

# CHAPTER 2

## PARAPHRASING

*"The mountain was in labour, and Jove was frightened, but it brought forth a mouse."*  
Greek Mythology

The word "paraphrase" إعادة السبك أو الصياغة (from the Greek, meaning literally "equivalent sentence") is defined as "expressing the meaning of a passage in other words." It is "the reproduction in one's own natural idiom or style of the full sense of a passage written in another idiom or style."

### I. IMPORTANCE OF PARAPHRASING

Someone has said, with a sneer سخرية, that paraphrase "usually takes the form of converting good English into bad." But this need not be so; and if in any case it is so, then the paraphrase in question is a bad paraphrase. It should be the aim of the pupil to improve his English by the practice of paraphrasing, and of the teacher to see that the English in which his pupil's paraphrases are written is good English.

Paraphrasing has three important uses:

#### (a) *As an Exercise in Comprehension:*

It is, first, a good test of a pupil's ability to understand what he reads; and is, therefore, an excellent method of training the mind to concentrate on what one reads and so to read intelligently. For it is impossible to paraphrase any passage without a firm grasp of its meaning.

#### (b) *As an Exercise in Composition:*

It is, secondly, a fine training in the art of expressing, what one wants to say, simply, clearly and directly. Incidentally, it gives valuable practice in grammatical and idiomatic composition.

A man who has once acquired the art of intelligent reading and of lucid expression التعبير الواضح, has received no mean measure of education.

#### (c) *As a Method of Explanation:*

A third use of paraphrase is that it forms a valuable method of explanation. Indeed, it is often the best way of explaining an involved معقد or ornate مزرك passage of prose or of an obscure غامض piece of poetry. So annotators شراح of poems often make use of it. For example, take the note in Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" (Oxford University Press) on this verse from Browning's "Rabbi Ben Ezra":

*“Enough now, if the Right  
And Good and Infinite  
Be named here, as thou callest thy hand thine own.  
With knowledge absolute,  
Subject to no dispute.  
From fools that crowded youth, nor let these feel alone.”*

Note: “It is enough if in age we can get as absolute a knowledge of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, the Changing and the Eternal, as we have of our own hands.”

## II. CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD PARAPHRASE

A good paraphrase should have the following characteristics:

**1. Clear Translation:** Paraphrasing is really a species of translation; for though a paraphrase is not a translation from one language into another language, yet it is a translation of the meaning of one original passage into another original passage in the same language.

A passage written in a very terse or compressed style has to be expanded in translation. For instance, this saying from Bacon’s “Essays.”:

“Prosperity doth best discover vice, but Adversity doth best discover virtue.”

*Paraphrase:* When a man is prosperous, there is more chance of his bad qualities coming to light; but when he is unfortunate or in trouble, his good qualities are more likely to show themselves.

A verbose passage needs compression in translation. Here is a humorous illustration given by Ruskin in a lecture at Oxford. He said that, whereas in his youth he might have informed a man that his house was on fire in the following way: “Sir, the abode in which you probably passed the delightful days of your youth is in danger of inflammation,” then, being older and wiser, he would say simply, “Sir, your house is on fire.”

In the following passage by Sydney Smith, the long words and humorously ornate style need translating into simple language:

“Whoever had the good fortune to see Dr. Parr’s wig must have observed that, while it trespasses a little on the orthodox magnitude of perukes in the anterior parts, it scorns even Episcopal limits behind, and swells out into a boundless convexity of frizz.”

*Paraphrase:* All who have seen Dr. Parr’s wig must have been struck with its enormous size. Even in front it is larger than the usual style of wig; but behind it is fuller even than the wigs worn by bishops, and swells out into a gigantic round of curls.

**2. Fullness:** Paraphrasing differs from summarising or précis writing, inasmuch as a paraphrase must reproduce, not only the substance or general meaning, but also the details, of a passage. Nothing in the original may be left unrepresented in the paraphrase. It is, therefore, a full reproduction. The difference between a summary and a paraphrase may be illustrated by giving both summary and paraphrase of the following verse:

*“The glories of our blood and state  
Are shadows, not substantial things:  
There is no armour against fate;  
Death lays his icy hand on kings;  
Sceptre and Crown  
Must tumble down,  
And in the dust be equal made  
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.*

**Summary:** High birth and rank are nothing; for in death, which claims all, peasants are equal with kings.

**Paraphrase:** Nobility of birth and exalted rank, of which men so proudly boast, are mere illusions and quickly pass away. They cannot protect their proud possessors from the common fate of all mankind - death. Even kings, like the meanest of their subjects, must die; and in the grave the poor peasant is equal with the haughty monarch.

While nothing in the original is to be unrepresented in the paraphrase, nothing is to be added to it. To insert ideas or illustrations of your own is not allowed. The paraphrase must be “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.”

There is no rule for the length of a paraphrase as compared with the length of the original passage; but, as in paraphrasing we have frequently to expand concise sentences to make their meaning clear. A paraphrase is usually as long as, and is often longer than, the original.

**3. Unity:** The original poem or text must be treated as a single unit. The practice of taking the original line by line, or sentence by sentence, and simply turning these into different words is not paraphrasing at all. Until the passage is grasped as a whole, no attempt should be made to paraphrase it. What we have to try to do is to get behind the words to the idea in the author’s mind which begot them. This is not an easy task, and calls for imagination and concentration of thought; but unless we can do it, we shall never produce a good paraphrase.

Suppose, for example, you are asked to paraphrase this sonnet:

*“Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen,  
Round many western islands have I been*

*Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
     That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;  
     Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold;  
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
     When a new planet swims into his ken;  
 Or like stout Cortez<sup>1</sup>, when with eagle eyes  
 He stared at the Pacific - and all his men  
 Looked at each other with a wild surmise -  
 Silent. upon a peak in Darien<sup>2</sup>."*

(J. Keats)

The mechanical line by line method of paraphrasing is of no use here. Before any satisfactory paraphrase can be produced the central meaning of the whole must be grasped. Sometimes it is difficult to paraphrase a poem unless we know the circumstances that gave it birth. Moreover, a wide knowledge of classical literature and history are often needed as poets frequently allude to them in their poems.

**Paraphrase:** Keats had read widely in Western literature, especially poetry; but he knew nothing of the great poetic literature of ancient Greece until he read Chapman's translation of Homer's Iliad. This was a revelation to him; and as he read, he felt all the wonder and joy felt by an astronomer when he discovers a new star, or an explorer when he discovers an unknown ocean.

**4. A Complete Piece of Prose:** Lastly, a good paraphrase is so well constructed and written that it will read as an independent and complete composition in idiomatic English. It should in itself be perfectly clear and intelligible, without any reference to the original passage. A paraphrase should be a piece of good prose that anyone would understand and read with pleasure, even if he had never seen the original upon which it is based. (Note: Explanatory notes, either attached to, or inserted in body of, the paraphrase, must never be resorted to. All the explanation required must be in the paraphrase itself. The insertion of explanatory notes is a confession of failure in paraphrasing).

To be successful in paraphrasing, it is necessary to keep these four points always in mind; for, if they are forgotten, the mere changing of the

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<sup>1</sup> A Spanish Conquistador

<sup>2</sup> Gulf on the east coast of Panama

words and constructions of a passage will never make a real paraphrase. If your paraphrase is not a faithful translation of the original passage into your own words; if it does not reproduce all the details, omitting nothing, if it does not reproduce the passage as a whole; and if it is not a self-contained composition, intelligible without reference to the original - then, your paraphrase is a failure.

### III. THE PARAPHRASE OF POETRY

These are some special points in the paraphrasing of poetry that may be explained separately.

One thing must be made clear to start with and that is that, as poetry in one language can never be translated into another without losing much, if not all, of its charm, so poetry can never be translated into prose. It is impossible to give in prose the same impression as is conveyed by a poem. The reason for this is that the matter and the form, the spirit and the letter, the soul and the body, of a poem are so inextricably inter-mingled that you cannot change the form without losing the spirit - that is, the poetry itself. The rhythm and the verbal music in which lies much of the magic of poetry, must be lost. Even the finest prose paraphrase of poem is not and can never be, a poem. All that a paraphrase can convey is the meaning of a poem. Nevertheless, the paraphrasing of poetry is a useful exercise in composition, and may often be a valuable help in interpreting the meaning of poems.

The peculiar difficulty of paraphrasing poetry lies in the difference between the language of verse and prose.

**A. Poetic Diction:** Formerly, poets made liberal use of words not employed in prose, and of peculiar phraseology and constructions. Since the time of Wordsworth, a most determined enemy of these devices, the use of such expressions and constructions has largely fallen out of favour. In paraphrasing, dispense with them as much as possible, and use modern words and correct grammatical constructions. The following are a few examples of these devices so that you can recognise them:

#### A. Poetic Words.

**Nouns:** Babe = baby // main = sea // maid or damsel = girl // morn = morning // dame = lady // sire = father // sward = grass // steed = horse // foe = enemy // swain = country-man // realm = kingdom // grot = cave // falchion or brand = sword // poesy = poetry // bard = poet // carol = song // a cot = cottage // argosy = merchant-ship // forefathers = ancestors // realm = kingdom // abode or demesne = home // mead or lea = meadow // vale =

valley // den = narrow valley // ken = range of knowledge or sight // kin = relatives // kith = acquaintances // strand = beach // pelf = wealth // etc.

**Adjectives:** Yon = yonder // jocund = merry // hapless = unlucky // sylvan = wooded or related to forests // dread = dreadful // bosky = wooded // serene = calm // hyaline = glassy // etc.

**Adverbs:** O'er = over // 'twixt = between // 'ere = before // full = very // oft or oft-times = often // sore = sorely // e'en = even // sans = without // 'neath = beneath // withal = in addition // to boot = as well // well neigh = almost // of yore = in the past // anent = about // perchance, belike and haply = perhaps // albeit = although // certes = certainly, etc.

**Verbs:** Wax = grow // quaff = drink // cleave = cling // smite = strike // tarry = remain // vanquish = conquer // quoth = said // ween = think: I trow = I am of the opinion // chide = scold, etc.

**Other words:** aught = anything // save = except, etc.

## B. Grammatical Peculiarities.

Poets have a habit of using the following devices, usually for the sake of rhythm and rhyme:

(1) Old-fashioned forms of second person singular:

Pronouns and possessive adjectives: thou, thine, thy, thyself.

Verbs: such as the use of the: thou dost, thou comest, etc.

(2) Old-fashioned forms of the past participle: clomb = climbed // wrought = worked // spreaded = spread (Keats). Also the use of "did" as an auxiliary, with no emphatic force, e.g. he did come = he came.

(3) Adjectives used in place of nouns: "The clear *hyaline*" (Shelley); "Yet did I never breathe its pure *serene*" (Keats).

(4) Adjectives used in place of adverbs: "*Loud* they sang yet *sweet*"; "Then they praised him *soft* and *low*" (Tennyson).

(5) Irregular comparatives of adjectives and adverbs: "He passionately and *hopefuller* would go" (Tennyson) ; "Surely no *gladlier* does the stranded wreck" (Tennyson); "*most boldest, most best*" (Shakespeare).

(6) Intransitive verbs used transitively: "He who hath *bent him* o'er the dead" (Byron).

(7) Simple personal pronouns, instead of reflexive pronouns: "The hills veiled *them* in mist.", also the line by Byron in (6).

(8) Compound nouns and adjectives in place of phrases: *Temple-eaten terms* (Tennyson), i.e. terms during which barristers-to-be have to attend a certain number of dinners at the Temple; *Lily-shining child* (Tennyson), i.e. a child fair as a shining lily.

(9) Inversion, i.e., any change in the normal grammatical construction in a sentence:

(a) Adjective placed after the noun: "Daisies *pie*d and violets *blue*" (Shakespeare); "So by the caverns of the forest *green*" (Shelley).

(b) Inversion of subject and verb: "And a wealthy wife was she." (Old Ballad); "Then came still evening on" (Milton).

(c) Preposition placed after the noun it governs: "He paced the fields *about*".

(d) Adverbs placed before the verb they modify: "*Daily* prayed they for help in need."

This getting rid of inversion is the chief thing we have to do in giving prose order to verse. Words may be added here and there to complete the grammatical sequence. Note the following examples:

- "Mine be a cot beside a hill;" → *May* a cottage beside a hill be mine.
- "A barking sound the shepherd hears;" → The shepherd hears a barking sound.

- "Not, Celia, that I juster am  
or better than the rest,"  
→ Not that I am more just or better than the rest.

### Other Devices.

(10) Transferred epithet: Consider such a line as:

"The lion crouched upon his *cruel* prey."

In this the adjective *cruel* has been for the sake of effect transferred from lion to prey, in order to suggest that it had been killed in a cruel manner. A little of this kind of artifice is tolerable; much of it becomes wearisome and irritating.

(11) The practice of omitting a vowel, either at the beginning, or in the middle of a word: 'mong = among; mem'ries = memories.

**C. Flowery and ornamental language:** Such language, frequent in verse, should be simplified or dispensed with in prose. For example:

*"Much have I travelled in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold"*

Which simply means that he had read much poetry by western poets.

**D. Rhythm and Rhyme:** so characteristic of verse, have no place in prose, and must be avoided in paraphrasing.

## IV. HINTS FOR THE NOVICE المستجد

The following hints will help you on your way:

**1. Comprehension:** Because no one can paraphrase a passage which he does not understand, first read the passage slowly and carefully until you feel you have firmly grasped its general meaning. Sometimes reading poetry is as easy as reading prose, but more frequently, you will find sentences that are mixed up and distorted مشوشة. Find the subject, verb and object of every sentence in the poem. Put the sentence in normal order and insert missing words.

*In order to understand the poem, ask yourself the following questions:*

- *Speaker:* Who is talking in the poem? The poet himself? Or some character or personified abstract quality? And whom is he talking to? Is there a difference of opinion between the poet and the personality that is speaking?
- *Place and time:* Where is the speaker? What time of day it is? What season? What historical occasion?
- *Attitude:* What is the poet's attitude towards his subject? And towards his reader? Is he being cynical, humorous, negative, optimistic, pessimistic, realistic, sentimental, satirical, nostalgic or whatever?
- *Allusions:* Are there any allusions to historical or mythological persons or events?
- *Imagery:* What about imagery? Are there any striking images? How does he achieve them?
- *Meaning:* What does he mean?
- *Purpose:* What is the poet's intent (purpose) in writing this poem?
- *Contrasts:* Are there any contrasts in the poem? What are their relations to the characters and theme of the poem?
- *Title:* Does the poem's title relate to its content?

If one reading does not make the poem clear, read it again and yet again, and study it until you thoroughly understand it. This first step is all important. (It is a good thing to write down at this stage a brief summary, concisely expressing the gist خلاصة of the main theme of the passage.)

**2. Details:** Next, read the passage again with a view to its details. Note all uncommon or difficult words, and all idioms and unusual grammatical constructions, metaphors and figures of speech, remembering that you are to express, not only the substance, but also the details, of the passage in your own way.

**3. Purport** الفحوى أو المعنى: Now, keeping clearly in mind the main meaning of the passage, prepare to reproduce the passage in your own words, in simple

and direct English, not leaving anything in the original unrepresented in your paraphrase.

**4. Unity:** Treat the passage as a unit. Do not work word by word, or line by line; but from the beginning keep the end in view.

**5. Direct and Indirect Speech:** A paraphrase may be written in either; but (unless indirect speech is definitely required), it is better to use direct speech, for indirect speech, (especially for foreign students writing in English) is full of traps for the unwary. A common fault in using indirect speech is the constant repetition of the "saying verb" - e.g., "The poet says that", "The poet further says", "The poet again remarks that", and so on. The "verb of saying", if used at all, should come once, at the beginning and not again.

**6. Metaphors:** The best way to deal with metaphors, is to resolve them into similes. For example:

*"Silently, one by one, in the infinite Meadows of Heaven,  
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."*

This might be paraphrased thus:

The stars came out one by one silently in the vast sky, like forget-me-nots flowering in the fields.

In some cases the metaphor may be dropped altogether, and the literal meaning given instead. For instance, the first line of Keats' sonnet:

*"Much have I travelled in the realms of gold"*

may be rendered: I have read widely in classical literature.

**7. Abstract used for concrete:** When the abstract is used for the concrete, the concrete should be restored. For example:

*"Let not Ambition mock their useful toil,"*

should become: Ambitious men should not despise the useful labour of poor peasants.

**8. Rhetorical questions** الاسئلة الخطاى: These should be changed into direct affirmations or negations. For example:

*"Are we not better armed than our foes?"*

should become: We are better armed than our enemies; and:

*"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?"*

may be paraphrased: I am not so contemptible a creature as to commit such a crime.

**9. Exclamations:** These should be turned into simple statements. For example:

*“O for a lodge in some vast wilderness!”*

can be paraphrased:

I wish I had a secluded refuge remote from human society.

**10. Consistency** الاتساق: In paraphrasing poems addressed in the second person, it is better to use the plural *you* than the singular *thou*, partly because *thou* is not used in ordinary prose, and partly because the construction of verbs in the second person plural is simpler. But whichever is adopted, must be kept to consistently throughout. It is a very bad form to begin with *thou* and later drop into *you*. Such passages may be rendered in the third person also; for instance, the first line of Matthew Arnold sonnet “Shakespeare”:

*“Others abide our question-  
Thou art free!”*

may be rendered,:

We can freely criticise other authors, but Shakespeare is beyond our criticism.

**11. Rearrangement:** You may rearrange the order of sentences, and even of the whole passage, if this can make the meaning clear.

**12. Clarity of expression:** Break up a long sentence into several short ones, or combine several short sentences into one long, if by so doing you can make the whole more easily understood.

**12. Changing words:** Do not change words simply for the sake of change. No word can ever precisely take the place of another; and when a word in the original is perfectly simple in meaning and the best word in that place, it is a mistake to alter it. But all words and phrases that are at all archaic وعتيق, obscure غامض, technical, or uncommon should be changed into suitable synonyms. (N.B.: Never substitute a difficult or unusual word for a simple and familiar word; e.g., do not put “ratiocination” for “argument.”)

**13. No explanatory notes:** Explanatory notes are altogether out of place in a paraphrase, and their presence is a confession of failure in paraphrasing. All explanations of difficulties must be intrinsic parts of the paraphrase itself. If any sentence in the paraphrase requires a note to explain it, you must rewrite the sentence until it explains itself.

**14. Rough drafts:** Write out a rough draft of your paraphrase first. (You may have to write several drafts before you get the paraphrase to your satisfaction.) Revise this carefully, comparing it with the original to see that you have omitted nothing, over- (or under-) emphasised nothing, nor imitated the original too closely. Correct any mistakes in spelling, punctuation, grammar or idiom. Read it aloud (for the ear sometimes can detect a blemish which the eye overlooks) to hear if it reads well as a piece of good English.

**15. Final copy:** If, after taking pains, you feel the paraphrase is as good as you can make it, finally write out the final copy neatly and legibly.

## EXAMPLES OF PARAPHRASING

1. *"Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
    This is my own, my native land?  
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd.  
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd.  
    From wandering on a foreign strand?  
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;  
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;  
High though his titles, proud his name,  
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;  
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,  
The wretch, concentred all in self,  
Living, shall forfeit fair renown.  
And, doubly dying shall go down  
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung.  
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung."* (Scot)

### Paraphrase:

It is difficult to believe that any man can be so spiritually dead as to have no love for his native country after travelling in foreign lands. But if such an unpatriotic person does exist, take careful note of his career; and you will find that he will never inspire poets to celebrate him in deathless song. He may be a man of high rank, of noble family and of riches beyond the dreams of avarice; but these great advantages will not save him from oblivion. In spite of them all, he will win no fame during his lifetime; and when he dies he will die in a double sense: His body will return to the dust whence it came, and his name will be forgotten. None will mourn him, none will honour him, and no poet will keep his name alive in immortal poetry.

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2. *“Heaven from all creatures hides the book of fate,  
All but the page prescribed, their present state:  
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know;  
Or who could suffer being here below?  
The lamb thy riot dooms to bleed to-day,  
Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?  
Pleas'd to the last, he crops the flow'ry food,  
And licks the hand just rais'd to shed his blood.  
Oh, blindness to the future! kindly giv'n,  
That each may fill the circle mark'd by Heav'n,  
Who sees with equal eyes, as God of all,  
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall.”* (Pope)

**Paraphrase:**

It would be impossible for us to continue living in this world if each of us knew exactly what fate had in store for him. God in His mercy conceals the future from all His creatures, and reveals only the present. He hides from the animals what men know, and He hides from men what the angels know. For example if a lamb had reason like a man, it could not gambol happily, knowing it was destined to be killed for human food. But, being quite ignorant of its fate, it is happy to the last minute of its short life contentedly grazing in the flowery meadow, and even in its innocence licks the hand of the butcher who is about to slaughter it. What a blessing it is that we are ignorant of the future. God, to Whom the death of a sparrow is of equal importance with the death of a hero, has in His mercy thus limited our knowledge, so that we might fulfil our duty in the sphere to which He has appointed us.

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3. *“Some murmur, when their sky is clear  
And wholly bright to view,  
If one small speck of dark appear  
In their great heaven of blue:  
And some with thankful love are filled,  
If but one streak of light,  
One ray of God's good mercy, gild  
The darkness of their night.”* (Trench)

**Paraphrase:**

Some people are pessimists and complain when they encounter a small misfortune in the course of their perfectly smooth life. On the other hand, there are some optimists who feel quite satisfied and are grateful to God for His mercy if they come upon a small piece of good fortune during their miserable life.

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4. *"Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us,  
Footprints on the sands of time;  
Footprints, that perhaps, another,  
Sailing o'er life's solemn main;  
A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother  
Seeing, shall take heart again."* (Longfellow)

**Paraphrase:**

If we study the lives of great men we are reminded that we too can achieve greatness and, when we die, leave behind us great works that are recorded in History. These works could inspire somebody who is as desolate as a shipwrecked sailor to have courage, and try for greatness..

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5. *"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer,  
Both for themselves and those who call them friends!"* (Tennyson)

**Paraphrase:**

More things can be accomplished by prayer than people imagine. Let your voice of prayer, therefore rise from the depth of your heart for me, like a fountain coming up from the bosom of the earth. If men, who have knowledge of God, do not lift their hands in prayer for themselves and for their friends, they are no better than animals, which are devoid of intellect.

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6. *"In such a world; so thorny, and where none  
Finds happiness unblighted; or, if found,  
Without some thistly sorrow at its side;  
It seems the part of wisdom, and no sin  
Against the law of love, to measure lots  
With less distinguish'd than ourselves, that thus  
We may with patience bear our moderate ills  
And sympathise with other suffering more."* (Cowper)

**Paraphrase:**

This world is full of miseries. None can find here perfect happiness. Happiness; if it is found, is accompanied with sorrow like a flower with thorns. It seems to be wise, and may not be an offence against the law of love, to compare our lot with the lot of those who are less fortunate, so that we may put up with our moderate misfortunes and sympathise with others who are more miserable.

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7. *“Children we are all  
Of one great father, in whatever clime  
Nature or chance hath cast the seeds of life -  
All tongues, all colours; neither after death  
Shall we be sorted into languages  
And tints, white, black, and tawny, Greek and Goth;  
Northmen, and offspring of hot Africa;  
The All-father, He in Whom we live and move  
He, the indifferent Judge of all, regards  
Nations, and hues, and dialects alike:  
According to their works shall they be judged  
When even-handed Justice in the scale  
Their good and evil weighs.”* (Southey)

**Paraphrase:**

We are all as children of one and great God, whatever the place of our birth, our language, or our complexion. Even after death we shall not be divided according to our language, colour, nationality or country. God, from whom we derive our life and activity, is our just judge, to whom distinctions of race, colour or languages are irrelevant. He will judge us strictly according to our actions, good or bad, which He will assess with the utmost impartiality.

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8. *“Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way.  
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,  
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,  
The village master taught his little school;  
A man severe he was, and stern to view, -  
I knew him well, and every truant knew;  
Well had the boding tremblers learn'd to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face;  
Full well they laugh'd with counterfeited glee,  
At all his jokes, -for many a joke had he;  
Full well the busy whisper, circling round,  
Convey'd the dismal tidings when he frown'd;*

*Yet he was kind; or if severe in aught.  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.”* (Goldsmith)

**Paraphrase:**

There was a school in that spot fenced with gorse that puts forth beautiful flowers, which there are none to enjoy. The schoolmaster, who taught in that noisy building, was a strict disciplinarian. He was fearful to look at. All the students who skipped school, including the poet had experience of his stern manners. Every morning, looking at their teacher’s face, the trembling pupils read there the misfortunes which the day had in store for them. He often cracked jokes and, whenever he did, they laughed with pretended joy. When he frowned, the terrible news was conveyed from one boy to another through whispers and circulated all around. Nevertheless, he was good-natured. If he was severe, it was because he was keen that his pupils should learn well.

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9. *“Hark! ’tis the twanging horn, O’er yonder bridge,  
That with its wearisome but needful length  
Bestrides the wintry flood, in which the moon  
Sees her unwrinkled face reflected bright.  
He comes, the herald of a noisy world,  
With spattered boots, trapped waist and frozen locks.  
News from all nations lumbering at his back,  
True to his charge, the close-packed load behind,  
Yet careless what he brings, his one concern  
Is to conduct it to the destined inn,  
And, having dropped the expected bag, pass on.  
He whistles as he goes, light-hearted wretch,  
Cold and yet cheerful: messenger of grief  
Perhaps to thousands and of joy to some,  
To him indifferent whether grief or joy.”* (Cowper)

**Paraphrase:**

It is winter, and the water of the river is cold and so calm that the reflection of the moon is seen clearly in it. There is a long bridge that crosses the river. Along that bridge, the postman usually sounds his horn that all may know he is coming. That messenger of a violent world comes to our peaceful village with his muddy boots, strapped waist and frozen hair, carrying letters from every country, in a bag which he carries on his back. He cares not what news he brings, his only care is to do his job. He delivers the letters to the village inn, and continues on his way whistling merrily in spite of the cold. To many he brings bad tidings, and brings good news to few; but the wretched postman does not care what news he brings.

•••••

10. *“Be it a weakness, it deserves some praise,  
 We love the play-place of our early days,  
 The scene is touching and the heart is stone  
 That feels not at the sight, and feels at none;  
 The wall on which we tried our graving skill,  
 The very name we carved subsisting still,  
 The bench on which we sat while deep-employed.  
 Though mangled, hacked, and hewed, not yet destroyed;  
 The little ones, unbuttoned, glowing hot,  
 Playing our games and on the very spot;  
 The pleasing spectacle at once excites  
 Such recollection of our own delights,  
 That viewing it, we seem almost to obtain  
 Our innocent sweet simple years again.”* (Cowper)

**Paraphrase:**

It may be a weakness to love the place where we played in our childhood, but such weakness is praiseworthy. The man who is not moved by that scene is stone-hearted and incapable of being moved by anything. The wall on which we carved our names is still visible; the bench on which we sat while fully occupied in studying, though it is damaged; the young children with rosy cheeks, and with their buttons unfastened playing the same games on the same spot. All these are very delightful to look at and reminds us of our childhood pleasures. We seem almost to regain our sweet innocent childhood.

