



Poem Copies

Semifinal Two

Round One

1. Sreepadaarchana Munjuluri (Indiana)

SAY GRACE

BY EMILY JUNGMIN YOON

In my country our shamans were women
and our gods multiple until white people brought
an ecstasy of rosaries and our cities today
glow with crosses like graveyards. As a child
in Sunday school I was told I'd go to hell
if I didn't believe in God. Our teacher was a woman
whose daughters wanted to be nuns and I asked
What about babies and what about Buddha, and she said
They're in hell too and so I memorized prayers
and recited them in front of women
I did not believe in. *Deliver us from evil.*
O sweet Virgin Mary, amen. O sweet. O sweet.
In this country, which calls itself Christian,
what is sweeter than hearing *Have mercy*
on us. From those who serve different gods. O
clement, O loving, O God, O God, amidst ruins,
amidst waters, fleeing, fleeing. *Deliver us from evil.*

O sweet, O sweet. In this country,
point at the moon, at the stars, point at the way the lake lies,
with a hand full of feathers,
and they will look at the feathers. And kill you for it.
If a word for religion they don't believe in is magic
so be it, let us have magic. Let us have
our own mothers and scarves, our spirits,
our shamans and our sacred books. Let us keep
our stars to ourselves and we shall pray
to no one. Let us eat
what makes us holy.

2. Glenn Deon James Doss Jr. (Michigan)

THE CHARGE OF THE LIGHT BRIGADE

BY ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

I

Half a league, half a league,

Half a league onward,

All in the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

“Forward, the Light Brigade!

Charge for the guns!” he said.

Into the valley of Death

Rode the six hundred.

II

“Forward, the Light Brigade!”

Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew

Someone had blundered.

Theirs not to make reply,

Theirs not to reason why,

Theirs but to do and die.
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

III

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
 Volleyed and thundered;
Stormed at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of hell
 Rode the six hundred.

IV

Flashed all their sabres bare,
Flashed as they turned in air
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
 All the world wondered.
Plunged in the battery-smoke

Right through the line they broke;

Cossack and Russian

Reeled from the sabre stroke

Shattered and sundered.

Then they rode back, but not

Not the six hundred.

V

Cannon to right of them,

Cannon to left of them,

Cannon behind them

Volleyed and thundered;

Stormed at with shot and shell,

While horse and hero fell.

They that had fought so well

Came through the jaws of Death,

Back from the mouth of hell,

All that was left of them,

Left of six hundred.

VI

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made!

All the world wondered.

Honour the charge they made!

Honour the Light Brigade,

Noble six hundred!

3. Lydia J.M. Newsome (Iowa)

WE ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE

BY HARRYETTE MULLEN

We are not responsible for your lost or stolen relatives.

We cannot guarantee your safety if you disobey our instructions.

We do not endorse the causes or claims of people begging for
handouts.

We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone.

Your ticket does not guarantee that we will honor your reservations.

In order to facilitate our procedures, please limit your carrying on.

Before taking off, please extinguish all smoldering resentments.

If you cannot understand English, you will be moved out of the way.

In the event of a loss, you'd better look out for yourself.

Your insurance was cancelled because we can no longer handle
your frightful claims. Our handlers lost your luggage and we
are unable to find the key to your legal case.

**Semifinal Two
Round One**

You were detained for interrogation because you fit the profile.

You are not presumed to be innocent if the police
have reason to suspect you are carrying a concealed wallet.

It's not our fault you were born wearing a gang color.

It is not our obligation to inform you of your rights.

Step aside, please, while our officer inspects your bad attitude.

You have no rights we are bound to respect.

Please remain calm, or we can't be held responsible
for what happens to you.

4. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)

RAIN OF STATUES

BY SARAH LINDSAY

From the Mithridatic Wars, first century BC

Our general was elsewhere, but we drowned.

While he rested, he shipped us home

with the bulk of his spoils

that had weighed his army down.

The thrashing storm

that caught us cracked the hulls

and made us offerings to the sea floor —

a rain of statues, gold, and men.

Released from service,

done with war,

the crash and hiss muted,

we fell through streams of creatures

whose lives were their purpose.

We settled with treasure looted

from temples of rubbled Athenian Greece;
among us, bronze and marble gods and goddesses
moored without grace,
dodged by incurious fish.

Their power was never meant to buoy us —
our pleasures were incidental gifts —
but, shaken by their radiance in our dust,
we had given them our voices.

Their faces, wings, and limbs
lie here with our sanded bones
and motionless devices.

Little crabs attempt to don rings
set with agate and amethyst,
and many an octopus,
seeking an hour of rest,
finds shelter in our brain-cases.

So we are still of use.

5. Amir Trinidad Vidal (Puerto Rico)

BLACK BOYS PLAY THE CLASSICS

BY TOI DERRICOTTE

The most popular “act” in
Penn Station
is the three black kids in ratty
sneakers & T-shirts playing
two violins and a cello—Brahms.
White men in business suits
have already dug into their pockets
as they pass and they toss in
a dollar or two without stopping.
Brown men in work-soiled khakis
stand with their mouths open,
arms crossed on their bellies
as if they themselves have always
wanted to attempt those bars.
One white boy, three, sits
cross-legged in front of his
idols—in ecstasy—

their slick, dark faces,
their thin, wiry arms,
who must begin to look
like angels!

Why does this trembling
pull us?

A: Beneath the surface we are one.

B: Amazing! I did not think that they could speak this tongue.

6. Molly Pitra (Georgia)

GITANJALI 35

BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;

Where knowledge is free;

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;

Where words come out from the depth of truth;

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary
desert sand of dead habit;

Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought
and action

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.

7. Victoria Laine Jelks (Kansas)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

BY ROBERT HAYDEN

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful
and terrible thing, needful to man as air,
usable as earth; when it belongs at last to all,
when it is truly instinct, brain matter, diastole, systole,
reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more
than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians:
this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro
beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,
this man, superb in love and logic, this man
shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues' rhetoric,
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.

