

Student Poems Inspired by

Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes by Billy Collins



Dressing Maya Angelou

by Katie Boecking

Your body so intricate,
Your skin so bare,
Put on a skirt,
Cover up those swinging hips.
Put on a blouse,
Cover up your heart,
Half of stone and half of gushy love.
Put on a jacket,
Cover up your backbone,
Your independence is too much for some to see.
Put on some gloves,
Cover up your hands,
Restrict your hold to those who read your work.
Put on some shoes,
Cover up your feet.
Lest you trample on another poor man's heart.
Put on a hat,
Cover up your head,
Keep your head from getting in the clouds,
Put on some clothes,
Cover up yourself.
Your words so harsh yet so loving,
Petting yet slapping,
A hug, but also a stab,
Chain your words down,
Keep them under control.
But no matter how many clothes you put on,
Still you rise.

At a Doctor's Appointment with Elizabeth Bishop
by Hannah Govett

*Elizabeth sits in the Waiting Room
With her Aunt Consuelo.
She quietly sits in the gloom
Writing of an armadillo.*

*The armadillo had been out
The night before.
Elizabeth saw his snout
Glistening as bright as the Florida shore.*

*Flipping through a book,
She sits next to her aunt.
At the pictures she loves to look
And wants to write, but can't.*

*Elizabeth's past has made her sad;
She has lost so much.
When she lost her dad
She lost her poet's touch.*

*One could say she's a master
Of the art of losing.
She remembers the disasters
As she waits for the doctor, snoozing.*

Words with Brooks

by Zach Barreto

Hey sister Brooks how you doing

I'm reading your poems and they're dang confusing

The points you make are so fly and amazing

When you walk by people stop what they doing

Because your blackness is just so pure and white

Hey that's a contradiction walking and talking

So you're an example to all what we need to be

Luminously discreet and complete and continuous

Your poems put us high in space, but the message you tell us

Grounds us down to this living place

So with much love rest in peace

A Hamburger with Billy Collins

by Maddie Reddick

The picnic table was worn
from the rays of the beating sun,
which lit his face,
smiling from beneath those dark eyes.

You should know
the hamburger was delicious,
or should I say cheeseburger
with ketchup, mayonnaise, mustard, lettuce, and tomato.

He cooked them himself,
just for us,
with no special ingredients or tricks,
yet it was the best burger
I had ever tasted.

The twinkle in his eye
sparkled like a jewel,
as he laughed
that whole-hearted laugh
at the not-so-funny jokes the children told.

He held them in his arms,
looking as if he never wanted to let them go.

Looking up at the blue sky,
I sniffed,
smelling the pine-scented air
just as he caught my eye,
smiling that sly smile as if to say,
“Shh, keep the secret.”

He winked at me and whispered,
“There is just no way you are the pine-scented air.”

Billy's Backyard

by Grant Martin

Billy gave me the grand tour one day of his home,
and of his grand backyard.

On one end, you can see Smokey the Bear
prowling and looking for troublemakers,
to show 'em how it's done.

On another end, you can see a pool with a corpse
on the bottom to show the art of drowning.

On another, he points out a home owned by a man
struggling with forgetfulness.

And what he describes as the best,
an open window on a house quite close to his,
where he can watch and fantasize
about undressing Emily Dickinson
from the view of his own bedroom.

painting with e e cummings

by tendai dandajena

painting?

yes painting... i guess i'll go painting with cummings.

he's a cool guy and all,

but when he starts to paint he goes somewhere i have never travelled
sadly beyond.

he paints these ladies, the cambridge ladies,

they look stuck up,

as if they move through dooms of money...

he paints their eyes small small with big heads,

apparently it represents ignorance.

i wonder how the critics will take his painting,

bet they'll smash it until only mister death can see its defunct brush strokes.

maggie and milly and molly and may

are on their way.

darkness already?

i guess it's time to go home and leave e. e. to his paintings.

if they don't get too crazy...

oftenevenican'tunderstandthem.

riding in-a car with e e cummings
by elyse hight

riding in-a car with him
is such a peculiar thing,
this car I don't understand.
He keeps raving and raving about
a simple piece of metal.
It's not that big of a
deal.

he is a very hard man to
understand, himself.
He breaks up his sentences into
fragments that don't make sense when
mashed together and what
not.

it was a nice ride though,
through Divinity Avenue.
he told me wonderful stories of stories
about this one lady of ladies,
he claimed "i carry her heart
with me".

it was quite romantic,
it just kept leading back to
his brand new car.
boy, he loved that
car of a car.

