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"A NEST OF SINGING BIRDS"

Печатается по решению редакционно-издательского совета Елабужского государственного педагогического университета Протокол № 15 от 29.03.2007 года

УДК 420  
ББК 81.432.1-923  
Г 93

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Пособие предназначено для обучения профессионально ориентированному чтению студентов филологических факультетов педвуза. В сборник включены тексты о поэтах Великобритании и поэтические произведения авторов. Материал сборника может быть использован учителями иностранного языка средних учебных заведений любого типа.
No age has surpassed the Elizabethan in lyrical poems. The English Renaissance, unlike the Italian, did not achieve great success in painting. The Englishman embodied in poetry his artistic expression of the beautiful. Many lyrics are merely examples of word painting. The Elizabethan poet showed his skill with the ingenious and musical arrangement of words, where an Italian would have used colour and drawing on an actual canvas.

The lyric verse of that age was remarkable for its wide range and for beauty of form and sentiment. Many Elizabethan song books show that lyrics were set to music and used on the most varied occasions (weddings, funerals, dances, banquets). There were large numbers of lyrics as spontaneous and unfettered as the song of the lark.

The lyrics included love sonnets, pastorals and miscellaneous verse.

Thomas Wyatt and Henry Surrey introduced into England from Italy the type of lyrical verse known as the sonnet. This is the most artificial of lyrics, because its rules prescribe a length of exactly 14 lines and a definite internal structure.

This form of lyrics was especially popular with Elizabethan poets. In the last ten years of the 16th century, more than 2000 sonnets were written. The subject matter of the sonnets was usually love. Sonnets came to be used in much the same way as a modern love letter or valentine.

The Elizabethan poets were called “a nest of singing birds”. The foremost poets of the time were Edmund Spenser (1552-1599), Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), Philip Sidney (1554-1586), Henry Howard (Earl of Surrey) (1517-1547), Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

(Shortened from Halleck’s New Literature by R.P.Halleck. New York-Cincinnati-Chicago, 1913)
Answer the following questions:

1. What did the Englishman embody his artistic expression in?
2. In what way did the Elizabethan poet show his skill?
3. What was the lyrical verse of that time remarkable for?
4. What kind of verses did the lyrics include?
5. What form of lyrics was especially popular with the Elizabethan poets?
6. What foremost poets of Elizabethan age do you know?

Edmund Spenser

Fair is my love, when her fair golden hairs
With the loose wind ye waving chance to mark,
Fair when the rose in her red cheeks appears,
Or in her eyes the fire of love doth spark;
Fair when her breast, like a rich laden bark
With precious merchandise, she forth doth lay:
Fair when that cloud of pride, which oft doth dark
Her goodly light, with smiles she drives away;
But fairest she, when so she doth display
The gate with pearls and rubies richly dight,
Through which her words so wise do make their way,
To bear the message of her gentle spright;
The rest be works of Nature’s wonderment,
But this the work of hearts’ astonishment.

Text 2. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616).

When two Englishmen were asked to name the finest walk in England, one chose the walk from Stratford to Coventry, the other - the walk from Coventry to Stratford. This part of the country is notable for its quiet, varied, rich scenery: beautiful woods, green fields, the winding Avon, ancient settlements, riverside parks and orchards. But Stratford lying in this part of the country is known to thousands of people not for its beauty, but for the fact that it is the birthplace of the great English poet and dramatist William Shakespeare. The name Shakespeare originally meant one skilled in wielding a spear.

He was the son of John Shakespeare, an influential merchant, who in 1571 was elected chief alderman of Stratford and bailiff in 1568.

The poet’s mother was the daughter of Robert Arden, a well-to-do farmer. Probably his mother was the original of some of her son’s noblest conceptions of women. His plays have more heroines than heroes. We may imagine that from her teaching, as she walked with him over the Stratford fields, he obtained a life-long passion for nature. Many of the references to nature in his plays are unsurpassed in English verse.

W. Shakespeare entered the Stratford Grammar School at the age of seven and continued there until he was nearly 14. The typical course in grammar school of that time consisted principally of various Latin authors. Although English was not taught, Shakespeare shows wonderful mastery in the use of his mother tongue. (He uses 15,000 different words, while a great novelist like W. Thackeray has a vocabulary of about 5000 words. The combinations that Shakespeare has made with these 15,000 words are far more striking than their mere number). The English Bible influenced his thought by all means. A great deal of scriptural phrases and references can be found in his plays.
At 14 William was taken from school, as his father’s affairs went from bad to worse, and he began to earn his own living.

In 1582 W. Shakespeare married Anna Hathaway. She was the daughter of a farmer in the village of Shottery, a short distance off Stratford. Writing verse was common at that time. It was called sonnetising. Even the young girl Ann Hathaway expressed her feelings for Shakespeare in verse. One of her poems addressed to Shakespeare is titled “To the Beloved of the Muses and Me”.

Their first child, a daughter, was born in 1583, to be followed in 1585 by twins, Hamnet and Judith.

We have no certain information as to Shakespeare’s life between 1584 and 1592. Some scholars say that he taught school for a bit in the country. There are many facts about grammar-school education, school masters, the process of instruction, the Latin tags in W. Shakespeare’s plays.

The next scene of Shakespeare’s life is laid in London. We can only imagine the steps by which he rose to his ascendancy as a dramatist. There is a story that Shakespeare’s first job in London was “to hold the Horses”. Since the principle actors were referred to as “Grooms”, the ordinary actors were called “Horses”. Shakespeare’s first work was “to coach” the younger players, which meant to teach them the parts they were about to play. Then he was asked “to hold the Horses”, that is to say he had to direct the actors when their turn came to appear on the stage.

Later, quite probably, he became an actor himself, then altered and improved the existing dramas and collaborated with others in producing new plays. Soon his own comedies were staged and later his historical plays began to appear. Play followed play. W. Shakespeare was no longer an unknown actor. He was recognized as a successful playwright and also as a poet.

W. Shakespeare lived in London for 25 years. His best years were all devoted to the theatre. Nowadays W. Shakespeare is considered to be the author of 37 plays, of two long poems and 154 sonnets.