8. Yan Luis Lebron Santiago (Florida)

APRIL MIDNIGHT

BY ARTHUR SYMONS

Side by side through the streets at midnight,
Roaming together,
Through the tumultuous night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

Roaming together under the gaslight,
Day's work over,
How the Spring calls to us, here in the city,
Calls to the heart from the heart of a lover!

Cool the wind blows, fresh in our faces,
Cleansing, entrancing,
After the heat and the fumes and the footlights,
Where you dance and I watch your dancing.

Good it is to be here together,

Good to be roaming,
Even in London, even at midnight,
Lover-like in a lover's gloaming.

You the dancer and I the dreamer,
Children together,
Wandering lost in the night of London,
In the miraculous April weather.

9. Nicholas Merlo (Missouri)

AH! WHY, BECAUSE THE DAZZLING SUN

BY EMILY BRONTË

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
Restored my earth to joy
Have you departed, every one,
And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And with a full heart's thankful sighs
I blessed that watch divine!

I was at peace, and drank your beams
As they were life to me
And revelled in my changeful dreams
Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought—star followed star
Through boundless regions on,

While one sweet influence, near and far,
Thrilled through and proved us one.

Why did the morning rise to break
So great, so pure a spell,
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek
Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red he rose, and arrow-straight,
His fierce beams struck my brow;
The soul of Nature sprang elate,
But mine sank sad and low!

My lids closed down—yet through their veil
I saw him blazing still;
And bathe in gold the misty dale,
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow then
To call back Night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light, again
Throb with my heart and me!

It would not do—the pillow glowed
And glowed both roof and floor,
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door.

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise
And give them leave to roam.

O Stars and Dreams and Gentle Night;
O Night and Stars return!
And hide me from the hostile light
That does not warm, but burn—

That drains the blood of suffering men;
Drinks tears, instead of dew:
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
And only wake with you!

10. Yohanna Endashaw (Illinois)

MY THERAPIST WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT MY RELATIONSHIP TO WORK

BY TIANA CLARK

I hustle

upstream.

I grasp.

I grind.

I control & panic. Poke

balloons in my chest,

always popping there,

always my thoughts thump,

thump. I snooze — wake & go

boom. All day, like this I short

my breath. I scroll & scroll.

I see what you wrote — I like.

I heart. My thumb, so tired.

My head bent down, but not

in prayer, heavy from the looking.

I see your face, your phone-lit
faces. I tap your food, two times
for more hearts. I retweet.
I email: *yes & yes & yes*.
Then I cry & need to say: *no-no-no*.
Why does it take so long to reply?
I FOMO & shout. I read. I never
enough. New book. New post.
New ping. A new tab, then another.
Papers on the floor, scattered & stacked.
So many journals, unbroken white spines,
waiting. Did you hear that new new?
I start to text back. Ellipsis, then I forget.
I balk. I lazy the bed. I wallow when I write.
I truth when I lie. I throw a book
when a poem undoes me. I underline
Clifton: *today we are possible*. I start
from image. I begin with Phillis Wheatley.
I begin with Phillis Wheatley. I begin
with Phillis Wheatley reaching for coal.
I start with a napkin, receipt, or my hand.
I muscle memory. I stutter the page. I fail.

Hit delete — scratch out one more line. I sonnet,
then break form. I make tea, use two bags.
Rooibos again. I bathe now. Epsom salt.
No books or phone. Just water & the sound
of water filling, glory — be my buoyant body,
bowl of me. Yes, lavender, more bubbles
& bath bomb, of course some candles too.
All alone with Coltrane. My favorite, “Naima,”
for his wife, now for me, inside my own womb.
Again, I child back. I float. I sing. I simple
& humble. Eyes close. I low my voice,
was it a psalm? Don’t know. But I stopped.

11. Drew Pirtle (Arkansas)

YOU, IF NO ONE ELSE

BY TINO VILLANUEVA

Translated by James Hoggard

Listen, you
who transformed your anguish
into healthy awareness,
put your voice
where your memory is.
You who swallowed
the afternoon dust,
defend everything you understand
with words.
You, if no one else,
will condemn with your tongue
the erosion each disappointment brings.

You, who saw the images
of disgust growing,
will understand how time
devours the destitute;
you, who gave yourself
your own commandments,
know better than anyone
why you turned your back
on your town's toughest limits.

Don't hush,
don't throw away
the most persistent truth,
as our hard-headed brethren
sometimes do.

Remember well
what your life was like: cloudiness,
and slick mud
after a drizzle;
flimsy windows the wind
kept rattling
in winter, and that

unheated slab dwelling

where coldness crawled

up in your clothes.

Tell how you were able to come

to this point, to unbar

History's doors

to see your early years,

your people, the others.

Name the way

rebellion's calm spirit has served you,

and how you came

to unlearn the lessons

of that teacher,

your land's omnipotent defiler.

Remember how,

from the first emptiness,

you started saving yourself,

and ask yourself what,

after all,

these words are good for
in this round hour now
where your voice strikes time.

12. Edward Wilson Jr. (Mississippi)

BEAUTIFUL WRECKAGE

BY W.D. EHRHART

What if I didn't shoot the old lady
running away from our patrol,
or the old man in the back of the head,
or the boy in the marketplace?

Or what if the boy—but he didn't
have a grenade, and the woman in Hue
didn't lie in the rain in a mortar pit
with seven Marines just for food,

Gaffney didn't get hit in the knee,
Ames didn't die in the river, Ski
didn't die in a medevac chopper
between Con Thien and Da Nang.

In Vietnamese, Con Thien means
place of angels. What if it really was
instead of the place of rotting sandbags,
incoming heavy artillery, rats and mud.

What if the angels were Ames and Ski,
or the lady, the man, and the boy,
and they lifted Gaffney out of the mud
and healed his shattered knee?

What if none of it happened the way I said?

Would it all be a lie?

Would the wreckage be suddenly beautiful?

Would the dead rise up and walk?

