these Because my love is come to me?

Shall we lay the blame on the war? When the guns fired in August 1914, did the faces of men and women show so plain in each other's eyes that romance was killed? Certainly it was a shock (to women in particular with their illusions

about education, and so on) to see the faces of our rulers in the light of the shell-fire. So ugly they looked—German, English, French—so stupid. But lay the blame where one will, on whom one will, the illusion which inspired Tennyson and Christina Rossetti to sing so passionately about the coming of their loves is far rarer now than then. One has only to read, to look, to listen, to remember. But why say 'blame'? Why, if it was an illusion, not praise the catastrophe, whatever it was, that destroyed illusion and put truth in its place? For truth . . . those dots mark the spot where, in search of truth, I missed the turning up to Fernham. Yes indeed, which was truth and which was illusion, I asked myself. What was the truth about these houses, for example, dim and festive now with their red windows in the dusk, but raw and red and squalid, with their sweets and their bootlaces, at nine o'clock in the morning? And the willows and the river and the gardens that run down to the river, vague now with the mist stealing over them, but gold and red in the sunlight—which was the truth, which was the illusion about them? I spare you the twists and turns of my cogitations, for no conclusion was found on the road to Headingley, and I ask you to suppose that I soon found out my mistake about the turning and retraced my steps to Fernham.

As I have said already that it was an October day, I dare not forfeit your respect and imperil the fair name of fiction by changing the season and describing lilacs hanging over garden walls, crocuses, tulips and other flowers of spring. Fiction must stick to facts, and the truer the facts the better the fiction—so we are told. Therefore it was still autumn and the leaves were still yellow and falling, if anything, a little faster than before, because it was now evening (seven twenty-three to be precise) and a breeze (from the southwest to be exact) had risen. But for all that there was something odd at work:

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;
My heart is like an apple tree
Whose boughs are bent with thick-set fruit—

perhaps the words of Christina Rossetti were partly responsible for the folly of the fancy—it was nothing of course but a fancy—that the lilac was shaking its flowers over the garden

walls, and the brimstone butterflies were scudding hither and thither, and the dust of the pollen was in the air. A wind blew, from what quarter I know not, but it lifted the half-grown leaves so that there was a flash of silver grey in the air. It was the time between the lights when colours undergo

their intensification and purples and golds burn in window-panes like the beat of an excitable heart; when for some reason the beauty of the world revealed and yet soon to perish (here I pushed into the garden, for, unwisely, the door was left open and no beads seemed about), the beauty of the world which is so soon to perish, has two edges, one of laughter, one of anguish, cutting the heart asunder. The gardens of Fernham lay before me in the spring twilight, wild and open, and in the long grass, sprinkled and carelessly flung, were daffodils and bluebells, not orderly perhaps at the best of times, and now wind-blown and waving as they tugged at their roots. The windows of the building, curved like ships' windows among generous waves of red brick, changed from lemon to silver under the flight of the quick spring clouds. Somebody was in a hammock, somebody, but in this light they were phantoms only, half guessed, half seen, raced across the grass—would no one stop her?—and then on the terrace, as if popping out to breathe the air, to glance at the garden, came a bent figure, formidable yet humble, with her great forehead and her shabby dress—could it be the famous scholar, could it be J—— H—— herself? All was dim, yet intense too, as if the scarf which the dusk had flung over the garden were torn asunder by star or sword—the flash of some terrible reality leaping, as its way is, out of the heart of the spring. For youth——

Here was my soup. Dinner was being served in the great dining-hall. Far from being spring it was in fact an evening in October. Everybody was assembled in the big dining-room. Dinner was ready. Here was the soup. It was a plain gravy soup. There was nothing to stir the fancy in that. One could have seen through the transparent liquid any pattern that there might have been on the plate itself. But there was no pattern. The plate was plain. Next came beef with its attendant greens and potatoes—a homely trinity, suggesting the rumps of cattle in a muddy market, and sprouts curled and yellowed at the edge, and bargaining and cheapening, and women with string bags on Monday morning. There was no reason to complain of human nature’s daily food, seeing that the supply was sufficient and coal-miners doubtless were sitting down to less. Prunes and custard followed. And if any one complains that prunes, even when mitigated by custard, are an uncharitable vegetable (fruit they are not), stringy as a miser’s heart and exuding a fluid such as might run in misers’ veins who have denied themselves wine and warmth for eighty years and yet not given to the poor, he should reflect that there are people whose charity embraces even the prune. Biscuits and cheese came next, and here the water-jug was liberally passed round, for it is the nature of biscuits to be dry, and these were biscuits to the core. That was all. The meal was over. Everybody scraped their chairs

