

A SAMPLER

OF

POEMS

from

*Wider than the Sky, Poems to Grow Up With*

Collected and Edited by

Scott Elledge

### April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you.  
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops.  
Let the rain sing you a lullaby.

The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk.  
The rain makes running pools in the gutter.  
The rain plays a little sleep-song on our roof at night—

And I love the rain.

LANGSTON HUGHES

Cats

Cats sleep

Anywhere,

Any table,

Any chair,

Top of piano,

Window-ledge,

In the middle,

On the edge,

Open drawer,

Empty shoe,

Anybody's

Lap will do,

Fitted in a

Cardboard box,

In the cupboard

With your frocks—

Anywhere!

*They* don't care!

Cats sleep

Anywhere.

ELEANOR FARJEON

## Ducks' Ditty

All along the backwater,  
Through the rushes tall,  
Ducks are a-dabbling.  
Up tails all!

Ducks' tails, drakes' tails,  
Yellow feet a-quiver,  
Yellow bills all out of sight  
Busy in the river!

Slushy green undergrowth  
Where the roach swim—  
Here we keep our larder,  
Cool and full and dim.

Every one for what he likes!  
We like to be  
Head down, tails up,  
Dabbling free!  
High in the blue above  
Swifts whirl and call—  
We are down a-dabbling  
Up tails all!

KENNETH GRAHAME

## Flint

An emerald is as green as grass,  
A ruby red as blood;  
A sapphire shines as blue as heaven;  
A flint lies in the mud,  
A diamond is a brilliant stone,  
To catch the world's desire;  
An opal holds a fiery spark;  
But a flint holds fire.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

## Proud Songsters

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,  
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs,  
And as it gets dark loud nightingales  
In bushes  
Pipe, as they can when April wears,  
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelve-months' growing,  
Which a year ago, or less than twain,  
No finches were, nor nightingales,  
Nor thrushes,  
But only particles of grain,  
And earth, and air, and rain.

THOMAS HARDY

Narcissa

Some of the girls are playing jacks.

Some are playing ball.

But small Narcissa is not playing

Anything at all.

Small Narcissa sits upon

A brick in her back yard

And looks at tiger lilies,

And shakes her pigtails hard.

First she is an ancient queen

In pomp and purple veil.

Soon she is a singing wind.

And, next, a nightingale.

How fine to be Narcissa,

A-changing like all that!

While sitting still, as still, as still

As anyone ever sat!

GWENDOLYN BROOKS

## Rain

The rain is raining all around,  
It falls on field and tree,  
It rains on the umbrellas here,  
And on the ships at sea.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Sea Shell

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,

Sing me a song, O please!

A song of ships, and sailor men,

And parrots, and tropical trees,

Of islands lost in the Spanish Main

Which no man ever may find again,

Of fishes and corals under the waves,

And sea horses stabled in great green caves.

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,

Sing of the things you know so well.

AMY LOWELL

## Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village, though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound's the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

ROBERT FROST

### The Chipmunk's Day

In and out the bushes, up the ivy,  
Into the hole  
By the old oak stump, the chipmunk flashes.  
Up the pole

To the feeder full of seeds he dashes,  
Stuffs his cheeks,  
The chickadee and titmouse scold him.  
Down he streaks.

Red as the leaves the wind blows off the maple,  
Red as a fox,  
Striped like a skunk, the chipmunk whistles  
Past the love seat, past the mailbox,

Down the path,  
Home to his warm hole stuffed with sweet  
Things to eat.  
Neat and slight and shining, his front feet

Curled at his breast, he sits there while the sun  
Stripes the red west  
With its last light: the chipmunk  
Dives to his rest.

RANDALL JARRELL

## The Months

January brings the snow,  
Makes our feet and fingers glow.

February brings the rain,  
Thaws the frozen lake again.

March brings breezes sharp and shrill,  
Shakes the dancing daffodil.

April brings the primrose sweet,  
Scatters daisies at our feet.

May brings flocks of pretty lambs,  
Skipping by their fleecy dams.

June brings tulips, lillies, roses,  
Fills the children's hands with posies.

Hot July brings cooling showers,  
Apricots and gilly flowers.

August brings the sheaves of corn,  
Then the harvest home is borne.

Warm September brings the fruit,  
Sportsmen then begin to shoot.

Brown October brings the pheasant,  
Then to gather nuts is pleasant.

Dull November brings the blast,  
Then the leaves go whirling past.

Chill December brings the sleet,  
Blazing fire and Christmas treat.

SARA COLERIDGE

## The Owl and the Pussy-Cat

The Owl and the Pussy-Cat went to sea  
In a beautiful pea-green boat:  
They took some honey, and plenty of money  
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.  
The Owl looked up to the stars above,  
And sang to a small guitar,  
"O lovely Pussy, O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

Pussy said to the Owl, "You elegant fowl,  
How charmingly sweet you sing!  
Oh! let us be married; too long we have tarried!  
But what shall we do for a ring?"  
They sailed away, for a year and a day,  
To the land where the bong-tree grows;  
And there in a wood a Piggy-wig stood,  
With a ring at the end of his nose,  
His nose,  
His nose,  
With a ring at the end of his nose.

"Dear Pig, are you willing to sell for one shilling  
Your ring?" Said the Piggy, "I will."  
So they took it away, and were married next day  
By the turkey who lives on the hill.  
They dined on mince and slices of quince,  
Which they ate with a runcible spoon;  
And hand in hand, on the edge of the sand,  
They danced by the light of the moon  
The moon,  
The moon,  
They danced by the light of the moon.

EDWARD LEAR

## The Rabbit

When they said the time to hide was mine,  
I hid back under a thick grape vine.  
And while I was still for the time to pass,  
A little gray thing came out of the grass.  
He hopped his way through the melon bed  
And sat down close by a cabbage head.  
He sat down close where I could see,  
And his big still eyes looked hard at me,  
His big eyes bursting out of the rim,  
And I looked back very hard at him.

ELIZABETH MADOX ROBERTS

What Is Pink?

What is pink? a rose is pink

By the fountain's brink.

What is red? a poppy's red

In its barley bed.

What is blue? the sky is blue

Where the clouds float thro'

What is white? a swan is white

Sailing in the light.

What is yellow? pears are yellow,

Rich and ripe and mellow.

What is green? the grass is green,

With small flowers between.

What is violet? clouds are violet

In the summer twilight.

What is orange? why, an orange,

Just an orange!

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Where Go the Boats?

Dark brown is the river,  
Golden is the sand;  
It flows along forever,  
With trees on either hand.

Green leaves a-floating,  
Castles of the foam,  
Boats of mine a-boating—  
Where will all come home?

On goes the river,  
And out past the mill,  
Away down the valley,  
Away down the hill.

Away down the river,  
A hundred miles or more,  
Other little children  
Shall bring my boats ashore.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON