

Poetry Memory Work

Name _____

Approved: _____

Period _____

For your memorization assignment, choose poems from the following pages. Each poem has a point value. Your job is to pick a combination of poems whose values add up to **50 points 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 **Fri., March 20**. They must be approved by me before you recite.

The poems must be memorized and ready to present by **Mon., April 20**.

Score: _____ – _____ deductions (regarding eye contact, inflection, pauses, pacing, or poise) = **Total Score:** _____ **out of 50**

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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've 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've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

_____ out of 12 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points

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 points