13. Emily Biaz (Alabama)

MY DAD & SARDINES

BY TOI DERRICOTTE

my dad's going to give me a self
back.
i've made an altar called
The Altar for Healing the Father & Child,
& asked him what i could do
for him so he would
do nice for me. he said i should stop
saying bad things about him &, since
i've said just about everything bad
i can think of &, since . . . well,
no, i change my
mind, i can't promise
him that. but even healing is
negotiable, so, if he's in
heaven (or trying
to get in), it wouldn't hurt

to be in touch. the first thing i want is to be able to
enjoy the little things again—for example, to stop peeling
down the list of things i
have to do &
enjoy this poem, enjoy how, last night, scouring
the cupboards, i found a
can of sardines that
must be five
years old &, since i was home after a long
trip &, since it was 1 a.m. & i hadn't eaten
dinner &, since there was no other
protein in the house,
i cranked it open & remembered that
my dad loved
sardines—right before bed—with
onions & mustard. i can't get into
my dad's old heart, but i remember that look
on his face when he would
load mustard on a saltine cracker, lay a little
fish on top, & tip it with a juicy slice
of onion. then he'd look up from his soiled
fingers with one eyebrow

raised, a rakish
grin that said—*all*
for me!—as if he was
getting away
with murder.

14. AdyLynn Anderson (Oklahoma)

EDGAR ALLAN POE IS REACHED AT THE BALTIMORE HARBOR BY THE SHADOWS THAT PURSUE HIM

BY FERNANDO VALVERDE

Translated by Carolyn Forché

*And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view—
—Edgar Allan Poe*

They always followed you.

Disdainful dogs,
they made you lose your balance.

You had to shout
blasphemies into shadows
trying to put out the din of their barking.

Other times

it was advisable to talk and try to calm them,
whispers could be more convincing
and stop them on any corner,
so as to continue alone.

Solitude is a walk through the streets of Baltimore.

You could never free yourself,
those shadows were growing,
crows perched on the statues
with eyes fixed on the emptiness of a demon who dreams.

To you,
who were on the edge of a dismal midnight
watching specters of dying embers on the ground.

To you,
who tasted sorrow,
who drank it like an exquisite liqueur,
I come close
and I look at you trying to find you on the other side of the stone

carved by misfortune,
the same as happens with beauty.
Never again will the silver bells ring,
the ships that now arrive at the port of Baltimore
are filled with people too frightened to speak.

They bring a stone in place of the heart,
they do not sense these shadows that wander the streets,
these shadows that are neither men nor women nor beasts,
perhaps dogs or birds or words in the beaks of the birds
or in their jaws.

When they pass they are nothing more than the sea breeze
from which they come.

There is a silence now
about silence
in the shadows.

They bite like words
in place of the heart.

15. Sarah Gamble (Kentucky)

THE ALBATROSS

BY KATE BASS

When I know you are coming home
I put on this necklace:
glass beads on a silken thread,
a blue that used to match my eyes.
I like to think I am remembering you.
I like to think you don't forget.

The necklace lies heavy on my skin,
it clatters when I reach down
to lift my screaming child.
I swing her, roll her in my arms until she forgets.
The beads glitter in the flicker of a TV set
as I sit her on my lap
and wish away the afternoon.

I wait until I hear a gate latch lift

the turn of key in lock.

I sit amongst toys and unwashed clothes,

I sit and she fingers the beads until you speak

in a voice that no longer seems familiar, only strange.

I turn as our child tugs at the string.

I hear a snap and a sound like falling rain.

16. Camilla Howell (Louisiana)

VERY LARGE MOTH

BY CRAIG ARNOLD

After D.H.L.

Your first thought when the light snaps on and the black wings
clatter about the kitchen is a bat

the clear part of your mind considers rabies the other part
does not consider knows only to startle

and cower away from the slap of its wings though it is soon
clearly not a bat but a moth and harmless

still you are shy of it it clings to the hood of the stove
not black but brown its orange eyes sparkle

like televisions its leg joints are large enough to count
how could you kill it where would you hide the body

a creature so solid must have room for a soul

and if this is so why not in a creature

half its size or half its size again and so on

down to the ants clearly it must be saved

caught in a shopping bag and rushed to the front door

afraid to crush it feeling the plastic rattle

loosened into the night air it batters the porch light

throwing fitful shadows around the landing

That was a really big moth is all you can say to the doorman

who has watched your whole performance with a smile

the half-compassion and half-horror we feel for the creatures

we want not to hurt and prefer not to touch

17. Megan Ammons (Tennessee)

TO HAVE WITHOUT HOLDING

BY MARGE PIERCY

Learning to love differently is hard,
love with the hands wide open, love
with the doors banging on their hinges,
the cupboard unlocked, the wind
roaring and whimpering in the rooms
rustling the sheets and snapping the blinds
that thwack like rubber bands
in an open palm.

It hurts to love wide open
stretching the muscles that feel
as if they are made of wet plaster,
then of blunt knives, then
of sharp knives.

It hurts to thwart the reflexes

of grab, of clutch ; to love and let
go again and again. It pesters to remember
the lover who is not in the bed,
to hold back what is owed to the work
that gutters like a candle in a cave
without air, to love consciously,
conscientiously, concretely, constructively.

I can't do it, you say it's killing
me, but you thrive, you glow
on the street like a neon raspberry,
You float and sail, a helium balloon
bright bachelor's button blue and bobbing
on the cold and hot winds of our breath,
as we make and unmake in passionate
diastole and systole the rhythm
of our unbound bonding, to have
and not to hold, to love
with minimized malice, hunger
and anger moment by moment balanced.

18. Amelia C. Escalante (Nebraska)

THIS IS MY LAST REPORT

BY JUAN FELIPE HERRERA

This is my last report:

I wanted to speak of existence, the ants most of all,
dressed up in their naughty flame-trousers, the exact jaws,
their unknowable kindnesses, their abyss of hungers,
and science, their mercilessness, their prophetic military
devotions, their geometry of scent, their cocoons
for the Nomenclature,

I wanted to speak of the Glue Sniffers
and Glue Smoothers who despise all forms
unbound, loose in their amber nectars, I wanted
to point to their noses, hoses and cables and networks,
their tools, if I can use that word now—and scales and
scanners and Glue Rectories.