back; the swing-doors swung violently to and fro; soon the hall was emptied of every sign of food and made ready no doubt for breakfast next morning. Down corridors and up staircases the youth of England went banging and singing. And was it for a guest, a stranger (for I had no more right here in Fernham than in Trinity or Somerville or Girton or Newnham or Christchurch), to say, ‘The dinner was not good,’ or to say (we were now, Mary Seton and I, in her sitting-room), ‘Could we not have dined up here alone?’ for if I had said anything of the kind I should have been prying and searching into the secret economies of a house which to the stranger wears so fine a front of gaiety and courage. No, one could say nothing of the sort. Indeed, conversation for a moment flagged. The human frame being what it is, heart, body and brain all mixed together, and not contained in separate compartments as they will be no doubt in another million years, a good dinner is of great importance to good talk. One cannot think well, love well, sleep well, if one has not dined well. The lamp in the spine does not light on beef and prunes. We are all probably going to heaven, and Vandyck is, we hope, to meet us round the next corner—that is the dubious and qualifying state of mind that beef and prunes at the end of the day’s work breed between them. Happily my friend, who taught science, had a cupboard where there was a squat bottle and little glasses—

(but there should have been sole and partridge to begin with)—so that we were able to draw up to the fire and repair some of the damages of the day's living. In a minute or so we were slipping freely in and out among all those objects of curiosity and interest which form in the mind in the absence of a particular person, and are naturally to be discussed on coming together again—how somebody has married, another has not; one thinks this, another that; one has improved out of all knowledge, the other most amazingly gone to the bad—with all those speculations upon human nature and the character of the amazing world we live in which spring naturally from such beginnings. While these things were being said, however, I became shamefacedly aware of a current setting in of its own accord and carrying everything forward to an end of its own. One might be talking of Spain or Portugal, of book or racehorse, but the real interest of whatever was said was none of those things, but a scene of masons on a high roof some five centuries ago. Kings and nobles brought treasure in huge sacks and poured it under the earth. This scene was for ever coming alive in my mind and placing itself by another of lean cows and a muddy market and withered greens and the stringy hearts of old men—these two pictures, disjointed and disconnected and nonsensical as they were, were for ever coming together and combating each other and had me

entirely at their mercy. The best course, unless the whole talk was to be distorted, was to expose what was in my mind to the air, when with good luck it would fade and crumble like the head of the dead king when they opened the coffin at Windsor. Briefly, then, I told Miss Seton about the masons who had been all those

years on the roof of the chapel, and about the kings and queens and nobles bearing sacks of gold and silver on their shoulders, which they shovelled into the earth; and then how the great financial magnates of our own time came and laid cheques and bonds, I suppose, where the others had laid ingots and rough lumps of gold. All that lies beneath the colleges down there, I said; but this college, where we are now sitting, what lies beneath its gallant red brick and the wild unkempt grasses of the garden? What force is behind that plain china off which we dined, and (here it popped out of my mouth before I could stop it) the beef, the custard and the prunes?

Well, said Mary Seton, about the year 1860—Oh, but you know the story, she said, bored, I suppose, by the recital. And she told me—rooms were hired. Committees met. Envelopes were addressed. Circulars were drawn up. Meetings were held; letters were read out; so-and-so has promised so much; on the contrary, Mr —— won't give a

penny. The Saturday Review has been very rude. How can we raise a fund to pay for offices? Shall we hold a bazaar? Can't we find a pretty girl to sit in the front row? Let us look up what John Stuart Mill said on the subject. Can anyone persuade the editor of the —— to print a letter? Can we get Lady —— to sign it? Lady —— is out of town. That was the way it was done, presumably, sixty years ago, and it was a prodigious effort, and a great deal of time was spent on it. And it was only after a long struggle and with the utmost difficulty that they got thirty thousand pounds together.¹ So obviously we cannot have wine and partridges and servants carrying tin dishes on their heads, she said. We cannot have sofas and separate rooms. 'The amenities,' she said, quoting from some book or other, 'will have to wait.'

At the thought of all those women working year after year and finding it hard to get two thousand pounds together, and as much as they could do to get thirty thousand pounds, we burst out in scorn at the reprehensible poverty of our sex. What had our mothers been doing then that they had no wealth to leave us? Powdering their noses? Looking in at shop windows? Flaunting in the sun at Monte Carlo? There were some photographs on the mantel-piece. Mary's mother—if that was her picture—may have been a wastrel in her spare time (she had thirteen children by a minister of the

church), but if so her gay and dissipated life had left too few traces of its pleasures on her face. She was a homely body; an old lady in a plaid shawl which was fastened by a large cameo; and she sat in a basket-chair, encouraging a

¹ 'We are told that we ought to ask for £30,000 at least. . . . It is not a large sum, considering that there is to be but one college of this sort for Great Britain, Ireland and the Colonies, and considering how easy it is to raise immense sums for boys' schools. But considering how few people really wish women to be educated, it is a good deal.'—
LADY STEPHEN, *Life of Miss Emily Davies*.

