



# SELECTIONS FROM ENGLISH VERSE

CLASS XI & XII

SINDH TEXTBOOK BOARD,  
JAMSHORO



# **SELECTIONS FROM ENGLISH VERSE**

**CLASS XI & XII**

**Edited by:  
D.Y. MORGAN**

**SINDH TEXTBOOK BOARD,  
JAMSHORO**

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# رَبِّ الْأَنْوَارِ الْمُجْدِي

## UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

A song from "As You Like It"

*William Shakespeare*

Under the greenwood tree  
Who loves to lie with me,  
And turn his merry note  
Unto the sweet bird's throat,  
Come hither, come hither, come hither! 5  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather.  
Who doth ambition shun,  
And loves to live i'the sun, 10  
Seeking the food he eats,  
And pleased with what he gets—  
Come hither, come hither, come hither.  
Here shall he see  
No enemy  
But winter and rough weather. 15

### NOTES

1. *greenwood*: woodland in spring and summer. This lovely word has unfortunately gone out of use.
2. *Who*: *whoever*.
3. *And turn his merry note unto the sweet bird's throat*: and make his own merry song like the song coming from the sweet bird's throat. The use of 'turn' in this sense was rare in Shakespeare's time and many editors of Shakespeare's have changed it to 'tune'. However, 'tune' would not have made sense to an Elizabethan and it is best not to change the words of the

earliest editions unless we are quite sure the printers went wrong.

5. *Come hither*: come here.

8. *But*: except.

9. *Who doth ambition shun*: whoever keeps clear of ambition (i.e., the kind of life led by ambitious people).

10. *i'the sun*: in the sun.

11. *Seeking*: looking for. The exiles in the forest had to hunt their own food and be satisfied with what they could get.

This song occurs in Act II, Scene V of *As You Like It*, one of Shakespeare's most popular comedies. It was probably written in 1599 and certainly not later than 1600. The song is sung by Amiens, one of a group of noblemen living a life of exile in the forest of Arden with a Duke who has been robbed of his dominions by his wicked brother. Like nearly all the songs Shakespeare introduces into his plays, it is completely relevant to the situation. The exiled Duke and his followers have experienced, and are experiencing, misfortunes brought about by human enemies. In their simple life in the forest of Arden they no longer have human enemies. They have to contend only with 'winter and rough weather'.

## THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

*Sir Henry Wotton*

How happy is he born or taught  
 That serveth not another's will;  
 Whose armour is his honest thought  
 And simple truth his utmost skill!

Whose passions not his masters are,  
 Whose soul is still prepared for death,  
 Untied unto the world by care  
 Of public fame, or private breath:

Who envies none that chance doth raise,  
 Nor vice; who never understood  
 How deepest wounds are given by praise;  
 Nor rules of state, but rules of good:

Who hath his life from rumours freed;  
 Whose conscience is his strong retreat;  
 Whose state can neither flatterers feed,  
 Nor ruin make oppressors great;

Who God doth late and early pray  
 More of His grace than gifts to lend;  
 And entertains the harmless day  
 With a religious book or friend;

—This man is freed from servile bands  
 Of hope to rise, or fear to fall:  
 Lord of himself, though not of lands,  
 And having nothing, yet hath all.

5

10

15

20

## NOTES:

5. *Whose passions not his masters are*: who is not mastered by his passions.
6. *still*: always (archaic meaning).
8. *private breath*: what people say about him in private
9. *Who envies . . . or vice*: who does not envy anybody raised to high position by chance or through wickedness.
11. This line describes a kind of danger in public life that the honest man will not understand. Praise may give the deepest wounds of all because the seeking of praise may corrupt a man's character, and because it may provoke the enmity of the envious. Moreover, praise from the insincere may be ironic and mocking.
12. *Nor*: this joins the line to *understood* in 1.10, giving the meaning 'and understood not rules of state, but rules of good'. Rules of state are rules of statecraft, statecraft being the art of managing high political affairs.
13. Who has freed his life from rumours.
14. *strong retreat*: a strong place into which he can retire with safety.
- 15 & 16. Whose state is not so great that it can feed flatterers or tempt people to accuse him so that they may plunder when he is ruined.
19. *entertains*: (archaic in this sense) passes.
21. *servile bands*: slavish bonds.

There are some very obvious likenesses between this poem and Campion's *The Man of Life Upright*. Both are concerned with

the life and virtues of a good man, both are deeply religious in spirit, and both are simple but dignified in expression. However, there is a difference in emphasis. The upright man of Campion's poem places all his thought and trust in 'heavenly things'. In Sir Henry Wotton's poem the virtuous man is happy not only in the promise of a heavenly reward but also in the enjoyment of a serene life of virtue in this world.

We also find running right through Sir Henry Wotton's poem a sharp sense of contrast, of the contrast between the uneasy life of the ambitious man and the contented life of the man satisfied to lead an obscure life of peaceful virtue. Sir Henry Wotton wrote from experience; for he was a distinguished servant of the crown who had seen for himself the rise and fall of ambitious men.

It is not surprising that this theme of the dangers of a public life as opposed to the happiness of a private life runs through so much literature of the period. (We had a taste of it in the song from *As You Like It*.) Mary Queen of Scots and the Earl of Essex were two great figures who were executed for treason in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. In the reign of her successor, King James I Sir Walter Raleigh was executed on trumped-up charges at the instigation of the King; and Sir Francis Bacon, the Lord Chancellor, was impeached by parliament and disgraced. The rewards of success were dazzling, but the anxieties and dangers of an ambitious life in the ruler's service were all too real.

'Secondly, tell me, without any doubt  
How soon I may ride the whole world about,  
And at the third question thou must not shrink,  
But tell me here truly what I do think.'

30

'O, these are hard questions for my shallow wit.  
Nor I cannot answer your grace as yet;  
But if you will give me but three weeks' space,  
I'll do my endeavour to answer your grace.'

35

'Now three weeks' space to thee will I give,  
And that is the longest time thou hast to live;  
For if thou dost not answer my questions three,  
Thy lands and thy living are forfeit to me.'

40

Away rode the abbot all sad at that word,  
And he rode to Cambridge and Oxenford;  
But never a doctor there was so wise,  
That could with his learning an answer devise.

Then home rode the abbot of comfort so cold,  
And he met his shepherd a-going to fold:  
How now my lord abbot, you are welcome home;  
What news do you bring us from good King John?

45

'Sad news, sad news, shepherd, I must give;  
That I have but three days more to live;  
For if I do not answer him questions three,  
My head will be smitten from my body.'

50

'The first is to tell him there in that stead,  
With his crown of gold so fair on his head,  
Among all his liege-men so noble of birth,  
To within one penny of what he is worth.'

55

'The second, to tell him, without any doubt,  
How soon he may ride this whole world about;  
And at the third question I must not shrink,  
To tell him there truly what he does think.'

60

'Now cheer up, sir abbot! Did you never hear yet,  
 That a fool he may learn a wise man wit?  
 Lend me horse, and serving-men and your apparel,  
 And I'll ride to London to answer your quarrel.'

65

'Nay, frown not, if it hath been told upto me,  
 I am like your lordship as ever may be;  
 And if you will but lend me your gown,  
 There is none shall know us at fair London town.'

'Now horses and serving-men thou shalt have,  
 With sumptuous array most gallant and brave,  
 With crozier and mitre, and rochet, and cōpe,  
 Fit to appear, 'fore our father the Pope.'

70

'Now welcome, sir abbot' the king did say,  
 'Tis well thou'rt come back to keep thy day;  
 For and if thou canst answer my questions three,  
 Thy life and thy living both saved shall be.'

75

'And first, when thou seest me here in this stead,  
 With my crown of gold so fair on my head,  
 Among all my liege-men so noble of birth,  
 Tell me to one penny what I am worth.'

80

'For thirty pence our Saviour was sold  
 Among the false Jews, as I have been told;  
 And twenty-nine is the worth of thee,  
 For I think thou'rt one penny worser than He.'

85

The king he laughed, and swore by Saint Bittel:  
 'I did not think I had been worth so little!  
 Now secondly tell me, without any doubt,  
 How soon I may ride this whole world about.'

'You must rise with the sun, and ride with the same,  
 Until the next morning he riseth again,  
 And then your grace need not make any doubt,  
 But in twenty-four hours you'll ride it about.'

90

The king he laughed, and swore by Saint John;  
 'I did not think it could be done so soon!  
 Now from the third question thou must not shrink,  
 But tell me here truly what I do think.'

95

'Yes, that shall I do, and make your grace merry;  
 You think I'm the abbot of Canterbury;  
 But I'm his poor shepherd, as plain you may see.  
 That am come to beg pardon for him and for me.'

100

The king he laughed, and swore by the mass,  
 'I'll make thee lord abbot this day in his place!'  
 "Now nay, my liege, be not in such speed,  
 For alack! I can neither write nor read."

'Four nobles a week, then, I will give thee,  
 For this merry jest thou hast shewn unto me;  
 And tell the old abbot, when thou comest home,  
 Thou hast brought him a pardon from good King John.'

105

## NOTES

1. *anon* (archaic): very soon.
2. *prince*: ruler (the usual meaning is the son of a monarch).
3. *main* (archaic): force.
6. *abbot*: head of a monastery. (There were many monasteries in England at the time of this story, when the Church in England was part of the Church of Rome. When England broke away from the Church of Rome in the reign of Henry VIII, the monasteries were suppressed.)
7. *for*: on account of, *his housekeeping*: his manner of running his household. It becomes clear, in the next stanza that the abbot lived in the splendid style of a great prince.

*high renown:* great reputation.

8. *rode post:* rode very fast by obtaining fresh horses at stages (posts) along the road. *fair:* beautiful.
11. *fifty gold chains:* fifty men wearing gold chains.
12. *waited the abbot about:* were in attendance around the abbot.
- 13–16. These are the words of King John.
17. *liege:* lord. (This word could mean either a 'liege lord' 'to whom allegiance was due, or a liege man', who owed allegiance to his feudal superior), *quoth:* (archaic) said. *I would:* (archaic) I wish.
18. *nothing:* anything (Such a use of two negatives— never ... nothing—is not acceptable in modern English).
19. *dere:* (archaic) harm.
20. *true-gotten gear:* (archaic) honestly obtained property.
- 21–24. The King is speaking again.
22. *needest:* (archaic) of necessity.
23. *except:* (archaic in this sense) unless.
24. *smitten:* struck, body. In reading this poem aloud, speak this word in the old-fashioned way, with stress on the second syllable.
25. *stead:* (archaic) place.
30. *the whole world about:* around the whole world.
33. *wit:* intelligence.
36. *do my endeavour:* make my attempt.

40. *living*: income (as a dignitary of the church).
42. *Oxenford*: Oxford.
43. *doctor*: university teacher.
45. *of comfort so cold*: so very poorly comforted.
46. *a-going*: (archaic) going. *fold*: enclosure for sheep.
62. *That a fool he may*: that the fool may. *learn* : teach. This old-fashioned use of the word survives only in the speech of the uneducated. (Do not imitate).
67. *but*: only.
70. *brave*: splendid in appearance.
71. *crozier*. *mitre*. *rochet*. *cope*: These are all parts of the ceremonial attire of a bishop or abbot. The crozier is a staff of office, like a shepherd's crook but often richly ornamented. The mitre is a tall cap. The rochet is a gown and the cope a cloak worn over the rochet.
72. *'fore*: before.
75. *and if*: (archaic) if.
- 81–84. The shepherd, disguised as the abbot, is replying.
84. *worser*: worse.
85. *Bittel*: corruption of Botulph, a saint after whom several churches were named.
91. *make any doubt*: (archaic) have any doubt.
99. *as plain you may see*: We may suppose that the shepherd, on speaking these words, threw off the ceremonial garments of the abbot and stood before the king in his humble shepherd's clothing.

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103. *nay:* (archaic) nor.

104. *alack:* (archaic) alas!

105. *noble:* a coin of that period. Four nobles a week would have been an exceedingly handsome income.

The poem is a typical old ballad of the south of England. Like all ballads, it tells a story and does so in a simple and traditional verse form. The best ballads are those from the north, from the regions on each side of the border between England and Scotland—but unfortunately the 'border ballads' are composed in a dialect that you would find rather hard to understand. Crude as their verse may be, the ballads of the north contain some magnificent poetry, and the moving stories they tell are usually harsh and tragic, for the border was for many centuries a wild and lawless area. Ballads from the south of England, though similar in form, are very different in spirit. The stories usually are amusing and end happily. The verse jogs along pleasantly enough but rarely rises to great poetic heights.

You will have noted that the poem is anonymous—that its authorship is unknown. We do not know who wrote the early ballads, nor is it easy for us to tell when they were first composed. A typical ballad, we conjecture, would have first been made up by a wandering entertainer, adding to a stock of songs and poems by making up his own rendering in verse of some popular tale from legend or history. If it took people's fancy it would be handed on from generation to generation, no doubt with changes in the language and, possibly, even in the main story itself. Educated people neglected this humble kind of verse until towards the end of the seventeenth century. Then it was realised that these old ballads formed a living line with the earlier culture of the ordinary English people and deserved to be preserved. Ballads began to be collected and printed. Thus, such a ballad as ours survives to tell a popular legend, going right back to the early thirteenth century, in language that is, understandably, a curious mixture of earlier and later English.

In the eighteenth century, readers of all classes developed a romantic taste for old things, and ballads began to be enjoyed

even by the more learned. Dr. Johnson, the great critic, knew many old ballads by heart and the poet Cowper composed an admirable comic poem, *John Gilpin*, in the old ballad style. At the end of the century, the ballad was taken up as a serious literary form by the great romantic poets. Wordsworth and Coleridge, who in 1798 published a remarkable collection of their own poems entitled *Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* demonstrated that the ballad form, so ostensibly simple and artless, could carry poetry of the highest and most magical quality. Early in the next century another great poet, John Keats, wrote a haunting and beautiful poem in ballad form, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. Later in this volume we have given you Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray*, so that you may see how the ancient art of ballad-writing developed in the hands of a great poet.

Our ballad is anything but great poetry, yet its very simplicity and crudeness give it a certain charm. Fine writing would not be appropriate for telling this straightforward and amusing folk story. The story, it should be noted, is no more than a popular legend. King John, who reigned from 1199 to 1216, was a very unpleasant man and a thoroughly bad king, but there is no historical evidence that anything like this ever happened. Now, popular legend is quite unsafe as a record of facts but it may contain a certain kind of truth. This ballad is only one of many which refer to his misdeeds and they make one thing clear—that the common people hated him and, after his death, were very ready to attach discreditable stories to his name. There are a large number of southern ballads about Robin Hood who, if he ever existed at all (which is doubtful), certainly lived at a much earlier period. But the many Robin Hood ballads are all set in the period when John was a prince, governing England very badly in the absence of foreign adventures of his brother, Richard I. As prince and king, John was detested and any legends involving bad rule tended to attach themselves to him.

Our particular ballad, characteristically, has little sympathy for the over-rich abbot either and certainly reflects a popular attitude that made it easy for King Henry VIII, in the sixteenth century, to suppress the monasteries without stirring up general discontent. These early ballads may be simple and artless but they give some fascinating glimpses into the soul of the common folk of England living centuries before us.

