

1. Riley Grace Saenim (Wisconsin)

Militants to Certain Other Women
By Katharine Rolston Fisher

You who pass coldly by when the police rush upon us,

When they wrench away our banners,

(Beautiful banners whose colors cry a demand for liberty)

You who criticize or condemn

(Declaring you “believe in suffrage,

Worked for it in your state, and your mother

knew Susan B. Anthony”)

Can you think in terms of a nation?

Could you die, (or face ridicule) for your belief?

For the freedom of women, for your freedom,

we are fighting;

For your safety we face danger, bear torture;

For your honor endure untellable insult.

To win democracy for you we defend the banners of democracy

Till our banners and our bodies

Are flung together on the pavement,

Waiting at the gates of government,

We have made of our weariness a symbol
Of women's long wait for justice.
We have borne the hunger and hardship of prison,
To open people's eyes
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You women who pass coldly by,
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As a summer wind blows over fields?
Slowly it has advanced by a sixty-years' war,
(Those who have fought in it have not forgotten)
And that war is not won.
Strongly entrenched, the foe sits plotting.
Close to his lines our banners fly,
Signalling where to direct the fire,
Greater forces are needed, reserves and recruits.
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Women who watch the banners go down?
Women who say, "Suffrage is coming,"
While suffrage goes by you into Prussia?
Cease to be content with applauding speeches, and praising politicians.
Patience is shameful.
Awake, rise, and act.

2. Jayda Dawn (Indiana)

The Weary Blues
By Langston Hughes

Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play.
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway . . .
He did a lazy sway . . .
To the tune o' those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!
Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—

“Ain’t got nobody in all this world,
Ain’t got nobody but ma self.
I’s gwine to quit ma frownin’
And put ma troubles on the shelf.”

Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—

“I got the Weary Blues
And I can’t be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can’t be satisfied—
I ain’t happy no mo’
And I wish that I had died.”

And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that’s dead.

3. Aarvi Shah (Alabama)

If I Had a Million
By Samuel Alfred Beadle

If I had a million dollars I don't know what I'd do,
But I sometimes think I'd stroll around and squander a few;
Or, maybe I'd steel away to the country's quietude
And spend the rest of life among the simple and the rude.

I hardly think with the fashionable I'd be imbued,
And the society woman I swear I would elude;
Nor should the bosoms of my Sunday shirts be immaculate—
Even a million, I don't think, my cranium would inflate.

Because I'd like to slip a cog and go it with a bit,
With my soul aglow of passion for my brother in the pit;
Proud to be with the commoners, I'd rusticate awhile,
Nor would I care a cursed thing about the latest style.

"Brogan shoes and homespun socks?" The very things I need,
For too much dress and fashion would my lithe step impede;
A single gallus, friend, would hold my breeches on to me,
And I'd not care a snap about their bagging at the knee.

The doctrine of the broad-brimmed hat I'm sure I would not heed.

I believe in reducing things to what we really need;

Besides I've always been content under a brimless cap,

To go it with the urchins a-frolicking, jolly chap.

With them I'd like to take just now a little bit of ease,

A lounging where I used to, out under the apple trees,

A whittling and swapping jokes with Bill and Tom and Ned.

And let our mem'ries flit around the lore of the trundle-bed.

Aye, over and above it all, this is the simple truth:

If I'd it, and could, I would spend a million for my youth!

Then with my true love I would go a sparking it again,

And look the love upon her my tongue could never explain.

To lead her once again, my friend, through the old Virginia reel:

To salute her, to balance all; again, to fondly feel

The same old bliss I used to while swinging corners all

And stepping to the. Music of the jocund country ball.

Were worth millions of yellow pelf to a maimed old chap like me,

And I'd give it, if I could, with a zest of childish glee.

Oh! If I could but put away my gout and rhumatis',

And take an old-time outing from the pressure of my "biz,"

**Semifinal Two
Round One**

With a bonny girl and youth I'd go to the fair old sunny clime,
Down the sylvan haunts of Dixie, where the jessamines ever twine;
Where the lilies faint of sweetness, and ever blows the thyme;
Where the seasons all are summer and the climate is sublime!