In 1597 he purchased “New Place”, the stateliest house in Stratford. Shakespeare probably bought New Place in Stratford as a residence for his family and a retreat for himself out of the theatrical season, but continued to live in London for the greater part of the time until a few years before his death in 1616.

W. Shakespeare is buried in the church of Stratford standing beside the river Avon. Inside the church one can see the grave of W. Shakespeare and a bust of Shakespeare carved by a Dutch sculptor. Four lines are inscribed on the tomb and are said to have been written by W. Shakespeare himself:

Good friend, for Jesus’ sake, forbear
To dig the dust enclosed here;
Blessed be he that spares these stones,
And cursed be he that moves my bones.

It is believed that these lines have prevented the removal of his remains from his native place to Westminster Abbey.

(Shortened from Halleck’s New Literature by R.P. Halleck. New York-Cincinnati-Chicago, 1913)

Answer the following questions and read the extract from “Sonnets to Sundry Notes of Music” by W. Shakespeare:

1. What is Stratford-Upon-Avon notable for?
2. What did the name Shakespeare originally mean?
3. Who was the original of Shakespeare’s noblest conception of women?
4. What education did Shakespeare get?
5. Did Shakespeare have a great mastery in the use of his mother tongue?
6. What does the word “sonnetising” mean?
7. What facts of W. Shakespeare’s biography do you know?
8. What were the steps by which he rose to his ascendancy as a dramatist?
9. What can you say about his literary work?
10. Where is W. Shakespeare buried?

William Shakespeare

Live with me, and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That hills and valleys, dales and fields,
And all the craggy mountains yields.

There will we sit upon the rocks,
And see the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers, by whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

There will I make thee a bed of roses,
With a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers and a kirtle
Embroider’d all with leaves of myrtle.

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs;
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Then live with me, and be my love.

An extract from “SONNETS TO SUNDRY NOTES OF MUSIC”

Text 3. JOHN DONNE (1572-1631)

The latter part of the 16th Century was a time of turmoil in England. Yet it produced many fascinating characters whose lives and works have influenced people in succeeding centuries.

John Donne was a young man of typical Elizabethan ebullience and style. Born in 1572 and tutored in a Catholic home, he entered Oxford University at the age of 12, spent time travelling on the continent and then at the age of 19 joined Lincoln’s Inn to study law. Donne’s companions were impressed by his wide knowledge — he got up at 4 a.m. to study — as well as by his wit amid fondness for the ladies. Although he devoted a lot of energy to life and love, his first writings were theological. He set out arguments for and against the old and new religions. But it is for his passionate, sensuous poetry that he is best known today. Donne wrote originally for a small circle of friends and acquaintances who were well educated and familiar with the style of intellectual argument he used in his poems. They probably also knew the ladies he wrote about. John Donne delights in teasing his reader, expecting the reader to follow his argument through complex verse forms, analogies and paradox, to reach what is sometimes a joke conclusion and sometimes a profound philosophical statement.

But life soon became serious for John Donne. At the age of 27 while working as secretary to the influential Sir Thomas Egerton, he fell in love with and married Lady Egerton’s niece, Ann More. Her father was furious and had Donne imprisoned and dismissed from his job. John and Ann had to leave London. For some years they lived in the country in comparative poverty, depending on the generosity of friends and family. Eventually the payment of Ann’s dowry gave the family some security — they now had three children.

Times were difficult. King James made it plain he would not help John Donne achieve a position of importance unless he
became a priest of the new religion. After much thought Donne decided that he was able to do this. He took Orders in 1615 and in 1616 was appointed Reader in Divinity at Lincoln’s Inn. Unfortunately his wife didn’t live much longer to share his new fame. After bearing him 12 children of whom seven survived her, she died in 1617.

John Donne put all his energies into religion. He produced poems about his love of God which had the same power and depth of feeling as his earlier love poems. He became famous for the writings and sermons he produced for his learned audience at Lincoln’s Inn. They were recognized as some of the finest in the language. One of his best known passages is on the theme of listening to a bell toll:

*No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main ... any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in Mankind: And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee...*

Soon, Donne was made Dean of St. Paul’s. There, while dying of a feverish illness, he continued to write and preach with wit and humanity, tinged with a certain black humour about his condition.

Donne’s vigorous approach to poetry was scorned by many later poets and critics, but his work began to be appreciated in recent centuries. Poets such as Gerard Manley Hopkins and Ezra Pound used his method of applying contemporary learning to the problems of an age suffering from doubt and troubled by new scientific discoveries. 20th century poets like T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats followed Donne in combining intellect and emotion in order to evoke the spirit of their age.

(Maureen Stack. Abridged from BBC "Modern English" "Mozaika", № 7-9, 1980)
My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest,
Where can we find two better hemispheres
Without sharp North, without declining West?
Whatever dies, was not mix’d equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die.

Text 4. THE BRONTES.

Charlotte and Emily Bronte lived with their sister Anne, who wrote The Tenant of Wildfell Hall, and brother Bramwell in their father’s parsonage at Haworth in Yorkshire. The countryside, with its manufacturing towns and small moorland villages is very much part of the wild, romantic atmosphere of the novels written by the Bronte sisters, and many people visit the area each year.

Haworth is a little town which seems to climb out of a valley onto the open moorland. The Brontes’ home is at the end of a steep cobbled street, which has hardly changed since they lived there. Rooks build their nests in the huge trees which shadow the bleak stone parsonage. They caw constantly as visitors walk through the damp grass, past the mossy tombstones, on their way to the home of this famous family of writers. The scene seems just right for the characters which appear in the Bronte novels: the governess heroines whose plain exteriors hide hearts beating with passion and the wicked, fascinating heroes.

The three novelists, Charlotte, Emily and Anne and their brother Bramwell, a brilliant but unstable boy who died of alcohol and opium at the age of 30, came to Haworth as children in 1820.

In the parsonage you can see the tiny room, hardly more than two metres square, where the young people talked, invented imaginary countries and wrote long stories about them in tiny writing in dozens of small notebooks.

Haworth parsonage was enlarged after the Brontes left, but it is still possible to see how it was during their lives. Rooms have been restored and filled with relics of the family, like the sofa on which Emily died. In another room there is the dress that Charlotte wore. She must have been small because it is hardly bigger than a present-day child’s dress. There is a pair of flimsy-looking shoes which she probably wore for walking the moors with her sisters.

