

*mark up your texts as you read!*

## UNIT ONE: SIGNPOSTS

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## THE COST OF ART

### Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "A Musical Instrument" (1860; 1860)

	Rhyme	Syllables
What was he doing, the great god Pan,	A	9
Down in the reeds by the river?	B	8
Spreading ruin and scattering ban,	A	8 or 9
Splashing and paddling with hoofs of a goat,	C	10
And breaking the golden lilies afloat	5 C	10
With the dragon-fly on the river.	B	9
He tore out a reed, the great god Pan,	A	9
From the deep cool bed of the river:	B	9
The limpid water turbidly ran,	A	9
And the broken lilies a-dying lay,	10 D	10
And the dragon-fly had fled away,	D	9
Ere he brought it out of the river.	B	9
High on the shore sat the great god Pan,	A	9
While turbidly flow'd the river:	B	8
And hack'd and hew'd as a great god can,	15 A	9
With his hard bleak steel at the patient reed,	E	10
Till there was not a sign of a leaf indeed	E	11
To prove it fresh from the river.	B	8
He cut it short, did the great god Pan,	A	9
(How tall it stood in the river!)	20 B	8
Then drew the pith, like the heart of a man,	A	10
Steadily from the outside ring,	F	8
And notch'd the poor dry empty thing	F	8
In holes, as he sat by the river.	B	9
"This is the way," laugh'd the great god Pan,	25 A	9
(Laugh'd while he sat by the river,)	B	8
"The only way, since gods began	A	8
To make sweet music, they could succeed."	E	9
Then, dropping his mouth to a hole in the reed,	E	11
He blew in power by the river.	30 B	8 or 9
Sweet, sweet, sweet, O Pan!	A	5
Piercing sweet by the river!	B	7
Blinding sweet, O great god Pan!	A	7
The sun on the hill forgot to die,	F	9
And the lilies reviv'd, and the dragon-fly	35 F	11
Came back to dream on the river.	B	8

Yet half a beast is the great god Pan,		A	9
To laugh as he sits by the river,		B	9
Making a poet out of a man:		A	9
The true gods sigh for the cost and pain, --	40	G	9
For the reed which grows nevermore again		G	10
As a reed with the reeds in the river.		B	10

### Points for Reflection

1. of all the Greek gods, why choose Pan when setting up this poem about the artistic process?
2. why employ a recurring sestet so reliant on repetition of "Pan" and "river"?
3. why might lines 1-4 open, not w/ pleasant iambic feet (unaccented, accented), but with more aggressive dactyls (accented, unaccented, unaccented) and trochees (accented, unaccented)? Isn't this, after all, a poem about sweet music?
4. is the Greek god depicted here malevolent or altruistic? Does Pan's arrival alter the environment permanently?
5. why might EBB describe the water from which Pan pulls the reed as "limpid" (l.9)?
6. in what way is this deity "great"?
7. does the reed retain any of its native qualities after it has been fashioned into an instrument (ll.13-24)?
8. why might Pan laugh (ll.25-26) while justifying his actions (ll.25-27)?
9. does Pan's music compensate for the destruction involved in creating his instrument (ll.31-36)?
10. what does this poem suggest about the cost of Art?
11. how does Pan's reaction to humankind's suffering differ from that of "the true gods" (ll.37-40)?

**Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" (c.1851; 1867) / published in *New Poems* (1867)**

The sea is calm to-night,  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. 5  
Come to the window, sweet is the night air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling, 10  
At their return, up the high strand.  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago 15  
Heard it on the Ægæan, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea. 20

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar, 25  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems 30  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain 35  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Points for Reflection

1. who is the poem's auditor/audience?
2. what tone dominates this poem?
3. does the sound of pebbles rolling across the sand spark the same thoughts in the narrator that they apparently sparked in Sophocles?
4. does romantic affection appear to be a powerful substitute for religious faith?



## Paul Laurence Dunbar's "Sympathy" (1899)

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,                   5  
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                   10  
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,                   15  
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 —                   20  
I know why the caged bird sings!

### Points for Reflection

1. why does a bird serve Dunbar's purposes better in "Sympathy" than would any other imprisoned animal?
2. why does the bird not learn its lesson and cease to beat its wing on the bars--why does the old pain throb "again with a keener sting" (l.13, emphasis added)?
3. how and why does the listener habitually misinterpret the bird's song?
4. which of Dunbar's poems more closely approximates the form of a song?
5. do Dunbar's poems cast the "two-ness" of which Du Bois speaks as an empowering or constraining duality?

## DEATH AND THE MAIDEN

### Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover" (1834; 1836, 1842)

The rain set early in to-night,  
The sullen wind was soon awake,  
It tore the elm-tops down for spite,  
And did its worst to vex the lake:  
I listen'd with heart fit to break. 5  
When glided in Porphyria; straight  
She shut the cold out and the storm,  
And kneel'd and made the cheerless grate  
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm;  
Which done, she rose, and from her form 10  
Withdrew the dripping cloak and shawl,  
And laid her soil'd gloves by, untied  
Her hat and let the damp hair fall,  
And, last, she sat down by my side  
And call'd me. When no voice replied, 15  
She put my arm about her waist,  
And made her smooth white shoulder bare,  
And all her yellow hair displaced,  
And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,  
And spread, o'er all, her yellow hair, 20  
Murmuring how she loved me—she  
Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour,  
To set its struggling passion free  
From pride, and vainer ties dissever,  
And give herself to me for ever. 25  
But passion sometimes would prevail,  
Nor could to-night's gay feast restrain  
A sudden thought of one so pale  
For love of her, and all in vain:  
So, she was come through wind and rain. 30  
Be sure I look'd up at her eyes  
Happy and proud; at last I knew  
Porphyria worshipp'd me; surprise  
Made my heart swell, and still it grew  
While I debated what to do. 35  
That moment she was mine, mine, fair,  
Perfectly pure and good: I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string I wound  
Three times her little throat around, 40  
And strangled her. No pain felt she;  
I am quite sure she felt no pain.  
As a shut bud that holds a bee,  
I warily oped her lids: again  
Laugh'd the blue eyes without a stain. 45

And I untighten'd next the tress  
 About her neck; her cheek once more  
 Blush'd bright beneath my burning kiss:  
 I propp'd her head up as before,  
 Only, this time my shoulder bore 50  
 Her head, which droops upon it still:  
 The smiling rosy little head,  
 So glad it has its utmost will,  
 That all it scorn'd at once is fled,  
 And I, its love, am gain'd instead! 55  
 Porphyria's love: she guess'd not how  
 Her darling one wish would be heard.  
 And thus we sit together now,  
 And all night long we have not stirr'd,  
 And yet God has not said a word! 60

### Points for Reflection

1. should the reader attribute the personification of lines 1-4 to the narrator or the author?
2. what rhyme scheme does Browning follow in this poem? Why might Browning hide the poem's structure by eliminating the traditional lines of space between each stanza?
3. consider the significance of Browning's interrupting the enjambment of lines 5-6.
4. what array of things does Porphyria do that warm the cottage (ll.6-9)?
5. which character appears to be in control in lines ll.15-20?
6. what struggle does Porphyria relay to the narrator (ll.21-30)?
7. is the narrator correct to interpret Porphyria's "passion" (l.26) as "worship" (l.33)?
8. do you consider the narrator's assessment of Porphyria as "perfectly pure and good" to be a function of her actual character or his current emotional state?
9. what does the narrator's perspective on his shocking actions reveal about the workings of his mind (l.41-55)? Do you consider his actions those of a criminal or a madman?
10. does it change your understanding of the poem to learn that Browning first published it as "Porphyria" (1836), then paired it with "Johannes Agricola in Meditation" under the title "Madhouse Cells" (1842), and finally separated it out again under its current title (1863)?

