



A Selection of English Poetry

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Practical Assignment on
Basic Course in Informatics (EI0300)

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William Shakespeare (1564-1616)

William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-Upon-Avon. It is believed that he attended King Edward VI Grammar School and Stratford Free School where he learned Latin grammar and literature. At the age of 18 he married Ann Hathaway who was 26 years old and three months pregnant. The first child was a girl and two years later Ann gave birth to twins, a girl and a boy.

There is little more information about the life of Shakespeare until he appeared on the London theatrical scene ten years after his marriage as actor and playwright. He was raised to nobility in 1596. His theatrical group was leading in London and built the Globe Theatre in 1599. In 1608 an indoors stage, *Blackfriars* was donated by the theater's patron king Jacob I.

In 1610 he retired to Stratford as a wealthy man and died in 1616, at the age of 52. There are no direct descendants of Shakespeare alive today.

Although this document contains only poetry, it has to be said that Shakespeare is most known for the plays he wrote. In fact there have been theories that claim that his plays were written by others, for instance by Marlowe or Francis Bacon. Another rumour has it that Shakespeare was homosexual, but this springs only from the fact that some of the sonnets are love poems to a young man and written to please his patron.

- Much ado about nothing
- Henry V
- Henry VI
- Richard III
- Romeo and Juliet
- Hamlet
- King Lear
- A Midsummer Night's Dream
- Othello
- Macbeth
- The Winter's Tale
- The Tempest

Sonnet XVIII

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course untrimm'd:
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st,
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Sonnet LXXI

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it, for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O! if,--I say you look upon this verse,
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse;
But let your love even with my life decay;
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

Sonnet XCI

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,
Some in their garments though new-fangled ill;
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:
But these particulars are not my measure,
All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' costs,
Of more delight than hawks and horses be;
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:
Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
All this away, and me most wretched make.

Sonnet CXVI

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

Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806-1861)

From early on in life Elizabeth was poor in health and lived isolated with her family and a tyrannical father. She was well educated for a woman because she was allowed to attend lessons with her brother's tutor. Her father published 50 copies of an epic she wrote as a child.

Elizabeth published poems, starting in 1840's. In *The Cry of the Children* Elizabeth wrote about child labour in industries, which attracted attention and raised revolutionary impulses. In 1845 she learned to know Robert Browning. They were secretly married 1846 and eloped to Italy and spent most of their time in Florence. Her health improved and the marriage was an unusually happy one but her father never approved of the marriage.

Elizabeth's feelings for her husband characterize her best work, a sonnet collection (1847) *Sonnets From the Portuguese*. The novel in verse called *Aurora Leigh* (1856) is an early contribution to the women's right issue.

Sonnets From the Portuguese 43

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can teach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints – I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

William Wordsworth (1770-1850)

Wordsworth founded a society called Sea School with Coleridge and Southey. They marked the breakthrough of romance in English literature in the 18th century. With Coleridge he published *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) and a later edition includes a preface by Wordsworth. Wordsworth is a great describer of nature with inspired landscape portrayals. He published two volumes of *Poems* in 1807, whereas the long poem called *Prelude* was published only in 1850, after his death.

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the marking of a bay
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not be gay,
In such a jocound company:
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Unknown

This collection of English poetry must be ended with some humour to lighten it up. Here follows a “poem” by an unknown poet, enjoy!

Remember When

...A computer was something on TV
From a science fiction show of note
A window was something you hated to clean
And ram was the cousin of a goat.

Meg was the name of my girlfriend
And gig was a job for the nights
Now they all mean different things
And that really mega bytes.

An application was for employment
A program was a TV show
A cursor used profanity
A keyboard was a piano.

Memory was something that you lost with age
A CD was a bank account
And if you had a 3.5” floppy
You hoped nobody found out.

Compress was something you did to garbage
Not something you did to a file
And if you unzipped anything in public
You’d be in jail for a while.

Log on was adding wood to a fire
Hard drive was a long trip on the road
A mouse pad was where a mouse lived
And backup happened to your commode.

Cut you did with a pocket knife
Paste you did with glue
The web it was a spider’s home
And a virus was the flu.

I guess I’ll stick to my pad and paper
And the memory in my head
I hear nobody’s been killed in a computer crash
But when it happens they’ll wish they were dead.