

# Poetry Memory Work

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Period \_\_\_\_\_

For your memorization assignment, choose poems from the following pages. Each poem has a line value. Your job is to pick a combination of poems whose values add up to **50 lines exactly**—no more, no less. Also, you may **not** recite two poems by the same poet. When you have selected your poems, delete the poems that you will not be reciting, and then print out the poems you have chosen (include these directions in your printout. Bring in your printed sheet to be approved by your teacher by **Friday, March 8**. They must be approved before you recite. The poems must be memorized by **Monday, March 18**.

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## The Courage That My Mother Had

Edna St. Vincent Millay

The courage that my mother had  
Went with her and is with her still;  
Rock from New England quarried;  
Now granite in a granite hill.

The golden brooch my mother wore  
She left behind for me to wear;  
I have no thing I treasure more:  
Yet, it is something I could spare.

Oh, if instead she'd left to me  
The thing she took into the grave!—  
That courage like a rock, which she  
Has no more need of, and I have.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 12 lines

## The Leaden-Eyed

Vachel Lindsay

Let not young souls be smothered out before  
They do quaint deeds and fully flaunt their pride.  
It is the world's one crime its babes grow dull,  
Its poor are oxlike, limp, and leaden-eyed.

Not that they starve, but starve so dreamlessly;  
Not that they sow, but that they seldom reap;  
Not that they serve, but have no gods to serve;  
Not that they die but that they die like sheep.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 8 lines

## Success Is Counted Sweetest

Emily Dickinson

Success is counted sweetest  
By those who ne'er succeed.  
To comprehend a nectar  
Requires sorest need.

Not one of all the purple Host  
Who took the Flag today  
Can tell the definition  
So clear of Victory

As he defeated—dying—  
On whose forbidden ear  
The distant strains of triumph  
Burst agonized and clear!

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 12 lines

## Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night

Dylan Thomas

Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,  
Because their words had forked no lightning they  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright  
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,  
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,  
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight  
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,  
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray!  
Do not go gentle into that good night.  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 20 lines

## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Robert Frost

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.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 16 lines

### **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.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 20 lines

### **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 dimmed;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest 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.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 14 lines

### **Mother to Son**

Langston Hughes

Well, son, I'll tell you:  
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.  
It's had tacks in it,  
And splinters,  
And boards torn up,  
And places with no carpet on the floor—  
Bare.  
But all the time  
I'se been a-climbin' on,  
And reachin' landin's,  
And turnin' corners,

And sometimes goin' in the dark  
Where there ain't been no light.  
So boy, don't you turn back.  
Don't you set down on the steps  
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.  
Don't you fall now—  
For I'se still goin', honey,  
I'se still climbin',  
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 12 lines

### **Death Be not Proud**

John Donne

Death be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,  
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow,  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,  
And poppy, or charms can make us sleep as well,  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 16 lines

### **Ecclesiastes 3:1-8**

King James Version

To every thing there is a season, and a time to  
every purpose under the heaven:  
A time to be born, and a time to die: a time to plant,  
and a time to pluck up that  
which is planted:  
A time to kill, and a time to heal: a time to break  
down, and a time to build up:  
A time to weep, and a time to laugh: a time to  
mourn, and a time to dance:  
A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather  
stones together: a time to  
embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing:  
A time to get, and a time to lose: a time to keep,  
and a time to cast away:  
A time to rend, and a time to sew: a time to keep  
silence, and a time to speak:  
A time to love, and a time to hate: a time of war,  
and a time of peace.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 18 lines

### Sonnet 116

William Shakespeare

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 height 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 proved,  
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 14 lines

### George Gray

Edgar Lee Masters

I have studied many times  
The marble which was chiseled for me—  
A boat with a furled sail at rest in a harbor.  
In truth it pictures not my destination  
But my life.  
For love was offered me and I shrank from its disillusionment;  
Sorrow knocked at my door, but I was afraid;  
Ambition called to me, but I dreaded the chances.  
Yet all the while I hungered for meaning in my life.  
And now I know that we must lift the sail  
And catch the winds of destiny  
Wherever they drive the boat.  
To put meaning in one's life may end in madness,  
But life without meaning is the torture  
Of restlessness and vague desire—  
It is a boat longing for the sea and yet afraid.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 16 lines

