**OBLIGATORY POEM**

**O Captain! My Captain!”**

**by Walt Whitman**

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,

The ship has weather’d every rack, the prize we sought is won,

The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,

While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,

Where on the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;

Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,

For you bouquets and ribbon’d wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,

For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head!

It is some dream that on the deck,

You’ve fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,

My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,

The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;

Exult O shores, and ring O bells!

But I with mournful tread,

Walk the deck my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

**OPTIONAL POEM 1**

**I Will Be Here**

**by Nicole George**

Whenever you’re sad,

or feeling blue,

Just call on me.

I’ll be here for you.

Whenever you’re happy,

or feeling sad,

Just call on me.

You are going to be glad that you had.

‘Cause I’m gonna be there

with open arms.

I’m going to be there

to bear your arms.

I may be young,

or tiny like a bug,

but when you’re sad

I swear to God,

I give the biggest hugs.

So when you’re lonely

or just plain blue,

Just think of me,

or this poem,

And I’ll come to you.

**OPTIONAL POEM 2**

**Mother to Son**

**by Langston Hughes**

Well, son, I’ll tell you

Life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

It’s had tacks in it,

And splinters,

And boards torn up,

And places with no carpet on the floor—

Bare.

But all the time

I’se been a-climbin’ on,

And reachin’ landin’s,

And turnin’ corners,

And sometimes goin’ in the dark

Where there ain’t been no light.

So boy, don’t you turn back.

Don’t you set down on the steps

’Cause you finds it’s kinder hard.

Don’t you fall now—

For I’se still goin’, honey,

I’se still climbin’,

And life for me ain’t been no crystal stair.

**OPTIONAL POEM 3**

**First Poem for You**

**By Kim Addonizio**

I like to touch your tattoos in complete

darkness, when I can’t see them. I’m sure of

where they are, know by heart the neat

lines of lightning pulsing just above

your nipple, can find, as if by instinct, the blue

swirls of water on your shoulder where a serpent

twists, facing a dragon. When I pull you

to me, taking you until we’re spent

and quiet on the sheets, I love to kiss

the pictures in your skin. They’ll last until

you’re seared to ashes; whatever persists

or turns to pain between us, they will still

be there. Such permanence is terrifying.

So I touch them in the dark; but touch them, trying.

**OPTIONAL POEM 4**

**"The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!"**

**By John Keats**

The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!

Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,

Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,

Bright eyes, accomplish’d shape, and lang’rous waist!

Faded the flower and all its budded charms,

Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,

Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,

Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise –

Vanish’d unseasonably at shut of eve,

When the dusk holiday – or holinight

Of fragrant-curtain’d love begins to weave

The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight,

But, as I’ve read love’s missal through to-day,

He’ll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

**OPTIONAL POEM 5**

**Love And Friendship**

**By Emily Brontë**

Love is like the wild rose-briar,

Friendship like the holly-tree—

The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms

But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,

Its summer blossoms scent the air;

Yet wait till winter comes again

And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now

And deck thee with the holly’s sheen,

That when December blights thy brow

He still may leave thy garland green.

**OPTIONAL POEM 6**

**They Flee From Me**

**By Sir Thomas Wyatt**

They flee from me that sometime did me seek

With naked foot, stalking in my chamber.

I have seen them gentle, tame, and meek,

That now are wild and do not remember

That sometime they put themself in danger

To take bread at my hand; and now they range,

Busily seeking with a continual change.

Thanked be fortune it hath been otherwise

Twenty times better; but once in special,

In thin array after a pleasant guise,

When her loose gown from her shoulders did fall,

And she me caught in her arms long and small;

Therewithall sweetly did me kiss

And softly said, “Dear heart, how like you this?”

It was no dream: I lay broad waking.

But all is turned thorough my gentleness

Into a strange fashion of forsaking;

And I have leave to go of her goodness,

And she also, to use newfangleness.

But since that I so kindly am served

I would fain know what she hath deserved.

**OPTIONAL POEM 7**

**Sonnet: I Thank You**

**By Henry Timrod**

I thank you, kind and best beloved friend,

With the same thanks one murmurs to a sister,

When, for some gentle favor, he hath kissed her,

Less for the gifts than for the love you send,

Less for the flowers, than what the flowers convey;

If I, indeed, divine their meaning truly,

And not unto myself ascribe, unduly,

Things which you neither meant nor wished to say,

Oh! tell me, is the hope then all misplaced?

And am I flattered by my own affection?

But in your beauteous gift, methought I traced

Something above a short-lived predilection,

And which, for that I know no dearer name,

I designate as love, without love’s flame.

**OPTIONAL POEM 8**

**Bad, Cheese**

**Written by : Ann Foster**

The carpet smelled old, with dust… and other things.

I sat outside your door, on the floor, smelling it.

The odorous sweetness, would never leave me,

Completely…

Until I asked God to take it away.

You had nothing to do with that.

You were evil, you are evil,

I pray you will not be lost forever,

as no one should go to hell.

Trading comfort for the price of your child.

Trading comfort for the price of innocence.

Where you also given away?

I would like to know what made you so?

What made you… the mom, that you are?

The Monster’s appetite was fed by wicked flakes of skin,

peeled back and roasted, slowly over a pit, where things moved.

You never saw it, as you preferred blindness.

How? How then could you keep out the smell?

Like a lovely meadow, scented with the leavings,

of the careless, and defiled.

Angels came,

they washed the awnings,

the windows,

and left…

all the doors wide open.

You can no longer hide the truth,

as the brightness pierces walls.

Evil is a shadow, that can not find space now,

to cast it’s wickedness…toward others.

**OPTIONAL POEM 9**

**Ethics**

**by**[***Linda Pastan***](https://www.poetrynook.com/poet/linda-pastan)

In ethics class so many years ago  
our teacher asked this question every fall:  
if there were a fire in a museum  
which would you save, a Rembrandt painting  
or an old woman who hadn't many  
years left anyhow? Restless on hard chairs  
caring little for pictures or old age  
we'd opt one year for life, the next for art  
and always half-heartedly. Sometimes  
the woman borrowed my grandmother's face  
leaving her usual kitchen to wander  
some drafty, half imagined museum.

One year, feeling clever, I replied  
why not let the woman decide herself?  
Linda, the teacher would report, eschews  
the burdens of responsibility.  
This fall in a real museum I stand  
before a real Rembrandt, old woman,  
or nearly so, myself. The colors

within this frame are darker than autumn,  
darker even than winter — the browns of earth,  
though earth's most radiant elements burn  
through the canvas. I know now that woman  
and painting and season are almost one  
and all beyond saving by children.