.....

11. *“Since trifles make the sum of human things,  
 And half our misery from our foibles springs;  
 Since life’s best joys consist in peace and ease,  
 And few can save or serve, but all may please.  
 Oh! let th’ ungentle spirit learn from hence,  
 A small unkindness is a great offence.  
 Large bounties to restore, we wish in vain,  
 But all may shun the guilt of giving pain.  
 To bless mankind with tides of flowing wealth,  
 With power to grace them, or to crown with health,  
 Our little lot denies, but heaven decrees  
 To all the gift of minist’ring ease;  
 The mild forbearance at another’s fault;  
 The taunting word, suppress’d as soon as thought;  
 On these Heaven bade the bliss of life depend,  
 And crush’d ill fortune when it made a friend.”* (Hannah More)

**Paraphrase:**

Our life is made up of little things, and half of our misery is due to our failings. The real joy in life is derived from living in peace and at ease. Only a very small number of men can save or serve their fellowmen, but it is possible for all men to be amiable. Uncivil persons should realise that a small act of unkindness causes great pain. We may not find ourselves able to bestow plentiful gifts on others, but it is quite possible to restrain ourselves from offending them. We may not be able to give them large quantities of wealth, to favour them with high positions, or to give them perfect health. But we have the capability of consoling those who are in distress, pardoning those who did us wrong, and resisting addressing sarcastic words to others. God has ordained that happiness in life shall depend on these factors and ordered misfortunes to vanish when one has a true friend.

.....

12. *"Now came still Evening on, and Twilight grey  
Had in her sober livery all things clad.  
Silence accompanied - for beast and bird.  
They to their grassy couch, those to their nests,  
Were slunk - all but the wakeful nightingale;  
She all night long her amorous descant sung.  
Silence was pleased. Now glow'd the firmament  
With living sapphires. Hesperus, that led  
The starry host, rode brightest, till the moon,  
Rising in clouded majesty at length,  
Apparent queen, unveil'd her peerless light.  
And o'er the dark her silver mantle threw."* (Milton)

**Paraphrase:**

Evening came, and all was quiet. Twilight enveloped everything in grey light. There was silence. Beasts retired to their beds of grass and birds to their nests. The nightingale, which was awake, sang her love-song throughout the night. Her song was so pleasing that even Silence enjoyed it. The sky, covered with stars, looked as if it was decorated with sapphires. Venus, the brightest star, shone most brilliantly till at last the moon rose from behind a cloud in her queenly majesty and revealed her matchless splendour so that the world was enveloped in silver light.

.....

## Exercises

### Paraphrase the Following Poems:

(Sometimes a poem may seem too simple and naive, if you dig deeper for a meaning, you may find nothing for it was only playful, or just sharing an experience. But still, dig deeper for you may strike gold.)

#### 1. Not waving but drowning

*Nobody heard him, the dead man,  
But he still lay moaning:  
I was much farther out than you thought  
And not waving but drowning.*

*Poor chap, he always loved larking  
And now he is dead  
It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,  
They said.*

Oh, no, no, no, it was too cold always  
(Still the dead one lay moaning)  
I was much too far out all my life  
And not waving but drowning. (Stevie Smith)

#### 2. Call It a Good Marriage

*Call it a good marriage-  
For no one ever questioned  
Her warmth, his masculinity,  
Their interlocking views;  
Except one stray graphologist  
Who frowned in speculation  
At her h's and her s's  
His p's and w's.  
Though few would still subscribe  
To the monogamic axiom  
That strife below the hip-bones  
Need not estrange the heart,  
Call it a good marriage:  
More drew those two together,  
Despite a lack of children,  
Than pulled them apart.  
Call it a good marriage:  
They never fought in public,*

*They acted circumspectly  
And faced the world with pride;  
Thus the hazards of their love-bed  
Were none of our damned business-  
Till as jurymen we sat on  
Two deaths by suicide.*

(Robert Graves)

### 3. The Flea

*Mark but this flea, and mark in this,  
How little that which thou deny'st me is;  
It sucked me first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be;  
Thou know'st that this cannot be said  
A sin, nor shame, nor loss of maidenhead,  
Yet this enjoys before it woo,  
And pampered swells with one blood made of two,  
And this, alas, is more than we would do.*

*Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where we almost, yea more than married are.  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our marriage bed, and marriage temple is;  
Though parents grudge, and you, we're met,  
And cloistered in these living walls of jet.  
Though use make you apt to kill me,  
Let not to that, self murder added be,  
And sacrilege, three sins in killing three.*

*Cruel and sudden, hast thou since  
Purpled thy nail, in blood of innocence?  
Wherein could this flea guilty be,  
Except in that drop which it sucked from thee?  
Yet thou triumph'st, and say'st that thou  
Find'st not thyself, nor me the weaker now;  
'Tis true, then learn how false, fears be;  
Just so much honour, when thou yield'st to me,  
Will waste, as this flea's death took life from thee.*

(John Donne)

#### 4. The Seven Ages of Man

*All the world's a stage,  
And all the men and women merely players:  
They have their exits and their entrances;  
And one man in his time plays many parts,  
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,  
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,  
Seeking the bubble reputation  
Even in the cannon 's mouth. And then the justice  
In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
Full of wise saws and modern instances,  
And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,  
With spectacles on nose and pouch on side,  
His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
For his shrunk shank ; and his big manly voice,  
Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.*

(As You Like It, Shakespeare)