**Robert Browning's "My Last Duchess" (1842; 1842)**  
published originally in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842)

Ferrara

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive. I call  
That piece a wonder, now; Frà Pandolf's hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands. 5  
Will 't please you sit and look at her? I said  
"Frà Pandolf" by design, *for never read*  
*Strangers like you* that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
*But to myself they turned* (since none puts by 10  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
*And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,*  
*How such a glance came there;* so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot 15  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Frà Pandolf chanced to say "Her mantle laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much," or "Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat": such stuff 20  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
*She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.* 25  
Sir, 'twas all one! My favor at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some officious fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace—all and each 30  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked  
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With *anybody's* gift. Who'd stoop to blame 35  
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
In speech—(which I have not)—to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, "Just this  
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
Or there exceed the mark"—and if she let 40  
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse  
--E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without

Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;                   45  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will 't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count your master's known munificence  
 Is ample warrant that no just pretense                                 50  
 Of *mine* for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
 Taming a sea horse, thought a rarity,                                 55  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

### Points for Reflection

1. as imagined by the narrator, why might the painting of the Duchess indicate a "spot of joy" on her cheek? Also, what exactly does "spot of joy" (ll.14-15, 21) denote?
2. of what does the narrator accuse the wife pictured in this painting, and how convincing is his argument?
3. did the narrator express his grievances to his wife in no uncertain terms?
4. where is the narrator's wife now?
5. who is the narrator's audience (auditor), and what is the narrator's current endgame? Does it make sense that the narrator would tell his auditor the story behind the painting, given what the narrator is presently attempting to achieve?
6. Browning could have placed any piece of art in the same vicinity as the Duchess's painting. Why might he have chosen the statue of Neptune taming a sea-horse (ll.54-56)?
7. literary critic Robert Langbaum suggests, in *The Poetry of Experience* (1957), that the attentive reader is led to "identify" with Italian duke of the poem, and that his "conviction of matchless superiority, his intelligence and bland amorality, his poise, his taste for art, his manners" overwhelm the reader, causing us to suspend moral judgment because we prefer to participate in the duke's power and freedom, in his hard core of character fiercely loyal to itself' (83). Do you agree with Langbaum's position?





Of bold Sir Lancelot.  
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd  
To a lady in his shield,  
That sparkled on the yellow field, 80  
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,  
Like to some branch of stars we see  
Hung in the golden Galaxy.  
The bridle bells rang merrily 85  
As he rode down to Camelot:  
And from his blazon'd baldric slung  
A mighty silver bugle hung,  
And as he rode his armour rung,  
Beside remote Shalott. 90

All in the blue unclouded weather  
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,  
The helmet and the helmet-feather  
Burn'd like one burning flame together,  
As he rode down to Camelot. 95  
As often thro' the purple night,  
Below the starry clusters bright,  
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,  
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd; 100  
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;  
From underneath his helmet flow'd  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot.  
From the bank and from the river 105  
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,  
'Tirra lirra,' by the river  
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,  
She made three paces thro' the room, 110  
She saw the water-lily bloom,  
She saw the helmet and the plume,  
She look'd down to Camelot.  
Out flew the web and floated wide;  
The mirror crack'd from side to side; 115  
'The curse is come upon me!' cried  
The Lady of Shalott.

#### PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,

The pale yellow woods were waning,  
The broad stream in his banks complaining,           120  
Heavily the low sky raining  
    Over tower'd Camelot;  
Down she came and found a boat  
Beneath a willow left afloat,  
And round about the prow she wrote                   125  
    The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse—  
Like some bold seer in a trance,  
Seeing all his own mischance—  
With a glassy countenance                           130  
    Did she look to Camelot.  
And at the closing of the day  
She loosed the chain, and down she lay;  
The broad stream bore her far away,  
    The Lady of Shalott.                               135

Lying, robed in snowy white  
That loosely flew to left and right—  
The leaves upon her falling light—  
Thro' the noises of the night  
    She floated down to Camelot:                   140  
And as the boat-head wound along  
The willowy hills and fields among,  
They heard her singing her last song,  
    The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,                       145  
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,  
Till her blood was frozen slowly,  
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,  
    Turn'd to tower'd Camelot;  
For ere she reach'd upon the tide                   150  
The first house by the water-side,  
Singing in her song she died,  
    The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,  
By garden-wall and gallery,                       155  
A gleaming shape she floated by,  
Dead-pale between the houses high,  
    Silent into Camelot.  
Out upon the wharfs they came,  
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,               160  
And round the prow they read her name,  
    The Lady of Shalott.



**Christina Rossetti's "In an Artist's Studio" (1856; 1896)**

One face looks out from all his canvases,	A	
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:	B	
We found her hidden just behind those screens,	B	
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.	A	
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,	C	5
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,	B	
A saint, an angel -- every canvas means	B	
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.	C	

He feeds upon her face by day and night,	D	
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,	E	10
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:	D	
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;	E	
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;	D	
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.	F	

Points for Reflection

1. what type of sonnet is Rossetti's poem?
2. why might Christina Rossetti have waited so long to publish this poem?
3. how does the poem's tone shift as one moves from opening octave to closing sestet?
4. what characteristics of his beloved has the painter memorialized in his portraits of her?





**M. Arnold's "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" (c.1852; 1855)**

Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused  
With rain, where thick the crocus blows,  
Past the dark forges long disused,  
The mule-track from Saint Laurent goes.  
The bridge is cross'd, and slow we ride,                   5  
Through forest, up the mountain-side.

The autumnal evening darkens round,  
The wind is up, and drives the rain;  
While, hark! far down, with strangled sound  
Doth the Dead Guier's stream complain,                   10  
Where that wet smoke, among the woods,  
Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapours white  
Past limestone scars with ragged pines,  
Showing--then blotting from our sight!--                   15  
Halt--through the cloud-drift something shines!  
High in the valley, wet and drear,  
The huts of Courrierie appear.

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and higher  
Mounts up the stony forest-way.                   20  
At last the encircling trees retire;  
Look! through the showery twilight grey  
What pointed roofs are these advance?--  
A palace of the Kings of France?

Approach, for what we seek is here!                   25  
Alight, and sparely sup, and wait  
For rest in this outbuilding near;  
Then cross the sward and reach that gate.  
Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come  
To the Carthusians' world-famed home.                   30

The silent courts, where night and day  
Into their stone-carved basins cold  
The splashing icy fountains play--  
The humid corridors behold!  
Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,                   35  
Cowl'd forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal  
Invests the stern and naked prayer--  
With penitential cries they kneel  
And wrestle; rising then, with bare                   40  
And white uplifted faces stand,  
Passing the Host from hand to hand;

Each takes, and then his visage wan  
Is buried in his cowl once more.  
The cells!--the suffering Son of Man                   45  
Upon the wall--the knee-worn floor--  
And where they sleep, that wooden bed,  
Which shall their coffin be, when dead!

The library, where tract and tome  
Not to feed priestly pride are there,                   50  
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,  
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!  
They paint of souls the inner strife,  
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

The garden, overgrown--yet mild,                   55  
See, fragrant herbs are flowering there!  
Strong children of the Alpine wild  
Whose culture is the brethren's care;  
Of human tasks their only one,                   60  
And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain  
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,  
From England, Germany, or Spain--  
All are before me! I behold  
The House, the Brotherhood austere!                   65  
--And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
And purged its faith, and trimm'd its fire,  
Show'd me the high, white star of Truth,  
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.                   70  
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:  
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!  
At whose behest I long ago  
So much unlearnt, so much resign'd--                   75  
I come not here to be your foe!  
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,  
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak!  
But as, on some far northern strand,                   80  
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
In pity and mournful awe might stand  
Before some fallen Runic stone--  
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

Wandering between two worlds, one dead, 85  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride--  
I come to shed them at their side. 90

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,  
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!  
Take me, cowl'd forms, and fence me round,  
Till I possess my soul again;  
Till free my thoughts before me roll, 95  
Not chafed by hourly false control!

For the world cries your faith is now  
But a dead time's exploded dream;  
My melancholy, sciolists say,  
Is a pass'd mode, an outworn theme-- 100  
As if the world had ever had  
A faith, or sciolists been sad!

Ah, if it be pass'd, take away,  
At least, the restlessness, the pain;  
Be man henceforth no more a prey 105  
To these out-dated stings again!  
The nobleness of grief is gone  
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

But--if you cannot give us ease--  
Last of the race of them who grieve 110  
Here leave us to die out with these  
Last of the people who believe!  
Silent, while years engrave the brow;  
Silent--the best are silent now.

Achilles ponders in his tent, 115  
The kings of modern thought are dumb,  
Silent they are though not content,  
And wait to see the future come.  
They have the grief men had of yore,  
But they contend and cry no more. 120

Our fathers water'd with their tears  
This sea of time whereon we sail,  
Their voices were in all men's ears  
We pass'd within their puissant hail.  
Still the same ocean round us raves, 125  
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what avail'd it, all the noise  
And outcry of the former men?--  
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,  
Say, is life lighter now than then? 130  
The sufferers died, they left their pain--  
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,  
Through Europe to the Ætolian shore 135  
The pageant of his bleeding heart?  
That thousands counted every groan,  
And Europe made his woe her own?

What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze  
Carried thy lovely wail away, 140  
Musical through Italian trees  
Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?  
Inheritors of thy distress  
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

Or are we easier, to have read,  
O Obermann! the sad, stern page,  
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head  
From the fierce tempest of thine age  
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,  
Or chalets near the Alpine snow? 150

Ye slumber in your silent grave!--  
The world, which for an idle day  
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,  
Long since hath flung her weeds away.  
The eternal trifler breaks your spell; 155  
But we--we learned your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,  
More fortunate, alas! than we,  
Which without hardness will be sage,  
And gay without frivolity. 160  
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;  
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

Allow them! We admire with awe  
The exulting thunder of your race;  
You give the universe your law, 165  
You triumph over time and space!  
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,  
We laud them, but they are not ours.

We are like children rear'd in shade  
Beneath some old-world abbey wall, 170  
Forgotten in a forest-glade,  
And secret from the eyes of all.  
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,  
Their abbey, and its close of graves!

But, where the road runs near the stream, 175  
Oft through the trees they catch a glance  
Of passing troops in the sun's beam--  
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!  
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,  
To life, to cities, and to war! 180

And through the wood, another way,  
Faint bugle-notes from far are borne,  
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,  
Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.  
Gay dames are there, in sylvan green; 185  
Laughter and cries--those notes between!

The banners flashing through the trees  
Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;  
That bugle-music on the breeze  
Arrests them with a charm'd surprise. 190  
Banner by turns and bugle woo:  
Ye shy recluses, follow too!

O children, what do ye reply?--  
"Action and pleasure, will ye roam  
Through these secluded dells to cry 195  
And call us?--but too late ye come!  
Too late for us your call ye blow,  
Whose bent was taken long ago.

Long since we pace this shadow'd nave;  
We watch those yellow tapers shine, 200  
Emblems of hope over the grave,  
In the high altar's depth divine;  
The organ carries to our ear  
Its accents of another sphere.

"Fenced early in this cloistral round 205  
Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,  
How should we grow in other ground?  
How can we flower in foreign air?  
--Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;  
And leave our desert to its peace!" 210

## Points for Reflection

1. why is the narrator of this poem (who speaks with Arnold's own voice) surprised to find himself at this Carthusian monastery in the Alps (l.66)?
2. why is the narrator crying (ll.85-90)?
3. explain the irony threaded into lines 91-108.
4. does the narrator value the “mood of sadness” (l.153) spun by the Byron and Shelley?
5. to what purpose does Arnold put the two epic similes found in lines 80-84 and 169-92?

## E. Dickinson's #207 [214] (1861)

I taste a liquor never brewed -  
From Tankards scooped in Pearl -  
Not all the Frankfort Berries  
Yield such an Alcohol!

Inebriate of air - am I - 5  
And debauchee of dew -  
Reeling - through endless summer days -  
From inns of molten blue -

When “Landlords” turn the drunken Bee 10  
Out of the Foxglove's door -  
When Butterflies - renounce their “drams” -  
I shall but drink the more!

Till seraphs swing their snowy Hats -  
And Saints - to windows run -  
To see the little Tippler 15  
Leaning against the - Sun!

## Points for Reflection

1. what extended conceit does Dickinson deploy to transform enjoyment of Nature into something scandalous?
2. does the tone one identifies in stanza four of this poem depend on the seriousness with which one takes religion? Do you read this poem as playful or satiric, gently indecorous or blatantly defiant?



**G. M. Hopkins's "Pied Beauty" (1877; 1918)**

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls, finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;                   5  
And áll trádes, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:                   10  
Praise him.

Points for Reflection

1. does Hopkins limit his praise of spots to those found in Nature?
2. how does stanza two constitute an elaboration of the simple principle proposed in stanza one?
3. applying the concept of sprung rhythm to this poem, how many metrical feet can you identify in each line? Remember that the length of each foot may vary: you're looking for the number of stressed syllables.
4. does Hopkins' use of alliteration draw attention to itself, or does it add subtle, aural effects to the images he describes?
5. why might lines 6-7 lack the alliteration and assonance that characterize the other lines of the poem?
6. to what end does Hopkins generate this celebration of Nature's beauty? What is his goal?

**Gerard Manley Hopkins's "[Carrion Comfort]" (1885; 1918)**

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee,  
Not untwist—slack they may be—these last strands of man  
In me ór, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;  
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me 5  
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan  
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,  
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.  
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod, 10  
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.  
Cheer whom though? The Hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot trod  
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? Is it each one? That night, that year  
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

Points for Reflection

1. how does Hopkins create a sense of spiritual struggle through non-standard language? What about the poem "Carrion Comfort" appears extremely odd?
2. the narrator of Hopkins's poem rejects Despair in the first line: is this a successful rejection?
3. to what might "rod" in line 10 refer?
4. how has Hopkins elaborated on and altered Genesis 32:22-23?

## SLAVERY & TRAFFICKING

### E. B. Browning's "The Runaway Slave at Pilgrim's Point" (1846; 1848, 1850)

#### I.

I stand on the mark beside the shore  
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,  
Where exile turned to ancestor,  
And God was thanked for liberty.  
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,                   5  
I bend my knee down on this mark...  
I look on the sky and the sea.

#### II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!  
I see you come out proud and slow  
From the land of the spirits pale as dew. . .                   10  
And round me and round me ye go!  
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run  
All night long from the whips of one  
Who in your names works sin and woe.

#### III.

And thus I thought that I would come                   15  
And kneel here where I knelt before,  
And feel your souls around me hum  
In undertone to the ocean's roar;  
And lift my black face, my black hand,  
Here, in your names, to curse this land                   20  
Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

#### IV.

I am black, I am black;  
And yet God made me, they say.  
But if He did so, smiling back  
He must have cast His work away                   25  
Under the feet of His white creatures,  
With a look of scorn,--that the dusky features  
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet He has made dark things  
To be glad and merry as light. 30  
There's a little dark bird sits and sings;  
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight;  
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,  
And the sweetest stars are made to pass  
O'er the face of the darkest night. 35

VI.

But we who are dark, we are dark!  
Ah, God, we have no stars!  
About our souls in care and cark  
Our blackness shuts like prison bars:  
The poor souls crouch so far behind, 40  
That never a comfort can they find  
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed, we live beneath the sky,...  
That great smooth Hand of God, stretched out  
On all His children fatherly, 45  
To bless them from the fear and doubt,  
Which would be, if, from this low place,  
All opened straight up to His face  
Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost, 50  
They make us hot, they make us cold,  
As if we were not black and lost:  
And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,  
Do fear and take us for very men!  
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen 55  
Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!--  
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee;  
For one of my colour stood in the track  
Where the drivers drove, and looked at me-- 60  
And tender and full was the look he gave:  
Could a slave look so at another slave?--  
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew  
As free as if unsold, unbought: 65  
Oh, strong enough, since we were two  
To conquer the world, we thought!  
The drivers drove us day by day;  
We did not mind, we went one way,  
And no better a liberty sought. 70

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,  
He said "I love you" as he passed:  
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,  
I heard how he vowed it fast:  
While others shook, he smiled in the hut 75  
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut,  
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song;  
Over and over I sang his name--  
Upward and downward I drew it along 80  
My various notes; the same, the same!  
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near  
Might never guess from aught they could hear,  
It was only a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea-- 85  
We were two to love, and two to pray,--  
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,  
Though nothing didst Thou say.  
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!  
And now I cry who am but one, 90  
How wilt Thou speak to-day?--

XIV.