² Every penny which could be scraped together was set aside for building, and the amenities had to be postponed. — R. STRACHEY, *The Cause*.

spaniel to look at the camera, with the amused, yet strained expression of one who is sure that the dog will move directly the bulb is pressed. Now if she had gone into business; had become a manufacturer of artificial silk or a magnate on the Stock Exchange; if she had left two or three hundred thousand pounds to Fernham, we could have been sitting at our ease tonight and the subject of our talk might have been archaeology, botany, anthropology, physics, the nature of the atom, mathematics, astronomy, relativity, geography. If only Mrs Seton and her mother and her mother before her had

learnt the great art of making money and had left their money, like their fathers and their grandfathers before them, to found fellowships and lectureships and prizes and scholarships appropriated to the use of their own sex, we might have dined very tolerably up here alone off a bird and a bottle of wine; we might have looked forward without undue confidence to a pleasant and honourable lifetime spent in the shelter of one of the liberally endowed professions. We might have been exploring or writing; mooning about the venerable places of the earth; sitting contemplative on the steps of the Parthenon, or going at ten to an office and coming home comfortably at half-past four to write a little poetry. Only, if Mrs Seton and her like had gone into business at the age of fifteen, there would have been—that was the snag in the argument—no Mary. What, I asked, did Mary think of that? There between the curtains was the October night, calm and lovely, with a star or two caught in the yellowing trees. Was she ready to resign her share of it and her memories (for they had been a happy family, though a large one) of games and quarrels up in Scotland, which she is never tired of praising for the fineness of its air and the quality of its cakes, in order that Fernham might have been endowed with fifty thousand pounds or so by a stroke of the pen? For, to endow a college would necessitate the suppression of families altogether.

Making a fortune and bearing thirteen children—no human being could stand it. Consider the facts, we said. First there are nine months before the baby is born. Then the baby is born. Then there are three or four months spent in feeding the baby. After the baby is fed there are certainly five years spent in playing with the baby. You cannot, it seems, let children run about the streets. People who have seen them running wild in Russia say that the sight is not a pleasant one. People say, too, that human nature takes its shape in the years between one and five. If Mrs Seton, I said, had been making money, what sort of memories would you have had of games and quarrels? What would you have known of Scotland, and its fine air and cakes and all the rest of it? But it is useless to ask these questions, because you would never have come into existence at all. Moreover, it is equally useless to ask what might have happened if Mrs Seton and her mother and her mother before her had amassed great wealth and laid it under the foundations of college and library, because, in the first place, to earn money was impossible for them, and in the second, had it been possible, the law denied them the right to possess what money they earned. It is only for the last forty-eight years that Mrs Seton has had a penny of her own. For all the centuries before that it would have been her husband's property—a thought which, perhaps, may have had its share in keeping

Mrs Seton and her mothers off the Stock Exchange. Every penny I earn, they may have said, will be taken from me and disposed of according to my husband's wisdom—perhaps to found a scholarship or to endow a fellowship in Balliol or Kings, so that to earn money, even if I could earn money, is not a matter that interests me very greatly. I had better leave it to my husband.

At any rate, whether or not the blame rested on the old lady who was looking at the spaniel, there could be no doubt that for some reason or other our mothers had mismanaged their affairs very gravely. Not a penny could be spared for 'amenities'; for partridges and wine, beadles and turf, books and cigars, libraries and leisure. To raise bare walls out of bare earth was the utmost they could do.

So we talked standing at the window and looking, as so many thousands look every night, down on the domes and towers of the famous city beneath us. It was very beautiful, very mysterious in the autumn moonlight. The old stone looked very white and venerable. One thought of all the books that were assembled down there; of the pictures of old prelates and worthies hanging in the panelled rooms; of the painted windows that would be throwing strange globes and crescents on the pavement; of the tablets and memorials and inscriptions; of the fountains and the grass;

of the quiet rooms looking across the quiet quadrangles. And (pardon me the thought) I thought, too, of the admirable smoke and drink and the deep armchairs and the pleasant carpets: of the urbanity, the geniality, the dignity which are the offspring of luxury and privacy and space. Certainly our mothers had not provided us with anything comparable to all this—our mothers who found it difficult to scrape together thirty thousand pounds, our mothers who bore thirteen children to ministers of religion at St Andrews.

