

Texas Christian University

2014 APSI for English

Poetry Pairs, Triplets, Quads:
a look at poetry that fits together



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Compare two poems

Piazza Piece (John Crowe Ransom)

—I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying
To make you hear. Your ears are soft and small
And listen to an old man not at all,
They want the young men's whispering and sighing.
But see the roses on your trellis dying
And hear the spectral singing of the moon;
For I must have my lovely lady soon,
I am a gentleman in a dustcoat trying.

5

—I am a lady young in beauty waiting
Until my truelove comes, and then we kiss.
But what gray man among the vines is this
Whose words are dry and faint as in a dream?
Back from my trellis, Sir, before I scream!
I am a lady young in beauty waiting.

10

When I Was One-and-Twenty

By A. E. Housman

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
“Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free.”
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

5

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
“The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty
And sold for endless rue.”

10

Compare two poems

My Papa's Waltz Theodore Roethke

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother's countenance
Could not unfrown itself. 5

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle. 10

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt. 15

good times Lucille Clifton

my daddy has paid the rent
and the insurance man is gone
and the lights is back on
and my uncle brud has hit
for one dollar straight 5
and they is good times
good times
good times

my mama has made bread
and grampaw has come 10
and everybody is drunk
and dancing in the kitchen
and singing in the kitchen
of these is good times
good times 15
good times

oh children think about the
good times

Compare two poems

You Are Happy by Margaret Atwood

The water turns
a long way down over the raw stone,
ice crusts around it

We walk separately
along the hill to the open
beach, unused
picnic tables, wind
shoving the brown waves, erosion, gravel
rasping on gravel. 5

In the ditch a deer
carcass, no head. Bird
running across the glaring
road against the low pink sun. 10

When you are this
cold you can think about
nothing but the cold, the images 15

hitting into your eyes
like needles, crystals, you are happy.

Traveling Through The Dark William Stafford

Traveling through the dark I found a deer
dead on the edge of the Wilson River road.
It is usually best to roll them into the canyon:
that road is narrow; to swerve might make more dead.

By glow of the tail-light I stumbled back of the car
and stood by the heap, a doe, a recent killing;
she had stiffened already, almost cold.
I dragged her off; she was large in the belly. 5

My fingers touching her side brought me the reason--
her side was warm; her fawn lay there waiting, 10

alive, still, never to be born.
Beside that mountain road I hesitated.

The car aimed ahead its lowered parking lights;
under the hood purred the steady engine.
I stood in the glare of the warm exhaust turning red; 15
around our group I could hear the wilderness listen.

I thought hard for us all--my only swerving--,
then pushed her over the edge into the river.

Compare three poems

ANTHEM₁ FOR DOOMED YOUTH Wilford Owen

What passing-bells² for these who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out³ their hasty orisons.⁴
No mockeries⁵ now for them; no prayers nor bells; 5
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
The shrill, demented⁶ choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles⁷ calling for them from sad shires.⁸
What candles⁹ may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes 10
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor¹⁰ of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk¹¹ a drawing-down of blinds.¹²
September - October, 1917

Notes for students

1 Anthem - perhaps best known in the expression "The National Anthem;" also, an important religious song (often expressing joy); here, perhaps, a solemn song of celebration

2 passing-bells - a bell tolled after someone's death to announce the death to the world

3 patter out - rapidly speak

4 orisons - prayers, here funeral prayers

5 mockeries - ceremonies which are insults. Here Owen seems to be suggesting that the Christian religion, with its loving God, can have nothing to do with the deaths of so many thousands of men

6 demented - raving mad

7 bugles - a bugle is played at military funerals (sounding the last post)

8 shires - English counties and countryside from which so many of the soldiers came

9 candles - church candles, or the candles lit in the room where a body lies in a coffin

The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner Randall Jarrell

From my mother's sleep I fell into the State,
And I hunched in its belly till my wet fur froze.
Six miles from earth, loosed from its dream of life,
I woke to black flak and the nightmare fighters.
When I died they washed me out of the turret with a hose.

"A ball turret was a Plexiglas sphere set into the belly of a B-17 or B-24, and inhabited by two .50 caliber machine-guns and one man, a short small man. When this gunner tracked with his machine guns a fighter attacking his bomber from below, he revolved with the turret; hunched upside-down in his little sphere, he looked like the foetus in the womb. The fighters which attacked him were armed with cannon firing explosive shells. The hose was a steam hose." -- Jarrell's note.

The poem was published in 1945. Why is that relevant to its meaning?

Compare two poems

CalN Irving Layton, 1958

Taking the air rifle from my son's hand
I measured back five paces, the Hebrew
In me, narcissist, father of children
Laid to rest. From there I took aim and fired.
The silent ball hit the frog's back an inch 5
Below the head. He jumped at the surprise
Of it, suddenly tickled or startled
(He must have thought) and leaped from the wet sand
Into the surrounding brown water. But
The ball had done its mischief. His next spring 10
Was a miserable flop, the thrust all gone
Out of his legs. He tried - like Bruce - again,
Throwing out his sensitive pianist's
Hands as a dwarf might or a helpless child.
His splash disturbed the quiet pondwater 15
And one old frog behind his weedy moat
Blinking, looking self-complacently on.
The lin's surface at once became closing
Eyelids and bubbles like notes of music
Liquid, luminous, dropping from the page 20
White. white-bearded, a rapid crescendo
Of inaudible sounds and a crones' whispering
Backstage among the reeds and bullrushes

As for an expiring Lear or Oedipus.