We were black, we were black!  
We had no claim to love and bliss:  
What marvel, if each turned to lack?  
They wrung my cold hands out of his,-- 95  
They dragged him... where?... I crawled to touch  
His blood's mark in the dust!... not much,  
Ye pilgrim-souls,... though plain as this!

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!  
Mere grief's too good for such as I. 100  
So the white men brought the shame ere long  
To strangle the sob of my agony.  
They would not leave me for my dull  
Wet eyes!--it was too merciful  
To let me weep pure tears and die. 105

XVI.

I am black, I am black!--  
I wore a child upon my breast  
An amulet that hung too slack,  
And, in my unrest, could not rest:  
Thus we went moaning, child and mother, 110  
One to another, one to another,  
Until all ended for the best:

XVII.

For hark ! I will tell you low... low...  
I am black, you see,--  
And the babe who lay on my bosom so, 115  
Was far too white... too white for me;  
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray  
Beside me at church but yesterday;  
Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear 120  
To look in his face, it was so white.  
I covered him up with a kerchief there;  
I covered his face in close and tight:  
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,  
For the white child wanted his liberty-- 125  
Ha, ha! he wanted his master right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,  
His little feet that never grew--  
He struck them out, as it was meet,  
Against my heart to break it through. 130  
I might have sung and made him mild--  
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child  
The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:  
He could not see the sun, I swear, 135  
More, then, alive, than now he does  
From between the roots of the mango... where  
... I know where. Close! a child and mother  
Do wrong to look at one another,  
When one is black and one is fair. 140

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had  
Of my child's face,... I tell you all,  
I saw a look that made me mad...  
The master's look, that used to fall  
On my soul like his lash... or worse! 145  
And so, to save it from my curse,  
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,  
He shivered from head to foot;  
Till, after a time, he lay instead 150  
Too suddenly still and mute.  
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold,...  
I dared to lift up just a fold...  
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But my fruit... ha, ha!--there, had been 155  
(I laugh to think on't at this hour!...)  
Your fine white angels, who have seen  
Nearest the secret of God's power,...  
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,  
And sucked the soul of that child of mine, 160  
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower.

XXIV.

Ha, ha, for the trick of the angels white!  
They freed the white child's spirit so.  
I said not a word, but, day and night,  
I carried the body to and fro; 165  
And it lay on my heart like a stone... as chill.  
--The sun may shine out as much as he will:  
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house, and the black man's hut,  
I carried the little body on, 170  
The forest's arms did round us shut,  
And silence through the trees did run:  
They asked no question as I went,--  
They stood too high for astonishment,--  
They could see God sit on His throne. 175

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,  
I bore it on through the forest... on:  
And when I felt it was tired at last,  
I scooped a hole beneath the moon.  
Through the forest-tops the angels far, 180  
With a white sharp finger from every star,  
Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright,...  
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed,  
All, changed to black earth,... nothing white,... 185  
A dark child in the dark,--ensued  
Some comfort, and my heart grew young:  
I sate down smiling there and sung  
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled, 190  
The white child and black mother, thus:  
For, as I sang it, soft and wild  
The same song, more melodious,  
Rose from the grave whereon I sate!  
It was the dead child singing that, 195  
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!  
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay,  
The free sun rideth gloriously;  
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away 200  
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.  
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn  
Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!--in their 'stead, their hunter sons!  
Ah, ah! they are on me--they hunt in a ring-- 205  
Keep off! I brave you all at once--  
I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!  
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think:  
Did you never stand still in your triumph, and shrink  
From the stroke of her wounded wing? 210

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!--)  
I wish you, who stand there five a-breast,  
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,  
A little corpse as safely at rest  
As mine in the mangos!--Yes, but she 215  
May keep live babies on her knee,  
And sing the song she liketh best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.  
I see you staring in my face--  
I know you, staring, shrinking back-- 220  
Ye are born of the Washington-race:  
And this land is the free America:  
And this mark on my wrist... (I prove what I say)  
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound! 225  
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.  
I only cursed them all around,  
As softly as I might have done  
My very own child!--From these sands  
Up to the mountains, lift your hands, 230  
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!  
For in this UNION, you have set  
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,  
Each loathing each: and all forget 235  
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair;  
While HE sees gaping everywhere  
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men  
Are, after all, not gods indeed, 240  
Nor able to make Christs again  
Do good with bleeding. We who bleed...  
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!  
We are too heavy for our cross,  
And fall and crush you and your seed. 245

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky:  
The clouds are breaking on my brain;  
I am floated along, as if I should die  
Of liberty's exquisite pain--  
In the name of the white child, waiting for me 250  
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,  
White men, I leave you all curse-free  
In my broken heart's disdain!

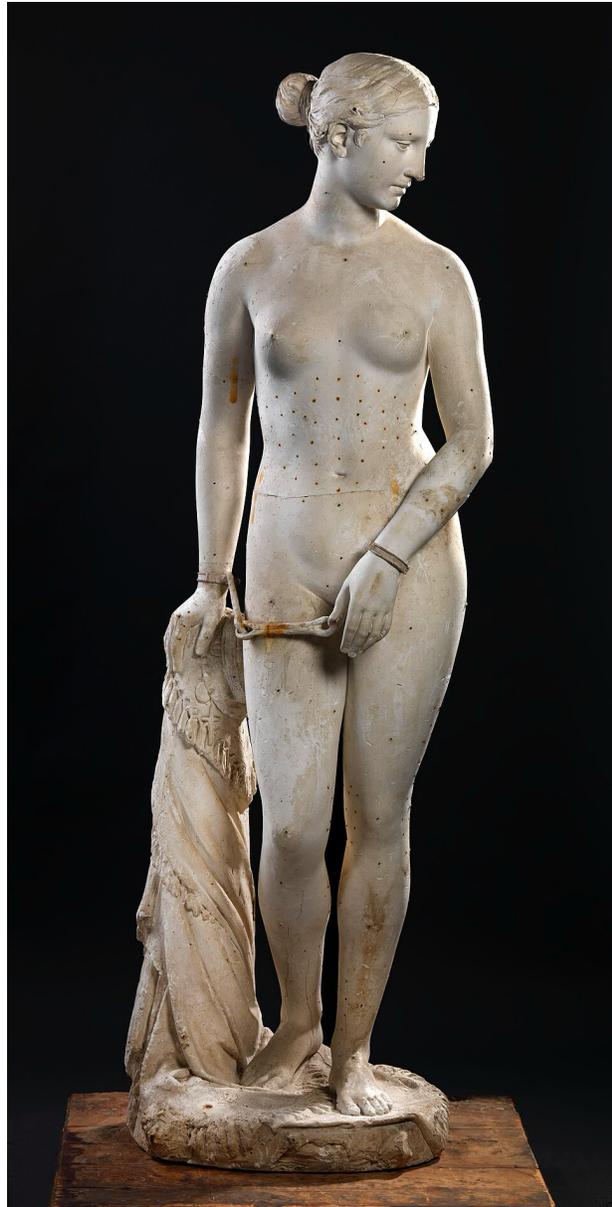
## Points for Reflection

1. EBB originally opened this poem with four italicized stanzas voiced by the narrator's male lover. Would you like to hear his perspective too, or is the female narrator's voice the one on which we should focus?
2. what central tension does E.B.B. establish in stanza one?
3. who constitutes the auditor for this poem, in its opening? [the ghosts of the original pilgrims]. At what point does the intended auditor change?
4. what provides the subject matter of the one song the narrator knows, and at what points does she prove unwilling to sing it?
5. is E.B.B. concerned more with creating a sense of high fidelity (realism) in this poem, or with shaping an emotionally and aesthetically effective polemic?
6. can we deduce what happens to the narrator's lover?
7. how does the narrator's devotion to God change in response to the abuse she received at the hands of her owners?
8. do lines 138-40 constitute an indictment of miscegeny?
9. what happens to the narrator's child, and why?
10. unpack the paradox of lines 146-47.
11. consider the central metaphor of stanza twenty-three: if "fruit" is the vehicle (ground), what is the tenor (figure)?
12. what is the dominant tone of stanza twenty three? Celebratory? Bitter? Something else?
13. how do the angels respond (at least, in the imagination of the narrator) to the narrator's surprising actions?
14. is the reader encouraged to either pity or scorn the narrator?
15. what are the five men who find the narrator preparing to do (l.211)?
16. do lines 212-15 constitute a curse or blessing?
17. towards what action is the narrator calling her fellow slaves (ll.229-32)?
18. should the reader agree with the narrator that she is "not mad" (l.218), but perfectly sane?
19. what does the narrator mean by the statement, "Our wounds are different" (l.239)?
20. does the narrator curse her captors in the poem's close?