So I went back to my inn, and as I walked through the dark streets I pondered this and that, as one does at the end of the day's work. I pondered why it was that Mrs Seton had no money to leave us; and what effect poverty has on the mind; and what effect wealth has on the mind; and I thought of the queer old gentlemen I had seen that morning with tufts of fur upon their shoulders; and I remembered how if one whistled one of them ran; and I thought of the organ booming in the chapel and of the shut doors of the library; and I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in; and, thinking of the safety and prosperity of the one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other and of the effect of tradition and of the lack of tradition upon the mind of a

writer, I thought at last that it was time to roll up the crumpled skin of the day, with its arguments and its impressions and its anger and its laughter, and cast it into the hedge. A thousand stars were flashing across the blue wastes of the sky. One seemed alone with an inscrutable society. All human beings were laid asleep—prone, horizontal, dumb. Nobody seemed stirring in the streets of Oxbridge. Even the door of the hotel sprang open at the touch of an invisible hand—not a boots was sitting up to light me to bed, it was so late.

GRAHAM GREENE

Graham Greene (1904 – 1991) was a British novelist and short story writer known for exploring two distinct influences in his writing: his Roman Catholic faith and the experience of British colonialism. His voluminous works achieved both popular and critical success in his lifetime.



A Shocking Accident

I

Jerome was called into his housemaster's room in the break between the second and the third class on a Tuesday morning. He had no fear of trouble, for he was a warden - the name that the proprietor and headmaster of a rather expensive preparatory school had chosen to give to approved, reliable boys in the lower forms (from a warden one became a guardian and finally before leaving, it was hoped for Marlborough or Rugby, a crusader). The housemaster, Mr Wordsworth, sat behind his desk with an appearance of perplexity and apprehension. Jerome had the odd impression when he entered that he was a cause of fear.

'Sit down, Jerome,' Mr Wordsworth said. 'All going well with the trigonometry?'

'Yes, sir.'

'I've had a telephone call, Jerome. From your aunt. I'm afraid I have bad news for you.'

'Yes, sir?'

'Your father has had an accident.'

'Oh.'

Mr Wordsworth looked at him with some surprise. 'A serious accident.'

'Yes, sir?'

Jerome worshipped his father: the verb is exact. As man re-creates God, so Jerome re-created his father - from a restless widowed author into a mysterious adventurer who travelled in far places - Nice, Beirut, Majorca, even the Canaries. The time had arrived about his eighth birthday when Jerome believed that his father either 'ran guns' or was a member of the British Secret Service. Now it occurred to him that his father might have been wounded in 'a hail of machine-gun bullets'.

Mr Wordsworth played with the ruler on his desk. He seemed at a loss how to continue. He said, 'You know your father was in Naples?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Your aunt heard from the hospital today.'

'Oh.'

Mr Wordsworth said with desperation, 'It was a street accident.'

'Yes, sir?' It seemed quite likely to Jerome that they would call it a street accident. The police of course fired first; his father would not take human life except as a last resort.

'I'm afraid your father was very seriously hurt indeed.'

'Oh.'

'In fact, Jerome, he died yesterday. Quite without pain.'

'Did they shoot him through the heart?'

'I beg your pardon. What did you say, Jerome?'

'Did they shoot him through the heart?'

'Nobody shot him, Jerome. A pig fell on him.' An inexplicable convulsion took place in the nerves of Mr Wordsworth's face; it really looked for a moment as though he were going to laugh. He closed his eyes, composed his features and said rapidly as though it were necessary to expel the story as rapidly as possible. 'Your father was walking along a street in Naples when a pig fell on him. A shocking accident. Apparently in the poorer quarters of Naples they keep pigs on their balconies. This one was on the fifth floor. It had grown too fat. The balcony broke. The pig fell on your father.'

Mr Wordsworth left his desk rapidly and went to the window, turning his back on Jerome. He shook a little with emotion.

Jerome said, 'What happened to the pig?'

This was not callousness on the part of Jerome, as it was interpreted by Mr Wordsworth to his colleagues (he even discussed with them whether, perhaps, Jerome was yet fitted to be a warden). Jerome was only attempting to visualize the strange scene to get the details right. Nor was Jerome a boy who cried; he was a boy who brooded, and it never occurred to him at his preparatory school that the circumstances of his father's death were comic - they were still part of the mysteries of life. It was later, in his first term at his public school, when he told the story to his best friend, that he began to realize how it affected others. Naturally after that disclosure he was known, rather unreasonably, as Pig.

Unfortunately his aunt had no sense of humour. There was an enlarged snapshot of his father on the piano; a large sad man in an unsuitable dark suit posed in Capri with an umbrella (to guard him against sunstroke), the Faraglione rocks forming the background. By the age of sixteen Jerome was well aware that the portrait looked more like the author of *Sunshine and Shade* and *Ramblers in the Balearics* than an agent of the Secret Service. All the same he loved the memory of his father: he still possessed an album fitted with picture-postcards (the stamps had been soaked off long ago for his other collection), and it pained him when his aunt embarked with strangers on the story of his father's death.