### Hope

Emily Dickinson

Hope is the thing with feathers  
That perches in the soul,  
And sings the tune--without the words,  
And never stops at all,  
And sweetest in the gale is heard;  
And sore must be the storm  
That could abash the little bird  
That kept so many warm.  
I've heard it in the chilliest land,  
And on the strangest sea;  
Yet, never, in extremity,  
It asked a crumb of me.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 12 lines

### I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

William Wordsworth

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.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin 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 but be gay,  
In such a jocund 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.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 24 lines

### Up-Hill

Christina Rossetti

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?  
Yes, to the very end.  
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?  
From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?  
A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.  
May not the darkness hide it from my face?  
You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?  
Those who have gone before.  
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?  
They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?  
Of labour you shall find the sum.  
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?  
Yea, beds for all who come.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 16 lines

### Meeting at Night

Robert Browning

#### I

The grey sea and the long black land;  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

#### II

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;  
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,  
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 12 lines

### The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;  
Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
The traveller hastens toward the town,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,  
Efface the footprints in the sands,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
The day returns, but nevermore  
Returns the traveller to the shore,  
And the tide rises, the tide falls.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 14 lines

### Harlem

Langston Hughes

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?

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 8 lines

### The Sound of the Sea

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The sea awoke at midnight from its sleep,  
And round the pebbly beaches far and wide  
I heard the first wave of the rising tide  
Rush onward with uninterrupted sweep;  
A voice out of the silence of the deep,  
A sound mysteriously multiplied  
As of a cataract from the mountain's side,  
Or roar of winds upon a wooded steep.  
So comes to us at times, from the unknown  
And inaccessible solitudes of being,  
The rushing of the sea-tides of the soul;  
And inspirations, that we deem our own,  
Are some divine foreshadowing and foreseeing  
Of things beyond our reason or control.

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 14 lines

### Sympathy

Paul Laurence Dunbar

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!  
When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;  
When the wind stirs, soft through the springing grass,  
And the river flows like a stream of glass;  
When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,  
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—  
I know what the caged bird feels!

I know why the caged bird beats his wing  
Till its blood is red on the cruel bars:  
For he must fly back to his perch and cling  
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;  
And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars  
And they pulse again with a keener sting—  
I know why he beats his wing!

I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,  
When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—  
When he beats his bars and he would be free;  
It is not a carol of joy or glee,  
But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,  
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—  
I know why the caged bird sings!

\_\_\_\_\_ out of 22 lines

**As Much As You Can**

Constantine P. Cavafy

And if you can't shape your life the way you want,  
 at least try as much as you can  
 not to degrade it  
 by too much contact with the world,  
 by too much activity and talk.

Try not to degrade it by dragging it along,  
 taking it around and exposing it so often  
 to the daily silliness  
 of social events and parties,  
 until it comes to seem a boring hanger-on.

\_\_\_\_\_ **out of 10 lines****truth**

Gwendolyn Brooks

And if sun comes  
 How shall we greet him?  
 Shall we not dread him,  
 Shall we not fear him  
 After so lengthy a  
 Session with shade?

Though we have wept for him,  
 Though we have prayed  
 All through the night-years—  
 What if we wake one shimmering morning to  
 Hear the fierce hammering  
 Of his firm knuckles  
 Hard on the door?

Shall we not shudder?—  
 Shall we not flee  
 Into the shelter, the dear thick shelter  
 Of the familiar  
 Propitious haze?

Sweet is it, sweet is it  
 To sleep in the coolness  
 Of snug unawareness.

The dark hangs heavily  
 Over the eyes.

\_\_\_\_\_ **out of 18 lines****The Winds of Fate**

Ella Wheeler Wilcox

One ship drives east and another drives west  
 With the self-same winds that blow;  
 'Tis the set of the sails  
 And not the gales  
 That tells them the way to go.

Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate  
 As we voyage along through life;  
 'Tis the set of the soul  
 That decides its goal  
 And not the calm or the strife.

\_\_\_\_\_ **out of 8 lines****The Funeral**

Gordon Parks

After many snows I was home again.  
 Time had whittled down to mere hills  
 the great mountains of my childhood.  
 Raging rivers I once swam trickled now like gentle streams.  
 And the wide road curving on to China or Kansas city or  
 perhaps Calcutta  
 had withered to a crooked path of dust  
 ending abruptly at the county burying ground.  
 Only the giant who was my father remained the same.  
 A hundred strong men strained beneath his coffin  
 When they bore him to his grave.

\_\_\_\_\_ **out of 10 lines**