#### 5. Abou Ben Adhem

*Abou Ben Adhem (may his tribe increase!)  
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,  
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,  
Making it rich, and like a lily on bloom,  
An angel writing in a book of gold:-  
Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,  
And to the presence in the room he said,  
'What writest thou?' - The vision raised its head,  
And with a look made of all sweet accord,  
Answered, 'The names of those that love the Lord'*

*'And is mine one ?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'  
 Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
 But cheer'ly still; and said, 'I pray thee, then,  
 Write me as one that loves his fellow men.'  
 The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night  
 It came again with a great wakening light,  
 And showed the names whom love of God had blessed.  
 And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest. (Leigh Hunt)*

### 6. From: An Essay on Man

*Know then thyself, presume not God to scan.  
 The proper study of Mankind is Man.  
 Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,  
 A Being darkly wise, and rudely great:  
 With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,  
 With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride.  
 He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest:  
 In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;  
 In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer,  
 Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;  
 Alike in ignorance, his reason such,  
 Whether he thinks too little, or too much:  
 Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;  
 Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd;  
 Created half to rise, and half to fall;  
 Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all:  
 Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd:  
 The glory, jest and riddle of the world! (Alexander Pope)*

### 7. Incident

*Once riding in old Baltimore  
 Heart-filled, head-filled with glee,  
 I saw a Baltimorean  
 Keep looking straight at me.  
 Now I was eight and very small,  
 And he was no whit bigger,  
 And so I smiled, but he poked out  
 His tongue, and called me, "Nigger."  
 I saw the whole of Baltimore  
 From May until December;  
 Of all the things that happened there  
 That's all that I remember. (Countee Cullen)*

## 8. The Adversary

*A mother's hardest to forgive,  
Life is the fruit she longs to hand you,  
Ripe on a plate. And while you live,  
Relentlessly she understands you.*

(Phyllis McGinley)

## 9. Mind

*Mind in its purest play is like some bat  
That beats about in caverns all alone,  
Contriving by a kind of senseless wit  
Not to conclude against a wall of stone.*

*It has no need to falter or explore;  
Darkly it knows what obstacles are there,  
And so may weave and flutter, dip and soar  
In perfect courses through the blackest air.*

*And has this simile a like perfection?  
The mind is like a bat. Precisely. Save  
That in the very happiest intellection  
A graceful error may correct the cave.*

(Richard Wilbur)

## 10. If thou must love me

*If thou must love me, let it be for naught  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way  
Of speaking gently — for a trick of thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought  
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day" —  
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
Be changed, or change for thee — and love, so wrought,  
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry —  
A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!  
But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.* (E. B. Browning)

## 11. Musée des Beaux Arts

*About suffering they were never wrong,  
The Old Masters: how well they understood*

*Its human position; how it takes place  
While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along;  
How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting  
For the miraculous birth, there always must be  
Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating  
On a pond at the edge of the wood:  
They never forgot  
That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course  
Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot  
Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse  
Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.*

*In Brueghel's **Icarus**, for instance: how everything turns away  
Quite leisurely from the disaster; the plowman may  
Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,  
But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone  
As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green  
Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen  
Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky,  
Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on.*

(W. H. Auden)

## **12. On Reading Poems to a Senior Class at South High**

*Before  
I opened my mouth  
I noticed them sitting there  
as orderly as frozen fish  
in a package.*

*Slowly water began to fill the room  
though I did not notice it  
till it reached  
my ears*

*and then I heard the sounds  
of fish in an aquarium  
and I knew that though I had  
tried to drown them  
with my words  
that they had only opened up  
like gills for them  
and let me in.*

*Together we swam around the room  
like thirty tails whacking words  
till the bell rang  
puncturing  
a hole in the door*

*where we all leaked out*

*They went to another class  
I suppose and I home*

*where Queen Elizabeth  
my cat met me and licked my fins  
till they were hands again.*

(D. C. Berry)

### 13. One Art

*The art of losing isn't hard to master;  
so many things seem filled with the intent  
to be lost that their loss is no disaster.*

*Lose something every day. Accept the fluster  
of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.*

*Then practice losing farther, losing faster:  
places, and names, and where it was you meant  
to travel. None of these will bring disaster.*

*I lost my mother's watch. And look! my last, or  
next-to-last, of three loved houses went.  
The art of losing isn't hard to master.*

*I lost two cities, lovely ones. And, vaster,  
some realms I owned, two rivers, a continent.  
I miss them, but it wasn't a disaster.*

*— Even losing you (the joking voice, a gesture  
I love) I shan't have lied. It's evident  
the art of losing's not too hard to master  
though it may look like (Write it!) like disaster.*

**14. The Lamb**

*Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?  
Gave thee life and bid thee feed  
By the stream and o'er the mead;  
Gave thee clothing of delight,  
Softest clothing woolly bright;  
Gave thee such a tender voice,  
Making all the vales rejoice!  
Little Lamb, who made thee?  
Dost thou know who made thee?*

*Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,  
Little Lamb, I'll tell thee!  
He is callèd by thy name,<sup>3</sup>  
For he calls himself a Lamb;  
He is meek and he is mild,  
He became a little child;  
I a child and thou a lamb,  
We are calkd by his name.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee.  
Little Lamb, God bless thee.*

William Blake (1757—1827)

**15. If thou must love me**

*If thou must love me, let it be for naught  
Except for love's sake only. Do not say  
"I love her for her smile—her look—her way  
Of speaking gently—for a trick of thought  
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought  
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day" —  
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
Be changed, or change for thee — and love, so wrought,  
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry—  
A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!  
But love me for love's sake, that evermore*

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<sup>3</sup> Christians call Jesus Christ the Lamb

*Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.*

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806—1861)

## 16. Good Times

*My Daddy has paid the rent  
and the insurance man is gone  
and the lights is back on  
and my uncle Brud has hit  
for one dollar straight  
and they is good times  
good times  
good times  
My Mama has made bread  
and Grampaw has come  
and everybody is drunk  
and dancing in the kitchen  
and singing in the kitchen  
oh these is good times  
good times  
good times  
oh children think about the  
good times*

Lucille Clifton (b. 1936)

## 17. There's a certain slant of light

*There's a certain slant of light,  
Winter afternoons,  
That oppresses like the heft  
Of cathedral tunes.  
Heavenly hurt it gives us.  
We can find no scar  
But internal difference  
Where the meanings are.*

*None may teach it any —  
'Tis the seal despair,  
An imperial affliction  
Sent us of the air.*

*When it comes the landscape listens,*

*Shadows hold their breath.  
When it goes 'tis like the distance  
On the look of death.*

Emily Dickinson (1830—1886)

### 18. The Triple Fool

*I am two fools, I know,  
For loving, and for saying so  
In whining poetry.  
But where's the wiseman that would not be I  
If she did not deny?  
Then, as the earth's inward, narrow, crooked lanes  
Do purge sea water's fretful salt away,  
I thought if I could draw my pains  
Through rhyme's vexations, I should them allay.  
Grief brought to numbers<sup>4</sup> cannot be so fierce,  
For he tames it that fetters it in verse.*

*But when I have done so,  
Some man, his art and voice to show,  
Doth set and sing my pain,  
And by delighting many, frees again  
Grief, which verse did restrain.  
To love and grief tribute of verse belongs,  
But not of such which pleases when 'tis read;<sup>5</sup>  
Both are increased by such songs,  
For both their triumphs so are published.  
And I, which was two fools, do so grow three.  
Who are a little wise, the best fools be.*

John Donne (1572—1631)

### 19. Mending Wall

*Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it  
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,  
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.  
The work of hunters is another thing:  
I have come after them and made repair*

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<sup>4</sup> verse

<sup>5</sup> read aloud

*Where they have left not one stone on a stone,  
 But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,  
 To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,  
 No one has seen them made or heard them made,  
 But at spring mending-time we find them there.  
 I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;  
 And on a day we meet to walk the line  
 And set the wall between us once again.  
 We keep the wall between us as we go.  
 To each the boulders that have fallen to each.  
 And some are loaves and some so nearly balls  
 We have to use a spell to make them balance:  
 "Stay where you are until our backs are turned!"  
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them.  
 Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,  
 One on a side. It comes to little more:  
 There where it is we do not need the wall:  
 He is all pine and I am apple orchard.  
 My apple trees will never get across  
 And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.  
 He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."  
 Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder  
 If I could put a notion in his head:  
 "Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it  
 Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.  
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
 What I was walling in or walling out,  
 And to whom I was like to give offense.  
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,  
 That wants it down:' I could say "Elves" to him,  
 But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather  
 He said it for himself. I see him there,  
 Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top  
 In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.  
 He moves in darkness as it seems to me,  
 Not of woods only and the shade of trees.  
 He will not go behind his father's saying,  
 And he likes having thought of it so well  
 He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."*

Robert Frost (1874—1963)

## 20. Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same

*He would declare and could himself believe  
 That the birds there in all the garden round  
 From having heard the daylong voice of Eve  
 Had added to their own an oversound,  
 Her tone of meaning but without the words.  
 Admittedly an eloquence so soft  
 Could only have had an influence on birds  
 When call or laughter carried it aloft.  
 Be that as may be, she was in their song.  
 Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed  
 Had now persisted in the woods so long  
 That probably it never would be lost.  
 Never again would birds' song be the same.  
 And to do that to birds was why she came.*

Robert Frost (1874—1963)

### 21. Of Money

*Give money me, take friendship whoso list,<sup>6</sup>  
 For friends are gone come once adversity,  
 When money yet remaineth safe in chest,  
 That quickly can thee bring from misery.  
 Fair face show friends when riches do abound;  
 Come time of proof, farewell, they must away.  
 Believe me well, they are not to be found,  
 If God but send thee once a lowering day.  
 Gold never starts aside, but in distress  
 Finds ways enough to ease thine heaviness.*

Barnabe Googe (1540—1594)

### 22. The warden said to me

*The warden said to me the other day  
 (innocently, I think), "Say, etheridge,  
 why come the black boys don't run off  
 like the white boys do?"  
 I lowered my jaw and scratched my head  
 and said (innocently, I think), "Well, suh,  
 I ain't for sure, but I reckon it's cause  
 we ain't got no wheres to run to."*

Etheridge Knight (1933—1991)

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<sup>6</sup> wishes

### 23. Richard Cory

*Whenever Richard Cory went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him:  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.*

*And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked;  
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,  
“Good-morning,” and he glittered when he walked.*

*And he was rich — yes, richer than a king —  
And admirably schooled in every grace:  
In fine, we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.*

*So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.*

Edwin Arlington Robinson (1869—1935)

### 24. Let me not to the marriage of true minds

*Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
It is the star to every wandering bark,  
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
If this be error and upon me proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.*

William Shakespeare (1564—1616)

### 25. Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

*Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.*

*Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way  
Do not go gentle into that good night.*

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

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

Dylan Thomas (1914—1953)

## **26. When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer**

*When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and  
measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much  
applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wandered off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Looked up in perfect silence at the stars.*

Walt Whitman (1819—1892)

**This book contains many other poems. Try your hand at paraphrasing them.**