I wanted you to meet my broom mother
who carved a hole into her womb
so that I could live—

At every sunset she stands
under the shadow of the watchtowers
elongating and denying her breath.

I wanted to look under the rubble fields
for once, for you (if you approved), flee
into the bullet-riddled openness and fall flat,
arched, askew, under the rubble sheets
and let the rubble fill me

with its sharp plates and ripped dust—
alphabets incomplete and humid. You,
listen,

a little closer
to the chalk dust—this child swinging her left arm,
a ribbon, agitated by unnamed forces, devoured.

Round Two

1. Sreepadaarchana Munjuluri (Indiana)

THE NEW COLOSSUS

BY EMMA LAZARUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

2. Glenn Deon James Doss Jr. (Michigan)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

BY ROBERT HAYDEN

When it is finally ours, this freedom, this liberty, this beautiful
and terrible thing, needful to man as air,
usable as earth; when it belongs at last to all,
when it is truly instinct, brain matter, diastole, systole,
reflex action; when it is finally won; when it is more
than the gaudy mumbo jumbo of politicians:
this man, this Douglass, this former slave, this Negro
beaten to his knees, exiled, visioning a world
where none is lonely, none hunted, alien,
this man, superb in love and logic, this man
shall be remembered. Oh, not with statues' rhetoric,
not with legends and poems and wreaths of bronze alone,
but with the lives grown out of his life, the lives
fleshing his dream of the beautiful, needful thing.

3. Lydia J.M. Newsome (Iowa)

I AM TRYING TO BREAK YOUR HEART
BY KEVIN YOUNG

I am hoping
to hang your head

on my wall
in shame—

the slightest taxidermy
thrills me. Fish

forever leaping
on the living-room wall—

paperweights made
from skulls

of small animals.
I want to wear

your smile on my sleeve

& break

your heart like a horse

or its leg. Weeks of being

bucked off, then

all at once, you're mine—

Put me down.

I want to call you *thine*

to tattoo *mercy*

along my knuckles. *I assassin*

down the avenue

I hope

to have you forgotten
by noon. To know you
by your knees
palsied by prayer.

Loneliness is a science—

consider the taxidermist's
tender hands

trying to keep from losing
skin, the bobcat grin

of the living.

4. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)

SIREN SONG

BY MARGARET ATWOOD

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?

I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.

Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!

Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas

it is a boring song

but it works every time.

5. Amir Trinidad Vidal (Puerto Rico)

PASSING

BY TOI DERRICOTTE

A professor invites me to his "Black Lit" class; they're reading Larson's *Passing*. One of the black students says, "Sometimes light-skinned blacks think they can fool other blacks, but *I* can always tell," looking right through me.

After I tell them I am black, I ask the class, "Was I passing when I was just sitting here, before I told you?" A white woman shakes her head desperately, as if I had deliberately deceived her.

She keeps examining my face, then turning away as if she hopes I'll disappear. Why presume "passing" is based on what I leave out and not what she fills in?

In one scene in the book, in a restaurant,
she's "passing,"
though no one checked her at the door—
"Hey, you black?"
My father, who looked white,
told me this story: every year
when he'd go to get his driver's license,
the man at the window filling
out the form would ask,
"White or black?" pencil poised, without looking up.
My father wouldn't pass, but he might
use silence to trap a devil.
When he didn't speak, the man
would look up at my father's face.
"What did he write?"
my father quizzed me.

6. Molly Pitra (Georgia)

THE MORE LOVING ONE

BY W.H. AUDEN

Looking up at the stars, I know quite well
That, for all they care, I can go to hell,
But on earth indifference is the least
We have to dread from man or beast.

How should we like it were stars to burn
With a passion for us we could not return?
If equal affection cannot be,
Let the more loving one be me.

Admirer as I think I am
Of stars that do not give a damn,
I cannot, now I see them, say
I missed one terribly all day.

Were all stars to disappear or die,
I should learn to look at an empty sky

And feel its total dark sublime,
Though this might take me a little time.

7. Victoria Laine Jelks (Kansas)

BATTLE-HYMN OF THE REPUBLIC

BY JULIA WARD HOWE

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord:
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fatal lightning of his terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps;
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps.
His Day is marching on.

I have read a fiery gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before his judgment-seat:

Oh! be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!

Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,

With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me:

As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,

While God is marching on.

8. Yan Luis Lebron Santiago (Florida)

I AM OFFERING THIS POEM

BY JIMMY SANTIAGO BACA

I am offering this poem to you,
since I have nothing else to give.
Keep it like a warm coat
when winter comes to cover you,
or like a pair of thick socks
the cold cannot bite through,

I love you,

I have nothing else to give you,
so it is a pot full of yellow corn
to warm your belly in winter,
it is a scarf for your head, to wear
over your hair, to tie up around your face,

I love you,

Keep it, treasure this as you would
if you were lost, needing direction,
in the wilderness life becomes when mature;
and in the corner of your drawer,
tucked away like a cabin or hogan
in dense trees, come knocking,
and I will answer, give you directions,
and let you warm yourself by this fire,
rest by this fire, and make you feel safe

I love you,

It's all I have to give,
and all anyone needs to live,
and to go on living inside,
when the world outside
no longer cares if you live or die;
remember,

I love you.

9. Nicholas Merlo (Missouri)

ANOTHER ANTIPASTORAL

BY VIEVEE FRANCIS

I want to put down what the mountain has awakened.

My mouthful of grass.

My curious tale. I want to stand still but find myself moved patch by
patch.

There's a bleat in my throat. Words fail me here. Can you understand?

I sink to
my knees tired or not. I now know the ragweed from the goldenrod,
and the blinding
beauty of green. Don't you see? I am shedding my skins. I am a paper
hive, a wolf spider,
the creeping ivy, the ache of a birch, a heifer, a doe. I have fallen from
my dream
of progress: the clear-cut glass, the potted and balconied tree, the
lemon-waxed
wood over a marbled pillar, into my own nocturne. The lullabies I had
forgotten.