Where the rose aflame of beauty, drops its petals on the sward,
Geraniums blush to scarlet; the passion flowers nod
And the breezy sweep of zephyrs brings on the metric chime
Of the winged minstrelsy in in the glory of their prime...

If you could take the silver from this old pate of mine,
Call back my youth a-gambling down yon vista way sublime,
And bring me back my true love, my long-lost love again,
Up from among the daisies where she so long hath lain,
The million dollars you might have and millions o'er and o'er
Again I'd take my love and youth and ask for nothing more.

4. MajieAhna Winfrey (Nebraska)

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!

5. Rory Berg (Georgia)

A January Dandelion
By George Marion McClellan

All Nashville is a chill. And everywhere
Like desert sand, when the winds blow,
There is each moment sifted through the air,
A powdered blast of January snow.
O! thoughtless Dandelion, to be misled
By a few warm days to leave thy natural bed,
Was folly growth and blooming over soon.
And yet, thou blasted yellow-coated gem,
Full many a heart has but a common boon
With thee, now freezing on thy slender stem.
When the heart has bloomed by the touch of love's warm breath
Then left and chilling snow is sifted in,
It still may beat but there is blast and death
To all that blooming life that might have been.

6. Lillian Baker (Arkansas)

The Prairie Town
By Helen Santmyer

Lovers of beauty laugh at this grey town,

Where dust lies thick on ragged curb-side trees,

And compass-needle streets lead up and down

And lose themselves in empty prairie seas.

Here is no winding scented lane, no hill

Crowned with a steepled church, no garden wall

Of old grey stone where lilacs bloom, and fill

The air with fragrance when the May rains fall.

But here is the unsoftened majesty

Of the wide earth where all the wide streets end,

And from the dusty corner one may see

The full moon rise, and flaming sun descend.

The long main street, whence farmers' teams go forth,

Lies like an old sea road, star-pointed north.

7. Miriam Mantara (Kansas)

It Was Not Fate
By William H. A. Moore

It was not fate which overtook me,
Rather a wayward, wilful wind
That blew hot for awhile
And then, as the even shadows came, blew cold.
What pity it is that a man grown old in life's dreaming
Should stop, e'en for a moment, to look into a woman's eyes.
And I forgot!
Forgot that one's heart must be steeled against the east wind.
Life and death alike come out of the East:
Life as tender as young grass,
Death as dreadful as the sight of clotted blood.
I shall go back into the darkness,
Not to dream but to seek the light again.
I shall go by paths, mayhap,
On roads that wind around the foothills
Where the plains are bare and wild
And the passers-by come few and far between.
I want the night to be long, the moon blind.

The hills thick with moving memories,
And my heart beating a breathless requiem
For all the dead days I have lived.
When the Dawn comes—Dawn, deathless, dreaming—
I shall will that my soul must be cleansed of hate,
I shall pray for strength to hold children close to my heart,
I shall desire to build houses where the poor will know
 shelter, comfort, beauty.
And then may I look into a woman's eyes
And find holiness, love and the peace which passeth understanding.

8. Emma Oleson (Iowa)

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9. Mallory Lott (Louisiana)

Tea at the Palaz of Hoon
By Wallace Stevens

Not less because in purple I descended
The western day through what you called
The loneliest air, not less was I myself.

What was the ointment sprinkled on my beard?
What were the hymns that buzzed beside my ears?
What was the sea whose tide swept through me there?

Out of my mind the golden ointment rained,
And my ears made the blowing hymns they heard.
I was myself the compass of that sea:

I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.

10. Sarah Wheatley (Oklahoma)

Song of Myself, 3
By Walt Whitman

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the beginning and the end
But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase,
always sex,
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that it is so.

**Semifinal Two
Round One**

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well entretied, braced in the
beams,

Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,

I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,

Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age,

Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they discuss I am
silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean,

Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than
the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;

As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side through the night, and

withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread.

Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with their
plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at my eyes,

**Semifinal Two
Round One**

That they turn from gazing after and down the road,

And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which is ahead?

11. Bella Slone (Kentucky)

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12. Elayjah Earles (Mississippi)

Let the Light Enter
By Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

The Dying Words of Goethe

“Light! more light! the shadows deepen,

And my life is ebbing low,

Throw the windows widely open:

Light! more light! before I go.

