



文藻外語大學

WENZAO URSULINE UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES

2020 文藻盃全國大專組指定詩

Required Poetry for the 2020 Poetry Reading Contest

1. The Answering Machine

By Linda Pastan

I call and hear your voice
on the answering machine
weeks after your death,
a fledgling ghost still longing
for human messages.

Shall I leave one, telling
how the fabric of our lives
has been ripped before
but that this sudden tear will not
be mended soon or easily?

In your emptying house, others
roll up rugs, pack books,
drink coffee at your antique table,
and listen to messages left
on a machine haunted

by the timbre of your voice,
more palpable than photographs
or fingerprints. On this first day
of this first fall without you,
ashamed and resisting

but compelled, I dial again
the number I know by heart,
thankful in a diminished world
for the accidental mercy of machines,
then listen and hang up.

Source:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/40937/the-answering-machine-56d21ee37d0ad>

2. Life Doesn't Frighten Me –

By Maya Angelou

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all

Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don't frighten me at all

Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won't cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild

Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Tough guys fight
All alone at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys all pull my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)
They don't frighten me at all.

Don't show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream,
If I'm afraid at all
It's only in my dreams.

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn't frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all.

Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Source:

<https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/life-doesn-t-frighten-me/>

3. Consolation

By Mathew Arnold

Mist clogs the sunshine.
Smoky dwarf houses
Hem me round everywhere;
A vague dejection
Weighs down my soul.

Yet, while I languish,
Everywhere countless
Prospects unroll themselves,
And countless beings
Pass countless moods.

Far hence, in Asia,
On the smooth convent-roofs,
On the gilt terraces,
Of holy Lassa,
Bright shines the sun.

Grey time-worn marbles
Hold the pure Muses;
In their cool gallery,
By yellow Tiber,
They still look fair.

Strange unloved uproar
Shrills round their portal;
Yet not on Helicon
Kept they more cloudless
Their noble calm.

Through sun-proof alleys
In a lone, sand-hemm'd
City of Africa,
A blind, led beggar,
Age-bow'd, asks alms.

No bolder robber
Erst abode ambush'd
Deep in the sandy waste;
No clearer eyesight
Spied prey afar.

Saharan sand-winds
Sear'd his keen eyeballs;
Spent is the spoil he won.
For him the present
Holds only pain.

Two young, fair lovers,
Where the warm June-wind,

Fresh from the summer fields
Plays fondly round them,
Stand, tranced in joy.

With sweet, join'd voices,
And with eyes brimming:
"Ah," they cry, "Destiny,
Prolong the present!
Time, stand still here!"

The prompt stern Goddess
Shakes her head, frowning;
Time gives his hour-glass
Its due reversal;
Their hour is gone.

With weak indulgence
Did the just Goddess
Lengthen their happiness,
She lengthen'd also
Distress elsewhere.

The hour, whose happy
Unalloy'd moments
I would eternalise,
Ten thousand mourners
Well pleased see end.

The bleak, stern hour,
Whose severe moments
I would annihilate,
Is pass'd by others
In warmth, light, joy.

Time, so complain'd of,
Who to no one man
Shows partiality,
Brings round to all men
Some undimm'd hours.

Source:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43587/consolation-56d2225a06c7e>

4. And Thou art Dead, as Young and Fair

By Lord Byron (George Gordon)

And thou art dead, as young and fair
As aught of mortal birth;
And form so soft, and charms so rare,
Too soon return'd to Earth!
Though Earth receiv'd them in her bed,
And o'er the spot the crowd may tread
In carelessness or mirth,
There is an eye which could not brook
A moment on that grave to look.

I will not ask where thou liest low,
Nor gaze upon the spot;
There flowers or weeds at will may grow,
So I behold them not:
It is enough for me to prove
That what I lov'd, and long must love,
Like common earth can rot;
To me there needs no stone to tell,
'T is Nothing that I lov'd so well.

Yet did I love thee to the last
As fervently as thou,
Who didst not change through all the past,
And canst not alter now.
The love where Death has set his seal,
Nor age can chill, nor rival steal,
Nor falsehood disavow:
And, what were worse, thou canst not see
Or wrong, or change, or fault in me.