The moors haunt the Bronte novels, and none more than Wuthering Heights. Emily, who wrote it, used the ruins of a farm called Top Withens as the model for the bleak farmhouse which she gave as a title to her novel. You only have to walk there, preferably twice, once in sunshine and once in rain, to understand the role the moors play in the novel. They are a kind of lost paradise and spiritual home, and at the same time a brooding elemental place full of danger. The modern writer J. B. Priestley has said that you can get lost there in a matter of minutes if the weather changes, and never be found! But on fine days you can see the great expanses of natural landscape, with nothing but an occasional rabbit hopping from a burrow or a skylark soaring high above. Set in this open moorland, Haworth and the parsonage have become one of the most moving shrines of romanticism in England.

(Victor Price. Abridged and adapted from BBC “Modern English” “Mozaika”, №12, 1980)
Answer the following questions and read the poem by Emily Bronte:

1. Whom did the family of the Brontes consist of?
2. Where did the Brontes live?
3. What can the visitors see in the Haworth parsonage?
4. How can we guess that Charlotte was rather small?
5. What role did the moors play in Emily’s novel?
6. Why is Haworth called one of the most moving shrines of romanticism in England?

Emily Jane Bronte

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow,
And the storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

Text 5. ROBERT BURNS (1759-1796).

R. Burns was born on the 25th of January 1759 in a small house about two miles from the town of Ayr. The name, which the poet modernized into Burns, was originally Burnes or Burness. His father, William Burnes, was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, and had received the education common in Scotland to persons in his condition of life; he could read and write, and had some knowledge of arithmetic. In 1757 he married Agnes Brown, the mother of a future poet.

In his 6th year Robert was sent to a school at Alloway Miln, about a mile distant, but Robert's regular schooling was rather short. Later a young teacher John Murdock by name was engaged to teach the boys. Unfortunately Mr. Murdock had to leave this part of the country. Robert's father continued to teach the children himself and later sent his sons to the parish school of Dalrymple. About this time, Murdock, their former teacher, after having been in different places in the country, came to be the established teacher of the English language in Ayr. The remembrance of Robert's father former friendship, and his attachment to Robert made him do everything in his power to improve Robert's and Gilbert's education.

When Robert was 13, he had to help his father on the farm, at 15 he worked beyond his strength doing a man's full labor. All his life he fought a hand-to-hand fight with poverty. Those were hard times, but in spite of all this sixteen-year-Robert began to write. His first love song Handsome Nell was dedicated to the girl who helped him in the field.

Burns' father died in the year 1784, and left him to try farming for himself. In the following year – when Robert was 25 or 26 – he wrote some of his most famous poems - The Folly Beggars, The Two Herds, The Epistle to Davy, Death and Dr
Hornbrook, Hallowe’en, The Cotter’s Saturday Night, The Holy Fair, Holy Willie’s Prayer and The Address to a Mouse. These works give us Burns’ full force in satire, in jollity, in domestic pathos, in wit, in tenderness, in humanity and brother-love, and in that crusade against cant and sanctimony on which he spent almost too much of his spiritual energy.

In the following year he first published his poems. This was Kilmarnock Edition of only six hundred copies. He had been on the verge of a voyage to Jamaica to escape from a wild mixture of poverty and amorous entanglements. But the prise with which his book was hailed, and the promise of fame and prosperity that its immediate success held out, kept him in Scotland. In winter he went to Edinburgh. He had no letters of introduction to the society of the capital city, but none were needed, for his poem had gone before him. He found himself the social and literary lion of the day. The new edition of his poems came out, and he was flattered until many a brain would have turned. The farmer poet, however, was perfectly self-possessed.

R. Burns and W. Scott met in Edinburgh in 1786-87, when the latter was about fifteen. There are some extracts from the letter of Sir Walter Scott to Lockhart which was written fully forty years after the single conversation between the two great Scots:

“I was a lad of fifteen in 1786-87, when he (R. Burns) came first to Edinburgh, but had sense and feeling enough to be much interested in his poetry, and would have given the world to know him; but I had very little acquaintance with any literary people, and still less with the gentry of the west country, the two sets that he most frequented. Mr. Thomas Grierson was at that time a clerk of my father’s. He knew Burns and promised to ask him to his lodgings to dinner, but had no opportunity to keep his word, otherwise I might have seen more of this distinguished man…

His person was strong and robust; his manners rustic, not clownish; a sort of dignified plainness and simplicity which received part of his effect perhaps from one’s knowledge of his extraordinary talent. His features are represented in Mr Nasmyth’s picture (the familiar best-known portrait) but to me it conveys the idea that they are diminished as if seen in perspective. I think his countenance was more massive than it looks in any of the portraits. I would have taken the poet, had I not known what he was, for a very sagacious country farmer… There was a strong expression of sense and shrewdness in all his lineaments; the eye alone, I think, indicated the poetical character and temperament. It was large, and of a dark cast, and glowed (I say literary glowed) when he spoke with feeling or interest. I never saw such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men in my time.

His conversation expressed perfect self confidence, without the slightest presumption. Among the men who were the most learned of their time and country, he expressed himself with perfect firmness, but without the least intrusive forwardness; and when he differed in opinion, he did not hesitate to express it firmly, yet at the same time with modesty.”

In 1787 Burn’s poems were reprinted, the result saved him for some time from any further financial embarrassment. Nothing came of his second visit to Edinburgh. He was almost totally neglected by the leaders of literature and fashion. He realized that there was a world of intellect, of cultivation, of association with the most brilliant men of his country, and that he was shut out from this by nothing but the want of money. Burns made no complaint.

In 1788 he married Jean Armour whom he first met in 1784. She is immortalized in many poems written by the poet, such as I Love My Jean, It Is Na, Jean, Thy bonnie Face, O, Were I on Parnassus Hill and many others. He rented a little farm and set out to live on his small income. The farm was not a success, and he moved to a tiny house in Dumfries. He was keenly sensitive to right and wrong, but lacked the power to choose the right and refuse the wrong. The end came very soon, he was only 37 when he died.
Burns wrote many poems in English, but the best of his works are written in the language of his native Scotland. Readers all over the world understand his humour, his tender lyricism, his ideas of liberty and fraternity. Among his well-known poems are The Jolly Beggars, Halloween, To a Mouse, The Two Dogs.

