**1.** **Isabel Teran (Arizona)**



**ENVY**

BY MARY LAMB

This rose-tree is not made to bear

The violet blue, nor lily fair,

   Nor the sweet mignionet:

And if this tree were discontent,

Or wished to change its natural bent,

   It all in vain would fret.

And should it fret, you would suppose

It ne’er had seen its own red rose,

   Nor after gentle shower

Had ever smelled its rose’s scent,

Or it could ne’er be discontent

   With its own pretty flower.

Like such a blind and senseless tree

As I’ve imagined this to be,

   All envious persons are:

With care and culture all may find

Some pretty flower in their own mind,

   Some talent that is rare.

**2.** **Nikolette Jade Salas (Guam)**



**“LOVE OF MY FLESH, LIVING DEATH”**

BY LORNA DEE CERVANTES

*after García Lorca*

Once I wasn’t always so plain.

I was strewn feathers on a cross

of dune, an expanse of ocean

at my feet, garlands of gulls.

   Sirens and gulls. They couldn’t tame you.

You know as well as they: to be

a dove is to bear the falcon

at your breast, your nights, your seas.

   My fear is simple, heart-faced

above a flare of etchings, a lineage

in letters, my sudden stare. It’s you.

*It’s you!* sang the heart upon its mantel

pelvis. Blush of my breath, catch

of my see—beautiful bird—It’s you.

**3. Katie Lineburg (Oregon)**



**BEGINNING**

BY JAMES WRIGHT

The moon drops one or two feathers into the field.

The dark wheat listens.

Be still.

Now.

There they are, the moon's young, trying

Their wings.

Between trees, a slender woman lifts up the lovely shadow

Of her face, and now she steps into the air, now she is gone

Wholly, into the air.

I stand alone by an elder tree, I do not dare breathe

Or move.

I listen.

The wheat leans back toward its own darkness,

And I lean toward mine.

**4. Emma C. Eldred (Idaho)**



**THE WORLD IS ABOUT TO END AND MY GRANDPARENTS ARE IN LOVE**

BY KARA JACKSON

     still, living like they orbit one another,

my grandfather, the planet, & grandma, his moon assigned

by some gravitational pull. they have loved long enough

for a working man to retire. grandma says she’s not tired,

she wears her husband like a coat that survives every season,

talks about him the way my parents talk about vinyl—

the subject salvaged by the tent of their tongues.

grandma returns to her love like a hymn, marks it with a color.

when the world ends will it suck the earth of all its love?

will i go taking somebody’s hand,

my skin becoming their skin?

the digital age is taking away our winters,

and i’m afraid the sun is my soulmate,

that waste waits for a wet kiss,

carbon calls me pretty, and i think

death is a good first date.

i hope when the world ends it leaves them be,

spares grandpa and his game,

grandma spinning corn into weight,

the two of them reeling into western

theme songs, the TV louder

than whatever’s coming.

**5.** **Blaze Rowan (Washington)**



**EPITAPH**

BY KATHERINE PHILIPS

*On her Son H.P. at St. Syth’s Church where her body also lies interred*

What on Earth deserves our trust?

Youth and Beauty both are dust.

Long we gathering are with pain,

What one moment calls again.

Seven years childless marriage past,

A Son, a son is born at last:

So exactly lim’d and fair,

Full of good Spirits, Meen, and Air,

As a long life promised,

Yet, in less than six weeks dead.

Too promising, too great a mind

In so small room to be confined:

Therefore, as fit in Heaven to dwell,

He quickly broke the Prison shell.

So the subtle Alchemist,

Can’t with Hermes Seal resist

The powerful spirit’s subtler flight,

But t’will bid him long good night.

And so the Sun if it arise

Half so glorious as his Eyes,

Like this Infant, takes a shrowd,

Buried in a morning Cloud.

**6. Elora L. Nation (Wyoming)**



**THE CONTRACT SAYS: WE’D LIKE THE CONVERSATION TO BE BILINGUAL**

BY ADA LIMON

When you come, bring your brown-

ness so we can be sure to please

the funders. Will you check this

box; we’re applying for a grant.

Do you have any poems that speak

to troubled teens? Bilingual is best.

Would you like to come to dinner

with the patrons and sip Patrón?

Will you tell us the stories that make

us uncomfortable, but not complicit?

Don’t read the one where you

are just like us. Born to a green house,

garden, don’t tell us how you picked

tomatoes and ate them in the dirt

watching vultures pick apart another

bird’s bones in the road. Tell us the one

about your father stealing hubcaps

after a colleague said that’s what his

kind did. Tell us how he came

to the meeting wearing a poncho

and tried to sell the man his hubcaps

back. Don’t mention your father

was a teacher, spoke English, loved

making beer, loved baseball, tell us

again about the poncho, the hubcaps,

how he stole them, how he did the thing

he was trying to prove he didn’t do.

**7. Grace Powell (South Dakota)**



**THE GAMBLE**

BY LAURA HERSHEY

We are taught not

to gamble.

Perhaps it is thought we have lost

enough already—legs, vision, speech,

the typical use

of our bodies.

Others' fears would teach us

to cringe at any thought

of any risk.

Disability and risk

don't mix.

Risk is something

we are supposed to be protected from—

by agencies, by professionals—

by parents, by doctors—

by invisibility,

by shame—

by confinement if necessary.

We must be kept safe: This is one of the lies

which fills the beds

of the so-called "homes."

So we embrace the risks

to fight the lies.