**Semifinal Two
Round Two**

How could I know what slept inside? What would rend my fantasies to

cud and up

from this belly's wet straw-strewn field—

these soundings.

10. Yohanna Endashaw (Illinois)

SIREN SONG

BY MARGARET ATWOOD

This is the one song everyone
would like to learn: the song
that is irresistible:

the song that forces men
to leap overboard in squadrons
even though they see the beached skulls

the song nobody knows
because anyone who has heard it
is dead, and the others can't remember.

Shall I tell you the secret
and if I do, will you get me
out of this bird suit?

I don't enjoy it here
squatting on this island
looking picturesque and mythical

with these two feathery maniacs,
I don't enjoy singing
this trio, fatal and valuable.

I will tell the secret to you,
to you, only to you.
Come closer. This song

is a cry for help: Help me!
Only you, only you can,
you are unique

at last. Alas
it is a boring song
but it works every time.

11. Drew Pirtle (Arkansas)

BEFORE THE BIRTH OF ONE OF HER CHILDREN

BY ANNE BRADSTREET

All things within this fading world hath end,
Adversity doth still our joyes attend;
No ties so strong, no friends so dear and sweet,
But with death's parting blow is sure to meet.
The sentence past is most irrevocable,
A common thing, yet oh inevitable.
How soon, my Dear, death may my steps attend,
How soon't may be thy Lot to lose thy friend,
We are both ignorant, yet love bids me
These farewell lines to recommend to thee,
That when that knot's untied that made us one,
I may seem thine, who in effect am none.
And if I see not half my dayes that's due,
What nature would, God grant to yours and you;
The many faults that well you know I have
Let be interr'd in my oblivious grave;

If any worth or virtue were in me,
Let that live freshly in thy memory
And when thou feel'st no grief, as I no harms,
Yet love thy dead, who long lay in thine arms.
And when thy loss shall be repaid with gains
Look to my little babes, my dear remains.
And if thou love thyself, or loved'st me,
These o protect from step Dames injury.
And if chance to thine eyes shall bring this verse,
With some sad sighs honour my absent Herse;
And kiss this paper for thy loves dear sake,
Who with salt tears this last Farewel did take.

12. Edward Wilson Jr. (Mississippi)

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI: A BALLAD

BY JOHN KEATS

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

Alone and palely loitering?

The sedge has withered from the lake,

And no birds sing.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,

So haggard and so woe-begone?

The squirrel's granary is full,

And the harvest's done.

I see a lily on thy brow,

With anguish moist and fever-dew,

And on thy cheeks a fading rose

Fast withereth too.

I met a lady in the meads,

Full beautiful—a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

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

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.

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

She took me to her Elfin grot,
And there she wept and sighed full sore,

And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four.

And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dreamed—Ah! woe betide!—
The latest dream I ever dreamt
On the cold hill side.

I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
They cried—'La Belle Dame sans Merci
Thee hath in thrall!'

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

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

**Semifinal Two
Round Two**

POL participants and judges: in this poem's third-to-last stanza, recitations that include "Hath thee in thrall!" or "Thee hath in thrall!" are both acceptable.

13. Emily Biaz (Alabama)

SHELTERED GARDEN

BY H.D.

I have had enough.

I gasp for breath.

Every way ends, every road,
every foot-path leads at last
to the hill-crest—
then you retrace your steps,
or find the same slope on the other side,
precipitate.

I have had enough—
border-pinks, clove-pinks, wax-lilies,
herbs, sweet-cress.

O for some sharp swish of a branch—
there is no scent of resin

in this place,
no taste of bark, of coarse weeds,
aromatic, astringent—
only border on border of scented pinks.

Have you seen fruit under cover
that wanted light—
pears wadded in cloth,
protected from the frost,
melons, almost ripe,
smothered in straw?

Why not let the pears cling
to the empty branch?
All your coaxing will only make
a bitter fruit—
let them cling, ripen of themselves,
test their own worth,
nipped, shrivelled by the frost,
to fall at last but fair
with a russet coat.

Or the melon—
let it bleach yellow
in the winter light,
even tart to the taste—
it is better to taste of frost—
the exquisite frost—
than of wadding and of dead grass.

For this beauty,
beauty without strength,
chokes out life.
I want wind to break,
scatter these pink-stalks,
snap off their spiced heads,
fling them about with dead leaves—
spread the paths with twigs,
limbs broken off,
trail great pine branches,
hurled from some far wood
right across the melon-patch,
break pear and quince—

leave half-trees, torn, twisted
but showing the fight was valiant.

O to blot out this garden
to forget, to find a new beauty
in some terrible
wind-tortured place.

14. AdyLynn Anderson (Oklahoma)

I ONCE WAS A CHILD

BY VICTORIA CHANG

I once was a child am a child am someone's child

not my mother's not my father's the boss

gave us special treatment treatment for something

special a lollipop or a sticker glitter from the

toy box the better we did the better the plastic prize made

in China one year everyone got a spinning top

one year everyone got a tap on their shoulders

one year everyone was fired everyone

fired but me one year we all lost our words one year

my father lost his words to a stroke

a stroke of bad luck stuck his words

used to be so worldly his words fired

him let him go without notice can they do that

can she do that yes she can in this land she can

once we sang songs around a piano *this land is your land*

this land is my land in this land someone always

owns the land in this land someone who owns

the land owns the buildings on the land owns

the people in the buildings unless an earthquake

sucks the land in like a long noodle

15. Sarah Gamble (Kentucky)

A HYMN TO GOD THE FATHER

BY JOHN DONNE

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,

Which was my sin, though it were done before?

Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,

And do run still, though still I do deplore?

When thou hast done, thou hast not done,

For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won

Others to sin, and made my sin their door?

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun

A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?