The better days of life were ours;
The worst can be but mine:
The sun that cheers, the storm that lowers,
Shall never more be thine.
The silence of that dreamless sleep
I envy now too much to weep;
Nor need I to repine
That all those charms have pass'd away,
I might have watch'd through long decay.

The flower in ripen'd bloom unmatched
Must fall the earliest prey;
Though by no hand untimely snatch'd,
The leaves must drop away:
And yet it were a greater grief
To watch it withering, leaf by leaf,
Than see it pluck'd to-day;
Since earthly eye but ill can bear
To trace the change to foul from fair.

I know not if I could have borne
To see thy beauties fade;
The night that follow'd such a morn
Had worn a deeper shade:
Thy day without a cloud hath pass'd,
And thou wert lovely to the last,
Extinguish'd, not decay'd;
As stars that shoot along the sky
Shine brightest as they fall from high.

As once I wept, if I could weep,
My tears might well be shed,
To think I was not near to keep
One vigil o'er thy bed;
To gaze, how fondly! on thy face,
To fold thee in a faint embrace,
Uphold thy drooping head;
And show that love, however vain,
Nor thou nor I can feel again.

Yet how much less it were to gain,
Though thou hast left me free,
The loveliest things that still remain,
Than thus remember thee!
The all of thine that cannot die
Through dark and dread Eternity
Returns again to me,
And more thy buried love endears
Than aught except its living years.

Source:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43822/and-thou-art-dead-as-young-and-fair>

5. Have You Prayed?

By Li-Young Lee

When the wind
turns and asks, in my father's voice,
Have you prayed?

I know three things. One:
I'm never finished answering to the dead.

Two: A man is four winds and three fires.
And the four winds are his father's voice,
his mother's voice . . .

Or maybe he's seven winds and ten fires.
And the fires are seeing, hearing, touching,
dreaming, thinking . . .
Or is he the breath of God?

When the wind turns traveler
and asks, in my father's voice, Have you prayed?
I remember three things.
One: A father's love

is milk and sugar,
two-thirds worry, two-thirds grief, and what's left over

is trimmed and leavened to make the bread
the dead and the living share.

And patience? That's to endure
the terrible leavening and kneading.

And wisdom? That's my father's face in sleep.

When the wind
asks, Have you prayed?
I know it's only me

reminding myself
a flower is one station between
earth's wish and earth's rapture, and blood

was fire, salt, and breath long before
it quickened any wand or branch, any limb
that woke speaking. It's just me

in the gowns of the wind,
or my father through me, asking,
Have you found your refuge yet?
asking, Are you happy?

Strange. A troubled father. A happy son.

The wind with a voice. And me talking to no one.

Source: *Behind My Eyes* (W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2008)
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/52208/have-you-prayed>

6. The Shark

By Mary Oliver

The domed head rose above the water, white
as a spill of milk. It had taken the hook. It swirled,
and all they could see then was the grinding
and breaking of water, its thrashing, the teeth
in the grin and grotto of its impossible mouth.
The line they refused to cut ran down like a birth cord
into the packed and strategic muscles.
The sun shone.

It was not a large boat. The beast plunged
with all it had caught onto, deep
under the green waves—a white
retching thing, it turned
toward the open sea. And it was hours before

they came home, hauling their bloody prize,
well-gaffed. A hundred gulls followed,
picking at the red streams,
as it sang its death song of vomit and bubbles,
as the blood ran from its mouth
that had no speech to rail against this matter—

speech, that gives us all there may be of the future—
speech, that makes all the difference, we like to say.
And I say: in the wilderness of our wit
we will all cry out last words—heave and spit them
into the shattering universe someday, to someone.

Whoever He is, count on it: He won't answer.
The inventor is like the hunter—each
in the crease and spasm of the thing about to be done
is lost in his work. All else is peripheral,
remote, unfelt. The connections have broken.

Consider the evening:
the shark winched into the air; men
lifting the last bloody hammers.
And Him, somewhere, ponderously lifting another world,
setting it free to spin, if it can,
in a darkness you can't imagine.