'A shocking accident,' she would begin, and the stranger would compose his or her features into the correct shape for interest and commiseration. Both reactions, of course, were false, but it was terrible for Jerome to see how suddenly, midway in her rambling discourse, the interest would become genuine. 'I can't think how such things can be allowed in a civilized country,' his aunt would say. 'I suppose one has to regard Italy as civilized. One is prepared for all kinds of things abroad, of course, and my brother was a great traveller. He always carried a water-filter with him. It was far less expensive, you know, than buying all those bottles of mineral water. My brother always said that his filter paid for his dinner wine. You can see from that what a careful man he was, but who could possibly have expected when he was walking along the Via Dottore Manuele Panucci on his way to the Hydrographic Museum that a pig would fall on him?' That was the moment when the interest became genuine.

Jerome's father had not been a very distinguished writer, but the time always seems to come, after an author's death, when somebody thinks it worth his while to write a letter to the *Times Literary Supplement* announcing the preparation of a biography and asking to see any letters or documents or

receive anecdotes from friends of the dead man. Most of the biographies, of course, never appear - one wonders whether the whole thing may not be an obscure form of blackmail and whether many a potential writer of a biography or thesis finds the means in this way to finish his education at Kansas or Nottingham. Jerome, however, as a chartered accountant, lived far from the literary world. He did not realize how small the menace really was, or that the danger period for someone of his father's obscurity had long passed.

Sometimes he rehearsed the method of recounting his father's death so as to reduce the comic element to its smallest dimensions - it would be of no use to refuse information, for in that case the biographer would undoubtedly visit his aunt who was living to a great old age with no sign of flagging.

It seemed to Jerome that there were two possible methods - the first led gently up to the accident, so that by the time it was described the listener was so well prepared that the death came really as an anti-climax. The chief danger of laughter in such a story was always surprise. When he rehearsed his method Jerome began boringly enough.

'You know Naples and those high tenement buildings? Somebody once told me that the Neapolitan always feels at

home in New York just as the man from Turin feels at home in London because the river runs in much the same way in both cities. Where was I? Oh, yes. Naples, of course. You'd be surprised in the poorer quarters what things they keep on the balconies of those sky-scraping tenements - not washing, you know, or bedding, but things like livestock, chickens or even pigs. Of course the pigs get no exercise whatever and fatten all the quicker.' He could imagine how his hearer's eyes would have glazed by this time. 'I've no idea, have you, how heavy a pig can be, but these old buildings are all badly in need of repair. A balcony on the fifth floor gave way under one of those pigs. It struck the third floor balcony on its way down and sort of ricocheted into the street. My father was on the way to the Hydrographic Museum when the pig hit him. Coming from that height and that angle it broke his neck.' This was really a masterly attempt to make an intrinsically interesting subject boring.

The other method Jerome rehearsed had the virtue of brevity.

'My father was killed by a pig.'

'Really? In India?'

'No, in Italy.'

'How interesting. I never realized there was pig-sticking in Italy. Was your father keen on polo?'

In course of time, neither too early nor too late, rather as though, in his capacity as a chartered accountant, Jerome had studied the statistics and taken the average, he became engaged to be married: to a pleasant fresh-faced girl of twenty-five whose father was a doctor in Pinner. Her name was Sally, her favourite author was still Hugh Walpole, and she had adored babies ever since she had been given a doll at the age of five which moved its eyes and made water. Their relationship was contented rather than exciting, as became the love-affair of a chartered accountant; it would never have done if it had interfered with the figures.

One thought worried Jerome, however. Now that within a year he might himself become a father, his love for the dead man increased; he realized what affection had gone into the picture-postcards. He felt a longing to protect his memory, and uncertain whether this quiet love of his would survive if

Sally were so insensitive as to laugh when she heard the story of his father's death. Inevitably she would hear it when Jerome brought her to dinner with his aunt. Several times he tried to tell her himself, as she was naturally anxious to know all she could that concerned him.

'You were very small when your father died?'

'Just nine.'

'Poor little boy,' she said.

'I was at school. They broke the news to me.'

'Did you take it very hard?'

'I can't remember.'

'You never told me how it happened.'

'It was very sudden. A street accident.'

'You'll never drive fast, will you, Jemmy?' (She had begun to call him 'Jemmy'.) It was too late then to try the second method - the one he thought of as the pig-sticking one.

They were going to marry quietly in a registry-office and have their honeymoon at Torquay. He avoided taking her to see his aunt until a week before the wedding, but then the night came, and he could not have told himself whether his apprehension was more for his father's memory or the security of his own love.