When thou hast done, thou hast not done,

For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun

My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;

But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

16. Camilla Howell (Louisiana)

**MISS YOU. WOULD LIKE TO GRAB THAT CHILLED TOFU WE
LOVE.**

BY GABRIELLE CALVOCORESSI

Do not care if you bring only your light body.
Would just be so happy to sit at the table
and talk about the menu. Miss you.
Wish we could bet which chilis they'll put
on the cubes of tofu. Our favorite.
Sometimes green. Sometimes red. Roasted
we always thought. But so cold and fresh.
How did they do it? Wish you could be here
to talk about it like it was so important.
Wish you could. Watched you on the screens
as I was walking, as I was cooking. Wished you
could get out of the hospital. Can't
bring myself to order our dish and eat it
in the car. Miss you laughing. Miss
you coming in from the cold or one

too many meetings. Laughing. I'll order
already. I'll order seven helpings, some
dumplings, those cold yam noodles that you
like. You can come in your light
body or skeleton or be invisible I don't even
care. Know you have a long way to travel.
Know I don't even know if it's long
at all. Wish you could tell me. What
you're reading. If you're reading.
Miss you. I'm at the table in the back.

17. Megan Ammons (Tennessee)

THE COLLAR

BY GEORGE HERBERT

I struck the board, and cried, "No more;

I will abroad!

What? shall I ever sigh and pine?

My lines and life are free, free as the road,

Loose as the wind, as large as store.

Shall I be still in suit?

Have I no harvest but a thorn

To let me blood, and not restore

What I have lost with cordial fruit?

Sure there was wine

Before my sighs did dry it; there was corn

Before my tears did drown it.

Is the year only lost to me?

Have I no bays to crown it,

No flowers, no garlands gay? All blasted?

All wasted?

Not so, my heart; but there is fruit,
 And thou hast hands.
Recover all thy sigh-blown age
On double pleasures: leave thy cold dispute
Of what is fit and not. Forsake thy cage,
 Thy rope of sands,
Which petty thoughts have made, and made to thee
Good cable, to enforce and draw,
 And be thy law,
While thou didst wink and wouldst not see.
 Away! take heed;
 I will abroad.
Call in thy death's-head there; tie up thy fears;
 He that forbears
 To suit and serve his need
 Deserves his load."
But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild
 At every word,
Methought I heard one calling, *Child!*
 And I replied *My Lord.*

18. Amelia C. Escalante (Nebraska)

UNDER THE EDGE OF FEBRUARY

BY JAYNE CORTEZ

Under the edge of february

in hawk of a throat

hidden by ravines of sweet oil

by temples of switchblades

beautiful in its sound of fertility

beautiful in its turban of funeral crepe

beautiful in its camouflage of grief

in its solitude of bruises

in its arson of alert

Who will enter its beautiful calligraphy of blood

Its beautiful mask of fish net

mask of hubcaps mask of ice picks mask

of watermelon rinds mask of umbilical cords

changing into a mask of rubber bands

Who will enter this beautiful beautiful mask of
punctured bladders moving with a mask of chapsticks

Compound of Hearts Compound of Hearts

Where is the lucky number for this shy love
this top-heavy beauty bathed with charcoal water
self-conscious against a mosaic of broken bottles
broken locks broken pipes broken
bloods of broken spirits broken through like
broken promises

Landlords Junkies Thieves
enthroning themselves in you
they burn up couches they burn down houses
and infuse themselves against memory
every thought
a pavement of old belts
every performance
a ceremonial pickup
how many more orphans how many more neglected shrines
how many stolen feet stolen fingers

stolen watchbands of death

in you how many times

Harlem

hidden by ravines of sweet oil

by temples of switchblades

beautiful in your sound of fertility

beautiful in your turban of funeral crepe

beautiful in your camouflage of grief

in your solitude of bruises

in your arson of alert

beautiful

Round Three

1. Sreepadaarchana Munjuluri (Indiana)

THE LEGEND

BY GARRETT HONGO

In Chicago, it is snowing softly
and a man has just done his wash for the week.
He steps into the twilight of early evening,
carrying a wrinkled shopping bag
full of neatly folded clothes,
and, for a moment, enjoys
the feel of warm laundry and crinkled paper,
flannellike against his gloveless hands.
There's a Rembrandt glow on his face,
a triangle of orange in the hollow of his cheek
as a last flash of sunset
blazes the storefronts and lit windows of the street.

He is Asian, Thai or Vietnamese,
and very skinny, dressed as one of the poor
in rumpled suit pants and a plaid mackinaw,
dingy and too large.

He negotiates the slick of ice
on the sidewalk by his car,
opens the Fairlane's back door,
leans to place the laundry in,
and turns, for an instant,
toward the flurry of footsteps
and cries of pedestrians
as a boy—that's all he was—
backs from the corner package store
shooting a pistol, firing it,
once, at the dumbfounded man
who falls forward,
grabbing at his chest.

A few sounds escape from his mouth,
a babbling no one understands
as people surround him
bewildered at his speech.

The noises he makes are nothing to them.

The boy has gone, lost
in the light array of foot traffic
dappling the snow with fresh prints.

Tonight, I read about Descartes'
grand courage to doubt everything
except his own miraculous existence
and I feel so distinct
from the wounded man lying on the concrete
I am ashamed.

Let the night sky cover him as he dies.
Let the weaver girl cross the bridge of heaven
and take up his cold hands.

IN MEMORY OF JAY KASHIWAMURA

**The reciting of the dedication is optional.*

2. Glenn Deon James Doss Jr. (Michigan)

RESPECTABILITY

BY TINA BOYER BROWN

We ask our children
to act calm/nervous/whatever
innocent looks like when
some cop shows his badge/pulls his gun/slows his car.

We beg kids
to say soft *yes sirs*.
We beg kids
to get on the hood of that car/empty their pockets/shut up/put your
hands behind your head.

No is an existential threat.
No is an existential threat.
No is an existential threat.
No is an existential threat.

Never is an existential threat.

Never is an existential threat.

Never is an existential threat.