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's "Hiram Powers's Greek Slave" (1850)

They say Ideal beauty cannot enter  
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands  
An alien Image with enshackled hands,  
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her  
(That passionless perfection which he lent her, 5  
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)  
To so confront man's crimes in different lands  
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,  
Art's fiery finger! and break up ere long  
The serfdom of this world. Appeal, fair stone, 10  
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!  
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone  
East griefs but west, and strike and shame the strong,  
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

Poem inspired by North American  
sculptor Hiram Powers's  
statue *Greek Slave* (1869) / photo from  
[Wikimedia](#)





Still bearing, in their headlong course  
 To meet th' embrace of ocean deep,  
     Mementoes of the tempest's force;                     50  
 For fire and tempest, flood and storm,  
     Wakened deep echoes in my soul,  
 And made the quickening life-blood warm  
     With impulse that knew no control;  
 And the fierce lightning's lurid flash                     55  
     Rending the somber clouds asunder,  
 Followed by the terrific crash  
     Which marks the hoarsely rattling thunder,  
 Seemed like the gleams of lurid light  
     Which flashed across my seething brain,                     60  
 Succeeded by a darker night,  
     With wilder horrors in its train.  
 And I have stood on ocean's shore,  
     And viewed its dreary waters roll,  
 Till the dull music of its roar                             65  
     Called forth responses in my soul;  
 And I have felt that there was traced  
     An image of my inmost soul,  
 In that dark, dreary, boundless waste,  
     Whose sluggish waters aimless roll—                     70  
 Save when aroused by storms' wild force  
     It lifts on high its angry wave,  
 And thousands driven from their course  
     Find in its depths a nameless grave.  
 Whene'er I turned in gentler mood                     75  
     To scan the old historic page,  
 It was not where the wise and good,  
     The Bard, the Statesman, or the Sage,  
 Had drawn in lines of living light,  
 Lessons of virtue, truth and right;                     80  
 But that which told of secret league,  
     Where deep conspiracies were rife,  
 And where, through foul and dark intrigue,  
     Were sowed the seeds of deadly strife.  
 Where hostile armies met to seal                             85  
     Their country's doom, for woe or weal;  
 Where the grim-visaged death-fiend drank  
     His full supply of human gore,  
 And poured through every hostile rank  
     The tide of battle's awful roar;                             90  
 For then my spirit seemed to soar  
     Away to where such scenes were rife,  
 And high above the battle's roar  
     Sit as spectator of the strife—  
 And in those scenes of war and woe,                     95  
 A fierce and fitful pleasure know.  
 There was a time when I possessed

High notions of Religion's claim,  
 Nor deemed its practice, at the best,  
 Was but a false and empty name; 100  
 But when I saw the graceless deeds  
 Which marked its strongest votaries' path,  
 How senseless bigots, o'er their creeds,  
 Blazing with wild fanatic wrath,  
 Let loose the deadly tide of war, 105  
 Spread devastation near and far,  
 Through scenes of rapine, blood and shame,  
 Of cities sacked, and towns on flame,  
 Caused unbelievers' hearts to feel  
 The arguments of fire and steel 110  
 By which they sought t' enforce the word,  
 And make rebellious hearts approve  
 Those arguments of fire and sword  
 As mandates of the God of love—  
 How could I think that such a faith, 115  
 Whose path was marked by fire and blood,  
 That sowed the seeds of war and death,  
 Had issued from a holy God?  
 There was a time when I did love,  
 Such love as those alone can know, 120  
 Whose blood like burning lava moves,  
 Whose passions like the lightning glow;  
 And when that ardent, truthful love,  
 Was blighted in its opening bloom,  
 And all around, below, above, 125  
 Seemed like the darkness of the tomb,  
 'Twas then my stern and callous heart,  
 Riven in its most vital part,  
 Seemed like some gnarled and knotted oak,  
 That, shivered by the lightning's stroke, 130  
 Stands in the lonely wanderer's path,  
 A ghastly monument of wrath.  
 Then how can I attune the lyre  
 To strains of love, or joyous glee?  
 Break forth in patriotic fire, 135  
 Or soar on higher minstrelsy,  
 To sing the praise of virtue bright,  
 Condemn the wrong, and laud the right;  
 When neither vice nor guilt can fling  
 A darker shadow o'er my breast, 140  
 Not even Virtue's self can bring,  
 Unto my moody spirit, rest.  
 It may not be, it cannot be!  
 Let others strike the sounding string,  
 And in rich strains of harmony, 145  
 Songs of poetic beauty sing;  
 But mine must still the portion be,





## Frances Ellen Watkins Harper's "Bury Me in a Free Land" (1858)

Make me a grave where'er you will,  
In a lowly plain, or a lofty hill;  
Make it among earth's humblest graves,  
But not in a land where men are slaves.

I could not rest if around my grave  
I heard the steps of a trembling slave;  
His shadow above my silent tomb  
Would make it a place of fearful gloom. 5

I could not rest if I heard the tread  
Of a coffle gang to the shambles led,  
And the mother's shriek of wild despair  
Rise like a curse on the trembling air. 10

I could not sleep if I saw the lash  
Drinking her blood at each fearful gash,  
And I saw her babes torn from her breast,  
Like trembling doves from their parent nest. 15

I'd shudder and start if I heard the bay  
Of bloodhounds seizing their human prey,  
And I heard the captive plead in vain  
As they bound afresh his galling chain. 20

If I saw young girls from their mother's arms  
Bartered and sold for their youthful charms,  
My eye would flash with a mournful flame,  
My death-paled cheek grow red with shame.

I would sleep, dear friends, where bloated might  
Can rob no man of his dearest right;  
My rest shall be calm in any grave  
Where none can call his brother a slave. 25

I ask no monument, proud and high,  
To arrest the gaze of the passers-by;  
All that my yearning spirit craves,  
Is bury me not in a land of slaves. 30

### Points for Reflection

1. Does our narrator seek notoriety in death?
2. She compares the state of death to what other states of being?
3. Does the use of metaphor and simile intensify or dilute the pain described in lines 13-16?
4. Does Harper point the accusing finger at the slavers themselves?

## GENDERED INTERIORITIES

### John Clare's "I Am" (1845; 1848)

I am! yet what I am who cares, or knows?  
My friends forsake me like a memory lost.  
I am the self-consumer of my woes,  
They rise and vanish, an oblivious host,  
Shadows of life, whose very soul is lost. 5  
And yet I am—I live—though I am toss'd

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,  
Into the living sea of waking dream,  
Where there is neither sense of life, nor joys,  
But the huge shipwreck of my own esteem 10  
And all that's dear. Even those I loved the best  
Are strange—nay, they are stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man has never trod,  
For scenes where woman never smiled or wept;  
There to abide with my Creator, God, 15  
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept  
Full of high thoughts, unborn. So let me lie,  
The grass below; above the vaulted sky.

### Points for Reflection

1. Does Clare maintain a consistent rhyme pattern across all three sestets?
2. What seem to be the causes of the narrator's distress?
3. Why might the narrator personify his woes?
4. To what end does Clare employ enjambment?
5. Does this poem conclude more upbeat than it began?

**Matthew Arnold's "The Buried Life" (1852)**  
**published in *Empedocles on Etna and Other Poems***

Light flows our war of mocking words, and yet,  
Behold, with tears mine eyes are wet!  
I feel a nameless sadness o'er me roll.  
Yes, yes, we know that we can jest,  
We know, we know that we can smile! 5  
But there's a something in this breast,  
To which thy light words bring no rest,  
And thy gay smiles no anodyne;  
Give me thy hand, and hush awhile,  
And turn those limpid eyes on mine, 10  
And let me read there, love! thy inmost soul.

Alas! is even love too weak  
To unlock the heart, and let it speak?  
Are even lovers powerless to reveal  
To one another what indeed they feel? 15  
I knew the mass of men conceal'd  
Their thoughts, for fear that if reveal'd  
They would by other men be met  
With blank indifference, or with blame reprov'd;  
I knew they liv'd and mov'd 20  
Trick'd in disguises, alien to the rest  
Of men, and alien to themselves—and yet  
The same heart beats in every human breast!

But we, my love!—doth a like spell benumb  
Our hearts, our voices?—must we too be dumb? 25

Ah! well for us, if even we,  
Even for a moment, can get free  
Our heart, and have our lips unchain'd;  
For that which seals them hath been deep-ordain'd!

Fate, which foresaw 30  
How frivolous a baby man would be—  
By what distractions he would be possess'd,  
How he would pour himself in every strife,  
And well-nigh change his own identity—  
That it might keep from his capricious play 35  
His genuine self, and force him to obey  
Even in his own despite his being's law,  
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast  
The unregarded river of our life  
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way; 40  
And that we should not see  
The buried stream, and seem to be  
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,

Though driving on with it eternally.

But often, in the world's most crowded streets, 45  
But often, in the din of strife,  
There rises an unspeakable desire  
After the knowledge of our buried life;  
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force  
In tracking out our true, original course; 50  
A longing to inquire  
Into the mystery of this heart which beats  
So wild, so deep in us—to know  
Whence our lives come and where they go.

And many a man in his own breast then delves, 55  
But deep enough, alas! none ever mines.  
And we have been on many thousand lines,  
And we have shown, on each, spirit and power;  
But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves— 60  
Hardly had skill to utter one of all  
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,  
But they course on for ever unexpress'd.  
And long we try in vain to speak and act  
Our hidden self, and what we say and do 65  
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true!  
And then we will no more be rack'd  
With inward striving, and demand  
Of all the thousand nothings of the hour  
Their stupefying power; 70  
Ah yes, and they benumb us at our call!  
Yet still, from time to time, vague and forlorn,  
From the soul's subterranean depth upborne  
As from an infinitely distant land,  
Come airs, and floating echoes, and convey 75  
A melancholy into all our day.

Only—but this is rare—  
When a beloved hand is laid in ours,  
When, jaded with the rush and glare  
Of the interminable hours, 80  
Our eyes can in another's eyes read clear,  
When our world-deafen'd ear  
Is by the tones of a lov'd voice caress'd—  
A bolt is shot back somewhere in our breast,  
And a lost pulse of feeling stirs again. 85

The eye sinks inward, and the heart lies plain,  
And what we mean, we say, and what we would, we know.  
A man becomes aware of his life's flow,

And hears its winding murmur, and he sees  
The meadows where it glides, the sun, the breeze. 90

And there arrives a lull in the hot race  
Wherein he doth for ever chase  
The flying and elusive shadow, rest.  
An air of coolness plays upon his face,  
And an unwonted calm pervades his breast. 95  
And then he thinks he knows  
The hills where his life rose,  
And the sea where it goes.

### Points for Reflection

1. does our narrator enjoy the witty bantering in which he and his love regularly engage?
2. why have so many poets joined Arnold (ll.10-110) in suggesting that one can read another's soul in their eyes? Do you agree?
3. by "men" (l.16), does Arnold mean humankind in general, or males in particular?
4. what might Arnold mean by the claim that "the same heart beats in every human breast" (l.23)?
5. according to the narrator, why (ll.30) does Fate hide the "river of our life" (l.39) from us?
6. does Arnold identify in lines 59-66 a problem shared by the sexes?
7. under what conditions do humans presumably, briefly, know themselves and speak truly (ll.77-90)?
8. consider the careful wording of line ninety-six.
9. does this poem uphold or validate the notion that romantic love is a powerful force for good?
10. what does this poem suggest about the scope of individual self-knowledge?

### C. Rossetti's "Winter: My Secret" (1857; 1862)

Perhaps some day, who knows?  
But not today; it froze, and blows and snows,  
And you're too curious: fie!  
You want to hear it? well:  
Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell. 5

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:  
Suppose there is no secret after all,  
But only just my fun.  
Today's a nipping day, a biting day;  
In which one wants a shawl, 10  
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps:  
I cannot open to everyone who taps,  
And let the draughts come whistling thro' my hall;  
Come bounding and surrounding me,  
Come buffeting, astounding me, 15  
Nipping and clipping thro' my wraps and all.  
I wear my mask for warmth: who ever shows  
His nose to Russian snows  
To be pecked at by every wind that blows?  
You would not peck? I thank you for good will, 20  
Believe, but leave the truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time: yet I don't trust  
March with its peck of dust,  
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,  
Nor even May, whose flowers 25  
One frost may wither thro' the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,  
When drowsy birds sing less and less,  
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,  
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud, 30  
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,  
Perhaps my secret I may say,  
Or you may guess.

#### Points for Reflection

1. what is the dominant tone of this poem?
2. why does the narrator withhold information from the auditor?
3. how would it change the poem if we knew exactly what the narrator was keeping back?

## Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Jenny" (1848, 1870)

Lazy laughing languid Jenny,  
Fond of a kiss and fond of a guinea,  
Whose head upon my knee to-night  
Rests for a while, as if grown light  
With all our dances and the sound 5  
To which the wild tunes spun you round:  
Fair Jenny mine, the thoughtless queen  
Of kisses which the blush between  
Could hardly make much daintier;  
Whose eyes are as blue skies, whose hair 10  
Is countless gold incomparable:  
Fresh flower, scarce touched with signs that tell  
Of Love's exuberant hotbed:—Nay,  
Poor flower left torn since yesterday  
Until to-morrow leave you bare; 15  
Poor handful of bright spring-water  
Flung in the whirlpool's shrieking face;  
Poor shameful Jenny, full of grace  
Thus with your head upon my knee;—  
Whose person or whose purse may be 20  
The lodestar of your reverie?

This room of yours, my Jenny, looks  
A change from mine so full of books,  
Whose serried ranks hold fast, forsooth,  
So many captive hours of youth,— 25  
The hours they thief from day and night  
To make one's cherished work come right,  
And leave it wrong for all their theft,  
Even as to-night my work has left:  
Until I vowed that since my brain 30  
And eyes of dancing seemed so fain,  
My feet should have some dancing too:—  
And thus it was I met with you.  
Well, I suppose 'twas hard to part,  
For here I am. And now, sweetheart, 35  
You seem too tired to get to bed.

It was a careless life I led  
When rooms like this were scarce so strange  
Not long ago. What breeds the change,—  
The many aims or the few years? 40  
Because to-night it all appears  
Something I do not know again.

The cloud's not danced out of my brain,—  
 The cloud that made it turn and swim  
 While hour by hour the books grew dim. 45  
 Why, Jenny, as I watch you there,—  
 For all your wealth of loosened hair,  
 Your silk ungirdled and unlac'd  
 And warm sweets open to the waist,  
 All golden in the lamplight's gleam,— 50  
 You know not what a book you seem,  
 Half-read by lightning in a dream!  
 How should you know, my Jenny? Nay,  
 And I should be ashamed to say:—  
 Poor beauty, so well worth a kiss! 55  
 But while my thought runs on like this  
 With wasteful whims more than enough,  
 I wonder what you're thinking of.