This is our gamble:

Minute by minute, city after city—

from the tense beginning to the jubilant or

scattered end

of every protest—

with every rhythmic word of every chant—

at each blocked entrance, each barricade—

with every defiant inch forward—

every move toward

freedom for our people—

any time we raise a fist

or a song

to mean

We're never going away—

in every confrontation, up and down the length

of the stand-off—

each and every time, we are

testing the humanity

of people who wear a badge,

carry a gun—

and fear our incomprehensible strength.

We know this is

a dangerous test—for some fail as extraordinarily

as others pass.

It is a gamble, risky and promising.

It may pay off

in unmet eyes or a curious stare,

surly dismissals or a question,

dialogue

or bruises.

**8. Jordyn Imig (Hawaii)**



**BECOMING A REDWOOD**

BY DANA GIOIA

Stand in a field long enough, and the sounds

start up again. The crickets, the invisible

toad who claims that change is possible,

And all the other life too small to name.

First one, then another, until innumerable

they merge into the single voice of a summer hill.

Yes, it’s hard to stand still, hour after hour,

fixed as a fencepost, hearing the steers

snort in the dark pasture, smelling the manure.

And paralyzed by the mystery of how a stone

can bear to be a stone, the pain

the grass endures breaking through the earth’s crust.

Unimaginable the redwoods on the far hill,

rooted for centuries, the living wood grown tall

and thickened with a hundred thousand days of light.

The old windmill creaks in perfect time

to the wind shaking the miles of pasture grass,

and the last farmhouse light goes off.

Something moves nearby. Coyotes hunt

these hills and packs of feral dogs.

But standing here at night accepts all that.

You are your own pale shadow in the quarter moon,

moving more slowly than the crippled stars,

part of the moonlight as the moonlight falls,

Part of the grass that answers the wind,

part of the midnight’s watchfulness that knows

there is no silence but when danger comes.

**9. Rayann Hijazi (Nevada)**



**WHAT WOMEN ARE MADE OF**

BY BIANCA LYNNE SPRIGGS

*There are many kinds of open.*

*— Audre Lorde*

We are all ventricle, spine, lung, larynx, and gut.

Clavicle and nape, what lies forked in an open palm;

we are follicle and temple. We are ankle, arch,

sole. Pore and rib, pelvis and root

and tongue. We are wishbone and gland and molar

and lobe. We are hippocampus and exposed nerve

and cornea. Areola, pigment, melanin, and nails.

Varicose. Cellulite. Divining rod. Sinew and tissue,

saliva and silt. We are blood and salt, clay and aquifer.

We are breath and flame and stratosphere. Palimpsest

and bibelot and cloisonné fine lines. Marigold, hydrangea,

and dimple. Nightlight, satellite, and stubble. We are

pinnacle, plummet, dark circles, and dark matter.

A constellation of freckles and specters and miracles

and lashes. Both bent and erect, we are all give

and give back. We are volta and girder. Make an incision

in our nectary and Painted Ladies sail forth, riding the back

of a warm wind, plumed with love and things like love.

Crack us down to the marrow, and you may find us full

of cicada husks and sand dollars and salted maple taffy

weary of welding together our daydreams. All sweet tea,

razor blades, carbon, and patchwork quilts of Good God!

and Lord have mercy! Our hands remember how to turn

the earth before we do. Our intestinal fortitude? Cumulonimbus

streaked with saffron light. Our foundation? Not in our limbs

or hips; this comes first as an amen, a hallelujah, a suckling,

swaddled psalm sung at the cosmos’s breast. You want to

know what women are made of? Open wide and find out.

**10. Rize Simmons (Colorado)**



**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.

**11. Oluwabori Fadairo (Texas)**



**THIS IS THE HONEY**

BY MAHOGANY L. BROWNE

There is no room on this planet for anything less than a miracle

We gather here today to revel in the rebellion of a silent tongue

Every day, we lean forward into the light of our brightest designs

       & cherish the sun

Praise our hands & throats

       each incantation, a jubilee of a people dreaming wildly

Despite the dirt

beneath our feet

or the wind

pushing against

our greatest efforts

Soil creates things

Art births change

This is the honey

       & doesn’t it taste like a promise?

Where your heart is an accordion

       & our laughter is a soundtrack

Friend, dance to this good song—

look how it holds our names!

Each bone of our flesh-homes sings welcome

O look at the Gods dancing

       as the rain reigns against a steely skyline

Where grandparents sit on the porch & nod at the spectacle

in awe of the perfection of their grandchildren’s faces

Each small discovery unearthed in its own outpour

Tomorrow our daughters will travel the world with each poem

       & our sons will design cities against the backdrops of living museums

Yes! Our children will spin chalk until each equation bursts a familial

     tree

Rooted in miraculous possibilities  
 & alive

**12. Ariana Kimball (Minnesota)**



**MANSPLAINING**

BY JENNIFER MILITELLO

Dear sir, your air of authority

leaves me lost. Eases me from

a place of ease. Contracts with

my contradictions to take from me

a place. Autopilots my autobiography.

Frightens my fright. Sighs with

my breath. Wins at my race.

Your certainty has me curtained.

Your nerve has me nervous. Your

childhood has me childlike and

your nastiness nests in my belfry

like a hawk. You are beyond

and above my slice of sky, peach

as a pie, bourbon as its pit. You are

spit and vinegar while I sour

in my bowl. You bowl me over

while I tread lightly on

my feet. You walk on water

while I sink. You witness me,

fisherman, boat on the lake,

while I struggle and burble and brittle

and drop. You wink at me and

I must relate. I close my eyes

to erase you and you are written

in my lids. A litmus test. A form

of lair. God with three days

of facial growth and an old bouquet

for a face. Soap and water for

a brain. I have no handsome

answer. I have no pillar of salt

or shoulder to look over. I have

no feather to weigh. I have no

bubble to burst. I am less

to myself, a character in a drama,

a drumbeat, a benevolence, a

blight. All parts of me say shoot

on sight. Aim for an artery

or organ. Good night.

**13. Hazel Ipuniuesea Leo (American Samoa)**



**STEPPING STONES**

BY ALBERT WENDT

Our islands are Tagaloaalagi’s stepping stones across Le Vasa Loloa

small and frail but courageous enough to bear his weight and mana

high enough to keep us above the drowning and learning

how to navigate by the stars    currents and the ferocity of storms

Point and sail in any direction as long as you know

how to return home

You have to navigate the space between the borders

of your skin and the intelligence of the tongueless horizon

and learn the language of touch    of signs and pain

of what isn’t and what may be in the circle of the tides

that will stretch until you understand the permanent silence

at the end of your voyage

and our islands are your anchor and launching site

for the universes that repeat and repeat

like the long waves of our ocean    like Tagaloaalagi’s

compulsive scrutiny of what is to come and fear

**14. Riley O'Hara (California)**



**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.

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.

**15. Kaitlyn Lubega (New Mexico)**



**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

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.

**16. Mona Koko (Alaska)**



**ONCE THE WORLD WAS PERFECT**

BY JOY HARJO

Once the world was perfect, and we were happy in that world.

Then we took it for granted.

Discontent began a small rumble in the earthly mind.

Then Doubt pushed through with its spiked head.

And once Doubt ruptured the web,

All manner of demon thoughts

Jumped through—

We destroyed the world we had been given

For inspiration, for life—

Each stone of jealousy, each stone

Of fear, greed, envy, and hatred, put out the light.

No one was without a stone in his or her hand.

There we were,

Right back where we had started.

We were bumping into each other

In the dark.

And now we had no place to live, since we didn't know

How to live with each other.

Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another

And shared a blanket.

A spark of kindness made a light.

The light made an opening in the darkness.

Everyone worked together to make a ladder.

A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world,

And then the other clans, the children of those clans, their children,

And their children, all the way through time—

To now, into this morning light to you.

**17.** **Anni Willes (Utah)**



**WHAT THE ORACLE SAID**

BY SHARA MCCALLUM

You will leave your home:

nothing will hold you.

You will wear dresses of gold; skins

of silver, copper, and bronze.

The sky above you will shift in meaning

each time you think you understand.

You will spend a lifetime chipping away layers

of flesh. The shadow of your scales

will always remain. You will be marked

by sulphur and salt.

You will bathe endlessly in clear streams and fail

to rid yourself of that scent.

Your feet will never be your own.

Stone will be your path.

Storms will follow in your wake,

destroying all those who take you in.

You will desert your children

kill your lovers and devour their flesh.

You will love no one

but the wind and ache of your bones.

Neither will love you in return.

With age, your hair will grow matted and dull,

your skin will gape and hang in long folds,

your eyes will cease to shine.

But nothing will be enough.

The sea will never take you back.

**18. Circe Atkinson (North Dakota)**



**ONE GIRL**

BY SAPPHO

*Translated by Dante Gabriel Rossetti*

                                I

Like the sweet apple which reddens upon the topmost bough,

Atop on the topmost twig, — which the pluckers forgot, somehow, —

Forget it not, nay; but got it not, for none could get it till now.

                               II

Like the wild hyacinth flower which on the hills is found,

Which the passing feet of the shepherds for ever tear and wound,

Until the purple blossom is trodden in the ground.

**19. Molly Ogan (Montana)**



**THE STRENGTH OF FIELDS**

BY JAMES L. DICKEY

*... a separation from the world,*

*a penetration to some source of power*

*and a life-enhancing return ...*

*Van Gennep: Rites de Passage*

Moth-force a small town always has,

          Given the night.

                                                What field-forms can be,

         Outlying the small civic light-decisions over

               A man walking near home?

                                                                        Men are not where he is

      Exactly now, but they are around him    around him like the strength

Of fields.    The solar system floats on

    Above him in town-moths.

                                                         Tell me, train-sound,

    With all your long-lost grief,

                                                         what I can give.

    Dear Lord of all the fields

                                                         what am I going to do?

                                        Street-lights, blue-force and frail

As the homes of men, tell me how to do it    how

    To withdraw    how to penetrate and find the source

      Of the power you always had

                                                            light as a moth, and rising

       With the level and moonlit expansion

    Of the fields around, and the sleep of hoping men.

       You?    I?    What difference is there?    We can all be saved

       By a secret blooming. Now as I walk

The night    and you walk with me    we know simplicity

   Is close to the source that sleeping men

       Search for in their home-deep beds.

       We know that the sun is away    we know that the sun can be

     conquered

   By moths, in blue home-town air.

          The stars splinter, pointed and wild. The dead lie under

The pastures.    They look on and help.    Tell me, freight-train,

                            When there is no one else

   To hear. Tell me in a voice the sea

         Would have, if it had not a better one: as it lifts,

          Hundreds of miles away, its fumbling, deep-structured roar

               Like the profound, unstoppable craving

            Of nations for their wish.

                                                                    Hunger, time and the moon:

         The moon lying on the brain

                                                                as on the excited sea    as on

          The strength of fields. Lord, let me shake

         With purpose.    Wild hope can always spring

         From tended strength.    Everything is in that.

            That and nothing but kindness.    More kindness, dear Lord

Of the renewing green.    That is where it all has to start:

         With the simplest things. More kindness will do nothing less

             Than save every sleeping one

             And night-walking one

         Of us.

                         My life belongs to the world. I will do what I can.

**Round 2 Poems**

**1.** **Isabel Teran (Arizona)**



**ARS POETICA**

BY JOSÉ OLIVAREZ

Migration is derived from the word “migrate,” which is a verb defined by Merriam-Webster as “to move from one country, place, or locality to another.” Plot twist: migration never ends. My parents moved from Jalisco, México to Chicago in 1987. They were dislocated from México by capitalism, and they arrived in Chicago just in time to be dislocated by capitalism. Question: is migration possible if there is no “other” land to arrive in. My work: to imagine. My family started migrating in 1987 and they never stopped. I was born mid-migration. I’ve made my home in that motion. Let me try again: I tried to become American, but America is toxic. I tried to become Mexican, but México is toxic. My work: to do more than reproduce the toxic stories I inherited and learned. In other words: just because it is art doesn’t mean it is inherently nonviolent. My work: to write poems that make my people feel safe, seen, or otherwise loved. My work: to make my enemies feel afraid, angry, or otherwise ignored. My people: my people. My enemies: capitalism. Susan Sontag: “victims are interested in the representation of their own  sufferings.” Remix: survivors are interested in the representation of their own survival. My work: survival. Question: Why poems? Answer:

**2.** **Nikolette Jade Salas (Guam)**



**CATHEDRAL OF SALT**

BY NICK FLYNN

Beneath all this I’m carving a cathedral

of salt. I keep

the entrance hidden, no one seems to notice

the hours I’m missing  …    I’ll

bring you one night, it’s where

I go when I

hang up the phone  …

                                      Neither you

nor your soul is waiting for me at

the end of this, I know that, the salt

nearly clear after I

chisel out the pews, the see-through

altar, the opaque

panes of glass that depict the stations of

our cross — *Here is the day*

we met, here is the day we remember we

met  …    The air down here

will kill us, some say, some wear paper

masks, some still imagine the air above the green

trees, thick with bees

building solitary nests out of petals. What’s

the name for this? *Ineffable?* The endless

white will blind you, some say,

but what is there to see we haven’t already

seen? Some say it’s

like poking a stick into a river — you might as well

simply write about the stick.

Or the river.

**3. Katie Lineburg (Oregon)**



**THE PULLEY**

BY GEORGE HERBERT

When God at first made man,

Having a glass of blessings standing by,

“Let us,” said he, “pour on him all we can.

Let the world’s riches, which dispersèd lie,

Contract into a span.”

So strength first made a way;

Then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure.

When almost all was out, God made a stay,

Perceiving that, alone of all his treasure,

Rest in the bottom lay.

“For if I should,” said he,

“Bestow this jewel also on my creature,

He would adore my gifts instead of me,

And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature;

So both should losers be.

“Yet let him keep the rest,

But keep them with repining restlessness;

Let him be rich and weary, that at least,

If goodness lead him not, yet weariness

May toss him to my breast.”

**4. Emma C. Eldred (Idaho)**



**SELF-PORTRAIT WITH SYLVIA PLATH’S BRAID**

BY DIANE SEUSS

Some women make a pilgrimage to visit it

in the Indiana library charged to keep it safe.

I didn’t drive to it; I dreamed it, the thick braid

roped over my hands, heavier than lead.

My own hair was long for years.

Then I became obsessed with chopping it off,

and I did, clear up to my ears. If hair is beauty

then I am no longer beautiful.

Sylvia was beautiful, wasn’t she?

And like all of us, didn’t she wield her beauty

like a weapon? And then she married,

and laid it down, and when she was betrayed

and took it up again it was a word-weapon,

a poem-sword. In the dream I fasten

her braid to my own hair, at my nape.

I walk outside with it, through the world

of men, swinging it behind me like a tail.

**5.** **Blaze Rowan (Washington)**



**HISTORY LESSON**

BY NATASHA TRETHEWEY

I am four in this photograph, standing

on a wide strip of Mississippi beach,

my hands on the flowered hips

of a bright bikini. My toes dig in,

curl around wet sand. The sun cuts

the rippling Gulf in flashes with each

tidal rush. Minnows dart at my feet

glinting like switchblades. I am alone

except for my grandmother, other side

of the camera, telling me how to pose.

It is 1970, two years after they opened

the rest of this beach to us,

forty years since the photograph

where she stood on a narrow plot

of sand marked colored, smiling,

her hands on the flowered hips

of a cotton meal-sack dress.

**6. Elora L. Nation (Wyoming)**



**SONGS FOR THE PEOPLE**

BY FRANCES ELLEN WATKINS HARPER

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   Songs for the old and young;

Songs to stir like a battle-cry

   Wherever they are sung.

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But songs to thrill the hearts of men

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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.

**7. Grace Powell (South Dakota)**



**AFTER WORKING SIXTY HOURS AGAIN FOR WHAT REASON**

BY BOB HICOK

The best job I had was moving a stone

from one side of the road to the other.

This required a permit which required

a bribe. The bribe took all my salary.

Yet because I hadn’t finished the job

I had no salary, and to pay the bribe

I took a job moving the stone

the other way. Because the official

wanted his bribe, he gave me a permit

for the second job. When I pointed out

that the work would be best completed

if I did nothing, he complimented

my brain and wrote a letter

to my employer suggesting promotion

on stationery bearing the wings

of a raptor spread in flight

over a mountain smaller than the bird.

My boss, fearing my intelligence,

paid me to sleep on the sofa

and take lunch with the official

who required a bribe to keep anything

from being done. When I told my parents,

they wrote my brother to come home

from university to be slapped

on the back of the head. Dutifully,

he arrived and bowed to receive

his instruction, at which point

sense entered his body and he asked

what I could do by way of a job.

I pointed out there were stones

everywhere trying not to move,

all it took was a little gumption

to be the man who didn’t move them.

It was harder to explain the intricacies

of not obtaining a permit to not

do this. Just yesterday he got up

at dawn and shaved, as if the lack

of hair on his face has anything

to do with the appearance of food

on an empty table.

**8. Jordyn Imig (Hawaii)**



**ABANDONED FARMHOUSE**

BY TED KOOSER

He was a big man, says the size of his shoes

on a pile of broken dishes by the house;

a tall man too, says the length of the bed

in an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,

says the Bible with a broken back

on the floor below the window, dusty with sun;

but not a man for farming, say the fields

cluttered with boulders and the leaky barn.

A woman lived with him, says the bedroom wall

papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves

covered with oilcloth, and they had a child,

says the sandbox made from a tractor tire.

Money was scarce, say the jars of plum preserves

and canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar hole.

And the winters cold, say the rags in the window frames.

It was lonely here, says the narrow country road.

Something went wrong, says the empty house

in the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields

say he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars

in the cellar say she left in a nervous haste.

And the child? Its toys are strewn in the yard

like branches after a storm—a rubber cow,

a rusty tractor with a broken plow,

a doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they say.

**9. Rayann Hijazi (Nevada)**



**THE PARADOX**

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

I am the mother of sorrows,

   I am the ender of grief;

I am the bud and the blossom,

   I am the late-falling leaf.

I am thy priest and thy poet,

   I am thy serf and thy king;

I cure the tears of the heartsick,

   When I come near they shall sing.

White are my hands as the snowdrop;

   Swart are my fingers as clay;

Dark is my frown as the midnight,

   Fair is my brow as the day.

Battle and war are my minions,

   Doing my will as divine;

I am the calmer of passions,

   Peace is a nursling of mine.

Speak to me gently or curse me,

   Seek me or fly from my sight;

I am thy fool in the morning,

   Thou art my slave in the night.

Down to the grave will I take thee,

   Out from the noise of the strife;

Then shalt thou see me and know me—

   Death, then, no longer, but life.

Then shalt thou sing at my coming,

   Kiss me with passionate breath,

Clasp me and smile to have thought me

   Aught save the foeman of Death.

Come to me, brother, when weary,

   Come when thy lonely heart swells;

I’ll guide thy footsteps and lead thee

   Down where the Dream Woman dwells.

**10. Rize Simmons (Colorado)**



**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.

**11. Oluwabori Fadairo (Texas)**



**CAGED BIRD**

BY MAYA ANGELOU

A free bird leaps

on the back of the wind

and floats downstream

till the current ends

and dips his wing

in the orange sun rays

and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks

down his narrow cage

can seldom see through

his bars of rage

his wings are clipped and

his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze

and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees

and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn

and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams

his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream

his wings are clipped and his feet are tied

so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings

with a fearful trill

of things unknown

but longed for still

and his tune is heard

on the distant hill

for the caged bird

sings of freedom.

**12. Ariana Kimball (Minnesota)**



**I FELT A FUNERAL, IN MY BRAIN, (340)**

BY EMILY DICKINSON

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,

And Mourners to and fro

Kept treading – treading – till it seemed

That Sense was breaking through –

And when they all were seated,

A Service, like a Drum –

Kept beating – beating – till I thought

My mind was going numb –

And then I heard them lift a Box

And creak across my Soul

With those same Boots of Lead, again,

Then Space – began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,

And Being, but an Ear,

And I, and Silence, some strange Race,

Wrecked, solitary, here –

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,

And I dropped down, and down –

And hit a World, at every plunge,

And Finished knowing – then –

**13. Hazel Ipuniuesea Leo (American Samoa)**



**PROPOSITIONS**

BY STEPHEN DUNN

Anyone who begins a sentence with, “In all honesty … ”

is about to tell a lie. Anyone who says, “This is how I feel”

had better love form more than disclosure. Same for anyone

who thinks he thinks well because he had a thought.

If  you say, “You’re ugly” to an ugly person — no credit

for honesty, which must always be a discovery, an act

that qualifies as an achievement. If  you persist

you’re just a cruel bastard, a pig without a mirror,

somebody who hasn’t examined himself enough.

A hesitation hints at an attempt to be honest, suggests

a difficulty is present. A good sentence needs

a clause or two, interruptions, set off  by commas,

evidence of a slowing down, a rethinking.

Before I asked my wife to marry me, I told her

I’d never be fully honest. No one, she said,

had ever said that to her. I was trying

to be radically honest, I said, but in fact

had another motive. A claim without a “but” in it

is, at best, only half  true. In all honesty,

I was asking in advance to be forgiven.

**14. Riley O'Hara (California)**



**SONNET 29: WHEN, IN DISGRACE WITH FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES**

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

When, in disgrace with fortune and men’s eyes,

I all alone beweep my outcast state,

And trouble deaf heaven 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.

**15. Kaitlyn Lubega (New Mexico)**



**THE ZEBRA GOES WILD WHERE THE SIDEWALK ENDS**

BY HENRY DUMAS

I

Neon stripes tighten my wall

where my crayon landlord hangs

from a bent nail.

My black father sits crooked

in the kitchen

drunk on Jesus’ blood turned

to cheap wine.

In his tremor he curses

the landlord who grins

from inside the rent book.

My father’s eyes are

bolls of cotton.

He sits upon the landlord’s

operating table,

the needle of the nation

sucking his soul.

II

Chains of light race over

my stricken city.

Glittering web spun by

the white widow spider.

I see this wild arena

where we are harnessed

by alien electric shadows.

Even when the sun washes

the debris

I will recall my landlord

hanging in my room

and my father moaning in

Jesus’ tomb.

In America all zebras

are in the zoo.

I hear the piston bark

and ibm spark:

let us program rabies.

the madness is foaming now.

No wild zebras roam the American plain.

The mad dogs are running.

The African zebra is gone into the dust.

I see the shadow thieves coming

and my father on the specimen table.

**16. Mona Koko (Alaska)**



**I LOVE YOU TO THE MOON &**

BY CHEN CHEN

not back, let’s not come back, let’s go by the speed of

queer zest & stay up

there & get ourselves a little

moon cottage (so pretty), then start a moon garden

with lots of moon veggies (so healthy), i mean

i was already moonlighting

as an online moonologist

most weekends, so this is the immensely

logical next step, are you

packing your bags yet, don’t forget your

sailor moon jean jacket, let’s wear

our sailor moon jean jackets while twirling in that lighter,

queerer moon gravity, let’s love each other

(so good) on the moon, let’s love

the moon

on the moon

**17.** **Anni Willes (Utah)**



**THE VACUUM**

BY HOWARD NEMEROV

The house is so quiet now

The vacuum cleaner sulks in the corner closet,

Its bag limp as a stopped lung, its mouth

Grinning into the floor, maybe at my

Slovenly life, my dog-dead youth.

I’ve lived this way long enough,

But when my old woman died her soul

Went into that vacuum cleaner, and I can’t bear

To see the bag swell like a belly, eating the dust

And the woolen mice, and begin to howl

Because there is old filth everywhere

She used to crawl, in the corner and under the stair.

I know now how life is cheap as dirt,

And still the hungry, angry heart

Hangs on and howls, biting at air.

**18. Circe Atkinson (North Dakota)**



**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.

**19. Molly Ogan (Montana)**



**REQUIEM**

BY CAMILLE T. DUNGY

*Sing the mass—*

*light upon me washing words*

*now that I am gone.*

The sky was a hot, blue sheet the summer breeze fanned

out and over the town. I could have lived forever

under that sky. Forgetting where I was,

I looked left, not right, crossed into a street

and stepped in front of the bus that ended me.

Will you believe me when I tell you it was beautiful—

my left leg turned to uselessness and my right shoe flung

some distance down the road? Will you believe me

when I tell you I had never been so in love

with anyone as I was, then, with everyone I saw?

The way an age-worn man held his wife’s shaking arm,

supporting the weight that seemed to sing from the heart

she clutched. Knowing her eyes embraced the pile

that was me, he guided her sacked body through the crowd.

And the way one woman began a fast the moment she looked

under the wheel. I saw her swear off decadence.

I saw her start to pray. You see, I was so beautiful

the woman sent to clean the street used words

like police tape to keep back a young boy

seconds before he rounded the grisly bumper.

The woman who cordoned the area feared my memory

would fly him through the world on pinions of passion

much as, later, the sight of my awful beauty pulled her down

to tears when she pooled my blood with water

and swiftly, swiftly washed my stains away.

**Round 3 Poems**

**1.** **Isabel Teran (Arizona)**



**FLOWERS**

BY CYNTHIA ZARIN

This morning I was walking upstairs

from the kitchen, carrying your

beautiful flowers, the flowers you

brought me last night, calla lilies

and something else, I am not

sure what to call them, white flowers,

of course you had no way of knowing

it has been years since I bought

white flowers—but now you have

and here they are again. I was carrying

your flowers and a coffee cup

and a soft yellow handbag and a book

 of poems by a Chinese poet, in

which I had just read the words “come

or go but don’t just stand there

in the doorway,” as usual I was

carrying too many things, you

would have laughed if you saw me.

It seemed especially important

not to spill the coffee as I usually

do, as I turned up the stairs,

inside the whorl of the house as if

I were walking up inside the lilies.

I do not know how to hold all

the beauty and sorrow of my life.

**2.** **Nikolette Jade Salas (Guam)**



**THE SPRING**

BY THOMAS CAREW

Now that the winter’s gone, the earth hath lost

Her snow-white robes, and now no more the frost

Candies the grass, or casts an icy cream

Upon the silver lake or crystal stream;

But the warm sun thaws the benumbed earth,

And makes it tender; gives a sacred birth

To the dead swallow; wakes in hollow tree

The drowsy cuckoo, and the humble-bee.

Now do a choir of chirping minstrels bring

In triumph to the world the youthful Spring.

The valleys, hills, and woods in rich array

Welcome the coming of the long’d-for May.

Now all things smile, only my love doth lour;

Nor hath the scalding noonday sun the power

To melt that marble ice, which still doth hold

Her heart congeal’d, and makes her pity cold.

The ox, which lately did for shelter fly

Into the stall, doth now securely lie

In open fields; and love no more is made

By the fireside, but in the cooler shade

Amyntas now doth with his Chloris sleep

Under a sycamore, and all things keep

Time with the season; only she doth carry

June in her eyes, in her heart January.

**3. Katie Lineburg (Oregon)**



**A NOISELESS PATIENT SPIDER**

BY WALT WHITMAN

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark’d where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark’d how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch’d forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to connect   
     them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form’d, till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

**4. Emma C. Eldred (Idaho)**



**FLOATING ISLAND**

BY DOROTHY WORDSWORTH

Harmonious Powers with Nature work

On sky, earth, river, lake, and sea:

Sunshine and storm, whirlwind and breeze

All in one duteous task agree.