Never is an existential threat.

We dare ask for humility

in the face of this oppression?

We have no idea what the threat feels like,

but we know

Breonna

Rekia

Sandra

Nia

Bettie

Yvette

Miriam

Shereese

Ahmaud

Trayvon

Eric

Laquan

**Semifinal Two
Round Three**

Michael

Philando

Stephon

Alton

Amadou

Akai

Quintonio

Rumai

John

Jordan

Jonathan

Reynaldo

Kendrec

Ramarley

Kenneth

Robert

Walter

Terence

Freddie

Samuel

George

Tamir

and more

and more

and more

There's no open wrist declaring our innocence that will confer peace
where innocents need.

Our children

stand in front of doors/pages/words/in the streets.

They shut down/they shut down/they shut down

the forces that burn against them.

3. Lydia J.M. Newsome (Iowa)

WE WEAR THE MASK

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!

4. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)

THE SEEKERS OF LICE

BY ARTHUR RIMBAUD

Translated by Wallace Fowlie

When the child's forehead, full of red torments,
Implores the white swarm of indistinct dreams,
There come near his bed two tall charming sisters
With slim fingers that have silvery nails.

They seat the child in front of a wide open
Window where the blue air bathes a mass of flowers
And in his heavy hair where the dew falls
Move their delicate, fearful and enticing fingers.

He listens to the singing of their apprehensive breath.
Which smells of long rosy plant honey
And which at times a hiss interrupts, saliva
Caught on the lip or desire for kisses.

He hears their black eyelashes beating in the perfumed
Silence; and their gentle electric fingers
Make in his half-drunken indolence the death of the little lice
Crackle under their royal nails.

Then the wine of Sloth rises in him,
The sigh of an harmonica which could bring on delirium;
The child feels, according to the slowness of the caresses
Surging in him and dying continuously a desire to cry.

5. Amir Trinidad Vidal (Puerto Rico)

OZYMANDIAS

BY PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

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."

6. Molly Pitra (Georgia)

WE WEAR THE MASK

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!

7. Victoria Laine Jelks (Kansas)

SONGS FOR THE PEOPLE

BY FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER

Let me make the songs for the people,
Songs for the old and young;
Songs to stir like a battle-cry
Wherever they are sung.

Not for the clashing of sabres,
For carnage nor for strife;
But songs to thrill the hearts of men
With more abundant life.

Let me make the songs for the weary,
Amid life's fever and fret,
Till hearts shall relax their tension,
And careworn brows forget.

Let me sing for little children,
Before their footsteps stray,

Sweet anthems of love and duty,
To float o'er life's highway.

I would sing for the poor and aged,
When shadows dim their sight;
Of the bright and restful mansions,
Where there shall be no night.

Our world, so worn and weary,
Needs music, pure and strong,
To hush the jangle and discords
Of sorrow, pain, and wrong.

Music to soothe all its sorrow,
Till war and crime shall cease;
And the hearts of men grown tender
Girdle the world with peace.

8. Yan Luis Lebron Santiago (Florida)

HERE'S AN OCEAN TALE

BY KWOYA FAGIN MAPLES

My brother still bites his nails to the quick,
but lately he's been allowing them to grow.
So much hurt is forgotten with the horizon
as backdrop. It comes down to simple math.

The beach belongs to none of us, regardless
of color, or money. We all come to sit
at the feet of the surf, watch waves
drag the sand and crush shells for hours.

My brother's feet are coated in sparkly powder
that leaves a sticky residue when dry.
He's twenty-three, still unaware of his value.
It is too easy, reader, for me to call him

beautiful, standing against the sky
in cherrywood skin and almond
eyes in the sun, so instead I tell him
he is handsome. I remind him

of a day when I brought him to the beach
as a boy. He'd wandered, trailing a tourist,
a white man pointing toward his hotel—
all for a promised shark tooth.

I yelled for him, pulled him to me,
drove us home. Folly Beach. He was six.
He almost went.

9. Nicholas Merlo (Missouri)

ADVICE TO A PROPHET

BY RICHARD WILBUR

When you come, as you soon must, to the streets of our city,
Mad-eyed from stating the obvious,
Not proclaiming our fall but begging us
In God's name to have self-pity,

Spare us all word of the weapons, their force and range,
The long numbers that rocket the mind;
Our slow, unreckoning hearts will be left behind,
Unable to fear what is too strange.

Nor shall you scare us with talk of the death of the race.
How should we dream of this place without us?—
The sun mere fire, the leaves untroubled about us,
A stone look on the stone's face?

Speak of the world's own change. Though we cannot conceive
Of an undreamt thing, we know to our cost

How the dreamt cloud crumbles, the vines are blackened by frost,
How the view alters. We could believe,

If you told us so, that the white-tailed deer will slip
Into perfect shade, grown perfectly shy,
The lark avoid the reaches of our eye,
The jack-pine lose its knuckled grip

On the cold ledge, and every torrent burn
As Xanthus once, its gliding trout
Stunned in a twinkling. What should we be without
The dolphin's arc, the dove's return,

These things in which we have seen ourselves and spoken?
Ask us, prophet, how we shall call
Our natures forth when that live tongue is all
Dispelled, that glass obscured or broken

In which we have said the rose of our love and the clean
Horse of our courage, in which beheld
The singing locust of the soul unshelled,
And all we mean or wish to mean.

Ask us, ask us whether with the worldless rose
Our hearts shall fail us; come demanding
Whether there shall be lofty or long standing
When the bronze annals of the oak-tree close.

10. Yohanna Endashaw (Illinois)

THE NEW COLOSSUS

BY EMMA LAZARUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

11. Drew Pirtle (Arkansas)

ALWAYS SOMETHING MORE BEAUTIFUL

BY STEPHEN DUNN

This time I came to the starting place
with my best running shoes, and pure speed
held back for the finish, came with only love
of the clock and the underfooting
and the other runners. Each of us would
be testing excellence and endurance

in the other, though in the past I'd often
veer off to follow some feral distraction
down a side path, allowing myself
to pursue something odd or beautiful,
becoming acquainted with a few of the ways
not to blame myself for failing to succeed.