Exporing the Garden with Emily Dickinson

by Emily Borders

As new feet within the garden—
We tiptoe right along—
The flowers in May are
Bold little beauties.

We listen to the robins—
She says she wishes she could fly
So that she could see the sea
And never wonder why.

The sunlight hits our faces
Butterflies flutter—carelessly
The murmur of the bees
The sweet nectar they must need

Sweet voices we hear—
Feathers on the ground—
She looks around in awe
Until the bird is found

A frog croaks in the pond—
She whispers to it quietly—
Don't shout! She says—
As if she were conversing

The dews grew chill—
We tiptoed to the light
To not disturb this little world—
And to leave Emily, to write

Packing for a Trip to England with T. S. Eliot

by Jessica Brewer

Ready to move to Britain,
We have to prepare our things for packing.
The house must be clean,
We need to go by the bank and get some things finished.

Oh,
And the cat needs to be groomed.
Oh,
Where did that cat even go?

This journey is sincerely long,
It will take pages and pages,
I stack boxes up like piles of words,
Bulging out of their space.

Oh,
Where is that cat?
Oh,
There it is...in the window.

I say goodbye to my students,
They've sharpened like a new pencil.
In fact, that pencil,
It needs to be packed.

Tea with Eliot

by Molly Kalk

Sitting across from me,
Alternating between sipping tea
And puffing on his pipe,
All the while, absent-mindedly
Petting a ginger cat.

With his deep blue jacket,
His neatly tied black tie,
His legs crossed in freshly pressed trousers,
He pushes his round framed glasses
Up the bridge of his nose.

The essence of sophistication.

The verandah is stylishly decorated,
Matching elegant wicker furniture,
Everything just right.

Statues of cats and nightingales
Are displayed throughout the yard,
All arranged so perfectly
So much so that it takes on a dream-like quality,

When he leans over and asks me,
“One lump, or two?”
And pulls me out of my thought.

The Autumn Trail

by Maddie Farber

Crunching, crunching, crunching,

The leaves crackle and separate into tiny fragments

Underneath our wandering feet.

Down the trail in the forest,

Our spirits soaring,

Waiting for what is to come next,

But just then

The trail splits in two.

Oh where to go? Oh what to do?

Robert says the trail with the leaves that have not been walked upon.

I say the one that has.

Oh what to do? Are Robert and I going to split in two, too?

But it will be an adventure if we are able to crunch the leaves with our own feet he proclaims,

And alas, I am swayed.

Oh, Robert*, you and your ways.

*Robert Frost

Taking A Walk with Robert Frost

by Scott Witcher

Walking through the woods with a friend Robert Frost,
A winding road through which the animals cross,
We had miles to go before the next street,
And miles to go before we sleep.

He told me that in my life I would,
Have to make choices and with those I should
Think before choosing because I would
Want to take both, as if I could.

We came upon two roads inside the wood.
And there I stood, I couldn't move my feet.
He said that if I wish to face defeat
I would take the one that's short and sweet.
But If I decided not to cheat,
I'd have miles to go before I sleep.

Of course, we chose the road less travelled by,
And at the moment the sun had left the sky,
And when nothing but stars shined up high,
I realized the advice he gave was not a lie.

He then told me to always be willing,
To do the uncommon; it is more fulfilling.
That often the unexpected is much more thrilling
Than to only be average, and go through life milling.

At the roads end, we came upon a Christmas tree.
He pointed out the beauty; I had to agree.
Never had I seen happiness right in front of me,
For free, then he said that one day I'll see.

To see good things in life is often so easy,
If I don't go around acting so queasy.
And that knowing this all obstacles I'll handle
Until I sleep, and God says "Out, out brief candle."

Taking a Walk with Robert Frost

by Cody Coyle

Robert and I begin our walk.
It is a walk in the woods about a mile away from his farm.
We first come upon two paths,
We take the different path, the one less traveled.
We come upon wild horses,
Jumping on them we begin to ride.
Both of us want to lead,
But we can just only ride.
It's tragic to think that this beauty can end.
I say probably a forest fire, probably from an accident.
But he says most likely in ice, probably a frost.
This has truly been a special night,
A peck of gold, a gift outright.

Strolling with Robert Frost

by Kendall Morgan

Robert and I
Slowly making our way along
Two paths we must choose between.
Which road not taken
Will he choose?