If of myself you think at all,  
 What is the thought?—conjectural 60  
 On sorry matters best unsolved?—  
 Or inly is each grace revolved  
 To fit me with a lure?—or (sad  
 To think!) perhaps you're merely glad  
 That I'm not drunk or ruffianly 65  
 And let you rest upon my knee.

For sometimes, were the truth confess'd,  
 You're thankful for a little rest,—  
 Glad from the crush to rest within,  
 From the heart-sickness and the din 70  
 Where envy's voice at virtue's pitch  
 Mocks you because your gown is rich;  
 And from the pale girl's dumb rebuke,  
 Whose ill-clad grace and toil-worn look  
 Proclaim the strength that keeps her weak, 75  
 And other nights than yours bespeak;  
 And from the wise unchildish elf,  
 To schoolmate lesser than himself  
 Pointing you out, what thing you are:—  
 Yes, from the daily jeer and jar, 80  
 From shame and shame's outbraving too,  
 Is rest not sometimes sweet to you?—  
 But most from the hatefulness of man  
 Who spares not to end what he began,  
 Whose acts are ill and his speech ill, 85  
 Who, having used you at his will,  
 Thrusts you aside, as when I dine  
 I serve the dishes and the wine.

Well, handsome Jenny mine, sit up:  
 I've filled our glasses, let us sup, 90  
 And do not let me think of you,  
 Lest shame of yours suffice for two.  
 What, still so tired? Well, well then, keep  
 Your head there, so you do not sleep;  
 But that the weariness may pass 95  
 And leave you merry, take this glass.  
 Ah! lazy lily hand, more bless'd  
 If ne'er in rings it had been dress'd  
 Nor ever by a glove conceal'd!

Behold the lilies of the field, 100  
 They toil not neither do they spin;  
 (So doth the ancient text begin,—  
 Not of such rest as one of these  
 Can share.) Another rest and ease  
 Along each summer-sated path 105  
 From its new lord the garden hath,  
 Than that whose spring in blessings ran  
 Which praised the bounteous husbandman,  
 Ere yet, in days of hankering breath,  
 The lilies sickened unto death. 110

What, Jenny, are your lilies dead?  
 Aye, and the snow-white leaves are spread  
 Like winter on the garden-bed.  
 But you had roses left in May,—  
 They were not gone too. Jenny, nay, 115  
 But must your roses die, and those  
 Their purpled buds that should unclove?  
 Even so; the leaves are curled apart,  
 Still red as from the broken heart,  
 And here's the naked stem of thorns. 120

Nay, nay, mere words. Here nothing warns  
 As yet of winter. Sickness here  
 Or want alone could waken fear,—  
 Nothing but passion wrings a tear.  
 Except when there may rise unsought 125  
 Haply at times a passing thought  
 Of the old days which seem to be  
 Much older than any history  
 That is written in any book;  
 When she would lie in fields and look 130  
 Along the ground through the blown grass,  
 And wonder where the city was,  
 Far out of sight, whose broil and bale  
 They told her then for a child's tale.

Jenny, you know the city now, 135  
 A child can tell the tale there, how  
 Some things which are not yet enroll'd  
 In market-lists are bought and sold  
 Even till the early Sunday light,  
 When Saturday night is market-night 140  
 Everywhere, be it dry or wet,  
 And market-night in the Haymarket.  
 Our learned London children know,  
 Poor Jenny, all your pride and woe;  
 Have seen your lifted silken skirt 145  
 Advertise dainties through the dirt;  
 Have seen your coach-wheels splash rebuke  
 On virtue; and have learned your look  
 When, wealth and health slipped past, you stare  
 Along the streets alone, and there, 150  
 Round the long park, across the bridge,  
 The cold lamps at the pavement's edge  
 Wind on together and apart,  
 A fiery serpent for your heart.

Let the thoughts pass, an empty cloud! 155  
 Suppose I were to think aloud,—  
 What if to her all this were said?  
 Why, as a volume seldom read  
 Being opened halfway shuts again,  
 So might the pages of her brain 160  
 Be parted at such words, and thence  
 Close back upon the dusty sense.  
 For is there hue or shape defin'd  
 In Jenny's desecrated mind,  
 Where all contagious currents meet, 165  
 A Lethe of the middle street?  
 Nay, it reflects not any face,  
 Nor sound is in its sluggish pace,  
 But as they coil those eddies clot,  
 And night and day remembers not. 170

Why, Jenny, you're asleep at last!—  
 Asleep, poor Jenny, hard and fast,—  
 So young and soft and tired; so fair,  
 With chin thus nestled in your hair,  
 Mouth quiet, eyelids almost blue 175  
 As if some sky of dreams shone through!

Just as another woman sleeps!  
 Enough to throw one's thoughts in heaps  
 Of doubt and horror,—what to say  
 Or think,—this awful secret sway, 180

The potter's power over the clay!  
Of the same lump (it has been said)  
For honour and dishonour made,  
Two sister vessels. Here is one.

My cousin Nell is fond of fun, 185  
And fond of dress, and change, and praise,

So mere a woman in her ways:  
And if her sweet eyes rich in youth  
Are like her lips that tell the truth,  
My cousin Nell is fond of love. 190

And she's the girl I'm proudest of.  
Who does not prize her, guard her well?  
The love of change, in cousin Nell,  
Shall find the best and hold it dear:

The unconquered mirth turn quieter 195  
Not through her own, through others' woe:  
The conscious pride of beauty glow  
Beside another's pride in her,

One little part of all they share.  
For Love himself shall ripen these 200  
In a kind of soil to just increase  
Through years of fertilizing peace.

Of the same lump (as it is said)  
For honour and dishonour made,  
Two sister vessels. Here is one. 205

It makes a goblin of the sun.

So pure,—so fall'n! How dare to think  
Of the first common kindred link?  
Yet, Jenny, till the world shall burn  
It seems that all things take their turn; 210

And who shall say but this fair tree  
May need, in changes that may be,  
Your children's children's charity?  
Scorned then, no doubt, as you are scorn'd!

Shall no man hold his pride forewarn'd 215  
Till in the end, the Day of Days,  
At Judgement, one of his own race,  
As frail and lost as you, shall rise,—  
His daughter, with his mother's eyes?

How Jenny's clock ticks on the shelf! 220  
Might not the dial scorn itself  
That has such hours to register?  
Yet as to me, even so to her  
Are golden sun and silver moon,

In daily largesse of earth's boon, 225  
 Counted for life-coins to one tune.  
 And if, as blindfold fates are toss'd,  
 Through some one man this life be lost,  
 Shall soul not somehow pray for soul?

Fair shines the gilded aureole 230  
 In which our highest painters place  
 Some living woman's simple face.  
 And the stilled features thus descried  
 As Jenny's long throat droops aside,—  
 The shadows where the cheeks are thin, 235  
 And pure wide curve from ear to chin,—  
 With Raffael's, Leonardo's hand  
 To show them to men's souls, might stand,  
 Whole ages long, the whole world through,  
 For preachings of what God can do. 240  
 What has man done here? How atone,  
 Great God, for this which man has done?  
 And for the body and soul which by  
 Man's pitiless doom must now comply  
 With lifelong hell, what lullaby 245  
 Of sweet forgetful second birth  
 Remains? All dark. No sign on earth  
 What measure of God's rest endows  
 The many mansions of his house.

If but a woman's heart might see 250  
 Such erring heart unerringly  
 For once! But that can never be.

