

Carl Sandburg (1878 – 1967)

## **Grass**

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.  
Shovel them under and let me work –  
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg  
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.  
Shovel them under and let me work.  
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the  
conductor:

What place is this?  
Where are we now?

I am the grass.  
Let me work.

William Carlos Williams

## **The Lonely Street**

School is over. It is too hot  
to walk at ease. At ease  
in light frocks they walk the streets  
to while the time away.  
They have grown tall. They hold  
pink flames in their right hands.  
In white from head to foot,  
with sidelong, idle look –  
in yellow, floating stuff,  
black sash and stockings –  
touching their avid mouths  
with pink sugar on a stick –  
like a carnation each holds in her hand –  
they mount the lonely street.

Randall Jarrell (1914 – 1965)

### **The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner**

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,  
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.  
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,  
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.  
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

Lorna Crozier

### **The Child Who Walks Backwards**

My next-door neighbour tells me  
her child runs into things,  
Cupboard corners and doorknobs  
have pounded their shapes  
into his face. She says he is bothered by dreams,  
rises in sleep from his bed  
to steal through the halls  
and plummet like a wounded bird  
down the flight of stairs.

This child who climbed my maple  
with the sureness of a cat  
trips in his room, cracks  
his skull on the bedpost,  
smacks his cheeks on the floor.

When I ask about the burns  
on the back of his knee,  
his mother tells me  
he walks backwards  
into fireplace grates  
or sits and stares at flames  
while sparks burn stars I his skin.

Other children write their names  
on the casts that hold  
his small bones.  
His mother tells me  
he runs into things,  
walks backwards,  
breaks his leg  
while she lies  
sleeping.

Martha Collins (1940 – )

## Lines

Draw a line. Write a line. There.  
Stay in line, hold the line, a glance  
between the lines is fine but don't  
turn corners, cross, cut in, go over  
or out, between two points of no  
return's a line of flight, between  
two points of view's a line of vision.  
But a line of thought is rarely  
straight, an open line's no party  
line, however fine your point.  
A line of fire communicates, but drop  
your weapons and drop your line,  
consider the shortest distance from  $x$   
to  $y$ , let  $x$  be me, let  $y$  be you.

Jane Yolen (1939 – )

## Fat Is Not a Fairy Tale

I am thinking of a fairy tale,  
Cinder Elephant,  
Sleeping Tubby,  
Snow Weight,  
where the princess is not  
anorexic, wasp-waisted,  
flinging herself down the stairs.  
I am thinking of a fairy tale,  
Hansel and Great,  
Repoundsel,  
Bounty and the Beast,  
where the beauty  
has a pillowed breast,  
and fingers plump as sausage.  
I am thinking of a fairy tale  
that is not yet written,  
for a teller not yet born,  
for a listener not yet conceived,  
for a world not yet won,  
where everything round is good:  
the sun, wheels, cookies, and the princess.

Roger McGough

### **I explain quietly**

I explain quietly. You  
hear me shouting. You  
try a new tack. I  
feel old wounds reopen.

You see both sides. I  
see your blinkers. I  
am placatory. You  
sense a new selfishness.

I am a dove. You  
recognize the hawk. You  
offer an olive branch. I  
feel the thorns.

You bleed. I  
see crocodile tears. I  
withdraw. You  
reel from the impact.

Langston Hughes

### **Bring me all of your dreams**

Bring me all of your dreams,  
You dreamers,  
Bring me all of your  
Heart melodies  
That I may wrap them  
In a blue cloud-cloth  
Away from the too-rough fingers  
Of the world.

William Carlos Williams

### **This Is Just to Say**

I have eaten  
the plums  
that were in  
the icebox

and which  
you were probably  
saving  
for breakfast

Forgive me  
they were delicious  
so sweet and  
so cold

Langston Hughes

### **Harlem**

What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up  
like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore--  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over--  
like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
like a heavy load.  
Or does it explode?

Roger McGough

## **Nooligan**

I'm a nooligan  
dnt give a toss  
in our class  
I'm the boss  
(well, one of them)

I'm a nooligan  
got a nard'head  
step out of line  
and youre dead  
(well, bleedin)

I'm a nooligan  
I spray me name  
all over town  
footballs me game  
(well, watchin)

I'm a nooligan  
violence is fun  
gonna be a nassassin  
or a nired gun  
(well, a soldier)

Robert Frost

## **The Road Not Taken**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth.

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.