But Death makes us all look ridiculous.
Consider this frog (dog, hog, what you will) 25
Sprawling, his absurd corpse rocked by the tides
That his last vain spring had set in movement.
Like a retired oldster, I couldn't help sneer,
Living off the last of his insurance:
Billows - now crumbling - the premiums paid. 30
Absurd, how absurd. I wanted to kill
At the mockery of it, Kill and kill
Again -- the self-infatuate frog, dog, hog,
Anything with the stir of life in it,
Seeing that dead leaper, Chaplin-footed, 35
Rocked and cradled in this afternoon
Of tranquil water, reeds, and blazing sun,
The hole in his back clearly visible
And the torn skin a blob of shadow
Moving when the quiet poolwater moved. 40
O Egypt, marbled Greece, resplendent Rome,
Did you also finally perish from a small bore
In your back you could not scratch? And would
Your mouths open ghostily, gasping out
Among the murky reeds, the hidden frogs, 45
We climb with crushed spines toward the heavens?
When the next morning I came the same way
The frog was on his back, one delicate
Hand on his belly, and his white shirt front
Spotless. He looked as if he might have been 50
A comic; tap dancer apologizing
For a fall, or an Emcee, his wide grin
Coaxing a laugh from us for an aside
Or perhaps a joke we didn't quite hear.

The Death of a Toad

Richard Wilbur

A toad the power mower caught,
Chewed and clipped of a leg, with a hobbling hop has got
To the garden verge, and sanctuaried him
Under the cineraria leaves, in the shade
Of the ashen and heartshaped leaves, in a dim, 5
Low, and a final glade.

The rare original heartsbleed goes,
Spends in the earthen hide, in the folds and wizenings, flows
In the gutters of the banked and staring eyes. He lies
As still as if he would return to stone, 10
And soundlessly attending, dies
Toward some deep monotone,

Toward misted and ebullient seas
And cooling shores, toward lost Amphibia's emperies.
Day dwindles, drowning and at length is gone 15
In the wide and antique eyes, which still appear
To watch, across the castrate lawn,
The haggard daylight steer.

Compare these three poems

The Sun Has Set (Emily Brontë)

THE sun has set, and the long grass now
 Waves dreamily in the evening wind;
And the wild bird has flown from that old gray stone
 In some warm nook a couch to find.

In all the lonely landscape round 5
 I see no light and hear no sound,
Except the wind that far away
 Come sighing o'er the healthy sea.

All Day I Hear the Noise of Waters (James Joyce)

All day I hear the noise of waters
Making moan,
Sad as the sea-bird is when, going
Forth alone,
He hears the winds cry to the water's 5
Monotone.

The grey winds, the cold winds are blowing
Where I go.
I hear the noise of many waters
Far below. 10
All day, all night, I hear them flowing
To and fro.

Night

By Louise Bogan

The cold remote islands
And the blue estuaries
Where what breathes, breathes
The restless wind of the inlets,
And what drinks, drinks 5
The incoming tide;

Where shell and weed
Wait upon the salt wash of the sea,
And the clear nights of stars
Swing their lights westward 10
To set behind the land;

Where the pulse clinging to the rocks
Renews itself forever;
Where, again on cloudless nights,
The water reflects 15
The firmament's partial setting;

—O remember
In your narrowing dark hours
That more things move
Than blood in the heart. 20

Compare these four poems

the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls By E. E. Cummings

the Cambridge ladies who live in furnished souls
are unbeautiful and have comfortable minds
(also, with the church's protestant blessings
daughters, unscented shapeless spirited) 5
they believe in Christ and Longfellow, both dead,
are invariably interested in so many things—
at the present writing one still finds
delighted fingers knitting for the is it Poles?
perhaps. While permanent faces coyly bandy
scandal of Mrs. N and Professor D 10
.... the Cambridge ladies do not care, above
Cambridge if sometimes in its box of
sky lavender and cornerless, the

My Aunt By Oliver Wendell Holmes 1831

My aunt! my dear unmarried aunt!
Long years have o'er her flown;
Yet still she strains the aching clasp
That binds her virgin zone;
I know it hurts her,-- though she looks 5
As cheerful as she can;
Her waist is ampler than her life,
For life is but a span.

My aunt! my poor deluded aunt!
Her hair is almost gray; 10
Why will she train that winter curl
In such a spring-like way?
How can she lay her glasses down,
And say she reads as well,
When through a double convex lens 15
She just makes out to spell?

Her father-- grandpapa! forgive
This erring lip its smiles--
Vowed she should make the finest girl
Within a hundred miles; 20
He sent her to a stylish school
'T was in her thirteenth June;
And with her, as the rules required,
"Two towels and a spoon."