Once did I see a slip of earth,

By throbbing waves long undermined,

Loosed from its hold; — how no one knew

But all might see it float, obedient to the wind.

Might see it, from the mossy shore

Dissevered float upon the Lake,

Float, with its crest of trees adorned

On which the warbling birds their pastime take.

Food, shelter, safety there they find

There berries ripen, flowerets bloom;

There insects live their lives — and die:

A peopled world it is; in size a tiny room.

And thus through many seasons’ space

This little Island may survive

But Nature, though we mark her not,

Will take away — may cease to give.

Perchance when you are wandering forth

Upon some vacant sunny day

Without an object, hope, or fear,

Thither your eyes may turn — the Isle is passed away.

Buried beneath the glittering Lake!

Its place no longer to be found,

Yet the lost fragments shall remain,

To fertilize some other ground.

**5.** **Blaze Rowan (Washington)**



**[WHAT HORROR TO AWAKE AT NIGHT]**

BY LORINE NIEDECKER

What horror to awake at night

and in the dimness see the light.

               Time is white

               mosquitoes bite

I’ve spent my life on nothing.

The thought that stings. How are you, Nothing,

sitting around with Something’s wife.

               Buzz and burn

               is all I learn

I’ve spent my life on nothing.

I’m pillowed and padded, pale and puffing

lifting household stuffing—

               carpets, dishes

               benches, fishes

I’ve spent my life in nothing.

**6. Elora L. Nation (Wyoming)**



**DAKOTA HOMECOMING**

BY GWENN NELL WESTERMAN

We are so honored that

              you are here, they said.

We know that this is

             your homeland, they said.

The admission price

             is five dollars, they said.

Here is your button

             for the event, they said.

It means so much to us that

             you are here, they said.

We want to write

             an apology letter, they said.

Tell us what to say.

**7. Grace Powell (South Dakota)**



**INVICTUS**

BY WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Out of the night that covers me,

      Black as the pit from pole to pole,

I thank whatever gods may be

      For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance

      I have not winced nor cried aloud.

Under the bludgeonings of chance

      My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears

      Looms but the Horror of the shade,

And yet the menace of the years

      Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,

      How charged with punishments the scroll,

I am the master of my fate,

      I am the captain of my soul.

**8. Jordyn Imig (Hawaii)**



**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!

**9. Rayann Hijazi (Nevada)**



**THINGS YOU MAY FIND HIDDEN IN MY EAR**

BY MOSAB ABU TOHA

*For Alicia M. Quesnel, MD*

i

When you open my ear, touch it

gently.

My mother’s voice lingers somewhere inside.

Her voice is the echo that helps recover my equilibrium

when I feel dizzy during my attentiveness.

You may encounter songs in Arabic,

poems in English I recite to myself,

or a song I chant to the chirping birds in our backyard.

When you stitch the cut, don’t forget to put all these back in my ear.

Put them back in order as you would do with books on your shelf.

ii

The drone’s buzzing sound,

the roar of an F-16,

the screams of bombs falling on houses,

on fields, and on bodies,

of rockets flying away—

rid my small ear canal of them all.

Spray the perfume of your smiles on the incision.

Inject the song of life into my veins to wake me up.

Gently beat the drum so my mind may dance with yours,

my doctor, day and night.

**10. Rize Simmons (Colorado)**



**THE SONG OF THE SMOKE**

BY W. E. B. DU BOIS

I am the Smoke King

I am black!

I am swinging in the sky,

I am wringing worlds awry;

I am the thought of the throbbing mills,

I am the soul of the soul-toil kills,

Wraith of the ripple of trading rills;

Up I’m curling from the sod,

I am whirling home to God;

I am the Smoke King

I am black.

I am the Smoke King,

I am black!

I am wreathing broken hearts,

I am sheathing love’s light darts;

Inspiration of iron times

Wedding the toil of toiling climes,

Shedding the blood of bloodless crimes—

Lurid lowering ’mid the blue,

Torrid towering toward the true,

I am the Smoke King,

I am black.

I am the Smoke King,

I am black!

I am darkening with song,

I am hearkening to wrong!

I will be black as blackness can—

The blacker the mantle, the mightier the man!

For blackness was ancient ere whiteness began.

I am daubing God in night,

I am swabbing Hell in white:

I am the Smoke King

I am black.

I am the Smoke King

I am black!

I am cursing ruddy morn,

I am hearsing hearts unborn:

Souls unto me are as stars in a night,

I whiten my black men—I blacken my white!

What’s the hue of a hide to a man in his might?

Hail! great, gritty, grimy hands—

Sweet Christ, pity toiling lands!

I am the Smoke King

I am black.

**11. Oluwabori Fadairo (Texas)**



**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.

**12. Ariana Kimball (Minnesota)**



**WHAT WOMEN ARE MADE OF**

BY BIANCA LYNNE SPRIGGS

*There are many kinds of open.*

*— Audre Lorde*

We are all ventricle, spine, lung, larynx, and gut.

Clavicle and nape, what lies forked in an open palm;

we are follicle and temple. We are ankle, arch,

sole. Pore and rib, pelvis and root

and tongue. We are wishbone and gland and molar

and lobe. We are hippocampus and exposed nerve

and cornea. Areola, pigment, melanin, and nails.

Varicose. Cellulite. Divining rod. Sinew and tissue,

saliva and silt. We are blood and salt, clay and aquifer.