The moment came all too soon. 'Is that Jemmy's father?' Sally asked, picking up the portrait of the man with the umbrella.

'Yes, dear. How did you guess?'

'He has Jemmy's eyes and brow, hasn't he?'

'Has Jerome lent you his books?'

'No.'

'I will give you a set for your wedding. He wrote so tenderly about his travels. My own favourite is Nooks and Crannies . He would have had a great future. It made that shocking accident all the worse.'

'Yes?'

Jerome longed to leave the room and not see that loved face crinkle with irresistible amusement.

'I had so many letters from his readers after the pig fell on him.' She had never been so abrupt before. And then the miracle happened. Sally did not laugh. Sally sat with open eyes of horror while his aunt told her the story, and at the end, 'How horrible,' Sally said. 'It makes you think, doesn't it? Happening like that. Out of a clear sky.'

Jerome's heart sang with joy. It was as though she had appeased his fear for ever. In the taxi going home he kissed her with more passion than he had ever shown and she returned it. There were babies in her pale blue pupils, babies that rolled their eyes and made water.

'A week today,' Jerome said, and she squeezed his hand.

'Penny for your thoughts, my darling.'

'I was wondering,' Sally said, 'what happened to the poor pig?'

'They almost certainly had it for dinner,' Jerome said happily and kissed the dear child again.

DYLAN THOMAS

Dylan Thomas (1914 – 1953) was a Welsh poet and journalist whose colorful personal life, distinctive readings of his own works, and sensitive verse made him a key figure in mid-20th century letters. His rhythmic style and keen sense of language marked him as a significant lyric poet.



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.

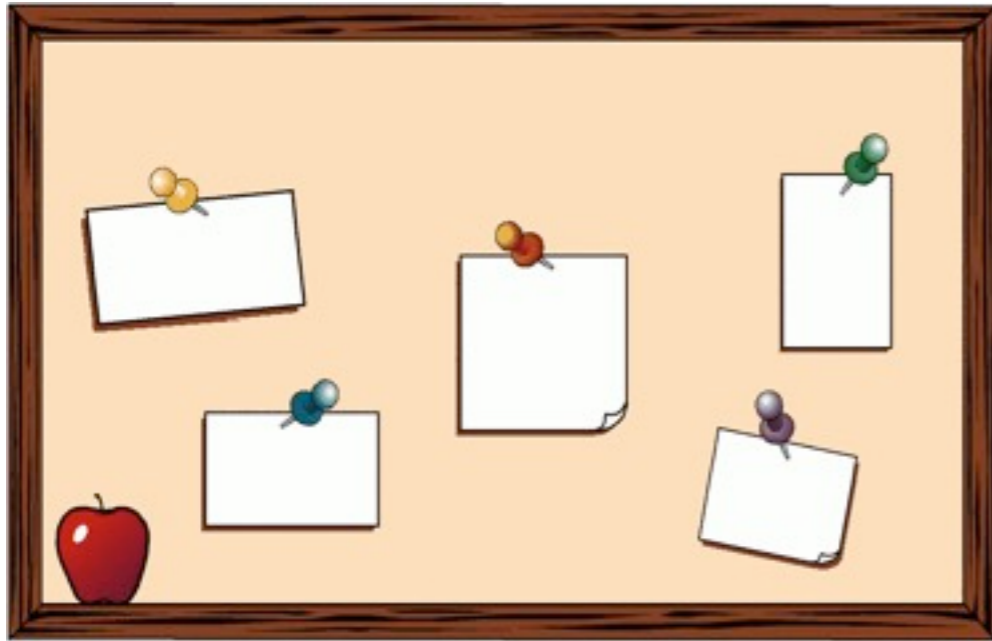
Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