## LINES FROM THE DESERTED VILLAGE

Oliver Goldsmith

Sweet Auburn ! loveliest village of the plain,  
 Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,  
 Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
 And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed:  
 Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,  
 Seats of my youth, when every sport could please  
 How often have I loitered o'er thy green,  
 Where humble happiness endear'd each scene !  
 How often have I paused on every charm  
 The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,  
 The never failing brook, the busy mill,  
 The decent church that topped the neighbouring

5

10

The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade,  
 For talking age and whispering lovers made !  
 How often have I blest the coming day,  
 When toil remitting lent its turn to play,  
 And all the village train, from labour free,  
 Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree;  
 Will many a pastime circled in the shade,  
 The young contending as the old surveyed;  
 And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,  
 And sleights of art and feats of strength went round;  
 And still as each repeated pleasure tired,  
 Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;  
 The dancing pair that simply sought renown  
 By holding out to tire each other down;  
 The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,  
 While secret laughter tittered round the place;  
 The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,  
 The matron's glance that would those looks reprove !

15

20

25

30

These were thy charms, sweet village, sports like these,  
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;  
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed  
These were thy charms—but all these charms are fled.  
These were thy charms but all these charms are fled.

III Fares the land, to hastening ills a prey  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:  
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;  
A breath can make them as a breath has made;  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride  
When once destroyed can never be supplied.

35

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## NOTES

1. *the plain*: There are no great plains in England like the vast plains of Pakistan. Imagine a tract of low lying fertile countryside, not completely flat because the village church was on a hill.
  2. *swain*: (archaic and poetical) humble country man.
  4. *parting*: departing, delayed went on blooming late in the year.
  5. *bowers*: shady places Surrounded by trees.
  6. *Seats of my youth*: places in which I spent much time in my youth.
  7. *green*: The 'village green' is probably meant. Many English village had an open grassy place in their centre, the natural place for games and recreation.
  10. *cot*: (archaic) cottage
  14. *For talking age*: of old people who are fond of talking
  16. *toil remitting*: work-ceasing. Goldsmith is describing a day of holiday.

17. *the village train*: the people living in the village.  
 'Train' suggests they came walking to the scene  
 of their sports in an informal procession.
18. *led up*: began.
19. While many a game went on in a circle in the shade  
 of the tree
20. *contending*: competing with one another. *surveyed*:  
 looked on.
21. *gambol*: playful activity. *frolicked*: went on merrily.
22. *sleights of art*: clever tricks. *went round*: were per-  
 formed in turn.
24. *mirthful band*: merry company.
26. *holding out*: not stopping.
27. *mistrustless of*: completely unaware of, *smutted*:  
 marked with soot or some such black substance  
 Some trick had been played on the 'smutted swain'  
 perhaps in a game in which he was blindfold and  
 could not see what was done to him, so that he was  
 now going about with a comically dirty face without  
 knowing it
29. *side-long*: to one side.
34. *but all these charms are fled*: In the sixteen lines  
 following—which we have omitted—there is a descrip-  
 tion of the village empty of people and falling  
 into ruins.
35. The country fares badly, and is the victim of evils  
 developing faster and faster.
38. *A breath*, a word. The monarch with a word can  
 give gentleman a great title.
- Goldsmith has been much criticised since the very first  
 appearance of *The Deserted Village* in 1770, for describing

something that never happened—the depopulation and ruin of a once-thriving English village. In Ireland, Goldsmith's native land, and in the west of Scotland, many landlords did ruthlessly evict tenants and depopulate villages when they discovered that sheep-farming, which required very few labourers, was more profitable than general farming, which gives employment to many. But Goldsmith's Auburn is very obviously a village in the South of England, where nothing like the wholesale and inhuman evictions of Scotland and Ireland ever took place. In fact, Goldsmith transferred an Irish tragedy to an English setting, to the justified annoyance of his English friends.

However, muddled Goldsmith may have been about the actual facts, he wrote sincerely and with a true love of village life at its happiest. And, of course, he wrote well. No matter what Goldsmith wrote—as a novelist, dramatist, poet, or mere Journalist—he invariably wrote easily and well. *The Deserted Village*, you will observe, is in rhymed couplets. Now, these can become very monotonous in a long poem. The neat self-contained form of the couplet may impede the flow of the poem as a whole and the obtrusive regularity of the rhymes may irritate the ear. Observe how effortlessly Goldsmith overcomes these technical difficulties. The whole thirty-four lines of the first extract make up one sentence—long but always easy to follow—with a striking and unexpected climax, and the flow of this long sentence keeps the poem moving easily through the well-turned couplets.

The rhymed couplet, for all the difficulties it presents, can be a very telling and memorable unit of expression. It is remarkable how many of the lines of verse that have become as familiar as proverbs to the educated speaker of English are drawn from poems in rhymed couplets by Dryden and Pope (the great masters of this form) and indeed this poem by Goldsmith. Few quotations from English verse are better known than the powerful couplet which opens our second extract:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.

## LUCY GRAY

*William Wordsworth*

Oft I had heard of Lucy Gray;  
 And when I crossed the wild,  
 I chanced to see at break of day  
 The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew;  
 She dwelt on a wide moor—  
 The sweetest thing that ever grew  
 Beside a human door !

You yet may spy the fawn at play,  
 The hare upon the green;  
 But the sweet face of Lucy Gray  
 Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night;  
 You to the town must go,  
 And take a lantern, child, to light  
 Your mother through the snow."

"That, father, will I gladly do:  
 'Tis scarcely afternoon—  
 The Minster-clock has just struck two,  
 And yonder is the moon."

At this the father raised his hook,  
 And snapp'd a faggot-band;  
 He plied his work, and Lucy took  
 The lantern in her hand.

5

10

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Not blither is the mountain roe:  
 With many a wanton stroke  
 Her feet disperse the powdery snow  
 That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time:  
 She wandered up and down;  
 And many a hill did Lucy climb:  
 But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night  
 Went shouting far and wide;  
 But there was neither sound nor sight  
 To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on a hill they stood  
 That overlooked the moor;  
 And thence they saw the bridge of wood  
 A furlong from their door.

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried  
 "In heaven we all shall meet!"  
 —When in the snow the mother spied  
 The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill's edge  
 They tracked the footmarks small;  
 And through the broken hawthorn-hedge,  
 And by the long stone-wall:

And then an open field they crossed:  
 The marks were still the same;  
 They tracked them on, nor ever lost;  
 And to the bridge they came.

They follow'd from the snowy bank  
 Those footmarks, one by one,  
 Into the middle of the plank;  
 And further there was none.

-Yet some maintain that to this day  
 She is a living child;  
 That you may see sweet Lucy Gray  
 Upon 'he lonesome wild.

60

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,  
 And never looks behind;  
 And sings a solitary song  
 That whistles in the wind.

## NOTES

1. *oft*: (archaic): often.
2. *wild*: uncultivated tract of land (and unusual way of using the word).
5. *mate*: regular companion.
6. *spy*: (archaic): see. *fawn*: young deer.
- 13–16. Lucy's father is speaking.
19. *Minster*: church of a monastery. Many minsters kept this name after suppression of the monasteries to which they belonged.
21. *hook*: bill-hook, a farming tool consisting of a large curved blade attached to a wooden handle.
22. *faggot-band*: a band holding a bundle of sticks together.
23. *plied*: was busy at.
25. *blither*: more joyful. *roe*: small species of deer.
26. *wanton*: playful and purposeless.
29. *before its time*: before it was expected.
47. *hawthorn*: a shrub that is thick-growing and thorny (hence its suitability for hedges) and comes out in rather pretty white or pink blossoms in May.

51. *nor ever lost*: nor did they ever lose them (the foot-marks in the snow).

*trips*: moves swiftly and lightly.

64. *That whistles in the wind*: that can be heard in the whistling sound of the wind.

*Lucy Gray*, written in 1799, appeared in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1800. You should read again *The Abbot of Canterbury*, comparing the old traditional ballad with this, a ballad written by a great poet of a more recent period.

*Lucy Gray* is closer to the spirit of the old northern ballads than to more cheerful spirit of such southern ballads as *The Abbot of Canterbury*. Like most northern ballads, it tells a tragic story but one without the violence to be found in most old ballads of the north.

You will notice that the stanzas are different in form from those of the *The Abbot of Canterbury*. The first and third lines have four beats each and the second and fourth lines only three. The two longer lines rhyme together as do the two shorter ones, the rhyme scheme being abab.

Most of the poem has a steady, regular rhythm and the language is plain and simple. Form and language in their bare simplicity, contribute to the bleak tone of the poem— the story of a simple tragedy in a cold bleak countryside beneath the snow.

For all this simplicity, the stanzas have a strange melancholy beauty. Notice the highly effective handling of speech sounds in the last two lines. There is the alliteration of s in 'And sings a solitary song,' and the sound is picked up again in 'whistles in the wind', where we have further alliteration, this time of w. Both these sounds suggest the mournful sound of the wind sighing over the wild moors.

SONNET COMPOSED  
UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

September 3, 1802  
*William Wordsworth*

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This city now doth, like a garment wear      5  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.

Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;      10  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !  
The river glideth at his own sweet will;  
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

NOTES

- 6. *temples*: places of worship.
- 8. *in the smokeless air*: The air is smokeless because it is very early in the morning before fires are lit.
- 9. *steep*: soak. The sun is so bright in the splendour of its rising that the buildings seem to be drenched in sunlight.
- 12. *glideth*: moves smoothly.

This is a sonnet, a type of short poem in which English literature is extremely rich. The form came from Italy in the sixteenth century and many of the greatest Elizabethan poets, notably Shakespeare, wrote sonnets in abundance. Wordsworth was one of the leading poets in its revival and wrote a very large number of sonnets, some of which are among the finest in English literature.

A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines, each line having ten syllables with five beats. Usually, the first eight lines (the 'octave') are marked off from the last six (the sestet) by a change of rhyme and a shift in the poet's thought. Wordsworth, who is a far greater poetic craftsman than the simplicity of his language suggests, uses a very difficult rhyme scheme—*abbaabbaccdcd*—which confines him to only four rhymes for fourteen lines.

Wordsworth, of all poets, was the poet of nature. He was a native of the Lake District, an extremely beautiful region of lakes and mountains in the north-west of England. He loved the beauty of such a countryside with a truly religious adoration—to him natural beauty was an aspect of God—and it was remarkable that the beauty of London just after sunrise should have struck him so forcefully. It was remarkable that he, the lover of nature at her wildest, should have been moved to write:

'Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill . . . ,

The largely man-made beauty of the scene—to his own astonishment, one feels—stirred his emotions as powerfully as the wild mountain scenery he knew and loved so well.

Even now, when the city is changing so quickly in appearance, the view from Westminster Bridge which crosses the River Thames by the House of Parliament, is still one of the finest view in London. Central London is almost flat and there are no great open views of London except along the breadth of the river. It makes a great curve to the right, down-river of Westminster Bridge, and some of the noble buildings all dominated by St. Paul's Cathedral about two miles away, are the same today as those that Wordsworth saw. The sheer size of the heart of London, with its great mass of public buildings, is impressive from this viewpoint. Very early in the morning (for the sun in mid-summer rises much earlier in England than it does in Pakistan), the peacefulness of the mighty city, so busy throughout the day is strangely moving. It is this impression of a mighty city at rest in the full beauty of sunrise, that Wordsworth conveys in the beautiful closing lines of the sonnet.

LINES FROM *THE LAY OF THE LAST  
MINSTREL*

*Sir Walter Scott*

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, concentrated 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.

5

10

15

NOTES

1. *Breathes there:* Does there live . . . ?
  6. *strand:* shore.
  7. If such a man should live, go and observe him closely.
  8. *Minstrel* a man who sang and recited, either as a wandering entertainer or as a regular member of a nobleman's household. Many of a minstrel's songs would praise great patriots.
- raptures:* rapturous compositions. *swell:* make a noble sound.

11. *pelf*: money (the word is always used with a strong feeling of scorn).
12. *concentred all in self*: with his thoughts centred entirely on his own selfish interest.
13. *forfeit*: lose as a penalty.
16. *Unwept*: not mourned; *unsung*: ignored in poetry and song.

This is a most spirited and vigorous piece of verse, breathing patriotism and denouncing any man who does not love his native land.

The very long poem from which it comes is written, as this extract exemplifies, in octosyllabic rhymed couplets with occasional variations. All the lines are octosyllabic (eight-syllabled) and we have the regular rhymed couplets (pairs of lines with the same rhyme) from line 7 to the end. But line 3 rhymes not with line 4 but with line 6, so the first six lines have the shape of a stanza with the rhyme scheme *aabccb*, an agreeable variation in a long poem and one which draws attention to a passage of particularly strong feeling.

It is excellent rhetorical verse, its bold and energetic rhythm lending itself splendidly to spirited declamation. Notice how the strong beat of rhythm is sometimes emphasised by alliteration—the use of words beginning with the same sound. We have it in line 11 with its 'power and pelf' and, more sustained, in lines 14 and 15 with 'And, doubly dying, shall go down to the vile dust from whence he sprung'.

Anybody who loves his own country should enjoy declaiming this fervent affirmation of patriotism.

## ABOU BEN ADHEM

Leigh Hunt

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 in bloom, 5  
 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, 10  
 Answered, 'The names of those who love the Lord.

'And is mine one ?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so,'  
 Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
 But cheerly still, and said, 'I pray thee, then,  
 Write me as one that loves his fellow men.' 15  
 The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night  
 It came again with a great wakening light,  
 And show'd the names whom love of God had bless'd,  
 And lo ! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest.

## NOTES

7. *the presence*: the angel. This supernatural being has no earthly substance so is termed 'a presence' and, later, 'a vision'.

9. *accord*: agreement and harmony.

11. *Nay* (archaic): No.

13. *cheerly*: (poetical) cheerfully.

19. *lo*: behold.

This simple and lovely tale is briefly told in easy and flowing rhymed couplets. The dominant word is 'peace'. Notice how its vowel sound rings through the phrases in which it is used—*'deep dream of peace'* and *'exceeding peace'*. Peace, beauty and happiness prevail right through this deeply religious poem.

## INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP

*Robert Browning*

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon:

A mile or so away,  
On a little mound, Napoleon  
Stood on our storming day;  
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,  
Legs wide, arms locked behind,  
As if to balance the prone brow  
Oppressive with its mind.

5

Just as perhaps he mused, 'My plans  
That soar, to earth may fall,  
Let once my army-leader Lannes  
Waver at yonder wall,'—  
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew  
A rider, bound on bound  
Full-galloping; nor bridle drew  
Until he reached the mound.

10

15

Then off there flung in smiling joy,  
And held himself erect  
By just his horse's mane, a boy:  
You hardly could suspect—  
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,  
Scarce any blood came through)  
You looked twice ere you saw his breast  
Was all but shot in two.

20

'Well', cried he, 'Emperor, by God's grace  
We've got you Ratisbon !  
The Marshal's in the market-place,  
And you'll be there anon  
To see your flag-bird flap his vans  
Where I, to heart's desire,

25

30

Perched him !' The Chief's eye flashed; his plans  
Soared up again like fire.

The Chief's eye flashed; but presently  
Softened itself, as sheathes  
A film the mother-eagle's eye  
When her bruised eaglet breathes:  
'You're wounded !', 'Nay', his soldier's pride  
Touched to the quick, he said:  
'I'm killed, Sire !' And his chief beside,  
Smiling, the boy fell dead.

35

40

## NOTES

1. *stormed*: took by storm, i.e., by a sudden and violent attack.
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
7. *prone brow*: forehead inclined right forward. Napoleon, in thought, must have been looking at the ground with bowed head.
8. *mind*: thoughts.
13. *'twixt*: betwixt (archaic), between.  
*battery-smokes*: the clouds of smoke from the batteries of guns.
15. *nor bridle drew*: and he did not draw his bridle. The bridle is the headgear of a horse and a rider draws his bridle—pulls on the bridle-rein—when he wishes to check or stop his horse.
17. *flung*: flung himself.
23. *ere*: (poetical/archaic) before.
24. *all but*: very nearly.
28. *anon*: very soon.