They braced my aunt against a board, 25
To make her straight and tall;
They laced her up, they starved her down,
To make her light and small;
They pinched her feet, they singed her hair,
They screwed it up with pins ;-- 30
Oh, never mortal suffered more
In penance for her sins.

So, when my precious aunt was done,
My grandsire brought her back
(By daylight, lest some rabid youth 35
Might follow on the track;)
"Ah!" said my grandsire, as he shook
Some powder in his pan,

"What could this lovely creature do
Against a desperate man!" 40

Alas! nor chariot, nor barouche,
Nor bandit cavalcade,
Tore from the trembling father's arms
His all-accomplished maid.
For her how happy had it been! 45
And Heaven had spared to me
To see one sad, ungathered rose
On my ancestral tree.

ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

The poems below, published in 1789 and 1794, were written by William Blake in response to the condition of chimney sweeps. Usually small children, sweeps were forced inside chimneys to clean their interiors. Read the two poems carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, compare and contrast the two poems, taking into consideration the poetic techniques Blake uses in each.

The Chimney Sweeper

When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry "'weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'"*
So your chimneys I sweep & in soot I sleep.

Line
5 There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head
That curl'd like a lambs back, was shav'd, so I said,
"Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare,
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair."

10 And so he was quiet, & that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping he had such a sight!
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, & Jack,
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black;

15 And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain, leaping, laughing they run,
And wash in a river and shine in the Sun;

20 Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind.
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

* The child's lisp attempt at the chimney sweep's street cry,
"Sweep! Sweep!"

William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper," *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (1789; 1794; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

(1789)

The Chimney Sweeper

A little black thing among the snow
Crying "'weep, 'weep,'" in notes of woe!
"Where are thy father & mother? say?"
"They are both gone up to the church to pray."

Line
5 "Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winter's snow;
They clothéd me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe."

10 "And because I am happy, & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury,
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery."

William Blake, "The Chimney Sweeper," *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (1789; 1794; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1965).

(1794)

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ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

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Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the following two poems, adults provide explanations for children. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing how each poet uses literary devices to make his point.

A Barred Owl

The warping night air having brought the boom
Of an owl's voice into her darkened room,
We tell the wakened child that all she heard
Line Was an odd question from a forest bird,
5 Asking of us, if rightly listened to,
“Who cooks for you?” and then “Who cooks for you?”

Words, which can make our terrors bravely clear,
Can also thus domesticate a fear,
And send a small child back to sleep at night
10 Not listening for the sound of stealthy flight
Or dreaming of some small thing in a claw
Borne up to some dark branch and eaten raw.

—Richard Wilbur

"A Barred Owl" from *MAYFLIES: NEW POEMS AND TRANSLATIONS*, copyright © 2000 by Richard Wilbur, reprinted by permission of Harcourt, Inc.

The History Teacher

Trying to protect his students' innocence
he told them the Ice Age was really just
the Chilly Age, a period of a million years
when everyone had to wear sweaters.
Line
5 And the Stone Age became the Gravel Age,
named after the long driveways of the time.

The Spanish Inquisition was nothing more
than an outbreak of questions such as
“How far is it from here to Madrid?”
10 “What do you call the matador's hat?”

The War of the Roses took place in a garden,
and the Enola Gay* dropped one tiny atom
on Japan.

The children would leave his classroom
15 for the playground to torment the weak
and the smart,
mussing up their hair and breaking their glasses,
while he gathered up his notes and walked home
past flower beds and white picket fences,
20 wondering if they would believe that soldiers
in the Boer War told long, rambling stories
designed to make the enemy nod off.

—Billy Collins

"The History Teacher" from *QUESTIONS ABOUT ANGELS*, by Billy Collins, © 1991. Reprinted by permission of the University of Pittsburgh Press.

*The name of the airplane from which an atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

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ENGLISH LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

SECTION II

Total time—2 hours

Question 1

(Suggested time—40 minutes. This question counts as one-third of the total essay section score.)

In the two poems below, Keats and Longfellow reflect on similar concerns. Read the poems carefully. Then write an essay in which you compare and contrast the two poems, analyzing the poetic techniques each writer uses to explore his particular situation.

Mezzo Cammin¹

When I Have Fears

**Written at Boppard on the Rhine August 25, 1842,
Just Before Leaving for Home**

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high-piled books, in charactery,
Line Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
5 When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
10 That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love;—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

1818 —John Keats (1795-1821)

Half of my life is gone, and I have let
The years slip from me and have not fulfilled
The aspiration of my youth, to build
Line Some tower of song with lofty parapet.
5 Not indolence, nor pleasure, nor the fret
Of restless passions that would not be stilled,
But sorrow, and a care that almost killed,
Kept me from what I may accomplish yet;
Though, half-way up the hill, I see the Past
10 Lying beneath me with its sounds and sights,—
A city in the twilight dim and vast,
With smoking roofs, soft bells, and gleaming lights,—
And hear above me on the autumnal blast
The cataract² of Death far thundering from the heights.

1842 —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807-1882)

¹ The title is from the first line of Dante's *Divine Comedy*: "*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita*" ("Midway upon the journey of our life").

² A large waterfall