Burns is one of the great masters of lyrical verse. There are few persons, from the peasant to the lord, who have not sung some of Burn’s songs such as Auld Lang Syne, Coming through the Rye, A Red, Red Rose and others. They are so simple and sincere that they go straight to the heart, so musical that they almost make their own melody. They have been sung wherever English is spoken.

Answer the following questions and read the poem by R. Burns:

1. When and where was R. Burns born?
2. What education did Robert get in his childhood?
3. When did he begin to write poems?
4. What poems did he write at the age of 25?
5. How did he find himself the social and literary lion of the day?
6. What did W. Scott write about his meeting with R. Burns?
7. Why was R. Burns shut out from the world of intellect and culture?
8. What poems was Jean Armour immortalized in?
9. What songs written by R. Burns do you know?

Robert Burns

EPISTLE TO DAVIE

“What tho’, like commoners of air,
We wander out, we know not where,

But either house or hall?
Yet nature’s charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, an’ foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please, then,
We’ll sit an’ sowth a tune;
Syne rhyme till’t, we’ll time till’t,
And sing’t when we hae done.

It’s no in titles nor in rank;
It’s no in wealth like Lon’on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It’s no in makin’ mackle mair;
It’s no in books; it’s no in lear,
To make us truly blest:
If happiness hae not her seat
An’ centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest:
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart aye’s the part aye
That makes us right or wrang.
Text 6. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770-1850).

The Lake District is in the north-west corner of England. It is a popular area with people who like walking and sailing. The mountains are only 3,000 ft. high but they still have the effect of great mass and strength. The high hillsides are bare and grassy, but the valleys and lakesides are gentle and thickly wooded.

Before Wordsworth (1770-1850), few people thought of going there, but during his lifetime the Lake District became a centre of pilgrimage for many young English poets.

W. Wordsworth was born in 1770 on the edge of the Lake District in a small town called Cockermouth. His early experience of this country provided a major source of inspiration for his later poetry. In The Prelude, he says that the full grandeur of Nature first struck him when, as a small boy, he rowed across a lake and felt the presence of a huge mountain towering above him. Before setting in the Lake District in 1799, Wordsworth had lived for a time in Somerset, and had also travelled widely throughout France and Germany. When travelling, Wordsworth had usually walked – in fact, he had walked from London to the Swiss Alps.

Back in the Lake District, Wordsworth lived with his sister, Dorothy, in a small cottage, known as Dove Cottage. His greatest poetry was written here and today the cottage is kept as a memorial and museum to him. Dove Cottage is just outside the village of Grasmere. Close by lie two small lakes, called Grasmere and Rydal Water, and to the south lies the great lake of Windermere.

Wordsworth’s life was spent in great simplicity – most of his time taken up by writing and walking. Apart from the beggars and tramps, who often travelled these lonely roads (and who often feature in his poems), his only visitors were poets of similar views to himself. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, with whom he lived in Somerset, came to live nearby, and Robert Southey and Thomas De Quincey were frequent visitors.

The love of natural beauty had become popular in England by the time Wordsworth had started writing. This cult concentrated on picturesque scenery and lonely castles and was originally inspired by the great French landscape painter, Claude Lorrain. Wordsworth was impatient with this fashion. He did not want to sit on a rock and observe pretty views from afar, but tried to root his whole experience in the natural world. Not only did he see Nature in its smallest forms, the different flowers, the bending branches of a tree in the wind, the flight of a butterfly – but he also saw that Nature possessed a spiritual force of power to move the human soul.

“My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old.
Or let me die!
The child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.”

This poem contains two of Wordsworth’s greatest inspirations – Nature and Childhood. From this union comes Wordsworth’s greatest poetry. Most people see a decline in Wordsworth’s poetry after 1808, the year in which he moved from Dave Cottage to Rydal Mount, with his wife and growing family. He increasingly became identified with the society he had once turned away from, and he was made Poet Laureate. Wordsworth remained at Rydal Mount until his death in 1850.

(M.E.Gibson. Abridged from BBC “Modern English
“Mozaika”, № 10, 1980)
Answer the following questions and read the poem by W. Wordsworth:

1. Why did the Lake District become a centre of pilgrimage for many young English poets?
2. When and where was W. Wordsworth born?
3. Where did he travel?
4. What cottage did W. Wordsworth live in with his sister Dorothy?
5. Who were frequent visitors of W. Wordsworth’s cottage?
6. What were W. Wordsworth’s greatest inspirations?

William Wordsworth

“THE SUN HAS LONG BEEN SET”

The sun has long been set,
The stars are out by twos and threes,
The little birds are piping yet
Among the bushes and the trees;
There’s a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes,
And a far-off wind that rushes,
And a sound of water that gushes,
And the cuckoo’s sovereign cry
Fills all the hollow of the sky.

Who would “go parading”,
In London, and “masquerading”,
On such a night of June
With that beautiful soft half-moon,
And all these innocent blisses?
On such a night as this is!

Text 7. WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832).

Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) more than anyone else, is responsible for the average Englishman’s ideas about the Scottish Highlands and their inhabitants. He created and popularized the myths of the romantic, tartan-clad clan chieftains who lived in the wild mountainous countryside.

Scott’s own family came from the Border country, which is around the English/Scottish border. He was brought up in Edinburgh and followed his father’s profession by studying Law. He qualified in 1792, and always earned some money from his legal work. He also inherited some money, and later on became a partner in a printing and publishing firm.

Although he earned a lot of money from his writing, it was not until the end of his life (when he was bankrupt) that this aspect of his writing became important to him.

When he was only eighteen months old, he was crippled by an attack of polio. This, together with a severe haemorrhage (internal bleeding) when he was about fifteen, meant that he had to spend a lot of his boyhood resting. He filled his time by reading and said, “My appetite for books was as ample and indiscriminating as it was indefatigable”. He was only interested in the plot, the action of what he read. This love of action is obvious in his own novels. The characters of his people may be flat and stereotyped, but the adventures race on.