29. *flag-bird*: France's national emblem under Napoleon's reign was the eagle and it was on the battle-standards.

*vans*: wings. This is a very unusual word indeed for wings and has never been in general currency with this meaning. Milton used it once in this sense but Browning had no other authority, as far as we know, for this eccentric piece of writing. Presumably, he used it in order to get a rhyme for plans.

30. *to heart's desire*: in fulfilment of my heart's desire.

- 34-35. *as sheathes a film*: as a film covers.

37. *Nay*: (archaic) No.

38. *touched to the quick*: painfully hurt. 'The quick' literally, is that part of the flesh most sensitive to pain, notably the flesh under the nails.

39. *Sire*: (archaic) Sir. *his chief beside*: at the side of his chief.

For all its weaknesses, this is a spirited poem—fast moving and exciting. Its weaknesses are a rather forced use of language in places—'mind' in line 8 and 'vans' in line 29 are all too obviously employed for the sake of rhyme—and a certain unreality (a boy with his 'breast all but shot in two' would not be able to gallop a horse and shout in triumph). It is very much a poet's poem about war, written with all the romantic exuberance of somebody who had never seen the real thing.

However, it is splendidly energetic and sounds very good when it is read aloud. Browning wrote many better poems than this but they are nearly all difficult. You should have no difficulty in enjoying this vigorous piece of writing and it will give you some idea of the poetical power that made Browning one of the most highly esteemed of the Victorian poets.

## THE TOYS

*Coventry Patmore*

My little son, who look'd from thoughtful eyes  
 And moved and spoke in quiet grown-up wise,  
 Having my law the seventh time disobey'd,  
 I struck him, and dismiss'd  
 With hard words and unkiss'd, 5  
 —His mother, who was patient, being dead.  
 Then, fearing lest his grief should hinder sleep,  
 I visited his bed,  
 But found him slumbering deep,  
 With darken'd eyelids, and their lashes yet 10  
 From his late sobbing wet.  
 And I, with moan,  
 Kissing away his tears, left others of my own;  
 For, on a table drawn beside his head,  
 He had put, within his reach, 15  
 A box of counters and a red-vein'd stone,  
 A piece of glass abraded by the beach,  
 And six or seven shells,  
 A bottle with bluebells,  
 And two French copper coins ranged there with 20  
 careful art,  
 To comfort his sad heart.  
 So when that night I pray'd  
 To God, I wept and said:  
 Ah! when at last we lie with tranced breath,  
 Not vexing Thee in death, 25  
 And Thou rememberest of what toys  
 We made our joys,  
 How weakly understood,  
 Thy great commanded good,  
 Then, fatherly not less 30  
 Than I whom Thou hast moulded from the clay,  
 Thou'l't leave Thy wrath, and say,  
 'I will be sorry for their childishness'.

## NOTES

2. *wise*: manner.
4. *and dismiss'd*: and dismissed him.
10. *yet*: still.
11. *late*: recent.
14. *drawn*: pulled.
17. *abraded*: rubbed and worn.
19. *bluebells*: a kind of wild flower with a cluster of small bell-shaped blue flowers growing on a long stem.
20. *ranged*: set out regularly.
24. *tranced breath*: the almost extinct breath in the unconsciousness before death.
26. *toys*: trifles as unimportant as the toys of the child.
- 28-29. How feebly we understood the great and good precepts of Thy laws.
32. *leave Thy wrath*: cease to be wrathful.

Like many Victorians, Coventry Patmore was deeply religious man who readily and sincerely associated the ordinary happenings of everyday life with his religious beliefs. The story behind the poem is a homely one. A father, whose wife has died, punishes his son for disobedience. Worried lest the little boy's unhappiness should be keeping him awake, he goes to his bedside and finds the child asleep, but with his little toys all set out carefully beside him. In his grief at being punished by his father, he has turned for comfort to these little toys—worthless odds and ends, in the sight of a grown-up, but

precious possessions to their childish owner. The father, deeply touched at this little scene—for he loves the boy dearly, although he had to punish him—thinks in his prayers that night that God will have the same merciful and loving forgiveness for the childish misdeeds of men, who find enjoyment in trifles that are no more than toys in His sight.

The verse is different from that of any other poem you have in this volume and it foreshadows the free style in which much twentieth century verse has been written. The lines are uneven in length, containing anything from two to five stresses, and are rhymed in an irregular fashion. This loose, rather fitful, style of composition suits the mood of the poem very well—a mood of deeply personal and sincere meditation.

## I HAD REACHED YOUR DOORSTEPS

*G. Allana*

I lost the scroll of instructions You gave  
 To guide me to the door of Your house;  
 I sat in distress on life's cross-roads  
 And asked the wayfarers and the caravans,  
 To show me the way to my destination.

5

Some said the way was long and tortuous;  
 You had said it is short and delectable  
 Others opined it was narrow, winding and  
 uphill,

You had said, it is straight and universal.  
 They shouted it is the dream of bigoted  
 fanatics;

10

You had said it is the ultimate reality,  
 In a world that is worth but a moment.  
 Then You came and handed me the chart,  
 I found I was sitting at the very gate,  
 Not knowing I had reached Your doorsteps.

15

### NOTES

*scroll:* a roll of paper or parchment, a piece of writing.

*wayfarer:* a traveller by road especially one who journeys on foot.

*delectable:* affording delight, delightful.

*bigoted:* blindly attached to some creed, opinion or party and intolerant towards others.

*fanatics:* persons affected by excessive and mistaken enthusiasm especially in religious matters.

*chart:* the Revealed Books, instructions given to man by Prophets of all the ages in the Revealed Books.

## PART II

## THE SEVEN AGES OF MAN

(A SPEECH FROM AS YOU LIKE IT)

William Shakespeare

All the world's a stage.

comedy  
History  
tragedies

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. 5  
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;  
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 ~~sod song~~ 10  
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, 15  
In fair round belly with good capon lin'd.  
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 pantaloons, 20  
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 childhood, and mere oblivion,  
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. 25

## NOTES

2. *players*: actors.
3. *exits*: departures from the stage. The exists and

- entrances of men and women from and upon the stage of life are, of course, their deaths and births.
4. *plays many parts*: acts the parts of many different characters.
  5. *Acts*: the division of a play. A man's life is seen as a play divided into seven acts from infancy to extreme old age.
  6. *Mewling*: crying feebly, whimpering, *puking*: being sick.
  8. *shining morning face*: In the morning, when he goes to school, the schoolboy's face will be newly washed and clean, a condition that will wear off, no doubt, as the day progresses.  
*like snail*: very slowly. Instead of 'like a snail', Shakespeare has written 'like snail' to avoid disturbing the metre of the line with an extra syllable. Snails, unknown in many parts of Pakistan but common all over Britain and Europe, are creatures an inch or two long, with soft slimy bodies partly protected by a curved shell. They slide along very slowly.
  9. *and then the lover etc.*: Shakespeare is here making fun, with playful exaggeration, of the conventional behaviour of the young Elizabethan lover, sighing loudly for grief because the woman he loves ignores him and composing a melancholy song in praise of one tiny feature of her appearance.
  10. *Sighing like furnace*: Again we have an 'a' left out for the sake of the metre. The blacksmith's furnace, familiar everywhere at a time when shoes for horses had to be made in every town and village, made a noise like a very loud sigh when the hand-operated bellows blew air through the burning fuel.  
*ballad*: song.
  11. *Made to*: composed in honour of.
  12. *pard*: leopard. Not normally used in modern English.
  13. *in honour*: In matters of honour.
  14. *the bubble reputation*: Reputation is thought of as a bubble because a man's fame can so quickly be forgotten

and disappears like a burst bubble. In Shakespeare's time the word was pronounced with five syllables (-tion had two), not four as in modern English, so this line, short, as it is, would have had ten syllables, five of them stressed, and had a more regular metre than it has with a modern pronunciation.

15. *justice*: Justice of the Peace. Justices of the Peace are, in Britain, unpaid magistrates who sit in local courts and try less serious offences. In Shakespeare's time, the Justices, who were usually prosperous landowners of good social position in their own locality, not only acted as magistrates but were responsible for all matters of local government.
16. *capon*: cockerel reared for eating. The whole line humorously describes the Justice's plumpness resulting from good feeding. Many modern speakers of English regard 'belly' as a rather coarse word, so it is not advisable for you to use it.
18. *saws*: sayings. The word is rarely used in modern English.  
*instances*: examples, i.e. examples of legal decisions.
20. Understand 'the age of' after 'into'. *pantaloons*: comical old man in a type of Italian comedy popular in Shakespeare's period wearing floppy trousers.
22. *His youthful hose*: the stocking he wore when he was a young man. Gentlemen in this period wore short breeches and long stockings. *well saved*: carefully preserved.  
*a world too wide*: very much too wide.
23. *shank*: leg. The word is no longer in common use.
24. *treble*: the high-pitched voice of a boy.
25. *his*: its (the pronoun 'its' was only just coming into use at this period).
27. *oblivion*: forgetfulness, lack of sensation.
28. *sans*: without. This French word has gone completely out of use in English.

This speech is taken from Act II, Scene VII of *As You Like It*. It is uttered by Jacques, one of the group of noblemen living a life of exile in the Forest of Arden. Jacques is a melan-

choly but witty man, much given to moralising. His wit is amusingly exuberant in the sketches of the first five stages of man's life but the sixth sketch, still witty, takes on a melancholy tone and the seventh sketch, of extreme old age, is utterly melancholy.

This speech is one of the best known passages from Shakespeare. Shakespeare was not only a dramatist—many would say the greatest dramatist in world literature—but also an actor, and this view of the world as a stage, of life as a drama, and of a man as an actor with different parts to play, comes naturally from a man who dedicated his life to the theatre. But a playwright's words are, in a sense, not his own. They must come naturally from the mouths of the characters he has created. It was natural, in fact, for a nobleman of this period to talk in terms of the stage because the theatre was immensely popular with royalty and the nobility. This is one reason why English drama reached its greatest height at this time.

Shakespeare had been a leading poet and dramatist for about seven years when he wrote *As You Like It*. Though his great tragedies were yet to be written, he had now achieved a wonderfully easy and sure command of dramatic verse. His plays were written mostly in blank verse—unrhymed verse with five beats to the lines—but they do contain occasional passages in prose, several songs (for it was a great age for music as well as poetry) and some rhymed couplets—pairs of lines that rhyme.

Our passage is in blank verse and you will get a good idea of the regular rhythm of the verse from the last line. It has five syllables which are heavily stressed—teeth, eyes, taste and first and last syllables of everything. The syllable in front of each of these stressed syllables is only lightly stressed. Say 'among' to yourself five times and you will hear the exact rhythm and beat of a regular line. But if the verse is kept strictly to this regular beat, it would soon become monotonous and it would certainly not sound like real speech. So you will find that Shakespeare often varies the regular pattern. The first few lines of our speech are pretty regular but with the sixth line we have the commonest type of variation. At the beginning of the line, the stress falls not on the second syllable but on the first, the first syllable of *Mewling*. The seventh line

actually has this kind of inversion all the way through. From *Then the to satchel*, we find the lightly stressed syllable coming after, not in front of, the more heavily stressed one. It is through such shifts of rhythm that good blank verse combines all the liveliness of natural speech with the discipline and beauty of poetry.

Quite frequently lines are marked off by a pause at the end but, again, the verse would be monotonous and unlike speech if there were too much regularity and the big pauses kept on coming at the same intervals. So the verse will often make a big pause not at the end but in the middle of a line. Notice in how many lines of our passage a sentence ends in the middle of the line and makes us pause there before starting the new sentence. Then quite a few lines run on to the next with no pause at all—look for this at lines 8, 19, 22 and 24.

There is enough regularity in the patterning of lines and their metres to make us feel we are listening to poetry and yet there is so much freedom that we have the sensation of listening to a real speech in a real situation. To enjoy and understand this passage as a piece of dramatic verse we must read it aloud, as well as we possibly can. We must get at the meaning and spirit of the words, speaking them as if the ideas behind them were our own—as if we ourselves were Jacques thinking his thoughts and finding the words for them. Speak with sincerity and liveliness but do not try to go too fast. *Do not be afraid of pausing at the right places.* Nothing sounds worse than blank verse gabbled straight through from beginning to end. Treat the passage as what it is, a piece of lively human speech full of wit and meaning. Shakespeare was a wonderful poetic craftsman and if you simply speak out his words with a full sense of their meaning and spirit, everything else will come right.

## THE MAN OF LIFE UPRIGHT

*Thomas Campion*

The man of life upright,  
 Whose guiltless heart is free  
 From all dishonest deeds,  
 Or thought of vanity;

The man whose silent days  
 In harmless joys are spent,  
 Whom hopes cannot delude,  
 Nor sorrow discontent:

That man needs neither towers  
 Nor armour for defence,  
 Nor secret vaults to fly  
 From thunder's violence.

He only can behold  
 With unaffrighted eyes  
 The horrors of the deep  
 And terrors of the skies.

Thus, scorning all the cares  
 That fate or fortune brings,  
 He makes the heaven his book.  
 His wisdom heavenly things,

Good thoughts his only friends,  
 His wealth a well-spent age,  
 His sport his sober inn  
 And quiet pilgrimage.

5

10

15

20

*of life upright:* who leads a strictly honourable  
 and honest life. (The placing of the adjective after  
 the noun, common enough in poetry, is not to be  
 insisted in prose).

11. *vaults*: cellars.

13. *He only*: 'Only' qualifies 'He', not 'can behold'.  
*behold*: see.

14. *unaffrighted*: unfrightened.

This poem is simple in language and form. Each stanza is of four short (six-syllabled) lines, the second line rhyming with the fourth. The first and third lines are unrhymed (it would chop the stanza up too much if they were rhymed as well). The rhythm is regular and nearly all pauses fall at the ends of the lines. Although the poem was written so long ago, its language is easy to understand.

Campion was a fine poet who could, when he chose, write verse that was anything but simple in form and meaning. Why, then, did he write this poem in such a very simple and direct style? The answer should be obvious. The form and style, as in all good poetry, match the subject. To describe the directness and simplicity of the honest man, we have a poem which breathes these qualities in every line.

The great art of such apparently simple poetry consists in saying a great deal in a few words all beautifully chosen. Observe how much meaning lies in such a little word as 'inn', in the last line but one. The earth is an inn, not a house or home, because to the pious man life on earth is not permanent. He sees his abode on earth as a temporary stay before an eternity in heaven.

Try to put yourself imaginatively in the period and place to which a poem belongs. A modern poet is unlikely to write about 'the horrors of the deep', for in our age we cross the great oceans in comfort and safety. In Campion's time brave men made perilous voyages across the world in tiny wooden sailing-ships. The full meaning and force of the line will not be understood by those without the imagination to think of the ocean as Campion and his contemporaries saw it. This kind of play of the imagination is essential to the reading of the poetry of bygone ages.

When you read the poem aloud, read it deliberately, giving full value to the noble regularity of rhythm.

## LINES FROM SAMSON AGONISTES

*John Milton*

These lines from Milton's great poetic drama describe the death of its hero, Samson. He was a man of immense strength but had been taken captive, through the treachery of his wife, by the Philistines, the deadly enemies of his race. As this passage describes, he saved his people by using his strength to kill the Philistine leaders but, in bringing down the roof of a great temple upon the heads of those assembled there, he sacrificed his own life at the same time.

He patient, but undaunted, where they led him,  
 Came to the place; and what was set before him,  
 Which without help of eye might be assayed,  
 To heave, pull, draw, or break, he still performed  
 All with incredible stupendous force,  
 None daring to appear antagonist.