I had come to believe what's beautiful
had more to do with daring

to take yourself seriously, to stay
the course, whatever the course might be.
The person in front seemed ready to fade,
his long, graceful stride shortening

as I came up along his side. I was sure now
I'd at least exceed my best time.

But the man with the famous final kick
already had begun his move. *Beautiful*, I heard
a spectator say, as if something inevitable
about to come from nowhere was again on its way.

12. Edward Wilson Jr. (Mississippi)

BLK HISTORY MONTH

BY NIKKI GIOVANNI

If Black History Month is not
viable then wind does not
carry the seeds and drop them
on fertile ground
rain does not
dampen the land
and encourage the seeds
to root
sun does not
warm the earth
and kiss the seedlings
and tell them plain:
You're As Good As Anybody Else
You've Got A Place Here, Too

**Semifinal Two
Round Three**

**The title of this poem may be recited "BLK History Month" or "Black History Month." Either is acceptable and should not affect the accuracy score.*

13. Emily Biaz (Alabama)

SURPRISED BY JOY

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, long buried in the silent Tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee?—Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

14. AdyLynn Anderson (Oklahoma)

I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER

BY THOMAS HOOD

I remember, I remember,
The house where I was born,
The little window where the sun
Came peeping in at morn;
He never came a wink too soon,
Nor brought too long a day,
But now, I often wish the night
Had borne my breath away!

I remember, I remember,
The roses, red and white,
The vi'lets, and the lily-cups,
Those flowers made of light!
The lilacs where the robin built,
And where my brother set
The laburnum on his birthday,—

The tree is living yet!

I remember, I remember,
Where I was used to swing,
And thought the air must rush as fresh
To swallows on the wing;
My spirit flew in feathers then,
That is so heavy now,
And summer pools could hardly cool
The fever on my brow!

I remember, I remember,
The fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their slender tops
Were close against the sky:
It was a childish ignorance,
But now 'tis little joy
To know I'm farther off from heav'n
Than when I was a boy.

15. Sarah Gamble (Kentucky)

CANDLES

BY CARL DENNIS

If on your grandmother's birthday you burn a candle
To honor her memory, you might think of burning an extra
To honor the memory of someone who never met her,
A man who may have come to the town she lived in
Looking for work and never found it.
Picture him taking a stroll one morning,
After a month of grief with the want ads,
To refresh himself in the park before moving on.
Suppose he notices on the gravel path the shards
Of a green glass bottle that your grandmother,
Then still a girl, will be destined to step on
When she wanders barefoot away from her school picnic
If he doesn't stoop down and scoop the mess up
With the want-ad section and carry it to a trash can.

For you to burn a candle for him
You needn't suppose the cut would be a deep one,
Just deep enough to keep her at home
The night of the hay ride when she meets Helen,
Who is soon to become her dearest friend,
Whose brother George, thirty years later,
Helps your grandfather with a loan so his shoe store
Doesn't go under in the Great Depression
And his son, your father, is able to stay in school
Where his love of learning is fanned into flames,
A love he labors, later, to kindle in you.

How grateful you are for your father's efforts
Is shown by the candles you've burned for him.
But today, for a change, why not a candle
For the man whose name is unknown to you?
Take a moment to wonder whether he died at home
With friends and family or alone on the road,
On the look-out for no one to sit at his bedside
And hold his hand, the very hand
It's time for you to imagine holding.

16. Camilla Howell (Louisiana)

SHALL EARTH NO MORE INSPIRE THEE

BY EMILY BRONTË

Shall earth no more inspire thee,
Thou lonely dreamer now?
Since passion may not fire thee
Shall Nature cease to bow?

Thy mind is ever moving
In regions dark to thee;
Recall its useless roving—
Come back and dwell with me.

I know my mountain breezes
Enchant and soothe thee still—
I know my sunshine pleases
Despite thy wayward will.

When day with evening blending

Sinks from the summer sky,
I've seen thy spirit bending
In fond idolatry.

I've watched thee every hour;
I know my mighty sway,
I know my magic power
To drive thy griefs away.

Few hearts to mortals given
On earth so wildly pine;
Yet none would ask a heaven
More like this earth than thine.

Then let my winds caress thee;
Thy comrade let me be—
Since nought beside can bless thee,
Return and dwell with me.

17. Megan Ammons (Tennessee)

ACROSS THE STREET

BY AUSTIN SEGREST

I ran across the street, I didn't know any better.

Ran out in the street, I didn't know no better.

I just knew a woman was there, though I'd never met her.

She sat me in her parlor, distracted me with trinkets,
milky glass birds and fish, distracting trinkets.

She said my mother would be fine, but did she think it?

The world was a blur of crystal wings and fins.

My tears were casked in crystal, wings and fins.

She was the first of many lady-friends.

The tree shadows shortened, she brought me a drink of water.

Morning matured, she brought me a glass of water.

I drank it so fast, she went and brought another.

I kept looking out the window, she didn't ask me what for.

I watched out that window, she didn't ask what for.

The seconds broke off and lay there on the floor.

I imagined my mother's route, as far as I could.

Her long morning walk, followed as far as I could.

Nothing I could do would do any good.

Suffer the little children, and forbid them not.

Christ said suffer the little children, and forbid them not.

Said love thy neighbor, sometimes she's all you got.

18. Amelia C. Escalante (Nebraska)

ON THE DEATH OF ANNE BRONTË

BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

There's little joy in life for me,
 And little terror in the grave;
I 've lived the parting hour to see
 Of one I would have died to save.

Calmly to watch the failing breath,
 Wishing each sigh might be the last;
Longing to see the shade of death
 O'er those beloved features cast.

The cloud, the stillness that must part
 The darling of my life from me;
And then to thank God from my heart,
 To thank Him well and fervently;

Although I knew that we had lost

The hope and glory of our life;
And now, benighted, tempest-tossed,
Must bear alone the weary strife.