Scott had a remarkably vivid memory for scenes, places, stories and people. As a boy, he came in contact with many older people who had memories of the two famous rebellions, the ’15 and ’45. In 1689, James II had been deposed and fled abroad. His son, James, tried to regain the throne in 1715, but was unsuccessful. James II’s grandson, Charles (commonly known as Bonnie Prince Charlie) led another unsuccessful rebellion thirty years later. Both rebellions started in Scotland, and were also
identified with the Catholic religion, which was strong in Scotland. Scott thought that these rebellions “afforded a theme, perhaps the finest that could be selected, for fictitious composition, founded upon real or probable incident.” Scott took many events and stories from people’s memories and wove them into his novels.

The rebellions provided a background for most of his famous novels and his heroes and heroines are continually getting tangled up in plots to put the rightful king back on the throne again.

However, in many ways the identity and self-respect of the Highlanders had been destroyed by the violent measures taken against them after the rebellions.

In his books, Scott was trying to keep alive the memories of the Scottish feudal traditions. In 1812, he bought Abbotsford. In fact, he bought the land, and built the house following his own ideas of a Scottish castle. He liked to think of himself as a Scottish laird (lord), and was generous to all his visitors. He was also very strongly aware of his duty to his tenants on his estate. He realized that the new, industrialised society was destroying this feudal system.

From early boyhood, Scott had known and loved the wild grandeur of the Highlands. His vivid imagination, and the stories he had heard about the ‘15 and ‘45, helped to fill this landscape with savage fighting, secret meetings and robber chieftains.

In 1813, Scott, a famous poet, had refused the poet laureateship. His first novel was published anonymously in 1814, and it was eleven years before Scott admitted that he had written it, and its nineteen successors. He had forbidden his children to read his poetry, saying that it was trite and worthless. Equally, they never knew about his novels either.

Fortunately, the majority of his readers did not share his own opinion of his work. Whatever else Scott may have achieved, his books have certainly encouraged many people to visit and appreciate the Highlands of Scotland, to enjoy the wild rugged scenery, and to imagine savage, but usually chivalrous, Scottish lairds.

(Abridged from “Current” ‘Mozaika , №11, 1980.)

Answer the following questions and read the poem by W. Scott:

1. Where did Scott’s family come from?
2. Where was Walter brought up?
3. What was the reason of his appetite for books?
4. What had Scott a remarkably vivid memory for?
5. What rebellions provided a background for most of his famous novels?
6. What do you know about his life in Abbotsford?
7. Was W. Scott first known as a poet and later as a novelist?
8. What was his own opinion of his creative work?
9. What novels by W. Scott have you read?
10. What is your opinion of his creative work?

Walter Scott

THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said:
“This is my own, my native land!”
Whose heart hath ne’er within him burned
As home his footsteps he hath turned
From wandering on a foreign strand?
If such there be, go, mark him well:
For him no minstrel—raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth, as wish can claim.
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentrated all in self,
Living shall forfeit fair renown,
And doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he spring
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung!

O Caledonia! Stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! What mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band
The knits me to thy rugged strand?"

Text 8. GEORGE GORDON BYRON (1788-1824).

George Gordon Noel Byron was born in London, January 22, 1788. His father John Byron, a dissipated captain in the Guards had gone abroad to be heard of no more. His mother Catherine Gordon moved to Aberdeen, Scotland.

There, in Scottish schools, the boy received his early education. He was extremely sensitive of his lameness (he was born with a clubfoot); its effect upon his character was obvious enough.

At the age of 10, George inherited the title and estates of his great-uncle and they returned to London. In 1799 Byron was sent to a Dulwich boarding-school and in 1801 to Harrow. In 1805 he became a student of Cambridge University.

The young lord’s life at Cambridge lasted about 2 years. In 1807 his first collection of poems entitled Hours of Idleness appeared. These boyish poems were severely criticized by the Edinburgh Review. Byron wrote a furious satire called “English Bards and Scotch Reviewers”. It was this satire that first brought him into popular notice.

Two years (1809-1811) Byron spent travelling in Spain and Turkey. This trip inspired the writing of the first two cantos of Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage. In spite of his own denials it is difficult not to believe that in his hero, Childe Harold, the gloomy, disappointed misanthrope, Byron was painting his own portrait.

This poem made him immediately popular. He wrote at that time: “I woke one morning and found myself famous”. Probably no other English poet knew such instant widespread fame as Byron. Poem after poem was produced by this lion of society, and each one was received with enthusiasm and delight.

Byron’s life as a man of fashion and a literary lion lasted about three years. During that time he took his seat in the House of Lords and wrote his Turkish tales. The Giaour and The Bride of Abydos appeared in 1813; The Corsair and Lara in the following year.

In 1815 Byron married Miss Milbanke, an heiress, but she left him a year later. Although no reason for the separation was given, the public fastened all the blame upon Byron. Suddenly and unexpectedly the adulation turned to hatred. Byron found himself the object of rumors. In 1816 he left England for ever.

His remaining eight years were spent mostly in Italy. Here, his great beauty, his exile, his poetry, and his passionate love of liberty made him a prominent figure throughout Europe. He
finished *Childe Harold*, wrote some dramas (*Manfred, Cain*) and a long satirical poem *Don Juan*.

In 1823 Byron went to Greece and joined the Greeks in their struggle against the Turks. There he fell ill and died of fever at the age of 36. His death was mourned by progressive people all over Europe.


Answer the following questions and read the poem by G.G. Byron:

1. When and where was G.G. Byron born?
2. What education did he get?
3. What was his first collection of poems?
4. What brought him into popular notice?
5. What poem did his trip in Spain and Turkey inspired?
6. What works appeared at the height of his success?
7. Had his marriage brought him happiness?
8. What works of Byron do you know?
9. Where did he spend his last years?
10. Was his death mourned by the progressive people?

**George Gordon Byron**

Farewell! if ever fondest prayer  
For other’s weal avail’d on high,  
Mine will not all be lost in air,  
But waft thy name beyond the sky.  
‘T were vain to speak, to weep, to sigh:  
Oh! more than tears of blood can tell,

When wrung from guilt’s expiring eye,  
Are in that word – Farewell! – Farewell!