5

At length for intermission sake they led him  
 Between the pillars; he his guide requested,  
 (For so from such as nearer stood we heard),  
 As over-tired, to let him lean a while  
 With both his arms on those two massy pillars  
 That to the arched roof gave main support.  
 He unsuspecting led him; which when Samson  
 Felt in his arms, with head a while inclined,  
 And eyes fast fixed, he stood, as one who prayed,

10

Or some great matter in his mind revolved:  
 At last, with head erect thus cried aloud:  
 'Hitherto, lords, what your commands imposed  
 I have performed, as reason was, obeying,  
 Not without wonder or delight beheld;  
 Now, of my own accord, such other trial

15

20

I mean to show you of my strength, yet greater;  
As with amaze shall strike all who behold.'  
This uttered, straining all his nerves, he bowed:  
As with the force of winds and waters pent  
When mountains tremble, those two massy pillars  
With horrible convulsion to and fro  
He tugged, he shook, till down they came, and drew  
The whole roof after them with burst of thunder  
Upon the heads of all who sat beneath, 25  
Lords, ladies, captains, counsellors or priests,  
Their choice nobility and flower, not only  
Of this, but each Philistine city round,  
Met from all parts to solemnize this feast.  
Samson, with these inmixed, inevitably  
Pulled down the same destruction on himself. 30  
35

## NOTES

- 1-4. Samson was being made to entertain a great gathering of the Philistine nobility with feats of strength. He was blind, for the Philistines, to make him a less dangerous captive, had put out his eyes.
3. *assayed*: essayed (attempted).
4. *still*: always.
6. Nobody daring to appear as his challenger in similar feats of strength.
7. *for intermission sake*: in order to have an interval in the display.
9. For so we heard from those people who stood nearer than we did. (The story is told by Manoa who saw the catastrophe).
11. *massy*: massive
12. *arched*: Pronounce it with two syllables.
14. *inclined*: bent forward.

16. Or one who was turning over some great subject in his mind.
19. as reason was: as it was reasonable for me to do.
20. And I was not observed without wonder and delight (on your part).
23. amaze: amazement.
25. pent: that have been confined.
32. choice: best (an old-fashioned usage not to be imitated).
- flower: finest members (of the Philistine community).
34. solemnize. celebrate in a formal manner.
35. with these inmixed: being among these people.

This, you will realise, is another passage of blank verse. If you compare it with Shakespeare's blank verse in the speech from *As You Like It*, you will, no doubt, find it very different, particularly if you read aloud the two passages in turn. Shakespeare's blank verse, although truly poetic, has the easy flow of normal speech. Milton's verse is slower and heavier, largely because the order of words often deviates from that of normal speech (e.g., "He his guide requested. . ." ". . .what your commands imposed I have performed. . .") and the sentences are often long and intricate. It is a grand, powerful style of writing which has a character all of its own. Virtually, any passage of Milton's blank verse bears the quite unmistakable stamp of his unique, highly personal style.

Read the passage aloud and you will certainly find this powerful and noble style wonderfully appropriate to the description of Samson's great act of strength through which he gave his own life to destroy the enemies of his people.

## LINES FROM AN ESSAY ON MAN

*Alexander Pope*

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 today. 5  
 Had he thy reason, would he skip and play?  
 Pleased to the last, he crops the flowery food,  
 And licks the hand just raised to shed his blood.  
 O blindness to the future! kindly given,  
 That each may fill the circle marked by Heaven: 10  
 Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
 A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,  
 Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,  
 And now a bubble burst, and now a world.  
 Hop humbly then; with trembling pinion soar; 15  
 Wait the great teacher Death; and God adore!  
 What future bliss, he gives not thee to know,  
 But gives that Hope to be thy blessing now.  
 Hope springs eternal in the human breast:  
 Man never Is, but always To be blest: 20  
 The soul, uneasy and confined from home,  
 Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

### NOTES

2. *all but*: all except.
3. Heaven hides from animals what men know and from men what angels know.

*suffer*: bear. *being*: existence, *below*: on earth.

5. *riot*: (archaic) wasteful and extravagant way of living.

11. *Who*: Its antecedent is 'Heaven'.

13. Note the contrast between 'atoms' and 'systems' between the infinitely small and the infinitely large (Most probably Pope had in mind astronomical 'systems').

15. *pinions*: (poetical) wings, soar: rise into the air, 'Trembling' suggests fearfulness and the thought behind these figurative words is that man, if he aspires to rise, should be humble and fearful.

17. *What future bliss*: what future bliss you will enjoy. gives: permits.

20. *Is . . . To be*: As the use of capitals suggests, 'Is' and 'To be' are to be stressed, to make the contrast between the present and the future. Man never considers himself happy now but always imagines that he will be happy in the future. This couplet is one of the most famous that Pope ever wrote.

21. *confined from home*: The soul's true home, Pope implies, is Heaven: so the soul on earth is confined and away from home.

22. *expatriate*: finds space and freedom. The word is derived from a Latin expression which meant to wander at large and freely. In modern English it is rarely used except of a speaker or writer who speaks or writes on a topic at great length

The long poem from which these lines are taken, *An Essay on Man*, is an ambitious philosophical and religious dissertation on human existence, addressed by Pope to Lord Bolingbroke. The whole poem is, like our extract, written in rhymed couplets, a verse form in which Pope, like his great predecessor Dryden, excelled.

The length and metre of the lines are the same as those of blank verse, each line having ten syllables and five stresses but the lines fall into pairs (couplets), the two lines in a pair rhyming together. The rhymed couplet, in the hands of such masters as Dryden and Pope, is a shapely and exact instrument of expression, though it inevitably lacks the freedom and sweeping movement of blank verse at its greatest. The regular rhymes are too noticeable for it ever to sound like inspired speech. But the conciseness and regularity of the rhymed couplet helps to give it force and it certainly is a unit of verse that is apt, if well written, to stick in the reader's memory. A very large number of couplets, and single lines from couplets, written by Pope—notable 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast', from our extract—have entered the language as stock sayings, often on the lips of English-speakers who have no knowledge of the original source.

**STANZAS FROM AN ELEGY WRITTEN IN  
A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD**

*Thomas Gray*

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

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

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower      10  
 The moping owl does to the moon complain  
 Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
 Molest her ancient solitary reign.

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

The breezy call of incense-breathing Morn,  
 The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,  
 The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,  
 No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed.      20

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

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

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

30

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

35

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault  
 If Memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,  
 Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault  
 The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

40

Can storied urn or animated bust  
 Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?  
 Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,  
 Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?

45

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid  
 Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;  
 Hands, that the rod of empire might have swayed,  
 Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre:

But Knowledge to their eyes her ample page  
 Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll;  
 Chill Penury repressed their noble rage,  
 And froze the genial current of the soul.

50

Full many a gem of purest ray serene  
 The dark unsathom'd caves of ocean bear:  
 Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,  
 And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

55

Some village-Hampden that with dauntless breast  
 The little tyrant of his fields withstood,  
 Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,  
 Some Cromwell, guiltless of his country's blood.

60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,  
 The threats of pain and ruin to despise.  
 To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,  
 And read their history in a nation's eyes.

Their lot forbade; nor circumscribed alone  
 Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined;  
 Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,  
 And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.

65

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,  
 To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,  
 Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride  
 With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

70

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife  
 Their sober wishes never learned to stray;  
 Along the cool sequester'd vale of life  
 They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

75

## NOTES

1. *curfew*: the ringing of a bell at sunset.  
*parting*: departing.
2. *lea*: stretch of open grassland.
3. *plowman*: Old spelling of 'ploughman'.
5. *glimmering*: faintly lit.
7. *Savè*: except.
8. *drowsy tinkling*: the sleepy sound of little bells. The tinklings would come from sheep-bells. In eighteenth-century England, as in most parts of Pakistan today, it was usual for animals to carry bells so that they would be heard when they strayed. It was a practice that almost died out in England after Gray's lifetime because fields in England became enclosed by hedges and fences.
- hill the distant folds*: make a soothing sound to the distant sheep-folds. Sheep-folds are enclosure made of stone walls or, if temporary, wooden or wicket hurdles, to keep the sheep together during the night when there is nobody to watch them.
9. *ivy-mantled tower*: tower clothed in ivy. Ivy is an evergreen climbing plant, with glossy dark-green leaves.

which commonly grows profusely in England up the walls of old buildings.

10. *moping*: miserable.
11. *bower*: a place closed in with foliage.
13. elms and yews, particularly yews, were commonly planted in English country Churchyards. The churchyard was the Parish burial place.
14. *heaves*: swells up. (The turf rises wherever there is a grave).
16. *rude*: simple in mind and manners. *Forefathers*: men of previous generations. *hamlet*: small village.
17. *incense-breathing*: sweet-smelling.
19. *clarion*: sound like that of a clarion (a high-pitched trumpet formerly used by troops in battle).
22. *ply her evening care*: carry out her evening tasks.
23. *lisp*: speak imperfectly (as young children do), *sire*: (archaic) father. The whole line means "No children shall run to announce, in childish accents, the return of their father".
26. The furrow made by their ploughs has often broken the stubborn earth. ('Glebe', rarely used today, came to mean a field, or fields, attached to the village parsonage, but Gray is using the word in its earlier sense of earth or land).
27. How cheerful (jocund) they were when they drove their teams of horses into the field!
28. How the woods bowed beneath the strong stroke of their axes! ('Bowed beneath' gives the idea of the falling trees lowering their heads in submission to the strength of the woodcutter).
29. *Ambition*: ambitious people.

31. *Grandeur*: people in stations of grandeur.
32. *annals*: historical records. This word is never used in the singular.
33. *heraldry*: the regulated use of coats-of-arms. A coat-of-arms was a family emblem, the use of which was approved by the monarch. In early days the coat-of-arms, as its name suggests, had a practical use. A knight had a coat-of-arms so that he and his followers could be recognised on the field of battle. Later a coat-of-arms was no more than a sign of social distinction. When Shakespeare became famous and prosperous, he successfully applied for his father to be granted a coat-of-arms. Old and great European families were very proud of their coats-of-arms, which would contain distinctive family symbols going back through centuries. 'The boast of heraldry' is an inspired phrase for pride in birth and rank.
36. *but*: only.
37. *these*: the villagers.
38. *trophies*: memorials of victory.
- 39- 40. A magnificent description of a great cathedral in which the illustrious dead of a nation are buried. The vault of a cathedral is its stone ceiling, described as 'fretted' because the stonework is elaborately carved. An anthem is a piece of religious music, often sung to the accompaniment of the organ. 'Pealing' is normally used to refer to the sound of church bells but here it describes the powerful, and majestic sound of the organ music.
41. *urn*: vase for containing the ashes of the dead or (as here) an urn-shaped piece of sculpture placed above a tomb. The 'storied' urn is adorned with carving representing the life history of the person commemorated.

*bust*: piece of sculpture depicting a person's head and shoulders, a common type of memorial in churches and cathedrals.

42. *mansion*: dwelling-place (here meaning the body, the dwelling place of the "fleeting breath" of the quick-passing breath of life).
43. *provoke*: to call to like.
46. *pregnant*: teeming. *Celestial fire*: heavenly inspiration.
47. Hands that might have swayed the rod of empire.  
*swayed*: (archaic) controlled. *Rod*: symbol of authority. *empire*: supreme and wide political control.
48. *lyre*: ancient type of harp with which the Greeks accompanied poetry. Here it symbolises poetry
51. *rage*: (archaic) ardour. The word today means uncontrolled anger.
52. *genial*: (archaic) of genius.
53. 56. One of the best known stanzas in English poetry
54. *unfathom'd*: unexplored.
55. *blush*: display its colour.
56. *desert*: empty of human beings.
57. *Hampden*: a great parliamentarian who fearlessly defied King Charles I.
59. *mute*: dumb; inarticulate.
60. *Cromwell*: the leader of parliamentary forces which overthrew King Charles I, and dictator of England during the only period of history when the country was a republic. Note that all three of Gray's heroes belong to the period of the great seventeenth-century conflict between king and parliament, and that all were on the side of parliament.
65. *lot*: destiny. (Their destiny forbade them to do things listed in the preceding stanza).

*circumscribed*: limited. ('Their lot' remains the subject of this verb and of 'forbade' in the next line).

- 69–72. This stanza continues the sentence beginning in I.
61. The villagers' lot prevented them from committing the sins here described.
69. To conceal the painful struggle of knowing the truth. (The suggestion is that eminent men often conceal, with some pain to their conscience, what they know to be true).
70. *Ingenuous*: innocent and natural. (Do not confuse this word with 'ingenious'. It is pronounced to rhyme with 'tenuous'.) A person who 'quenches the blushes of ingenuous shame' refuses to show signs of shame at misconduct which would make a good person blush.
72. *Muse*: one of the nine goddesses in the ancient Greek mythology and religion who supported such arts as poetry, music and dancing. The two lines give an image of a poet or the practitioner of some other noble art, who misuses his powers to dedicate his work to the flattery of great people living in luxury and pride. Sweet-smelling incense was burnt as an offering to the gods on the altars of pagan shrines.
73. *madding*: of mad, turbulent behaviour.
74. *sober*: quiet and self-restrained. *stray*: deviate from the path of virtue.
75. *sequester'd*: isolated.
76. *tenor*: fixed course. The course of life of the humble villagers is described as passing through the 'vale'—i.e. valley of life because their humble lot lay in the low, and sheltered walks of life.

After the stanzas you have read, there come thirteen more stanzas. They describe the humble tombstones above the graves in the churchyard, and this leads the poet to prophesy how he himself will be remembered after death and what the epitaph on his own tombstone will be.

The poem is probably the best known poem of its length in English. So well known is it that many of its lines are as familiar as proverbs.

It was immensely admired in the Eighteenth Century. Just before leading the victorious assault upon Quebec, in which he died, General Wolfe recited stanzas from it to a group of his officers and declared that he would have been prouder to have written that poem than to have conquered Canada. Its great appeal may be explained by the fact that, like so much of the best writing of the Eighteenth Century, it puts general and universal truths about life and death into memorable language. As in previous poems we have read, we find an acute sense of the blessings of obscure poverty and the dangers to the soul of wealth and power. But Gray does not like so many earlier writers describe the humble life in romantic terms. The cramping effects of ignorance and poverty are not disguised nor is there any unwillingness to recognise the worth and grandeur of power and fame.

The English language, with its rich vocabulary drawn from Anglo-Saxon, Danish, French and Latin, can be written in both plain and ornate styles. Gray makes wonderful use of the potential contrast between these two styles. Most of his lines are in a dignified, measured, rather ornate style, but from time to time he comes out with a line that derives its force and power from masterly simplicity.

*'The short and simple annals of the poor'- 'The paths of glory lead but to the grave'- 'Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death'- 'And shut the gates of mercy on mankind'.* Notice how these lines, which exploit the force of short simple words, bring a stanza to a telling close.

This, of all poems, demands to be read aloud.

## THE SOLITARY REAPER

*William Wordsworth*

Behold her, single in the field,  
 Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
 Reaping and singing by herself;  
 Stop here, or gently pass!  
 Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
 And sings a melancholy strain!  
 O listen! for the vale profound  
 Is overflowing with the sound.

5

No nightingale did ever chaunt  
 More welcome notes to weary bands  
 Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
 Among Arabian sands:  
 A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
 In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
 Breaking the silence of the seas  
 Among the farthest Hebrides.

10

15

Will no one tell me what she sings?  
 Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
 For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
 And battles long ago:  
 Or is it some more humble lay,  
 Familiar matter of today?  
 Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
 That has been, and may be again!