Like a rose shut in a book  
 In which pure women may not look,  
 For its base pages claim control 255  
 To crush the flower within the soul;  
 Where through each dead rose-leaf that clings,  
 Pale as transparent psyche-wings,  
 To the vile text, are traced such things  
 As might make lady's cheek indeed 260  
 More than a living rose to read;  
 So nought save foolish foulness may  
 Watch with hard eyes the sure decay;  
 And so the life-blood of this rose,  
 Puddled with shameful knowledge, flows 265  
 Through leaves no chaste hand may uncloze:  
 Yet still it keeps such faded show  
 Of when 'twas gathered long ago,  
 That the crushed petals' lovely grain,  
 The sweetness of the sanguine stain, 270

Seen of a woman's eyes, must make  
 Her pitiful heart, so prone to ache,  
 Love roses better for its sake:—  
 Only that this can never be:—  
 Even so unto her sex is she. 275

Yet, Jenny, looking long at you,  
 The woman almost fades from view.  
 A cipher of man's changeless sum  
 Of lust, past, present, and to come,  
 Is left. A riddle that one shrinks 280  
 To challenge from the scornful sphinx.

Like a toad within a stone  
 Seated while Time crumbles on;  
 Which sits there since the earth was curs'd  
 For Man's transgression at the first; 285  
 Which, living through all centuries,  
 Not once has seen the sun arise;  
 Whose life, to its cold circle charmed,  
 The earth's whole summers have not warmed;  
 Which always—whitherso the stone 290  
 Be flung—sits there, deaf, blind, alone;—  
 Aye, and shall not be driven out  
 Till that which shuts him round about  
 Break at the very Master's stroke,  
 And the dust thereof vanish as smoke, 295  
 And the seed of Man vanish as dust:—  
 Even so within this world is Lust.

Come, come, what use in thoughts like this?  
 Poor little Jenny, good to kiss,—  
 You'd not believe by what strange roads 300  
 Thought travels, when your beauty goads  
 A man to-night to think of toads!  
 Jenny, wake up. . . . Why, there's the dawn!

And there's an early waggon drawn  
 To market, and some sheep that jog 305  
 Bleating before a barking dog;  
 And the old streets come peering through  
 Another night that London knew;  
 And all as ghostlike as the lamps.

So on the wings of day decamps 310  
 My last night's frolic. Glooms begin  
 To shiver off as lights creep in  
 Past the gauze curtains half drawn-to,  
 And the lamp's doubled shade grows blue,—

Your lamp, my Jenny, kept alight, 315  
 Like a wise virgin's, all one night!  
 And in the alcove coolly spread  
 Glimmers with dawn your empty bed;  
 And yonder your fair face I see  
 Reflected lying on my knee, 320  
 Where teems with first foreshadowings  
 Your pier-glass scrawled with diamond rings:  
 And on your bosom all night worn  
 Yesterday's rose now droops forlorn,  
 But dies not yet this summer morn. 325

And now without, as if some word  
 Had called upon them that they heard,  
 The London sparrows far and nigh  
 Clamour together suddenly;  
 And Jenny's cage-bird grown awake 330  
 Here in their song his part must take,  
 Because here too the day doth break.

And somehow in myself the dawn  
 Among stirred clouds and veils withdrawn  
 Strikes greyly on her. Let her sleep. 335  
 But will it wake her if I heap  
 These cushions thus beneath her head  
 Where my knee was? No,—there's your bed,  
 My Jenny, while you dream. And there  
 I lay among your golden hair 340  
 Perhaps the subject of your dreams,  
 These golden coins.  
 For still one deems  
 That Jenny's flattering sleep confers  
 New magic on the magic purse,— 345  
 Grim web, how clogged with shrivelled flies!  
 Between the threads fine fumes arise  
 And shape their pictures in the brain.  
 There roll no streets in glare and rain,  
 Nor flagrant man-swine whets his tusk; 350  
 But delicately sighs in musk  
 The homage of the dim boudoir;  
 Or like a palpitating star  
 Thrilled into song, the opera-night  
 Breathes faint in the quick pulse of light; 355  
 Or at the carriage-window shine  
 Rich wares for choice; or, free to dine,  
 Whirls through its hour of health (divine  
 For her) the concourse of the Park.  
 And though in the discounted dark 360  
 Her functions there and here are one,

Beneath the lamps and in the sun  
There reigns at least the acknowledged belle  
Apparelled beyond parallel.  
Ah Jenny, yes, we know your dreams. 365

For even the Paphian Venus seems,  
A goddess o'er the realms of love,  
When silver-shrined in shadowy grove:  
Aye, or let offerings nicely placed  
But hide Priapus to the waist, 370  
And whoso looks on him shall see  
An eligible deity.

Why, Jenny, waking here alone  
May help you to remember one,  
Though all the memory's long outworn 375  
Of many a double-pillowed morn.  
I think I see you when you wake,  
And rub your eyes for me, and shake  
My gold, in rising, from your hair,  
A Danaë for a moment there. 380

Jenny, my love rang true! for still  
Love at first sight is vague, until  
That tinkling makes him audible.

And must I mock you to the last,  
Ashamed of my own shame,—aghast 385  
Because some thoughts not born amiss  
Rose at a poor fair face like this?  
Well, of such thoughts so much I know:  
In my life, as in hers, they show,  
By a far gleam which I may near, 390  
A dark path I can strive to clear.

Only one kiss. Good-bye, my dear.

## Points for Reflection

1. what tone does the narrator's opening alliteration establish, and what do Jenny's two fondnesses signal about her (ll.1-2)?
2. in what pastime did the narrator and Jenny occupy themselves prior to sitting down?
3. what about Jenny makes her appear innocent?
4. what type of "grace" does the narrator discover in "Poor shameful Jenny" (l.18)?
5. the narrator assumes Jenny's mind is revolving around what?
6. what can we determine about the narrator's own character and situation?
7. the narrator observes that, until recently, his current environment seemed familiar and comfortable (ll.37-42). What has altered his perspective?
8. what does the narrator imagine Jenny has temporarily escaped as she rests in his lap?
9. does the narrator let Jenny continue resting--instead of sitting up to drink with him--out of kindness?
10. why might the narrator invoke Matthew 6:25-29 in lines ll.100-110?
11. is the narrator considering Jenny's body when he ponders the state of her lilies, roses, leaves, and "naked stem of thorns," or something more intangible (ll.111-20)?
12. the narrator presumes that--excepting the occasional memory of an innocent, rural past--nothing wrings a tear out of Jenny except "passion" (ll.121-34). Why would "passion" cause her to cry?
13. what does "bale" (l.133) mean in this context?
14. how many times does the narrator attempt to interrupt his morbid musings about Jenny's life trajectory?
15. according to the narrator, how would Jenny respond if he spoke aloud what he's thinking?
16. why is the narrator appalled by the thought that Jenny sleeps like any other woman (ll.177-84)?
17. what possible fate does the narrator envision befalling Jenny (l.228)?
18. does this narrator agree with Browning's "Fra Lippo Lippi" who, in RB's poem, declares that a painter who captures beauty in art can "take the Prior's pulpit-place, / Interpret God to all of you!" (ll.310-11)?

19. does the narrator find it easy to envision a restful heaven that compensates for the "lifelong hell" experienced by Jenny?
20. to whose erring heart does the narrator refer in line 251?
21. does the narrator think it likely that proper women and women like Jenny can understand and show compassion for one another?
22. why compare lust to an insolvable riddle, akin to a toad trapped within a stone (ll.276-97)?
23. why allude to Jesus's Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) in ll.315-16?
24. is the fact that the rose pinned to Jenny's dress has not yet entirely wilted provide us with a hopeful symbol of renewal (ll.323-25)?
25. how is it that the narrator can see Jenny's face when her head lies sideways on his knee, facing away from him?
26. what kind of pet does Jenny have in her room?
27. to what does "grim web" refer?
28. what does the narrator imagine filling Jenny's dreams?
29. why would it be important to "hide Priapus to the waist" in order for this fertility god, one of Aphrodite's sons, to be considered "an eligible deity" (ll.370-72)?
30. is the description of Jenny later awaking on her own to shake gold out of her hair a beautiful, poignant image with which to close the poem?
31. the narrator seems caught between mocking Jenny for counterfeiting love and censuring himself for his own shameful, lustful thoughts and actions (ll.381-87). Does he see a way forward and out of his predicament?