Source:

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/browse?volume=146&issue=1&page=10>

7. Aubade

By Philip Larkin

I work all day, and get half-drunk at night.
 Waking at four to soundless dark, I stare.
 In time the curtain-edges will grow light.
 Till then I see what's really always there:
 Unresting death, a whole day nearer now,
 Making all thought impossible but how
 And where and when I shall myself die.
 Arid interrogation: yet the dread
 Of dying, and being dead,
 Flashes afresh to hold and horrify.

The mind blanks at the glare. Not in remorse
 —The good not done, the love not given, time
 Torn off unused—nor wretchedly because
 An only life can take so long to climb
 Clear of its wrong beginnings, and may never;
 But at the total emptiness for ever,
 The sure extinction that we travel to
 And shall be lost in always. Not to be here,
 Not to be anywhere,
 And soon; nothing more terrible, nothing more true.

This is a special way of being afraid
 No trick dispels. Religion used to try,
 That vast moth-eaten musical brocade
 Created to pretend we never die,
 And specious stuff that says No rational being
 Can fear a thing it will not feel, not seeing
 That this is what we fear—no sight, no sound,
 No touch or taste or smell, nothing to think with,
 Nothing to love or link with,
 The anaesthetic from which none come round.

And so it stays just on the edge of vision,
 A small unfocused blur, a standing chill
 That slows each impulse down to indecision.
 Most things may never happen: this one will,
 And realisation of it rages out
 In furnace-fear when we are caught without
 People or drink. Courage is no good:
 It means not scaring others. Being brave
 Lets no one off the grave.
 Death is no different whined at than withstood.

Slowly light strengthens, and the room takes shape.
 It stands plain as a wardrobe, what we know,
 Have always known, know that we can't escape,
 Yet can't accept. One side will have to go.
 Meanwhile telephones crouch, getting ready to ring
 In locked-up offices, and all the uncaring

Intricate rented world begins to rouse.
The sky is white as clay, with no sun.
Work has to be done.
Postmen like doctors go from house to house.

Source: *Collected Poems* (Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2001)
<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48422/aubade-56d229a6e2f07>

8. Diving into the Wreck

By Adrienne Rich

First having read the book of myths,
and loaded the camera,
and checked the edge of the knife-blade,
I put on
the body-armor of black rubber
the absurd flippers
the grave and awkward mask.
I am having to do this
not like Cousteau with his
assiduous team
aboard the sun-flooded schooner
but here alone.

There is a ladder.
The ladder is always there
hanging innocently
close to the side of the schooner.
We know what it is for,
we who have used it.
Otherwise
it is a piece of maritime floss
some sundry equipment.

I go down.
Rung after rung and still
the oxygen immerses me
the blue light
the clear atoms
of our human air.
I go down.
My flippers cripple me,
I crawl like an insect down the ladder
and there is no one
to tell me when the ocean
will begin.

First the air is blue and then
it is bluer and then green and then
black I am blacking out and yet
my mask is powerful
it pumps my blood with power
the sea is another story
the sea is not a question of power
I have to learn alone
to turn my body without force
in the deep element.

And now: it is easy to forget
what I came for
among so many who have always

lived here
 swaying their crenellated fans
 between the reefs
 and besides
 you breathe differently down here.

I came to explore the wreck.
 The words are purposes.
 The words are maps.
 I came to see the damage that was done
 and the treasures that prevail.
 I stroke the beam of my lamp
 slowly along the flank
 of something more permanent
 than fish or weed

the thing I came for:
 the wreck and not the story of the wreck
 the thing itself and not the myth
 the drowned face always staring
 toward the sun
 the evidence of damage
 worn by salt and sway into this threadbare beauty
 the ribs of the disaster
 curving their assertion
 among the tentative haunters.

This is the place.
 And I am here, the mermaid whose dark hair
 streams black, the merman in his armored body.
 We circle silently
 about the wreck
 we dive into the hold.
 I am she: I am he

whose drowned face sleeps with open eyes
 whose breasts still bear the stress
 whose silver, copper, vermeil cargo lies
 obscurely inside barrels
 half-wedged and left to rot
 we are the half-destroyed instruments
 that once held to a course
 the water-eaten log
 the fouled compass

We are, I am, you are
 by cowardice or courage
 the one who find our way
 back to this scene
 carrying a knife, a camera
 a book of myths
 in which
 our names do not appear.

Source:

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