20

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang  
 As if her song could have no ending;  
 I saw her singing at her work,  
 And o'er the sickle bending;—  
 I listen'd, motionless and still;

25

And, as I mounted up the hill,  
 The music in my heart I bore  
 Long after it was heard no more.

## NOTES

1. *Behold*: see *sing* by herself.
2. *Yon..... lass*: That girl over there. Both 'yon' and 'lass' are dialect words. It is pity that 'yon' has been lost from standard English, because it is a useful word for which there is no other equivalent.
2. *Highland*: belonging to the mountainous areas of western and northern Scotland.
6. *strain*: melody.
7. *the vale profound*: the deep valley.
9. *chant*: sing.
16. *Hebrides*: islands off the west coast of Scotland.
18. *numbers*: lines of verse or music. The word is rarely used in this sense today.
21. *lay*: song.
25. *Whate'er the theme*: Whatever the subject of her song might have been.

The Highland girl was singing in Gaelic, a Celtic language still spoken in the Highlands of Scotland and the Hebrides. That is why Wordsworth could only guess at the theme of her song.

You will notice that the stanza Wordsworth uses is made up of eight lines and that there are eight syllables, and four beats, to each line except the fourth. The fourth has only

three beats and this stopping short imposes a reflective pause in the middle of each stanza. Notice too, that the second part of the stanza has a different rhyme pattern from the first.

You must imagine a remote and lovely valley in the Scottish hills. Wordsworth, on one of his long solitary walks through the empty hills, comes upon this girl working by herself in a field at the bottom of the valley singing as she works and breaking the silence of the calm hills with a beautiful song in a mysterious language.

It was, for Wordsworth, a pleasurable experience of great beauty, but it was more than the experience of a moment. He concludes the poem with the lines,

"The music in my heart I bore  
Long after it was heard no more."

For Wordsworth, one of the keenest joys of life lay in the ability to preserve a lovely experience in the memory. The same thought is expressed in his famous poem, 'The Daffodils'. Lovely experiences are not merely good in themselves, they add to a precious store of such experiences held for ever in the memory, a lasting source of refreshment and joy.

'MUSIC WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE'

*Percy Bysshe Shelley*

Music, when soft voices die,  
 Vibrates in the memory;  
 Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
 Live within the sense they quicken.

4

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,  
 Are heaped for the beloved's bed;  
 And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,  
 Love itself shall slumber on.

8

NOTES

3-4. When sweet violets are dying, their fragrance can still be enjoyed in the memory.

7-8. And so Love itself shall sleep upon thoughts of thee, when thou art gone.

The beauty of this very short poem is beyond ordinary discussion and analysis. You will probably feel how abominably ugly our two pieces of paraphrase are in comparison with the original. Many of the words in the paraphrasing are the same, but once the rhythm and word-music of the original lines have been destroyed, all their magic has gone.

When you read the poem aloud, speak softly and slowly. But avoid the slightest tinge of affected 'soulfulness'. If spoken well, these lovely lines will do their own work without any emotional colouring in the speaker's voice.

## LINES FROM ENDYMION

John Keats

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
 Its loveliness increases; it will never  
 Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
 A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
 Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet  
 breathing.

5

Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing  
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways  
 Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,  
 Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
 From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,  
 Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boón  
 For simple sheep; and such are daffodils  
 With the green world they live in; and clear rills  
 That for themselves a cooling covert make  
 'Gainst the hot season; the mid-forest brake,  
 Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:  
 And such too is the grandeur of the dooms  
 We have imagined for the mighty dead;  
 All lovely tales that we have heard or read;  
 An endless fountain of immortal drink,  
 Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

10

15

20

## NOTES

3. *still*: always.

6. *morrow*: new day, *wreathing*: making into the shape of a wreath (a ring of flowers or leaves woven together).

7. *A flowery band to bind us to the earth:* Keats makes a band of flowers, to symbolise our experience of beautiful things that binds us to life in spite of so much that is gloomy and depressing.
8. *Spite of:* in spite of. *dearth:* scarcity.
9. *noble natures:* men and women of noble character.
10. *o'er-darkened paths:* all too dark paths of life (that we have to explore).
12. *pall:* dark and gloomy covering. The word's primary meaning is that of a black or purple ceremonial cloth placed over a coffin.
13. *Such the sun.....* Such shapes of beauty are the sun.
15. *daffodils:* beautiful yellow bell-shaped flowers on long stalks that some of you may have seen in the hills of Pakistan. They grow profusely, wild and cultivated, in all parts of Britain in the early spring.
16. *rills:* little streams.
17. *covert:* hidden place sheltered by vegetation.
18. *'Gainst:* against. *brake:* (archaic) thick clump of bushes or young trees.
19. *musk-rose:* a rose, often growing wild, with fragrant white blossoms.
20. *dooms:* final fates.
24. *brink:* edge of a steep place.

These are the famous opening lines of Keats's earliest long poem. The memorable first line is one of the most quoted lines in English verse.

After reading the extracts from Pope and Goldsmith, you will no doubt have noticed that Keats too, is here writing in rhymed couplets. You will probably notice too, how different is Keats's handling of the form. Pope's couplets are very regular and most of them are self-contained—you can take couplets out of the text and it will make sense by itself. The couplets we have read by Goldsmith are more flowing and less often self-contained, but there is at least a pause often a heavy pause, at the end of each couplet. Now Keats disliked the neatness and regularity of the couplet as used by Dryden, Pope and Goldsmith. He enjoyed the music of the rhyme but could not bear to have the rich flow of his verse interrupted at the end of every two lines. Consequently, his couplets are very different from those of the earlier writers. Time and time again he will place a big pause (as in the second line) in the middle of a line and run the flow of words over into the next line without a pause between the two lines. Observe that he does this in lines 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 17, and 20—ten times in only twenty-four lines. Reading this passage aloud is just like reading a piece of Shakespearean blank verse and quite unlike reading the rhymed couplets of the major poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This is a most noble affirmation of the poet's joy in the beautiful things of life—whether of nature, human history or literature. The joy in these things is all the keener because of the unhappiness of much of life. In Keats's all too short life, there were many real causes of unhappiness but he had a wonderful capacity for enjoying all that was good and beautiful. His best verse has a richness of texture and a verbal music that recall the golden age of English poetry, the age of Shakespeare.

**'SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NAUGHT  
AVALETH'**

*Arthur Hugh Clough*

Say not the struggle naught availeth,  
 Nil or never  
 The effort and the wounds are vain, useless  
 The enemy faints not, not faileth,  
 And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;  
 Things that deceive  
 It may be, in yon smoke conceal'd hidden  
 Friends run after  
 Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers, Enemies  
 And, but for you, possess the field. Battle field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking, striking.  
 Seem here no painful inch to gain, Edge  
 Future Far back, through creeks and inlets making, Inland waterways.  
 Comes silent, flooding in, the main. The sea -

And not by eastern windows only,  
 When daylight comes, comes in the light;  
 In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,  
 But westward, look, the land is bright !

**NOTES**

1. Do not say the struggle is of no use.
2. *vain*: useless.
- 3 & 4. These lines, like line 2, follow on from 'Say not'.
5. *dupes*: victims of deceit. The general sense of the line is that fears may be just as unjustified as hopes which previously deceived one.
6. *smoke*: the smoke from the guns on a field of battle.
7. *e'en*: even. *flier*: those fleeing from the battle.
8. *possess*: would possess. *field*: battlefield.

11. *creeks and inlets*: The two words mean pretty much the same thing. A creek or an inlet is a channel running inland from the sea.  
*making*: advancing.
12. *the main*: the sea. The whole stanza pictures a man standing on a beach watching the tide coming in. On the beach the waves do not seem to be advancing but 'far back' (i.e. further inland, behind the watcher) the water flowing in steadily up the tidal waterways.
- 15 & 16. We have now the picture of man watching the rising sun. Looking east he sees that the sun is climbing very slowly. He does not observe the rapid advance of the new day until he looks to the west and sees that the country-side is flooded with light.

This poem is the best-known of Clough's poems. (Note that the poet's name is pronounced to rhyme with 'tough.') It has a striking opening line and the last stanza rises to a very fine climax.

The two images in the third and fourth stanza come somewhat unexpectedly after the battlefield images of the first two, but they are apt and striking. What is in the poet's mind is that a man engaged in a great struggle may fail to appreciate that his cause is gaining just as a watcher of the tide may fail to realise that it is rising and a watcher of the sunrise may fail to realise how quickly light is overcoming darkness. Since Britain is an island and nobody lives very far from the sea, the tide is an image much used in English verse and ordinary speech. If some political or social movement is beginning to succeed after initial set-backs, it comes quite naturally to speakers of English to describe the process as 'a turn of the tide.' In virtually all languages and cultures light appears to be a symbol of good, darkness a symbol of evil and the sunrises a symbol of the human hope that light will prevail over darkness.

## LINES FROM ULYSSES

Alfred Lord Tennyson

My mariners,  
 Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—  
 That ever with a frolic welcome took  
 The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed  
 Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old; 5  
 Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;  
 Death closes all; but something ere the end,  
 Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
 Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.  
 The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks: 10  
 The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep  
 Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends;  
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
 Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds 15  
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
 Of all the western stars, until I die.  
 It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:  
 It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles.  
 And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.  
 Tho' much is taken, much abides, and tho'  
 We are not now that strength which in old days 20  
 Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;  
 One equal temper of heroic hearts,  
 Made weak by time and fate but strong in will  
 To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield. 25

## NOTES

1. *My mariners* Ulysses, a hero of Greek mythology, is, addressing those who will man his ship on one last great voyage in his old age.

2. *wrought*: 'accomplished' things. ('Wrought' is the old past tense of 'work'. For normal purposes, it has been ousted by 'worked' and it has a slightly different meaning of its own).
3. *frolic*: merry. This use of 'frolic' as an adjective— it is normally used as a noun or verb—is archaic.
7. *ere*: (archaic) before. It is pronounced as rhyming with there.
8. *note*: eminence.
9. *Not unbecoming*: not dishonouring. *strove*: contested. According to Greek legend, Ulysses and his comrades strove with gods during the war between Greece and Troy, when the gods themselves took sides in the contest, and during Ulysses's heroic journey back to Greece when he had to face great perils because he had angered Poseidon, the god of the sea.
11. *wanes*: slowly loses its light. *the deep*: the sea.
14. Sea-going boats of ancient times were propelled by oars, using sails only when the wind was behind them. The mariners had to sit in good order to man their oars.
15. *sounding furrows*: noisy waves. Ulysses calls the waves 'furrows' because they are like the furrows in a ploughed field.
- my purpose holds*: I still intend.
- 16 & 17. *the baths of all the western stars*: the waters of the sea to the west, in which the stars appear to sink when they set.
18. *gulfs*: great depths of the sea.
19. *touch*: arrive at (by sea). *Happy Isles*: Isles of the

Blest in ancient Greek mythology and religion. Great heroes were believed to go after death not to Hades, the underworld, but to the Isles of the Blest lying far to the west and out in the unknown and mysterious waters of the Atlantic.

20. *Achilles*: The great Greek warrior in the war with Troy. He had been killed when Paris, the Trojan prince, shot him with an arrow in the heel, the one vulnerable part of his body.
21. Although much is taken from us, much remains.
24. *temper*: quality (a stirring word, for 'temper' was often used to refer to the quality of the steel of a sword-blade).

This is one of the noblest passages in blank verse composed during the nineteenth century. The old hero, Ulysses, seeking one great adventure of exploration and discovery before he dies, symbolises the human spirit at its bravest and strongest.

## THE LOST STAR

*G. Allana*

The cell of my being was small indeed  
 But there began the infinitude of God  
 With its endless immensity,  
 In the mirror of eternity  
 Countless cities and deserts throbbed within me;      5  
 Many constellations shone lustrously  
 I was larger than the world.  
 Which I held in the grip of my fingers..

What has happened now?

Who am I?  
 An insignificant atom  
 In a chaotic cosmos  
 Someone has drugged my Soul  
 Another has stolen my Light  
 No longer I am the same I was.      10

I now reason with Truth,  
 Argue with the Irrefutable,  
 Blur with doubt the mirror of Reality,  
 Demolish the Image of the Almighty.      15

I am another man  
 Of the race of the damned;  
 I am the dead man  
 And I wander in visionary worlds  
 In search of the Primeval Spark  
 That lent Light  
 To the Star that I have lost.      20

5

10

15

20

25

## NOTES

2. *infinity*: the quality or attribute of being infinite, boundlessness.
3. *immensity*: the quality or condition of being immense, hugeness.
4. *eternity*: the quality or condition of being eternal that has always existed and always will exist.
5. *throbbed*: a violent beat or pulsation of the heart.
6. *constellations*: the position of stars (i.e., Planets) in regard to one another.
- insignificant*: meaningless, immaterial, an unimportant person.
12. *chaotic*: utterly confused or disordered.
13. *cosmos*: the world or universe as an ordered system.
17. *irrefutable*: that cannot be refuted or disproved.
18. *Blur*: a moral stain, a blemish, a blot.
24. *Primeval Spark*: (God created Man after His own image). This means that God endowed Man with sort of Godly powers.

## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

ROBERT BROWNING (1812–1889) was the son of well-to-do official of the Bank of England. After the age of fourteen, he had little formal education but educated himself privately with the help and encouragement of his father, a highly cultivated man with an excellent library. Thanks to his father's generosity, Browning was able to devote his whole life to literature. His early long poems, *Pauline* (1833), *Paracelsus* (1835) and *Sordello* (1840), attracted much attention because of their originality and forcefulness, but their terse and vigorous style sometimes degenerated into an awkwardness and obscurity that repelled his less intellectual and persevering readers. Fortunately, he never again was to write a poem as obscure as *Sordello*. He wrote many beautiful lyrics but the most striking and characteristic of the shorter poems are his 'dramatic monologues' soliloquies spoken by all manner of men and women of various places and periods. His greatest long poem is *The Ring and the Book*, a work of great force and originality, in which the story of a murder is told time after time from the viewpoints of the different participants in the tragedy.

In 1846, Browning made his famous runaway marriage with the poetess, Elizabeth Barrett, rescuing her from her well-meaning but despotic father who had confined her to her home for years on the excuse that she was an invalid. For the sake of her health they went to live in Italy, a country they loved and in which many of Browning's finest poems are set.

His wife died in 1861 and Browning returned to England to look after the education of their son, an only child. His reputation grew steadily until he, with Tennyson, was generally regarded as one of the two great English poets of the age. At his death this eminence was confirmed by his burial in Westminster Abbey.

THOMAS CAMPION (1567–1620) was amazingly versatile even by Elizabethan standards. He went to the University of Cambridge and became a fine classical scholar. He also studied law at one of the Inns of Court in London and then went to a continental university and qualified as a physician. However, he achieved fame not as a scholar, lawyer or doctor, but as poet and musician, this in an age when English poetry and music reached their supreme heights.

As a poet, Campion was greatest when he wrote those lyrics which he set to his own music. Many of them were contained in his four 'Books of Airs', published from 1610 to 1612. His other publications confirm his versatility—a collection of poems written in Latin, a treatise on the art of counterpoint in music, and an important work of criticism, *Observation on the Art of English Poetry* (1602). It is interesting that Campion argued in this work that English poetry should be written in accordance with the rules of Latin poetry and should therefore abandon both rhyme and its normal system of metrical stressing, a remarkable opinion to come from a poet who used the normal forms of contemporary verse with wonderful craftsmanship and delicacy. It is fortunate that Campion was not always bound by the critical precepts he here put forward because we should then have lost some of the most polished and graceful lyrics in English verse.