We are breath and flame and stratosphere. Palimpsest

and bibelot and cloisonné fine lines. Marigold, hydrangea,

and dimple. Nightlight, satellite, and stubble. We are

pinnacle, plummet, dark circles, and dark matter.

A constellation of freckles and specters and miracles

and lashes. Both bent and erect, we are all give

and give back. We are volta and girder. Make an incision

in our nectary and Painted Ladies sail forth, riding the back

of a warm wind, plumed with love and things like love.

Crack us down to the marrow, and you may find us full

of cicada husks and sand dollars and salted maple taffy

weary of welding together our daydreams. All sweet tea,

razor blades, carbon, and patchwork quilts of Good God!

and Lord have mercy! Our hands remember how to turn

the earth before we do. Our intestinal fortitude? Cumulonimbus

streaked with saffron light. Our foundation? Not in our limbs

or hips; this comes first as an amen, a hallelujah, a suckling,

swaddled psalm sung at the cosmos’s breast. You want to

know what women are made of? Open wide and find out.

**13. Hazel Ipuniuesea Leo (American Samoa)**



**NO COWARD SOUL IS MINE**

BY EMILY BRONTË

No coward soul is mine

No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere

I see Heaven's glories shine

And Faith shines equal arming me from Fear

O God within my breast

Almighty ever-present Deity

Life, that in me hast rest,

As I Undying Life, have power in Thee

Vain are the thousand creeds

That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,

Worthless as withered weeds

Or idlest froth amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one

Holding so fast by thy infinity,

So surely anchored on

The steadfast rock of Immortality.

With wide-embracing love

Thy spirit animates eternal years

Pervades and broods above,

Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates and rears

Though earth and moon were gone

And suns and universes ceased to be

And Thou wert left alone

Every Existence would exist in thee

There is not room for Death

Nor atom that his might could render void

Since thou art Being and Breath

And what thou art may never be destroyed.

**14. Riley O'Hara (California)**



**1969**

BY ALEX DIMITROV

The summer everyone left for the moon

even those yet to be born. And the dead

who can’t vacation here but met us all there

by the veil between worlds. The number one song

in America was “In the Year 2525”

because who has ever lived in the present

when there’s so much of the future

to continue without us.

How the best lover won’t need to forgive you

and surely take everything off your hands

without having to ask, without knowing

your name, no matter the number of times

you married or didn’t, your favorite midnight movie,

the cigarettes you couldn’t give up,

wanting to kiss other people you shouldn’t

and now to forever be kissed by the Earth.

In the Earth. With the Earth.

When we all briefly left it

to look back on each other from above,

shocked by how bright even our pain is

running wildly beside us like an underground river.

And whatever language is good for,

a sign, a message left up there that reads:

HERE MEN FROM THE PLANET EARTH

FIRST SET FOOT UPON THE MOON

JULY 1969, A.D.

WE CAME IN PEACE FOR ALL MANKIND.

Then returned to continue the war.

**15. Kaitlyn Lubega (New Mexico)**



**SILENCE**

BY THOMAS HOOD

There is a silence where hath been no sound,

   There is a silence where no sound may be,

   In the cold grave—under the deep deep sea,

Or in the wide desert where no life is found,

Which hath been mute, and still must sleep profound;

   No voice is hush’d—no life treads silently,

   But clouds and cloudy shadows wander free,

That never spoke, over the idle ground:

But in green ruins, in the desolate walls

   Of antique palaces, where Man hath been,

Though the dun fox, or wild hyena, calls,

   And owls, that flit continually between,

Shriek to the echo, and the low winds moan,

There the true Silence is, self-conscious and alone.

**16. Mona Koko (Alaska)**



**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!

**17.** **Anni Willes (Utah)**



**THE OCEAN**

BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

The Ocean has its silent caves,

Deep, quiet, and alone;

Though there be fury on the waves,

Beneath them there is none.

The awful spirits of the deep

Hold their communion there;

And there are those for whom we weep,

The young, the bright, the fair.

Calmly the wearied seamen rest

Beneath their own blue sea.

The ocean solitudes are blest,

For there is purity.

The earth has guilt, the earth has care,

Unquiet are its graves;

But peaceful sleep is ever there,

Beneath the dark blue waves.

**18. Circe Atkinson (North Dakota)**



**HOW TO BREAK A CURSE**

BY DANIELLE BOODOO-FORTUNÉ

Lemon balm is for forgiveness.

Pull up from the root, steep

in boiling water. Add locusts’ wings,

salt, the dried bones of hummingbirds.

Drink when you feel ready.

Drink even if you do not.

Pepper seeds are for courage.

Sprinkle them on your tongue.

Sprinkle in the doorway and along

the windowsill. Mix pepper and water

to a thick paste. Spackle the cracks

in the concrete, anoint the part

in your hair. You need as much

courage as you can get.

Water is for healing.

Leave a jar open beneath the full moon.

Let it rest. Water your plants.

Wash your face. Drink.

The sharpened blade is for memory.

Metal lives long, never grows weary

of our comings and goings. Wrap this blade

in newspaper. Keep beneath your bed.

Be patient, daughter.

Be patient.

**19. Molly Ogan (Montana)**



**MEZZO CAMMIN**

BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

Half of my life is gone, and I have let

   The years slip from me and have not fulfilled

   The aspiration of my youth, to build

   Some tower of song with lofty parapet.

Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret

   Of restless passions that would not be stilled,

   But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,

   Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;

Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past

   Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—

   A city in the twilight dim and vast,

With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—

   And hear above me on the autumnal blast

   The cataract of Death far thundering from the heights.