Fire or ice,
The way our world will end,
Tasting desire leads to favoring fire,
But hate is also known.
Either would suffice.

Into the woods we stare.
A snowy evening is all that I see,
But there is more here.
Dark and deep do these woods seem,
Miles more to go.

The land we possess,
Our land before we were.
Hundreds of years have we been
Living here on this great land,
Living the gift outright.

Live in the moment,
The age-long theme,
Age that saw our lives go by.
We know that life goes on.
Carpe diem.

Singing with Langston Hughes

by Emily Bedford

His guitar strums to the sweet but drowning melodies,
Yet in his mind there is an orchestra playing in the background.
Our minds put together as if to create our own memories,
Through his weary blues swaying to the thick dull pound.
Each time he plays a different type of song,
He reveals another person that relates to it.
Though life is fine, he thinks everything is wrong
And he relies on everything bit by bit—
And having his guitar with him on the run,
So that he will always be himself.
The dreams about walking with the dawn,
All the advice from mother to son—
Keep him writing his soulful songs till dawn.

Tea with John Keats by Jake Harrell

As I sat in London Square, drinking my tea,
The young John Keats came up to greet me.
Before he sat down, he waved bye to Fanny;
The loneliness in his eyes a bit uncanny.
I noticed a few things -- he coughed, heavily and much,
And his handshake, not firm, just a soft, weak, touch.
From the late evening sky, a "Bright Star" showed his pale skin,
Luminous, glowing a little, looking much too thin.
Then he looked at me, and slowly began to speak,
"I have fears I may cease to be, for I am getting weak.
Each day I feel my bones continuing to wither.
I know I am the grasshopper, ill prepared for winter."
With that he turned and walked quietly away,
Leaving me and my thoughts in great disarray.

Traveling with Pablo Neruda by Megan Noble

There is no better way in my mind
To better understand a person
Than to travel the world with them
Experience new places and things with them
And talk with them along the way.

Neftali is a seasoned traveler
Spain, Russia, France, Cuba, Mexico, Rangoon, Java
And more
The quiet older man stares off into the distance
As we sit at a café in Paris.

He is quiet
Generally speaking
But not to say that he doesn't use his words
But wisely.
To show this, he quotes, himself, friends, famous authors
And writes, pouring emotions from pen to paper
Mind to matter.

We've moved through Western Europe,
Experienced as much as is proper.
Moving on to Eastern Europe, to Russia
Where he has friends, and many opinions.
Politics, besides poetry, where his words flow freely.

I have learned, experienced, traveled with
A man of figurative and literary genius.
His deep thought and reflection,
Like a clear pond, graced with the floating presence
Of a soft white swan, on a starry night.

Cooking with Sylvia Plath

by Tamara Allen

In order to cook with Miss Plath,
One must understand her temperament.

If she does not speak to you,

Then don't speak to her.

Her mind tends to wander quite easily.

She salts her meals with tears;

An aroma of heartbreak makes its way through the house.

Do not comment on this;

It will only make things worse.

She tries to forget when she can.

The mad girl will cook her meal in silence.

Although her children may scream,

Just background noise.

After the meal is prepared, however,

A beautifully bitter masterpiece shall be consumed by all.

(I regret to inform you, that

Miss Plath is not allowed

To use her oven.

For safety purposes.)

“Wet Towels and Cloths” - Last Days with Sylvia*
by Rachel Rengstorf

I saw you suffering in the cold,
Abandoned and on your own,
You did your best to stay so bold,
For your children, not quite grown.

Third time comes and this is it,
You left bread for the kids,
Knowing this time you would commit,
You open the door, God forbids.

Wet towels and cloths seal the room,
In your mind this plan did plow,
Turn on the gas and let it fume,
There's no turning back now.

The end has come,
You are relieved,
The pain, the feelings now are numb,
Your goal, finally achieved.

We saw your pain,
We saw your guilt,
This time was not to entertain,
You were done, your heart had spilt.

*Sylvia Plath

Breakfast with Sylvia*

by Carrie Carter

She invites me in and the first thing that I notice,
Is her grey cardigan, and green eyelet skirt.
I've noticed that she didn't dress up for me.
She decided that morning not to put on her best dress,
Or her embroidered apron.
Instead she is carrying an old dish towel.

Her kitchen is full of food.
Pancakes and syrup and eggs and
She is slicing strawberries to add to the
Beauty of the breakfast.