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH (1819 – 1861) was born in Liverpool and educated at Rugby School and Balliol College Oxford. He is best known, today on account of the poem in this volume, his close friendship with the more eminent poet Matthew Arnold, who mourned his death in the poem *Thyrsis*, and the assistance he gave to that wonderful woman, Florence Nightingale, in her successful campaign for the reform of hospitals and the nursing profession. Like Arnold, he found himself unable, after a painful intellectual and spiritual struggle, to accept the religious faith in which he had been brought up. This loss of faith would have been less tragic

to a man less sensitive or less high-principled in thought and conduct. His character, his intellectual brilliance, and his manly struggles, in spite of poor health, for such great causes as education and social welfare, caused him to be much admired by some of the greatest of his contemporaries. His death at the early age of forty-two was deeply mourned. The poem *Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth* became famous in Britain and America during the Second World War, when Sir Winston Churchill quoted it in one of his most notable war-time speeches to express his conviction that hard and disheartening as the long struggle then was, victory would come in the end.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH (1728–1774) was born in Ireland, the son of a Protestant clergyman. After his education at various schools and Trinity College, Dublin, he failed to settle down to any regular professional career. He studied medicine at Edinburgh and Leyden, but never took a medical degree from either university. Indeed, he appears to have been too irresponsible to fit himself for any regular profession. For some time during his twenties he rambled the Continent leading a hand-to-mouth existence and often, according to the stories he told later, living on the alms he was given for playing the flute. He made a vague claim later to have obtained a medical degree during the period but there is no evidence to support it. At the age of thirty he settled, penniless, in London to try to earn a living by writing. He did an immense amount of sheer hack work, for he wrote fast and would turn his pen to almost anything that paid. However, he had found his vocation. As a writer, he had an easy and graceful style of expression that was quite individual and ran through everything he wrote. He emerged from obscurity and entered the intellectually brilliant circle of Dr. Johnson and his friends. In 1764, he achieved fame and success with his long poem, *The Traveller*—the first of his writings to be published under his own name. In 1766, his deservedly popular novel, *The Vicar of Wake-field*, was published, long after it had been written

and sold to the publisher. His first play, *The Good-natured Man*, was first performed in 1768 and, although it was not very well received, Goldsmith sold its copyright for a handsome price. His finest poem, *The Deserted Village*, was published in 1770. His greatest popular success came with the production of his excellent comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*, in 1773.

There are many vivid sketches of Goldsmith in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. He often seemed foolish, vain and awkward in company, but he was essentially a lovable man, and his friends were affectionately tolerant of his absurdities. His warmth of personality and affection for mankind are evident in his writings.

He was buried in the Temple, one of the old Inns of Court, and his admirers created a monument to him in Westminster Abbey, bearing a Latin inscription composed by Dr. Johnson, whose generous support had meant so much to his life.

THOMAS GRAY (1716–1771) was born in the heart of London, where his father was a 'money-scrivener'—a dealer in promissory notes and such-like documents relating to loans and credits. The only one of twelve children to survive infancy, he was, understandably, over-protected by his mother and his aunts, and his rather solitary early childhood fostered in him two qualities he was never to lose a devotion to books and a timidity towards the more practical affairs of life. Two of his uncles were masters at Eton and they rescued him from his loneliness at home by arranging his admission to that great public school. There one of his closest friends was Horace Walpole, the future author of *The Castle of Otranto* and youngest son of Sir Robert Walpole, the prime minister.

He left Eton for Cambridge in 1734 and studied assiduously for four years along his own lines, not bothering to follow regular tutorials or take a degree, for, in the extremely lax conditions then prevailing at the university, tutorials were rarely of much value and a degree had little significance.

In 1739, he accepted Horace Walpole's invitation to accompany him on 'the grand tour', a prolonged excursion, through the main social and cultural centres of Europe which often concluded the education of the sons of the rich. After two years of this tour he quarrelled with Walpole and returned home alone. In 1742, he returned to Cambridge where he took a degree at last, that of Bachelor of Civil Laws. He lived the rest of his life quietly at Cambridge, as a fellow first of Peterhouse College and then of Pembroke Hall. He eventually obtained, in 1768, the University Chair of Modern History, but such a professorship was normally regarded as a mere sinecure, and he never delivered any lectures. Certainly, the great reforms at Oxford and Cambridge in the following century were long overdue.

However, the independence and security that Cambridge gave to Gray were rewarded by a lifetime of devotion to scholarship and poetry. He had the reputation of being the best-read man in Europe and few men of his century had a knowledge of so many ancient and modern European languages. He was one of the first scholars to explore the early literature of Old Norse, Old English and Welsh. As a poet he was greatly respected although he wrote so little. He published a few striking odes, mostly written in an ornate but powerful style and bearing the marks of the most careful poetical craftsmanship.

His fame rested, however, and still rests, on the great *Elegy*, as finished a work of art as any in the whole range of English literature. He wrote most of it during the summer of 1742 but worked on it at irregular intervals for the next eight years, slowly bringing it to its final state of perfection. The immense popularity of the *Elegy* was undoubtedly deserved, by the critical standards of any period, but its success with the cultivated reader of the Eighteenth century was, beyond question, a measure of its success in embodying the taste of the period. A strong element in that taste was a spirit sometimes called 'classical', an admiration for the formal and controlled

and, in literature and painting, for the expression of those emotions and experiences which were common to humanity rather than unique to the individual artist. The *Elegy's* appeal to this element in contemporary taste is well expressed in the words of Dr. Johnson (who thoroughly disliked the rest of Gray's poetry)—“It abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo.” Although this age is often described as ‘classical’, a certain kind of romanticism was beginning to run strongly through English taste, notably a fondness for the old and picturesque. The setting of the *Elegy* —an ancient hamlet with its ‘ivy-mantled tower’, and the peaceful countryside around in the gathering dusk—was one which made a strong and general appeal to this kind of romantic spirit as is demonstrated by the many ‘night pieces’ composed by various poets in the first half of the century. The harmonious fusion in Gray's poem of elements ‘classical’ and ‘romantic’ should warn students against thoughtlessly applying these words as mutually exclusive labels to this or that writer, or this or that piece of writing.

JAMES HENRY LEIGH HUNT (1784–1859) invariably spoken of as ‘Leigh Hunt’, was born near London, the son of a clergyman. He was educated at Christ’s Hospital, an old charitable foundation which has long provided at modest fees an education comparable with that of the best public schools and has produced a remarkable number of fine writers (among whom were Leigh Hunt, Lamb and Coleridge). The first poems Leigh Hunt published had been written while he was still at school.

He became a public figure when young because, in 1808, he joined his brother in editing a newspaper called *The Examiner*, notable for its exceedingly liberal political views and hence its vigorous criticism of the Tory Government. In 1812, *The Examiner* commented in the sharpest possible terms on the profligate and immoral character of the Prince Regent, who was to succeed to the throne as King George IV. The character

of this notorious prince justified every word of the article but legally it was a 'seditious libel' and the two brothers were tried for the offence and jailed for two years. Public opinion, however, was almost entirely on their side and affected the prison authorities to such an extent that they provided the Hunts with every possible comfort in their place of confinement and allowed them to receive visitors without limit. Never was imprisonment such a triumph and a large proportion of the many visitors who came and saw Leigh Hunt to demonstrate their sympathy with his opinions were so charmed with him as a man that they became his friends for life.

In 1816, he published *The Story of Rimini*, an Italian tale in verse. This long poem is no longer very highly regarded but it was well received when it appeared. Keats admired it and imitated its use of the rhymed couplet with unconventional freedom when he wrote *Endymion*.

Leigh Hunt's place today in the history of English literature rests not so much on his poetry but on his achievements as an editor, a critic, an essayist and, perhaps above all, a stimulating and beloved figure in a wonderful circle of literary genius, which included Keats, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, Wordsworth and Lamb. The greatest debt we owe to him is for his encouragement of Keats as a young poet, many of whose short poems he was the first to publish. The new poets in the circle were unpopular with the more conservative critics of the time and, in fact, were often savagely attacked in the most powerful critical journals. Leigh Hunt brought them forward and defended them intelligently.

Unfortunately for Leigh Hunt's reputation as an essayist today he was the contemporary of two giants among English essayists—Hazlitt and Lamb. Their immortal essays have eclipsed his very charming but much slighter performances. Perhaps the prose work of his that best deserves to survive is the *Autobiography*, praised by Carlyle as a pious, ingenuous, altogether worthy and human book.

There is a remarkable vivid sketch of Leigh Hunt as a charming companion and brilliant conversationalist in *Bleak House*. Dickens confessed that, in writing this great novel, he drew the more charming aspects of Harold Skimpole's character straight from the real-life characteristics of Leigh Hunt. Most unhappily, however, Dickens also made Skimpole a fundamentally selfish and cruelly irresponsible person beneath all his wit and charm and inevitably many readers came to think, in spite of Dickens' sincere protestations later, that the real Leigh Hunt had the same flaw of character as the fictional Skimpole. This, it must be said emphatically, was not so. All accounts agree that he was a sincerely religious and benevolent man, whose brilliance and charm were enhanced by true unselfishness and honesty. He was cheerful and uncomplaining when, in the later years of his life, he was rather poor and had to live frugally. His hardship was relieved by a Crown pension, in happy contrast with his earlier treatment by the Crown in the days of the Prince Regent.

JOHN KEATS (1795–1821) was born in London and educated at the Enfield School, where a sympathetic headmaster inspired his passion for literature. After leaving school, he qualified himself for surgery but abandoned it for poetry. He published his first volume of verse in 1817 and *Endymion* in 1818. *Endymion* was harshly criticised in some of the leading journals, largely because Keats was associated with Leigh Hunt against whom there was a good deal of politically inspired hostility. Byron, with characteristic irresponsibility, gave currency to a legend that Keats's shock at these attacks hastened his early death. Keats, in fact, was far too courageous and level-headed to take much notice of them, knowing that his poetry, had won the admiration of other poets, notably Shelley, whose opinions he took more seriously than those of the critics writing for the Tory press. But 1818 was indeed a tragic year for Keats. His brother Tom, whom he nursed devotedly through his last illness, died of tuberculosis and this was a grievous blow. Soon after his brother's death, Keats

himself developed symptoms of the same disease. In 1820, he published a volume of poems which included *Lamia*, *Isabella* and *The Eve of Saint Agnes*, a narrative poem of rich beauty. He also wrote several odes, of which the best known are *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Ode to a Grecian Urn* and *Ode to Autumn*. These odes show Keats's power at its greatest but some of his sonnets are also masterpieces.

In a vain attempt to save his health and life, some of Keats's friends arranged for him to go to Italy. He died and was buried, at Rome. His death at an early age was perhaps the greatest disaster to befall English poetry. The power and breadth of his poetry showed every sign of developing vastly, his letters manifest great intellectual strength, deep critical insight and complete dedication to poetry. At its greatest, his poetry has a rich beauty unmatched since the age of Shakespeare.

JOHN MILTON (1608–1674) was born in London, the son of a well-to-do law-scrivener. He studied for seven years at Christ's College, Cambridge, where he gained a high reputation as a classical scholar. From 1632 to 1638, he lived mainly with his father, who had retired to the village of Horton in Buckinghamshire. He continued his studies and also the writing of poetry in English and Latin. During this period, he wrote two of his finest short poems, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the masque *Comus*, and *Lycidas* his famous lament for a friend drowned in a shipwreck.

From April 1638 until August 1639 he toured the continent, spending most of his time in Italy visiting centres of learning. On his return to London he, conducted a small private school and it is worth remembering that this practical experience lies behind his treatise *Of Education*, published in 1644. Most of his writing from his return to England until the restoration of the monarchy, in 1660, consisted of prose pamphlets and treatises. In the years immediately before the civil war, during the war itself and during the republican government

first of parliament and then of Cromwell, Milton was passionately on the side of freedom and republicanism. He almost completely abandoned poetry to advance his religious and political beliefs in prose. His motives were patriotic—and he abandoned poetry with reluctance—but the loss to English poetry must have been great. However, his devotion to the public good caused him to write the magnificent *Areopagitica*, a noble and courageous pamphlet defending freedom of speech and attacking parliamentary laws for the licensing and censorship of the press.

In March 1649 (the year when Charles I was beheaded) Milton accepted the post of 'Secretary for foreign tongues' to the Council of State of the new republican government. In addition to his routine duties of drafting diplomatic correspondence in Latin, he made it his business to compose tracts in Latin, for circulation in Europe, eloquently defending the republican regime, which was utterly obnoxious to the monarchical states of Europe. He went on labouring at these tasks in spite of the onset of blindness, which became total in 1652.

It is amazing that Milton was left unscathed after the restoration of the monarchy, for he had been one of the foremost adherents to the government which had executed the king's father. Of course he had to retire from public affairs, but he was left in peace to devote himself to his true mission, that of a great poet. He had for years meditated the composition of a great epic and was now able to devote himself completely to his noble task. *Paradise Lost* was published in 1667, this first edition consisting of ten books. In spite of Milton's adherence to an unpopular cause, the merit of this great work was instantly recognised. The famous poet, John Dryden whose political and religious opinions were utterly opposed to Milton's, at once recognised its greatness and praised it generously. In 1674, the year of his death, Milton published *Paradise Lost* in a revised version in twelve books, the form

in which we normally study it today. In 1671, he had published together *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, a noble poetic tragedy after the classical Greek model.

Milton's verse is, in some respects, outside the main tradition of English poetry. He was one of the greatest Latin scholars and Latin poets of Europe, and imposed some of the qualities of Latin upon English. He was also influenced heavily by Spenser, an Elizabethan with a highly individual style. There is a heavy sonority in Milton's verse which is unique in quality. The remarkably individual style has a majesty superbly appropriate to the nobility and power of his thought and imagination. *Paradise Lost* is the only true epic in English, but it can stand worthily beside the other great epics of world literature.

COVENTRY PATMORE (1823–1896), born in Essex, near London, was the son of a journalist, Peter George Patmore, who edited *The New Monthly Magazine* from 1841 to 1853. He was educated privately, his father encouraging his studies in literature. In 1846, he became Assistant Librarian at the British Museum, which has been by far the most comprehensive library in Britain, and held this post for nineteen years.

He became famous as a poet in 1854, upon the publication of *The Angel in the House*, which was warmly praised by Ruskin and many other critics. The four groups of poems in this work celebrate the joys of a happy marriage dominated by religious faith. In 1877, Patmore published *The Unknown Eros and Other Odes*.

Patmore was a sincere and highly original poet. He wrote in verse unusually free and irregular for the period and in natural easy-flowing language. More than any other English writer, he is the poet of the home and family, finding great beauty and significance in the simple affairs of family life and devoutly convinced that the blessings of a happy home come from and must be sought from God.

ALEXANDER POPE (1688–1744) was the most brilliant and influential poet of his period. He was born in London, the son of a prosperous linen-draper. The family was Roman Catholic and this prevented Pope from attending either of the English universities, but his poor health might have prevented it in any case. He received, however, an excellent private education and was a diligent student. He wrote poetry from his early boyhood and was regarded as a prodigy by the age of sixteen, when he was cordially admitted into the company of London's leading men of letters. However, he published nothing until 1709 when there appeared his *Pastorals* and a metrical version of one of Chaucer's tales. From the beginning he attempted to carry on the new tradition of smooth and elegant versification established in the previous century by Denham, Waller and Dryden. The rhymed couplet was his favourite medium.