These lips are mute, these eyes are dry;  
But in my breast and in my brain,  
Awake the pangs that pass not by,  
The thought that ne’er shall sleep again.  
My soul nor deigns nor dares complain,  
Though grief and passion there rebel;  
I only know we loved in vain –  
I only feel – Farewell! – Farewell!

**Text 9. RUDYARD KIPLING (1865-1936).**

God gives all earth to love,  
But since our hearts are small  
Ordains for each one spot shall prove  
Beloved over all.

And for Rudyard Kipling that spot was Sussex.  
Born in Bombay on December 30th 1865 and educated in Britain, he returned to India at the age of 16, where he did “seven years hard” as a journalist and writer of verse. He married an American lady, Miss Balastier, and he and his wife lived for a time in the United States, travelled extensively, and in 1896 finally came back to Britain in search of a permanent home. After a brief period at Torquay, they moved to Sussex – to the village of Rottingdean (near Brighton). There they took a house called the Elms.
Kipling wrote steadily in his first Sussex home and the products of this period include *Stalky and Co.*, *Kim* and the *Just-So Stories* – originally told to his own children. Unfortunately his fame led to his being pestered by over-zealous admirers. They haunted the Elms, peered in at his windows and even stole his pens. Life became unendurable, so in 1902 the Kiplings betook themselves to an old manor-house called Bateman’s, just outside the village of Burwash, and this remained the author’s home for the rest of his life. He died in 1936.

For all Kipling-lovers, Bateman’s is a shrine. Bequeathed by Mrs. Kipling to the National Trust, the house is kept almost as it was when the family lived there; Kipling’s study, indeed, is completely unchanged. It is lined with books and crowded with treasures presented to him by his friends. The gardens, which are beautifully maintained, were largely planned by Mrs. Kipling. At the far end of the garden is the little river Dudwell which figures in several of the episodes in *Puck of Pook’s Hill* and *Rewards and Fairies* – two well-loved books which consolidated Kipling’s reputation as a writer for children.

At the end of the village street at Burwash stands St. Barnabas’ Church and opposite the church is the Bell Inn which is reputed to have been a favourite meeting-place of smugglers. Ticehurst Will and the other gun-runners in “Hal o’ the Draft” drank their ale there. One is inevitably reminded of “A Smuggler’s Song” in *Puck of Pook’s Hill*, and after nightfall it is easy to imagine “Five and twenty ponies trotting through the dark” and the village children being adjured to “watch the wall, my darling, while the Gentlemen go by”.

*(Gwyneth Pennethorne. Abridged from “In Britain” “Mozaika”, № 5, 1976)*

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Answer the following questions and read the poem “If.” by R. Kipling:

1. When and where was R. Kipling born?
2. Where did he get his education?
3. Where did R. Kipling settle in Great Britain?
4. What can you say about Bateman’s house?
5. For what books is Kipling considered to be a writer for children?

**Rudyard Kipling**

*IF –*

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don’t deal in lies,
Or being hated, don’t give way to hating,
And yet don’t look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master,
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim,
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you’ve spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build ’em up with worn-out tools;
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,

And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: “Hold on!”

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds’ worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that’s in it,
And which is more – you’ll be a Man, my son!

Text 10. DYLAN THOMAS (1914-1953).

Wales has been called the land of poetry and song. Certainly, poetry is enjoyed and valued by ordinary people and the crowning of the bard (the Welsh word for poet) is probably the most important event at the Welsh National Eisteddfod (Cultural Festival) every year. Perhaps this is because the Welsh love words and the sound of the human voice – get into conversation with any Welshman, and you’ll soon find that out!

Wale’s most famous poet was obsessed with words, their sound, colour and variety – though he never wrote in the Welsh language. He also had a marvellous, rich speaking voice, and many people cannot read his poems now without remembering his deep Welsh voice, even though he died in 1953. Luckily, he left many recordings of his poems, read by himself. He also left a style of writing which has influenced many poets and writers all over the world. His name is Dylan Thomas (1914-1953).

Dylan Thomas was born and brought up in Swansea, a town on the south coast of Wales. He wrote about the hills, the sea, and the places where he played when he was a boy. His poetry is often like painting or music: when you read it, you can almost hear the wind and the sea, and see the colours of the Welsh landscape. In a letter to a student, he wrote about his love for words, and how he first learnt to use them:

What the words stood for, or symbolized, or meant was of very secondary importance; what mattered was the sound of them...I cared for the shapes of sound that their names and the words describing their actions made in my ears; I cared for the colours that the words cast on my eyes... the shape and shade and size and noise of the words as they hummed, jigged and galloped along.

Thomas wasn’t only a great poet. He could also be very funny. His best known work is a comic play called “Under Milk Wood”. This is a portrait of a Welsh village and the people who live there. They are eccentric, greedy, wicked, rude, crazy – but always hilarious and full of life. Thomas was far from polite about his fellow Welshmen, but he thoroughly enjoyed them.

Here is an extract from “Under Milk Wood”, describing morning in the village of Llareggub. You may not find all the words in the dictionary, as Dylan Thomas sometimes invented or joined up two words to make a new one. Don’t worry too much about the meaning, read it aloud and enjoy the sounds of the words, as the poet intended.

There’s the clip-clop of horses on the sunhoneyed cobbles of
the humming street, hammering of horse-shoes, gobblequack and cackle, tomtit twitter from the bird-ounced boughs, braying on Donkey Down. Bread is baking, pigs are grunting, chop goes the butcher, milk churns bell, tills ring, sheep cough, dogs shout, saws sing

(Diana Reynolds. From “Current” “Mozaika”, № 4-6, 1982)

Answer the following questions and read the poem by Dylan Thomas:

1. What does the Welsh word “a bard” mean?
2. Where was D. Thomas born and brought up?
3. What were his poems devoted to?
4. In what way did he describe his love for words?
5. What is his best known work?
6. Why is his poetry like painting or music?
7. Why can’t a reader of Dylan Thomas’s poetry find the meaning of the words in a dictionary?

Dylan Thomas

This bread I break was once the oat,
This wine upon a foreign tree
Plunged in its fruit;
Man in the day or wind at night
Laid the crops low, broke the grape’s joy.

Once in this wind the summer blood
Knocked in the flesh that decked the vine,

Once in this bread
The oat was merry in the wind;
Man broke the sun, pulled the wind down.