“Softly let the balmy sunshine

Play around my dying bed,

E'er the dimly lighted valley

I with lonely feet must tread.

“Light! more light! for Death is weaving

Shadows 'round my waning sight,

And I fain would gaze upon him

Through a stream of earthly light.”

Not for greater gifts of genius;

Not for thoughts more grandly bright,
All the dying poet whispers
Is a prayer for light, more light.

Heeds he not the gathered laurels,
Fading slowly from his sight;
All the poet's aspirations
Centre in that prayer for light.

Gracious Saviour, when life's day-dreams
Melt and vanish from the sight,
May our dim and longing vision
Then be blessed with light, more light.

13. Eliza Aldridge (Michigan)

Chicago
By Carl Sandburg

Hog Butcher for the World,
Tool maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's
Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

They tell me you are wicked and I believe them, for I have seen your
painted women under the gas lamps luring the farm boys.

And they tell me you are crooked and I answer: yes, it is true I have seen the
gunman kill and go free to kill again.

And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the faces of women and
children I have seen the marks of wanton hunger.

And having answered so I turn once more to those who sneer at this my city,
and I give them back the sneer and say to them:

Come and show me another city with lifted head singing so proud to be alive
and coarse and strong and cunning.

Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on job, here is a tall bold

slugger set vivid against the little soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning as a savage pitted
against the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,
Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse, and under his ribs
the heart of the people,
Laughing!
Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of Youth, half-naked,
sweating, proud to be Hog Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player
with Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.

14. Sarah Williamson (Tennessee)

On Pain
By Kahlil Gibran

And a woman spoke, saying, Tell us of Pain.

And he said:

Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding.

Even as the stone of the fruit must break, that its heart may stand in the sun,
so must you know pain.

And could you keep your heart in wonder at the daily miracles of your life your
pain would not seem less wondrous than your joy;

And you would accept the seasons of your heart, even as you have always
accepted the seasons that pass over your fields.

And you would watch with serenity through the winters of your grief.

Much of your pain is self-chosen.

It is the bitter potion by which the physician within you heals your sick self.

Therefore trust the physician, and drink his remedy in silence and tranquility:

For his hand, though heavy and hard, is guided by the tender hand of the
Unseen,

And the cup he brings, though it burn your lips, has been fashioned of the clay

which the Potter has moistened with His own sacred tears.

15. David D'Aguilar (Puerto Rico)

A Dream Within a Dream
By Edgar Allan Poe

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow:
You are not wrong who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,

While I weep—while I weep!

O God! can I not grasp

Them with a tighter clasp?

O God! can I not save

One from the pitiless wave?

Is *all* that we see or seem

But a dream within a dream?

16. Esinam Agama (Florida)

“That Blessed Hope”
By Frances Ellen Watkins Harper

Oh touch it not that hope so blest
Which cheers the fainting heart,
And points it to the coming rest
Where sorrow has no part.
Tear from heart each worldly prop,
Unbind each earthly string;
But to this blest and glorious hope,
Oh let my spirit cling.
It cheer'd amid the days of old
Each holy patriarch's breast,
It was an anchor to their souls,
Upon it let me rest.
When wand'ring in the dens and caves,
In goat and sheep skins drest,
Apeel'd and scatter'd people learn'd
To know this hope was blest.
Help me to love this blessed hope;

My heart's a fragile thing;
Will you not nerve and bear it up
Around this hope to cling.
Help amid this world of strife
To long for Christ to reign,
That when he brings the crown of life
I may that crown obtain.

17. Salvador Gonzalez (Missouri)

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which the Potter has moistened with His own sacred tears.

18. Jaden Conley (Illinois)

Mother to Son
By Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:

Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

It's had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare;

But all the time

I've been a'climbin' on,

And reachin' landin's,

And turnin' corners,

And sometimes goin' in the dark,

Where there ain't been no light.

So boy, don't you turn back;

Don't you sit down on the steps,

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard;

Don't you fall now—

**Semifinal Two
Round One**

For I'se still goin', honey,

I'se still climbin',

And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.