Her finger accidentally gets sliced by her knife,
And it really almost seems like she doesn't much care about the pain.
Instead, she is staring at the flap of skin,
She is examining the blood rising to the top of her inner layer of skin,
Her plush, creamy skin.

And I offer her a bandage,
But she politely declines,
And she lets the blood dry.

We sit down by the window,
And she gives us both 3 pancakes,
1 cup of chopped berries,
And, with a swift movement,
She grabs the syrup and pours half the container
Onto her cakes, and I wonder how she stays so thin.

She really seems to enjoy her breakfast,
With all of her being.
I try to get her to talk about her problems with Ted,
Or her poetry,
But she just changes the subject,
In a delightfully warbling voice.

*Sylvia Plath

A Flight with Rilke*

by Olivia Morris

A flight with Rilke
Parted, from the dust of the earth
I am set free
Limbs lingering about the air
My tender wings unraveled, taut
My poet's eyes laugh
His wings gather light
And flare as they pulse idly
I fight the air and follow
To a hallowed land

Stealing the scent of rose
Lost in the brilliance of the stars
He gently guides my hands
Across the water's blue
Never a word spoken
Yet a thousand meanings shown
The stars hold their sovereignty
Above my wandering eyes
The sun's demise never seen
And yet the moon's rise
Clasped in place

Suspended through the ages
This is a world I have known
When I but wake in my sleep
To sleep in my wake
His language is through the eyes
He stretches my face to the heavens
Where there is nothing to hide
"I have seen this face of the world
I have known this place of the gods
As you have through your wonderings"

*Rainer Maria Rilke

Spending Midnight with Dylan Thomas by Casey Barth

Basement,
Dimly lit and stuffy,
Sparsely furnished with a fridge stuffed in a corner,
Bucket standing strong in the middle of the room,
Thomas gagging and choking the night's contents inside,

Waiting,
Watching him suffer,
Rise quickly and advance to aid in his misery,
Hold his hair back and tilt his head in the right angle,
Empty the contents in the bucket and wash it clean,

Cries,
Another heave hits,
But without his bucket to empty his creativity and dinner,
Throw him the pail and grab the mop for cleaning,
Passed out on the floor, not to be woken until morning,
What a night to spend with such a deep man,
Now knee deep in his own vomit,
Again.

Walking With Walt Whitman

by Bronte Yardley

Together we walk, Side-by-side,

Touching, Dreaming, Talking

The softness of your fingers glides across my skin

Gossamer wings

I walk next to you, I am your follower.

You, who I wish to devour

To Consume,

I want to submerge myself with-in you

You walk ahead.

Why will you not stay by my-side? Will you not follow me,

Like I have follow'd you?

I watch your back, your shoulders, your neck

you turn, your hand stretch'd out

beckoning, welcoming,

I grasp the firmness of your hand,

Calloused from work, Gentle, Warm

Hand-in-Hand we walk, you speak of body, of soul

Your words caress me

They slip into me

Until we part, I am to be your lover,

I will caress your body and your soul

Until night , when all we have are Dreams

I will be your body and your soul.

Gone Fishing with William Wordsworth

written by Melissa Doan

I followed in his known footprints
reflecting on the soul of their outline,
Deeply remembered is his imprint
where I have barely begun to start mine.
The trees whispered thoughts to ponder
to the lonely clouds whose life wandered.

Interminable as the heart of Nature
was the landscape I saw at a glance.
Here, kindness dwelled and dreams were feathers
and daffodils grew warmer perchance.
The sparkling stream held waves and petals
as the leaves danced on the ripples.

He then gave me a piece of worldly advice:
Live with your heart, act with your mind.
Don't forget about the gifts of solitude twice,
And to the lessons of nature, be not blind.
"And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils."

inspired by William Wordsworth's "The Daffodils"

A Walk through the Woods with William Wordsworth
by Grace Aguilera

*The evergreen trees sway in the breeze,
The clouds are moving quickly across the sky,
And the rest of the world seems to freeze,
And over the forest trail we fly.*

*Talk of past and forbidden love pass through his lips,
Mixed feelings, and indecision about indecision.
For a minute he looks down at his feet,
But the moment passes and his eyes return to the world
Around us.*

*His eyes reflect the greens and dark browns.
The earth is damp and soft.
The moss growing on fallen trees
Beckons to be sat upon.*

*Next to the log, a few daffodils dance
In a patch of sunlight.*