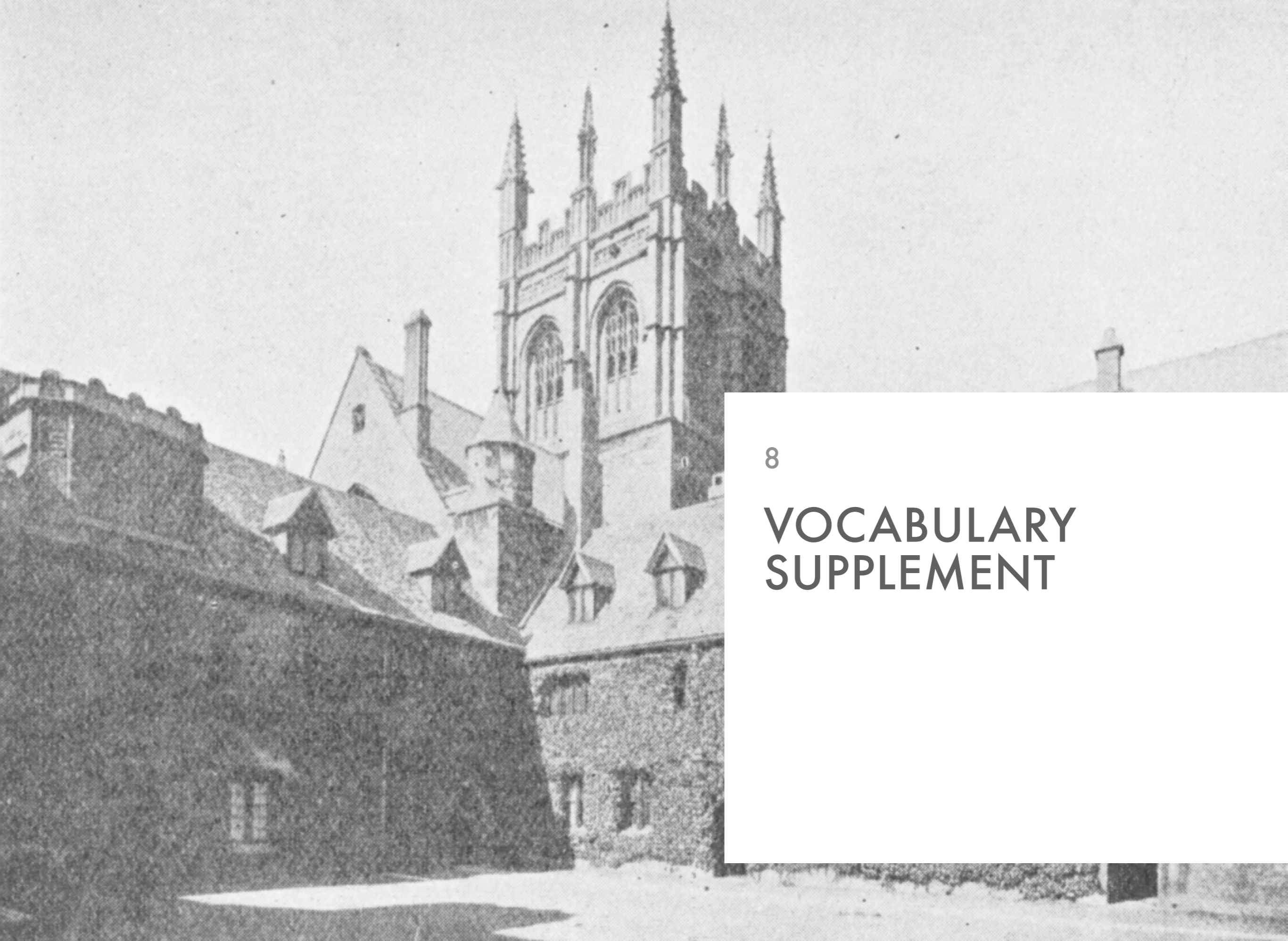
And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

AUDIO 7.1 Read by the poet



RESOURCES 10 The Twentieth Century





8

VOCABULARY SUPPLEMENT

ENGLISH 11 VOCABULARY

[Download all lists in PDF form](#)

UNIT 1

abase, abate, abet, abhor, abject, abjure, abominable, abortive, abridge, abrogate, absolute, abstain, abstinence, abstract, abundant, abut, accessible, accommodate, accomplice, accord, accost, accrue, acute, adamant, addle, address (v), adhere, adjacent

UNIT 2

amity, amorous, ample, amplify, anchor (v), anguish, annals, anoint, anthem, antidote, antipathy, ape (v), apex, appall, apparition, appease, apprehend, apprehension, apprise, approbation, ardent, arraign, array, arrest, arrogance, articulate, artless, ascribe

UNIT 3

babble, baffle, bait (v), baleful, balk, ballast, balm, bandy, bard, barren, barricade, bauble, bawdy, beam, beget, beguile, belie, bemoan, benediction, benefactor, benign, bent, bereft, beseech, beset, besiege, besmirch, bestial, bestow

UNIT 4

bustle, buttress, buxom, cadence, calamity, calumny, canvass, capitulate, capricious, captivate, carat, carnal, carping, castigate, casualty, catechism, celebrated, celerity, celestial, censure, ceremonious, chafe, chaff, chalice, chameleon, chary, chaste, chastise, check (v), chide

UNIT 5

complement, composure, compound (v), concave, conceit, concord, concur, condemn, condescend, condole, conduit, confine, confirm, confiscate, confluence, confound, congeal, congruent, conjecture, consecrate, consign, consort, conspiracy, constraint, construe, consummate (adj), contagion, contaminate, contempt

