

*Myths and Heroes*

*Poetry Sequence*

Excerpted from:

*Great Short Poems*. Ed. Paul Negril. Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2000. Print

William Shakespeare (1564–1616)

Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;  
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;  
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd:  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest'  
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

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*Great Short Poems*

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William Wordsworth (1770–1850)

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

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.

Ralph Waldo Emerson  
(1803 - 1882)

### Character

The sun set, but set not his hope:  
Stars rose; his faith was earlier up:  
Fixed on the enormous galaxy,  
Deeper and older seemed his eye;  
And matched his sufferance sublime  
The taciturnity of time.  
He spoke, and words more soft than rain  
Brought the Age of Gold again:  
His action won such reverence sweet  
As hid all measure of the feat.

Walt Whitman  
(1819 - 1892)

### I Hear America Singing

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe  
and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand  
singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing  
as he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the plowboy's on his way in the morning,  
or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work,  
or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young fellows,  
robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

William Ernest Henley

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Emma Lazarus (1849-1887)

### The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome, her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1850–1919)

**Solitude**

Laugh, and the world laughs with you;  
Weep, and you weep alone.  
For the sad old earth must borrow its mirth,  
But has trouble enough of its own.  
Sing, and the hills will answer;  
Sigh, it is lost on the air.  
The echoes bound to a joyful sound,  
But shrink from voicing care.  
  
Rejoice, and men will seek you;  
Grieve, and they turn and go.  
They want full measure of all your pleasure,  
But they do not need your woe.

Stephen Crane (1871–1900)

**“I Saw a Man Pursuing the Horizon”**

I saw a man pursuing the horizon;  
Round and round they sped.  
I was disturbed at this;  
I accosted the man.  
“It is futile,” I said,  
“You can never—”  
“You lie,” he cried,  
And ran on.

Paul Laurence Dunbar  
(1872-1906)

We Wear the Mask

We wear the mask that grins and lies,  
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—  
This debt we pay to human guile;  
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,  
And mouth with myriad subtleties.

Why should the world be otherwise,  
In counting all our tears and sighs?  
Nay, let them only see us, while  
    We wear the mask.

We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries  
To thee from tortured souls arise.  
We sing, but oh the clay is vile  
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;  
But let the world dream otherwise,  
    We wear the mask!

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

The Negro Speaks of Rivers

I've known rivers:  
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of  
    human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.  
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.

I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.  
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to  
    New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in  
    the sunset.

I've known rivers:  
Ancient, dusky rivers.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.