This flesh you break, this blood you let
Make desolation in the vein,
Were oat and grape
Born of the sensual root and sap;
My wine you drink, my bread you snap.


“Poetry makes nothing happen,” wrote W.H. Auden. It exists for its own sake:
In the valley of its making it survives where executives
Would never want to tamper, flows on south
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,
Raw towns that we believe and die in.

He justifies poetry because it is a form of reaching out isolation and personal anxieties. It is a form, probably the best form, of communication: “it survives, a way of happening, a mouth.”

This creed enabled Auden to devote himself to poetry. The mark of his life and work was discipline. His vocation required all his energy, even to the point of going to bed early every night. Auden gave his life to his art.

He died in Vienna on October 29, 1973. Born in Birmingham in 1907 and educated at Oxford, he emigrated to America in 1939. New York became his home, but he spent his summers in an Austrian village. In the 50’s he returned to live in Oxford.

His appearance was unique and memorable. He always
wore carpet slippers and loose-fitting clothes. He smoked fifty cigarettes a day. All who saw him were impressed by his intelligence and the assurance of his manner. Opinions he had, and he pronounced them. He was both gruff and kindly and his overbearing manner was softened by a gentle smile. His face became so wrinkled that Stravinsky said, “Soon we will have to smooth him out to see who he is.”

He was a master of his art. Few writers had his vast vocabulary, just as few shared his love to play with and count out the metres: “It’s such fun,” he exclaimed.

His poetry is often difficult. Auden sensed and wrote about the many sides of an experience. Take, for instance, the famous lullaby which begins:

Lay your sleeping head, my love,
Human on my faithless arm;
Time and fevers burn away
Individual beauty from
Thoughtful children, and the grave
Proves the child ephemeral:
But in my arms till break of day
Let the living creature lie,
Mortal, guilty, but to me
The entirely beautiful.

Auden sees beyond the tender moment. He recalls that lovers are mortal, that beauty is passing, that love is full of illusions, that this is just a moment of escape from the demands of society. He recognizes, moreover, (the “faithless arm”) his own failures and responsibility for suffering. Yet, he seizes and cherishes the tenderness of the moment.

All poetry does not tell us to rejoice, but Auden’s did. Though life is full of wrong and injustice, and though we can do little about it, he tells us to accept and be grateful for it: “Bless what there is for being”.

His poetry makes nothing happen, but it puts us in contact with his clear, many-sided understanding of life. Our minds and our hearts are opened. And so he still lives, this poet whom we lost in 1973.

(Paul Delaney. From “Modern English” “Mozaika”)

Answer the following questions and read the poem by W. H. Auden:

1. What was the mark of his life and work?
2. When and where was W. H. Auden born?
3. What education did he get?
4. Where did he emigrate to?
5. When did he return to live in Oxford?
6. What can you say about his appearance?
7. What did he write about?
8. Why did he write the following words: “Poetry makes nothing happen”?

Wystan Hugh Auden

This lunar beauty
Has no history
Is complete and early;
If beauty later
Bear any feature
It had a lover
And is another.
This like a dream
Keeps other time
And daytime is
The loss of this;
For time is inches
And the heart’s changes
Where ghost has haunted
Lost and wanted.

But this was never
A ghost’s endeavour
Nor finished this,
Was ghost at ease;
And till it pass
Love shall not near
The sweetness here
Nor sorrow take
His endless look.


Philip Arthur Larkin (1922-1985) was an English poet, novelist and jazz critic. He received many awards in recognition of his writing and is commonly regarded as one of the greatest English poets of the latter half of the 20th century.

Larkin was born in Coventry, a large provincial city in the English Midlands. He was educated at King Henry VIII School in Coventry, and St. John’s College, Oxford. In 1943, soon after graduating from Oxford, he applied for, and was appointed to, the position of municipal librarian at Wellington, Shropshire. In 1946, he became assistant librarian at the University College, Leicester. In March 1955, he became librarian at the University of Hull, a position in which he remained until his death. He never married, but did have long term relationships with a number of women.

The first of his poems to be published in a national weekly was “Ultimatum”, which appeared in the Listener in 1940. Then in 1943, three of his poems were published in Oxford Poetry (1942-43). These were “A Stone Church Damaged By A Bomb”, “Mythological Introduction”, and “I Dreamed of an Out-thrust Arm of Land”. In 1945, ten of his poems appeared in Poetry from Oxford in Wartime. Two novels, “Jill” and “A Girl in Winter” were published in 1946 and 1947 respectively. In 1951 a small collection, XX Poems, was privately printed in an edition of 100 copies. Also in 1954 a pamphlet containing five of his poems and later “Toads” and “Poetry of Departures” were published. His collection “The Less Deceived”, published in 1955, marked Larkin as an up-and-coming poet. It was this collection that would be the foundation of his reputation as one of the foremost figures in 20th century poetry. “The Whitsun Weddings” (1964) became the collection that was well received and widely acclaimed. The following year, Larkin was awarded the Queen’s Gold Medal for Poetry.

It was during the years 1961-71 that Larkin contributed monthly reviews of jazz recordings for the Daily Telegraph, and these reviews were brought together and published in 1970 under the title “All What Jazz: a record diary 1961-1968”. Larkin was a notable critic of modernism in contemporary art and literature. He also edited “The Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse”, which was published in 1973.

His last collection “High Windows” (1974) confirmed him as one of the finest poets in English Literary history. It contains a number of his most-loved pieces, including “This Be the Verse”
and “The Explosion”, as well as the title poem. “Aubade”, his last great poem, was published in The Times Literary Supplement in 1977. If this had been the only poem Larkin had ever written, his place in English poetry would still be secure. A collection of his essays and reviews was published in 1983 as “Required Writing: miscellaneous pieces 1955-1982”, and won the W.H. Smith Literary Award for 1984.

In 1975 he was awarded the CBE, and in 1976 was given the German Shakespeare-Pries. He chaired the Booker Prize Panel in 1977, was made Companion of Literature in 1978, and served on the Literature Panel of the Arts between 1980 and 1982. He was made an Honorary Fellow of the Library Association in 1980. In 1982 the University of Hull made him a Professor. In 1984 he received an honorary D.Litt. from Oxford University, and was elected to the Board of the British Library. In December of 1984 he was offered the chance to succeed Sir John Betjeman as Poet Laureate but declined, being unwilling to accept the high public profile and associated media attention of the position.

In 1985 Larkin was awarded the much prized Order of the Companion of Honour but he was unable to attend the investiture at Buckingham Palace because of ill health. Philip Larkin died in December 1985. He was 63 years old.

Media interest in Larkin has increased in the 21st century. His poems, “This Be the Verse”, “The Whitsun Weddings” and “An Arundel Tomb”, featured in the “Nation’s Top 100 Poems” as voted for by television viewers. His poem “At Grass” is featured in one Anthology booklet of the GCSE English exam, and “Afternoons” appears in another, Best Words. The Larkin Society was formed in 1995, ten years after the poet’s death; its president is Anthony Thwaite, one of Larkin’s literary executors. In 2003, BBC TWO broadcast a play, titled “Love Again”, that dealt with the last 30 years of Larkin’s life. The lead role was played by Hugh Bonneville.

Answer the following questions and read the poem by Philip Larkin:

1. What is Philip Larkin known for?
2. Where and when was Philip Larkin born?
3. Where was he educated?
4. What was his profession?
5. When and where was his first poem published?
6. What novels did Philip Larkin publish in 1946 and 1947?
7. What works were published in 1955?
8. What information have you got about his collection “The Whitsun Weddings”?
9. What contribution did Philip Larkin make as an art critic?
10. What was his last collection?
11. What awards did Larkin receive in recognition of his writing?

Philip Larkin

FIRST SIGHT

Lambs that learn to walk in snow
When their bleating clouds the air
Meet a vast unwelcome, know
Nothing but a sunless glare.
Newly stumbling to and fro
All they find, outside the fold,
Is a wretched width of cold.

As they wait beside the ewe,
Her fleeces wetly caked, there lies
Hidden round them, waiting too,
Earth’s immeasurable surprise.
They could not grasp it if they knew,
What so soon will wake and grow
Utterly unlike the snow.

Text 13. RUTH PADEL

Ruth Padel is a British poet and writer, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. Her books are an eclectic range of prose non-fiction on music, travel, ancient Greek myth and religion, ideas of the mind and self, nature conservation and poetry. “Few women writing non-fiction today have such sophisticated understanding of language, nuanced approach to style and willingness to engage with big issues both personal and political,” Sara Wheeler, Guardian.

Born in London in 1946, Ruth has lived for several years in Greece, sung in an Istanbul nightclub, Heraklion Town Choir in Crete and Philippe Caillard’s choir in Paris; helped to excavate Minoan tombs, taught modern as well as ancient Greek at Cambridge, Oxford and on the island of Kalymnos, taught myth in Buenos Aires University Psychology Dept, opera at Princeton, and horse-riding in Berlin. She currently lives in London.

Her first job was playing viola in Westminster Abbey for £5.


She wrote the popular “Sunday Poem” column for the Independent on Sunday for three years. Her book from it, “52 Ways of Looking at a Poem” includes a ground-breaking introduction to British poetry of the last twenty years, exploring issues from iambic pentameter and feminism to media attitudes to poetry in Britain.

Ruth Padel’s “52 Ways of Looking at a Poem” is indispensable for anyone who writes, teaches or loves poetry. Her new book asks what reading a poem is anyway. Why do we still need poetry on the journey of our lives? In Part One poem, she shows how poetry has always been part of our humanity and still is. Part Two, her readings of sixty poems (by poets not usually found in one volume eg Roger McGough, Jean ‘Binta’ Breeze, Seamus Heaney, John Ashbery, Alice Oswald, J. H. Prynne) is structured round the journey of life. Together, they form the perfect companion for every journey, real or metaphorical, and a unique exploration, both accessible and profound, of reading itself.


“Rembrandt Would Have Loved You”. This book includes the poem that won the 1996 UK National Poetry Competition,
“Icicles Round a Tree in Dumfriesshire”. Judge Jo Shapcott called it “a daring blend of fire and ice, passion and design”. “Emotion, wit, music, texture and elegance,” wrote another judge Paul Durcan. “If Wallace Stevens and Anna Akhmatova were one and the same person, you’d have Ruth Padel”.

Ruth Padel is considered to be one of the best love poets in England.

Readers give high appraisals of her poetry books:

Fiona Shaw: “Deftly, gently, she guides the reader in the necessity of poetry. How else are we to know ourselves? Much more than a book about poetry, this is a handbook for living!”

Michael Wood: “A treasure trove of delights, a sparkling demonstration that reading is still at the core of our culture. Every school should have a copy!”

Gillian Beer: “This vivid, illuminating book opens pathways for the reader of contemporary poetry”.


Ruth Padel is a great great grand-daughter of Charles Darwin and a Fellow of The Zoological Society of London. For the last two years, through ten Asian countries, she has been researching wild tigers - where they live, who protects them and what threatens them - for a travel-memoir to be published in 2005. Her short stories on tigers have appeared in Dublin Review, Prospect, and the Daily Mail and been translated into German.

Answer the following questions and read the poem by Ruth Padel:

1. What is Ruth Padel?
2. What occupations has she tried?
3. Where does she currently live?
4. What does Ruth Padel’s non-fiction include?
5. What information have you got about her book 52 Ways of Looking at a Poem?
6. What collections of Ruth Padel’s poetry do you know?
7. What awards and prizes for her writing has she got?
8. What appraisals do the readers give of Ruth Padel’s poetry books?
9. What problems does her journalism touch upon?
10. What do you know about Ruth Padel’s relation to Charles Darwin?

Ruth Padel

TIGER DRINKING AT FOREST POOL

Water, moonlight, danger, dream.
Bronze urn, angled on a tree-root: one
Slash of light, then gone. A red moon
Seen through clouds, or almost seen.

Treasure found but lost, flirting between
The worlds of lost and found. An unjust law
Repealed, a wish come true, a lifelong
Sadness healed. Haven, in the mind,

To anyone hurt by littleness. A prayer,
For the moment, saved; treachery forgiven.
Flame of the crackle-glaze tangle, amber
Reflected in grey milk-jade. An old song
Remembered, long debt paid.
A painting on silk, which may fade.
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