

### **There is no frigate like a book**

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)

There is no frigate like a book  
To take us lands away,  
Nor any coursers like a page  
Of prancing poetry.  
This traverse may the poorest take  
Without oppress of toll;  
How frugal is the chariot  
That bears a human soul!

#### VOCAB

frigate—a fighting ship  
courser—a swift horse  
frugal—thrifty with money

### **Introduction to Poetry (Billy Collins)**

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

**The Red Wheelbarrow**

William Carlos Williams

so much depends  
upon

a red wheel  
barrow

glazed with rain  
water

beside the white  
chickens

**In the Station at the Metro** (Ezra Pound)

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;  
Petals on a wet, black bough.

1913

**Written in Pencil in a Sealed Railway Car**

(Dan Pagis)

here in this carload  
i am eve  
with abel my son  
if you see my other son  
cain son of man  
tell him that i

## **Sonnet 18**

William Shakespeare

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.

## **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening** (Robert Frost (1874-1963))

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

1923

**Tell the truth but tell it slant**  
(Emily Dickinson)

Tell all the Truth but tell it slant --  
Success in Circuit lies  
Too bright for our infirm Delight  
The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased  
With explanation kind  
The Truth must dazzle gradually  
Or every man be blind –

**Richard Cory**  
(Edward Arlington Robinson (1869-1935))

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

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

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

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

1919

## **My Papa's Waltz**

(Theodore Roethke (1908-1963))

The whiskey on your breath  
Could make a small boy dizzy;  
But I hung on like death:  
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans  
Slid from the kitchen shelf;  
My mother's countenance  
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist  
Was battered on one knuckle;  
At every step you missed  
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head  
With a palm caked hard by dirt,  
Then waltzed me off to bed  
Still clinging to your shirt.

## **This is just to say**

William Carlos Williams

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

## **Dulce et Decorum Est**

(Wilfred Owen (1893-1918))

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs  
And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots  
But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
Of disappointed shells that dropped behind.

GAS! Gas! Quick, boys!-- An ecstasy of fumbling,  
Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time;  
But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
And floundering like a man in fire or lime.--  
Dim, through the misty panes and thick green light  
As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

In all my dreams, before my helpless sight,  
He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams you too could pace  
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,--  
My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
Pro patria mori.

January 1918

## **The Road Not Taken** (Robert Frost)

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.

## **Traveling through the Dark**

(William Stafford)

Traveling through the dark I found a deer  
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.  
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:  
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car  
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;  
she had stiffened already, almost cold.  
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly.

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason—  
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting,  
alive, still, never to be born.  
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;  
under the hood purred the steady engine.  
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red;  
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all--my only swerving—,  
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

1962

Like many of Dickinson's poems, "There is no Frigate like a Book" contains many different variations of punctuation. The version below is believed to be the original version as Dickinson intended it, unedited. However, there's no way to know for sure. As well, the original date of writing is unknown. In this poem Dickinson talks about her pleasures of reading. She uses the following metaphors: a "frigate" is seen as a vessel capable of traveling at fast speeds, a "courser" is a swift horse, and a "Chariot" refers to the ride the human soul is t

There is no Frigate like a Book To take us Lands away, Nor any Coursers like a Page Of prancing Poetry â€“ This Traverse may the poorest take Without oppress of Toll â€“ How frugal is the Chariot That bears a Human soul.

Other poems by Dickinson. "There is no Frigate like a Book" at YouTube. This poem is in the public domain. Categories: Public domain poems. 19th-century poems. American poems. Poetry by Emily Dickinson. Poems. Community content is available under CC-BY-SA unless otherwise noted. Books on the topic of this essay may be found in The Imaginative Conservative Bookstore. We hope you will join us in The Imaginative Conservative community. The Imaginative Conservative is an on-line journal for those who seek the True, the Good and the Beautiful. We address culture, liberal learning, politics, political economy, literature, the arts and the American Republic in the tradition of Russell Kirk, T.S. Eliot, Edmund Burke, Irving Babbitt, Wilhelm Roepke, Robert Nisbet, Richard Weaver, M.E. Bradford, Eric Voegelin, Christopher Dawson, Paul Elmer More and other leaders of Imaginative