His *Essay on Criticism* was published in 1711. This at once established the immense reputation that he enjoyed throughout his life and which persisted till the end of the century. What is perhaps his masterpiece, *The Rape of the Lock*, appeared in its original version in 1712. Pope's elegant couplets are the perfect vehicle for the wit and grace of this work, perhaps the finest comic poem in English literature. He gave many years of his life to the translation into English verse of Homer's two epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. These translations were immensely popular and gained him a large fortune, but they are quite neglected today. Pope belonged to a brilliant circle of Tory writers and became involved in many political and literary controversies and quarrels. A good friend, he was a malignant enemy. In 1728, he published anonymously *The Dunciad*, a fierce satire upon a host of contemporary writers mostly in the opposite political camp. It is a venomous, often dishonest, piece of writing but so brilliant that its worth and importance as literature cannot be disputed. His last complete long poem was *Essay on Man* (1733), a philosophical poem. His work in the remaining period of his

life was mainly satirical. He gave the title of *Moral Essays* to ten satirical epistles written between 1731 and 1735, which were to form part of a large scheme never completed, of writings to be grouped with the *Essay on Man*. Pope's brilliance both as a satirist and poet is at its most dazzling in some of these epistles, notably the famous *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

Pope's verse has none of the lyrical richness and sweet-  
ness of the great Elizabethans and the nineteenth-century ro-  
mantics. Consequently his poetry has been heavily condem-  
ned by such authoritative critics as Keats and Matthew Arnold.  
But Pope should not be condemned for lacking qualities which  
he did not try to cultivate. He carried a certain type of writing  
well-nigh to perfection and simply cannot be ignored.

SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771–1832) is best known for his great historical novels, but he first made his reputation as a poet. He was born in Edinburgh, the son of an attorney, and was trained to follow the law himself, as an advocate. Indeed, he faithfully carried out the duties of a deputy-sheriff and clerk of sessions for twenty-five years despite his energetic pursuit of literature. As a young man, he was keenly interested in Scottish traditions and history and paid particular attention to the traditions and folk literature of the border country. He made an admirable collection of traditional songs and ballads *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, the first instalment of which was published in 1802. He wrote some original ballads in the old style but quite rightly decided that it was unsound for a modern writer to try and catch the style of bygone times. He wanted to put an old Scottish story into verse and found the metrical form that suited him when a friend who had visi-  
ted Coleridge quoted to him some of the lines of Coleridge's then unpublished *Christabel*. He was thus inspired to write his first long poem of importance, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* which tells stirringly a romantic story of the border country. It appeared in 1805 and was immensely popular. His later verse romances, *Marmion* (1808) and *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), were equally successful. However, he abandoned the

writing of long poems upon his even more striking success as a novelist. Scott was the pioneer of the historical novel and unquestionably its greatest practitioner. His fame was international and he inspired the writing of historical novels in many European countries. His finest novels are those set in the Scotland of the Eighteenth Century which he recreated with superb authenticity. He had a wonderful feeling for the speech, manners and outlook of men and women in all walks of life and a remarkable power to visualize how great historical events, and forces interacted with the day-to-day lives of people. A great patriot, loyal both to Britain and his beloved Scotland, he has communicated to millions of readers his love of the Scottish people, their traditions and the beautiful land in which they live. To this day, he is one of Scotland's foremost national heroes.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616) was born at Stratford-on-Avon in April 1564. Far more is known about his life than is generally realised, but most of our information comes from parish records and various legal documents which throw more light on his family affairs and business dealings than on the circumstances which led him to write his great works. He was the son of a leading tradesman of Stratford, prominent in civic affairs, and it is very likely, though not certain, that he received his education at the town's grammar school. There are parish records of his marriage to Anne Hathaway and the baptisms of his children but none which explain why he left Stratford for London or how he came to enter the theatre. From this period of obscurity in the records, he emerges in the early 1590's as an important young playwright and poet, and a member of the leading company of actors. In 1598, Francis Meres, a lawyer, wrote of him as Britain's greatest dramatist, excelling in every type of drama and poetry. Fortunately, Meres gave a list of twelve plays that he had written up to that date, a list of great help to scholars. It is difficult to date Shakespeare's plays because his company was reluctant to have his plays printed lest they should then be performed by rival companies. Only seventeen of his plays were published

in his lifetime, the remainder appearing in 1623 in a complete edition of his plays commonly known as the First Folio. His company was called *The Lord Chamberlain's Company* from about 1594 and *The King's Men* from the accession of King James I in 1603. With Burbage (the greatest actor of the time) and Shakespeare among the principal shareholders, it is no wonder that the company prospered. From about 1598 it owned the Globe Theatre, an open-air theatre, and from about 1608 the Blackfriars Theatre, an indoor theatre. It enjoyed the patronage, successively, of Queen Elizabeth and King James, and gave performances in the royal palaces. Shakespeare's purchases of property in Stratford and elsewhere from 1597 onwards show that he thrived with his company. He seems to have returned to Stratford, and made it his regular home, in about 1610.

Shakespeare's genius was fully recognised by his contemporaries. Tributes to him are numerous, the most valuable being those of his friend Ben Jonson, who wrote some of the greatest comedies in English literature.

Dryden, the great poet and critic of the late Seventeenth Century acclaimed him as supreme among English writers, and that judgement has firmly stood. Indeed, he is widely regarded as the greatest writer in world literature. His poetry at its best is impossible to exceed in power and beauty. No writer has dealt with so many aspects of human behaviour or peopled his works so convincingly with such an immense range of characters. No writer can match his excellence in so many kinds of drama—history, romance, comedy and tragedy. To know English and not to read Shakespeare is as deplorable a waste of knowledge as can be imagined.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792–1822) was born in Sussex and educated at Eton and University College, Oxford, from which he was expelled in 1811 for having circulated a pamphlet, *The Necessity of Atheism*. Throughout his life, he was a passionate enemy of established religious and social institutions. In the same year as his expulsion from Oxford he married a sixteen-year-old girl. Three years later he deserted

her. She was left with two children. After her suicide in 1815, Shelley was free to marry Mary Godwin, for whom he had abandoned her. After his departure for Italy with Mary Godwin in 1814, he never returned to England. He was a close friend of Byron and a generous admirer of Keats, whose death moved him to write the great elegy, *Adonais. Prometheus Unbound*, a lyrical drama, is generally regarded as his masterpiece and some of the individual lyrics it contains are of rare beauty. A sombre play, *The Cenci*, is one of the finest tragedies in blank verse since the seventeenth century. Among the most beautiful of his shorter poems are *Lines Written among the Euganean Hills*, *Ode to the West Wind* and *The Cloud*. His greatest passages have a pure and intense lyrical quality that demands his recognition as a major poet. Like so many English poets he loved the sea, a love which cost him his life for he was drowned when sailing a small boat off Spezzia.

LORD ALFRED TENNYSON (1809–1892) was born at Somersby, a village in Lincolnshire where his father was rector. He was educated at the Grammar School of Louth and Trinity College, Cambridge. He began to write poetry as a boy and in 1830, when he was twenty-one published *Poems*, chiefly *Lyrical* in which are some of his most romantic and melodious short poems. His next volume, *Poems*, published at the end of 1832, contains some of his best and most popular poems. Among them were *The Lady of Shalott*, *The Lotus-Eaters* and *Oenone*. The death of his close friend, Arthur Hallam, in 1833, was a shattering blow to him. He did not publish again until 1842 when his *Poems*, a collected edition of all his works up to that date, included such magnificent new poems as *Ulysses*. From this date he was generally regarded as the greatest English poet of his age. For years, he had been working on a long poem on the death of Hallam and this poem, *In Memoriam*, was published in 1850. The poem is lacking in cohesion but it has passages of great beauty.

Tennyson wrote steadily, from boyhood to old age, and we cannot list here all that he wrote. Little that he wrote fell

below the high standard of technical excellence that he set himself. He succeeded Wordsworth as Poet Laureate in 1850 and his reputation steadily mounted. He declined the offer of a baronetcy in 1873 and 1874 but, strongly persuaded by Prime Minister Gladstone, he later accepted a peerage and took his seat in the House of Lords in 1884. No English poet has so dominated the world of letters and enjoyed the respect of the nation for so long a period as Tennyson. He died in his eighty-fourth year and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Tennyson's technical excellence, and his superb ear for verbal melody, cannot be denied, but his works have fallen out of favour during the Twentieth Century. Critics and readers of this century have come to feel that the earlier poets of the Nineteenth Century wrote poetry of greater intensity and value. This reaction against Tennyson has gone too far. His best poems are far too good to neglect.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850) was born at Cockermouth in the Lake District and educated at Hawkshead Grammar School and St. John's College, Cambridge. After leaving Cambridge, he spent a year in France and was passionately in sympathy with the revolutionaries. He lost this sympathy when the revolution led to totalitarian government and wars of conquest.

In 1793, he published *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk*. These works show his life-long love of natural beauty, but are written in a conventional and artificial style. However, during the next five years, in association with his friend, Coleridge, Wordsworth developed his own original and immensely valuable theories concerning poetry and poetic style. The result was the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, which contained *The Ancient Mariner* by Coleridge, but was made up otherwise, of poems by Wordsworth. The volume forms one of the great landmarks in the history of English poetry, just as Wordsworth's preface to the second edition of 1800, forms one of the great landmarks of English criticism. Wordsworth

as a poet and critic introduced a new conception of poetic style, insisting that the plain language of common speech was a fit medium for the poet. Again he insisted that the ordinary events in humble lives were fit subject matter, when viewed by the poetic imagination. A new poetic vision which found a revelation of God in the beauties of nature came into English poetry. From 1798 to 1807 Wordsworth's powers extended and strengthened, as is seen in his *Poems in Two Volumes* of 1807. Most of the masterpieces among his shorter poems are found in this volume. He had written most of his great long autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, by 1807, although it was not published until 1850.

From 1808 to 1835, after which he published nothing new, Wordsworth wrote copiously, but his old greatness was less frequently displayed. Although, there was an undeniable falling-off in his powers in these later years, his reputation and influence grew steadily, his earlier poems becoming more and more admired.

He was buried in Grasmere, in his beloved Lake District, which he had made his home since 1799.

SIR HENRY WOTTON (1568–1639) was born in Kent, the son of a country gentleman. He was educated at Winchester School and Oxford, where he went first to New College and then to Queen's College. From 1589 to 1594, he travelled about Europe, presumably to complete his education and prepare himself for a diplomat's career. However, he appears to have acted as the confidential agent and correspondent of the Earl of Essex, a dominant figure at the court of Queen Elizabeth. On his return to England, he became one of Essex's secretaries and in 1594 he was admitted to the Middle Temple to study law. Early in 1601, he fled from England on the failure of the revolt of Essex (who was condemned for high treason and executed). In 1602 he made a romantic excursion, under a false name, from Italy to Scotland, where he carried to the Scottish king, James VI, a report from Tuscany that there was a

conspiracy to assassinate him. He returned to London from the continent in 1603, after James VI of Scotland succeeded to the English throne as James I of England. King James showed his gratitude by knighting him immediately. For the next twenty years he served James as an ambassador, mainly at Venice. (It was Wotton who defined an ambassador as 'an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country'). He led an important mission in 1620, to the court of Emperor Ferdinand at Vienna to conduct negotiations on behalf of James's daughter, the Queen of Bohemia. It was this experience which led him to compose his loveliest poem, *On his Mistress, the Queen of Bohemia*. After retiring from foreign service he was installed, in 1624, as Provost of Eton College. King James never forgot Wotton's loyal services to himself and his daughter and gave him a generous pension in 1627 which was more than doubled three years later. The last fifteen years of Wotton's life formed a tranquil close to his eventful career, that of a truly distinguished diplomat, scholar and poet.

**GHULAM ALI ALLANA** (1906-1985) invariably spoken of as G. Allana was born in Karachi. Starting his political career about 35 years ago as General Secretary of the Sind Muslim League, he rose to be the Financial Secretary of the All Pakistan Muslim League, the Mayor of Karachi, and a Member of the West Pakistan Legislative Assembly

After the establishment of Pakistan, G. Allana founded the Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Pakistan, of which he continued to be President for many years. For nine years, he was on the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization, and in 1956 he was unanimously elected as President of the International Organization of Employers, Brussels.

He was a writer and poet of eminence, his poetry having been translated into many languages. He was Vice-President of United Poets Laureate International which organization designated him as Poet Laureate Anthologist.

G. Allana was a widely travelled person. He was elected in 1962 as Vice-President of the Economic Committee of the General Assembly of the United Nations. He was elected Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights for the year 1975-76.

## NOTES ON THE ELEMENTS OF ENGLISH VERSE

Students intending to study English literature beyond the Intermediate level should certainly become acquainted at this stage with the simple facts about verse forms here presented. All students, however, are likely to find the poems in this selection more interesting and enjoyable if they have the elementary knowledge that these notes attempt to give.

You may object that the study of poetry becomes dreary and mechanical when it is made into a business of counting syllables, marking stresses and the like. This, of course, is an altogether sound objection if we study poetry only in this way. But there are good reasons for giving part of our time and attention to the details of versification. Part of the joy to be had from poetry is that of appreciating what a miracle the poet is performing, the miracle of making so many things come right all at once. Metre, rhyme, patterning of lines all work together with the sounds, meanings and associations of the words themselves to produce one great effect. The richness and delight of it all will be most fully appreciated by those of us who give a little time to learning to recognize the various formal elements in the poet's handiwork.

Our study of a poem, needless to say, should not stop at the detailed study of its versification. What really matters is to hear and understand the poem in all its flow and beauty—as the poet meant us to hear and understand it. The one purpose of these notes is to help you to hear and understand poetry in this rich and enjoyable way.

### The Line

A piece of verse may have no rhyme and its rhythm may be irregular but it will certainly be composed in lines. Indeed, it is this division into lines that distinguishes, as far as form goes, all verse from prose. It is within the line that the recurrent rhythm of a poem is normally established.

The length of a line may be measured in two ways, by the number of syllables in it or by the number of stresses. Campion's *The Man of Life Upright* has very short lines, all six-syllabled and with three stresses to the line. The commonest type of line in English verse, and the commonest in our selections, is a line with ten syllables and five stresses—such a line as. "*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day*". Since the commonest metrical unit is one consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, we find that most lines of English verse have twice as many syllables as stresses. If a line has more than twice as many syllables as stresses, we tend to speak it quickly because, in order to keep the beat going regularly on the stressed syllables, we hurry over the unstressed ones. That is why *The Abbot of Canterbury* seems to move so quickly. It is full of lines like '*Away rode the abbot all sad at that word*' which has eleven syllables to only four stresses.

When we listen to a poem—hearing it read aloud or mentally hearing it as we read it to ourselves—we are aware of its division into lines because natural pauses mark some, at least, of the line-endings, and of course, because there are rhymes at the end of the lines if it is not a piece of blank verse. Most of the poems in our collection have nearly all their line-endings regularly marked by pauses. But in the pieces of blank verse from Shakespeare and Milton, we find a number of lines which move on to the next without any pause, the pauses that do exist falling within the lines. For the moment the rhythmic pattern created by line-divisions is broken. In the passage to take on, as is appropriate in a play, the quality of real speech and make it flexible and lively. In this passage from Milton, whose verse is much heavier and slower-moving, such irregularities add to the tension and excitement.

*'Those two massy pillars  
With horrible convulsion to and fro'*

*He tugged, he shook, till down they came, and drew*

*The whole roof after them with burst of thunder*

The verse here strains against the set pattern of line divisions just as Samson strains against the mighty pillars.

Note that irregular lines make regular lines more forceful. Look at the last lines again of the speech from *As You Like It*, measured and regular lines which come as a fine climax after the lively, less regular, lines that lead up to them. The magnificent opening line of *Endymion*—‘*A thing of beauty is a joy forever*’—is self-contained and stands out all the more because the lines which follow constantly run over from one to the next.

Always keep the flow of the sentence moving when you read aloud and make no pause at a line-ending when the sentence runs on. It would ruin a superb piece of verse to make the pause after ‘deep’ in Tennyson’s.