UNIT 6

cozen, craven, credence, credo, credulity, creed, crest, crevice, cringe, crop, cull, curtail, dank, dappled, daub, daunt, dauntless, dearth, debase, debonair, decipher, deface, decorum, decrepit, defame, default, defer, defiance

UNIT 7

disburse, discerning, disclaim, disclose, disconsolate, discord, discourse, discredit, discretion, disdain, disembark, disfigure, dishearten, dismantle, dismay, dismember, dismiss, disparage, dispatch, disperse, disquiet, dissemble, dissolute, dissolution, dissuade, distraught, diurnal, divest, divine (v), divulge

UNIT 8

engage, engaging, engender, engross, enigma, enmity, enormity, ensconce, ensemble, entail, entice, entreat, epicure, epigram, epilogue, epitaph, epithet, equinox, equivocal, equivocate, erroneous, espouse, esteem (v), estranged, ewe, exacting, exalt, exasperate, exclaim, execrable, execute

UNIT 9

fleece (v), flinch, flora, flourish, flux, fodder, foil (v), foolhardy, forbearance, foresight, forlorn, forsake, forswear, forthright, fortitude, foster, founder (v), frail, frantic, fraught, fret, frivolous, fruition, frustrate, fugitive, fulsome, fundamental

UNIT 10

grisly, grove, grovel, guile, guise, gusty, haggard, hallowed, halting, harbinger, hardy, haughty, headlong, headstrong, heed, heedless, heinous, heresy, hermitage, heyday, hoard, homage, hoodwink, host (v), hostility, hovel, hover, hue, humane, humility, idolatry

UNIT 11

incite, incline, inclined, inclusive, incontinent, incorporate, incredulous, incur, indenture, indict, indifferent, indigent, indignity, indissoluble, induce, indulgent, industrious, inevitable, inexorable, infallible, infamous, infer, infernal, infidel, infirmity, informal, infusion, ingenious, ingenuous, ingrate, injurious

UNIT 12

jaded, jaunt, jollity, jovial, judicious, justification, kernel, kindle, kindred, knave, knit, knotty, labyrinth, lament, languish, languor, largess, laud, lavish, leaven, lecherous, legacy, levity, levy, lewd, licentious, limber, linger, loath, lofty, loiter

UNIT 13

metaphysical, metropolis, mettle, mincing, mirth, mischievous, misconstrue, mishap, missive, mitigate, mock, molten, monarchy, monastic, monumental, mores, mote, motley, mundane, mural, murky, muster, musty, mutability, mutinous, negligence, nemesis, neutral, nicety

UNIT 14

paradox, paragon, parasite, partial, partisan, partition, passive, pastoral, patent, patrician, pedant, peerless, pendant, pensive, penury, percussion, perdition, peremptory, perfidious, perjury, pernicious, perpetual, pertinent, peruse, perverse, petty, phlegmatic, phoenix, plausible, plenitude, pliant

UNIT 15

prevail, prey (v), pristine, procrastinate, prodigal, prodigious, prodigy, profane, profound, progeny, prolix, prologue, prolong, promontory, prompt, promulgate, prone, propagate, prophetic, propinquity, propriety, prosperity, prostrate, protract, provident, provincial, provoke, prowess, prudent, prune, puny, purge

UNIT 16

regale, reiterate, relevant, relish, remission, remnant, remorse, rend, render, renege, renounce, renown, rent, repast, repeal, repel, replete, reprieve, reproach, reputed, requite, reserve, resolution, resolve, respite, restitution, restraint, retain, retentive, retinue, retort

UNIT 17

servile, servitude, sever, severity, sham, shambles, sheaf,
shear, sheer, shrewd, shroud, shun, sinewy, singular, sinister,
skirmish, slake, slander, slight (v), slothful, slovenly, sluggish,
smelt, sobriety, sodden, sojourn, solace, sovereign

UNIT 18

supple, supposition, suppress, surfeit, surly, surmise,
surmount, surpass, sustain, sustenance, swagger, swarm,
swarthy, swerve, taint, tarry, tedious, temperate,
tempestuous, temporal, tender (v), terrestrial, testy, tether
(v), threadbare, thrifty, thrive, throes, throng, thwart

UNIT 19

unseemly, unsightly, unwieldy, upbraid, usurp, vagabond,
vantage, vehement, venerable, venial, venom, vent (v),
verbatim, verge, vilify, vex, vie, viper, virtue, vital, vouchsafe,
vulnerable, waft, waggish, wallow, wan, wane, wanton,
warble

APPENDIX

ERRORS & OMISSIONS 1

Report any mistakes or
make suggestions to
improve this book.