*The long day wanes, the slow moon climbs: the deep  
Moans round with many voices*

### The Foot

We have seen how stresses, pauses and line-divisions contribute to the general flow and rhythm of a piece of verse. However, the rhythm of English verse cannot be properly studied without attention to the small rhythmical unit known as the *foot*. In a very regular line, such as the opening line of Gray’s famous *Elegy*, the rhythmical pattern of the feet is as can be:—

‘*The curfew tolls the knell of parting day*’.

There are five stresses in this line. The stressed syllables are the first syllable of ‘curfew’ ‘tolls’ ‘knell’, the first syllable of ‘parting’, and ‘day’. Each of these stressed syllables follows an unstressed syllable, so we have the regular rhythmical

pattern of an unstressed syllable plus a stressed syllable occurring five times in succession in the line. This pattern constitutes a foot. Such a foot—unstressed syllable plus stressed is called an *iambus*. The *metre* (i.e. the rhythm created by the combination of syllables of varying degrees of stress) of the whole line is *iambic*. The whole line has five feet all, iambuses and is what we call an *iambic pentameter*, 'pentameter' meaning a line of five feet. The iambic pentameter is the most widely used line in English poetry. It is the almost universal line in blank verse and it is the line favoured by most writers of rhymed couplets (the lines we have read by Pope and Goldsmith are iambic pentameters rhyming in couplets).

While it is true that most iambic feet consist of an unstressed syllable plus stressed syllable, the iambic metre may be sustained even when there is quite heavy stress on the first syllable, provided there is heavier stress on the second. Let us study that magnificent piece of verse by Tennyson again:-

*The long day wanes, the slow moon climbs; the deep Moans round with many voices.*

There is a great deal of stress on 'day', 'moon', and 'moan', yet each of the words is the first syllable of an iamb. The iambic rhythm persists, because 'wanes' is a little more heavily stressed than 'day', 'climbs' than 'moon' and 'round' than 'Moans'. The verse moves very slowly and with a beautiful solemnity as a result of the unusual weight of stress on syllables that are normally, in this metre, only lightly stressed.

If you read the opening lines of our extract from *The Deserted Village* which are, in fact, the opening lines of the poem itself—you will soon realise that you are reading verse in the iambic metre. But you will probably notice a shift of rhythm at the beginning of the sixth line:-

*'Seats of my youth, when every sport could please.'*

The first two syllables do not form an iamb, for the pattern is not unstressed syllable plus stressed but just the opposite

stressed plus unstressed. After this irregular first foot the metre, of course, reverts to iambs. The first foot is what we call a trochee, a foot with two syllables of which the first is stressed. This placing of a trochee at the beginning of an otherwise iambic line is a much employed variation and gives a line a powerful opening. The first and third of these rousing lines by Scott begin with a trochee:-

*'Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,*

*Who never to himself hath said,*

*This is my own, my native land!'*

You will find many other examples of this variation in other poems in this volume but no poem in which the predominant metre is trochaic. As an example of trochaic verse there is the well-known carol which begins:-

*'Good King Wenceslas looked out*

*On the feast of Stephen.'*

Each line contains three trochees but the first has an extra stressed syllable at the end, quite a common variation in trochaic verse.

There is a third type of foot in *The Abbot of Canterbury*.

We have it twice in the very first line:-

*'An ancient story I'll tell you anon.'*

It starts with two iambs but in front of the third stressed syllable, 'tell' we find not one but two unstressed syllables. This pattern is repeated in the fourth and final foot. This pattern—two unstressed syllables plus one stressed is that of the kind of foot called the *anapaest*. *The Abbot of Canterbury* has, all the way through, a mixture of iambs and anapaests, and these anapaests make the poem seem to move briskly.

If we reverse the pattern of the anapaest we have that of the *dactyl*, which also has three syllables. But the stressed syllable in the dactyl is the first, not the third. There are no poems in dactyls in this collection but those of you who have read *Poems for Young People* may remember Stevenson's *From a Railway Carriage*, the characteristic rhythm of which is heard in the first line—'Faster than fairies, faster than witches'. It is made up of four feet—dactyl, trochee, dactyl, trochee.

As we have seen, a poet may use different metres in the same poem. He may even break away from regular metrical patterns altogether. It is quite impossible to scan-analyse into feet—the following line from the sonnet we have read by Wordsworth—

*'Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie'*

It is a measure of Wordsworth's genius that a line which departs so boldly from the dominant iambic rhythm of the sonnet (only the last four syllables are in a recognisable metre) moves so easily and does not break up the general flow of the verse. The whole sonnet, in fact, is remarkably free in its shifts of rhythm right upto the twelfth line. That largely explains why the even and regular last two lines form so peaceful and beautiful a close.

### Rhyme

Lines which rhyme end in the same sound or group sounds. The last stressed syllable in each line has to be included in the rhyme and the vowel or diphthong sounds, with any consonants that follow them, have to be the same.

The first two stanzas of Gray's famous *Elegy* illustrate the nature of rhyme extremely well. Lines 2 and 4 rhyme and 3 rhyme 'day' and 'way' with the same diphthong sound. Lines 1 and 5 rhyme 'sight' and 'flight'—diphthong plus one consonant. Lines 6 and 8 rhyme 'holds' and 'fold'—identical

diphthong plus three identical consonants. (Note that we are thinking in terms of sound, not spelling, when we speak of vowels, diphthongs and consonants).

Since rhymes must contain the last stressed syllable in each line, lines ending in single unstressed syllables must have rhymes that take in the last two syllables, *Endymion* begins:-

*'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:*

*Its loveliness increases: it will never*

*Pass into nothingness; . . . . .*

Such a rhyme as that of 'ever' with 'never' covering the last two syllables in order to keep the stressed syllable within the rhyme, is termed for some reason, a *feminine rhyme*.

Rhymes play an important part in working out the form of a piece of verse, particularly when it is heard, and not seen on the printed page. It is the rhyme which formally marks the unity of the pair of lines in such a rhymed couplet as:

*'Ill fares the land, to hast'ning ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.'*

When a poem is written in stanza, rhymes bring out the shape of the stanza by marking the line-endings and they will, if they are suitably patterned, make clear to the listener the shift from one stanza to the next.

A convenient way of setting out a pattern of rhymes is to write *a* for the first rhyme, *b* for the second, *c* for the third and so on. The rhyme pattern of each stanza in Gray's *Elegy* for example, may be represented as *abab*. This interlocking pattern also found in Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray*, marks off one stanza from the next very clearly, far more clearly than the rhyme pattern in *The Abbot of Canterbury* which goes *aabb*. Listening to *The Abbot of Canterbury* read aloud, it is impossible to tell—unless the speaker makes a big pause at the end of each stanza—whether we are listening to couplets or a four-line stanza.

Both *The Solitary Reaper* and *The incident of the French Camp* are written in eight-line stanzas. The rhyme pattern in Wordsworth's poem is ababccdd, in Browning's ababcdcd. Words worth's pattern marks off one stanza from another quite clearly but Browning's pattern could very well be that of a poem written in four-line stanzas. In sonnets, the rhyme pattern may be such as to make a very clear division between the octave and the sestet. Wordsworth wrote his *Sonnet Composed upon Westminster Bridge* with the rhyme pattern abababababcdcd, in which the shift from the *a* and *b* rhymes to the *c* and *d* rhymes clearly marks the shift from the octave to the sestet.

### Alliteration

In very early English poetry, centuries earlier than the poems in our volume, alliteration—using words close together that begin with the same sound—was a very important feature. At least two stressed words in a line had to alliterate. It is possible that this ancient characteristic of English verse caused so many phrases with alliteration in them—phrases like 'dead as a door nail', 'without rhyme or reason'—to become current in English. But for the last few hundred years, alliteration has been used only occasionally in poetry to give extra emphasis in places. We have already pointed out the effective use of alliteration in Wordsworth's *Lucy Gray* and in the lines from Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

### Imagery

An image is a picture, and we employ imagery in our speech or writing when we attempt to bring out certain qualities of one being or thing by creating the mental picture of another. For example, some of the porters who have climbed highest with expeditions to the Himalayas are called 'tigers' because they have displayed the qualities of strength and courage that we associate with tigers. Ordinary English is full of imagery of this kind, much of it used so often that it has

ceased to have much force as imagery. When for instance we speak of the head of a school, we are scarcely aware of the image that brought the word into use with this meaning—the image of the head controlling the other parts of the body. By no means all imagery of everyday speech has lost its force. 'As tough as old boots' is still a striking way of describing a very tough piece of meat.

When we use imagery in our ordinary discourse, we normally use conventional images of the types just cited. Poets, however, constantly make up images of their own. Anybody might clarion an elephant 'trumpeting'—making a noise like that of a trumpet, but it was a poet who wrote 'The cock's shrill' clarion.

Examples of imagery may be classified into two kinds, *similes* and *metaphors*. A simile states explicitly that one thing is like another. 'As tough as old boots' is a simile. A metaphor calls one thing by another name, to show that the first thing has some of the qualities of the second. 'Tiger' for an outstanding Himalaya porter is a metaphor.

There are a few similes and many metaphors in the poems of this volume. Here are some of the similes:—

(a) ...creeping like snail, Unwillingly to school

(b) Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom.

(c) .....as sheathes  
A film the mother eagle's eye  
When her bruised eagle breathes:  
.....

Here are a few examples of the many metaphors:—

(a) All the world's a stage,

(b) He makes the heaven his book,  
.....

- (c) *Whose armour is his honest thought,*  
 .....  
 (d) *Hope humble then; with trembling pinion soar!*  
 .....  
 (e) *Hands, that the rod of Empire might have swayed.*  
 .....  
 (f) *Therefore on every morrow are we wreathing  
 A flowery band to bind us to the earth.*  
 .....

To understand this last metaphor you will need to go back again to the lines from *Endymion* in which it occurs.

There is a beautiful example of a mixture of simile and metaphor in our sonnet by Wordsworth:-

*The city now doth, like a garment, wear  
 The beauty of the morning:*

'Like a garment' is an obvious simile but 'doth...wear the beauty of the morning', which contains it, constitutes a metaphor.

Imagery may be used on a much larger scale than that of the single metaphor or simile. Shakespeare was not satisfied to stop at calling all the world a stage. He went on to view men and women as actors, their births and deaths as entrances and exits and their lives as plays divided into seven acts. In Jacques' speech the little world of the theatre is a symbol of the great world of life itself.

## EXERCISES

*Part One*

1. Briefly describe the kind of life to which the listeners are invited by the song; "*Under the Greenwood Tree*".

2. Pick out the line or lines from *The Character of a Happy Life* in which the poet identifies each of the following characteristics of a man whose life is happy:—

- (a) independence, (b) honesty of thought, (c) truthfulness, (d) self-control, (e) freedom from worldly ambition, (f) freedom from envy of worldly success, (g) lack of wealth and position, (h) piety.

3. Attempt to explain briefly how Sir Henry Wotton's happy man 'having nothing yet hath all'.

4. Briefly answer the following questions about *The Abbot of Canterbury*:—

- (a) What do we mean when we say that a poem is 'anonymous'? (b) Does this ballad tell a true story? (c) Who was King of England at the time of the story and when did he reign? (d) What was an Abbot? (e) Why was King John hostile to the Abbot of Canterbury? (f) What has the Abbot to do in order to save himself from being beheaded? (g) Why, on leaving the court, did he ride to Cambridge and Oxford? (h) What was the shepherd doing when he met him? (i) When he met the shepherd how many days had passed since the king had given him the three riddles to answer? (j) What did the shepherd propose to do? (k) In answering the first riddle how did the shepherd justify valuing the king at twenty-nine pence?

(l) How did he know the answer to the third riddle? (m) How did King John behave on finding out that he had been deceived? (n) How did the shepherd excuse himself from being made Abbot in place of his master? (o) What reward did the shepherd receive? (p) How did the real Abbot benefit from his shepherd's bold trick?

5. If you were looking through an anthology of poems and came upon a ballad, briefly explain how you would recognise it as a ballad.

6. Briefly answer the following questions on the extracts from *The Deserted Village*:— (a) At what period in his life was the poet familiar with Auburn? (b) In what kind of country-side was Auburn set? (c) What building was to be seen on the nearby hill? (d) Where did the villagers congregate for their rural sports? (e) What had happened to the village that Goldsmith loved? (f) What, in brief, were Goldsmith's views on the ruin of such a village as Auburn? (g) In what form of verse is the poem written?

7. Briefly narrate the tragic story of *Lucy Gray*.

8. Briefly discuss in what ways *Lucy Gray* resembles the older traditional type of ballad.

9. If you were looking through an anthology of poems briefly explain how you would recognise a sonnet.

10. Briefly answer the following questions about Wordsworth's *Sonnet Composed upon Westminster Bridge*:—(a) What was the view that inspired Wordsworth to write this sonnet? (b) At what time of day did he see this view? (c) What new thought comes into the poem with the ninth line? (d) What do we call the last six lines of a sonnet? (e) What quality in the scene appears to have impressed Wordsworth most when he came to write the last four lines?

11. What is the chief sentiment in the lines from *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*? What penalties does the minstrel foresee for the man who has no love for his native land?

12. Explain briefly and simply how Abou Ben Adhem demonstrated his love of God.

13. Briefly answer the following question about *Incident of the French Camp*: (a) What was Napoleon doing when his troops stormed Ratisbon? (b) What kind of person brought to him the news that the assault had been successful? (c) Why did the boy hold on to his horse's mane and keep his lips compressed when he stood before Napoleon? (d) Why did the wounded boy contradict Napoleon's "You're wounded"?

14. Briefly explain what religious lesson Coventry Patmore drew from the incident in *The Toys*.

## Part Two

15. Answer briefly the following questions about Jacques' speech form *As you Like it*:—(a) What are the seven stages into which Jacques divides a man's life? (b) Why does the schoolboy go to school at a snail's pace? (c) Why does the lover 'sigh like furnace'? (d) What motive is said to make the soldier brave in battle? (e) What was a 'Justice'?
16. "Jacques takes a disrespectful, humorous view of man in all the parts he plays through life." Discuss this statement.
17. Briefly describe in your own words the character of Campion's upright man.
18. Tell in your own words the story of Samson's destruction of the Philistine leaders.
19. How do the lines from *An Essay on Man* justify Pope's opinion that ignorance of the future and hope are two great blessings?
20. Answer the following questions about *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*:—(a) What scene, at what time of day, do the first three stanzas describe? (b) What type of men were 'the rude Forefathers of the hamlet'? (c) How does the ninth stanza (11.33-36) explain the eighth (11.29-56)? (d) What is the relevance of the fourteenth stanza (11.53-32) to the poet's argument? (e) What compensations does the poet find in the narrow destiny of the humble villagers that denied them all opportunity of becoming great and famous?
21. Briefly describe the incident that led Wordsworth to write *The Solitary Reaper*.

22. "To paraphrase poetry is to destroy it." Briefly discuss this statement with particular reference to Shelley's "*Music When Soft Voices Die*".

23. To judge from the opening lines of *Endymion* what things of beauty did Keats find most inspiring?

24. Explain the significance of the third and fourth stanzas in Clough's '*Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth*'.

25. Answer briefly the following questions about the lines from *Ulysses*:—(a) Who is speaking? (b) To whom is he speaking? (c) What kind of men are they? (d) What great adventure is he proposing?

26. Explain the assertion that Ulysses 'symbolises the human spirit at its bravest and strongest'.

27. What is your favourite piece of verse in this anthology? Briefly explain why it appeals to you

28. Select from this anthology any piece of verse written in stanzas and describe the elementary features of its versification.

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