



National
Poetry
Day

Thursday 4 October 2018

Change

A collection of poems
on the theme of change,
specially curated by
The Reader to celebrate
National Poetry Day.

#NationalPoetryDay

The
Reader



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Outgrown

by **Penelope Shuttle**

It is both sad and a relief to fold so carefully
her outgrown clothes and line up the little worn shoes
of childhood, so prudent, scuffed and particular.
It is both happy and horrible to send them galloping
back tappity-tap along the misty chill path into the past.

It is both a freedom and a prison, to be outgrown
by her as she towers over me as thin as a sequin
in her doc martens and her pretty skirt,
because just as I work out how to be a mother
she stops being a child.

Say Not the Struggle Nought Avaieth by **Arthur Hugh Clough**

Say not the struggle nought avaieth,
The labour and the wounds are vain,
The enemy faints not, nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be, in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light,
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.

Phonebox Elegy
by **Matthew Francis**

No one noticed them leaving
as no one had noticed how
every evening
at some almanacked hour

they must have switched on in the twilight
their introverted glow
of dashboard and luminous watch.
Never quite part of the street,

they just seemed to appear
with that Close-Encounters
hovering look
when you'd searched for them long enough.

And you stood in the chilled
belljar of light
and mimed your lifestory
to whoever was waiting outside.

More compact than a church
and less subtle in its demands for money,
it was a heavy-doored
shrine to the invisible,

censed with breath
and the smell of breathed-on plastic,
absorbing our prayers –
'Pick it up. Pick it up –'

also forgotten wallets,
chewing gum,
the phone numbers of vice girls
as impossible as archangels,

and the occasional urge to desecrate it
by urine, evisceration
or the cramming in of too many bodies.
We were translated there.

The Call

by **Charlotte Mew**

From our low seat beside the fire
Where we have dozed and dreamed and watched the glow
Or raked the ashes, stopping so
We scarcely saw the sun or rain
Above, or looked much higher
Than this same quiet red or burned-out fire.
Tonight we heard a call,
A rattle on the window pane
A voice on the sharp air,
And felt a breath stirring our hair,
A flame within us: Something swift and tall
Swept in and out and that was all.
Was it a bright or a dark angel? Who can know?
It left no mark upon the snow,
But suddenly it snapped the chain
Unbarred, flung wide the door
Which will not shut again;
And so we cannot sit here anymore.
We must arise and go:
The world is cold without
And dark and hedged about
With mystery and enmity and doubt,
But we must go
Though yet we do not know
Who called, or what marks we shall leave upon the snow.

Transformations

by **Thomas Hardy**

Portion of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.
These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,
Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I often tried to know
May be entering this rose.
So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

The Rec

by David Constantine

Back home and finding the rec gone
Flogged off, become a gated community
CCTV in every hanging basket
And identical shaven-headed fat men
Aiming remotes at his own portcullis

How can I make of it a 'luminous emptiness'
As Heaney did of his axed chestnut tree?
It's a space stuffed full of hardware
Loungers and meat. At thirty paces
It lights up sodium white. Pitbulls prowl the wire.

Oh that man who stands at the bus-stop all day long
And whatever number bus comes he never gets on
But tells everybody waiting, It was all fields round here
When I was a boy – day by day, more and more
He's me. I tell them Miss Eliza Smythe left the rec

In trust to the Town in perpetuity
For the health of children, her line dying out.
It was an old enclosure quick-set with hawthorn
And we lay there watching and waiting for our turn
In a team-game on the free ground under the open sky.

Only the moon and stars lit up the rec.
Few still believe there was such a playing-place
But, yes, another elegy would be very nice
So remember all you like. Can we live on lack?
Should have stopped them grabbing it. Should take it back.

Gather Ye Rosebuds While Ye May by Robert Herrick

(To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time)

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

Bright Star
by John Keats

Bright star! would I were steadfast as thou art –
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night
And watching with eternal lids apart,
Like nature's patient, sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores;
Or gazing on the new soft-fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors –
No – yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair love's ripening breast,
To feel for ever its soft swell and fall,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever – or else swoon to death.

The Furthest Distances I've Travelled

by **Leontia Flynn**

Like many folk, when first I saddled a rucksack,
feeling its weight on my back –
the way my spine
curved under it like a meridian –

I thought: Yes. This is how
to live. On the beaten track, the sherpa pass, between
Krakow
and Zagreb, or the Siberian white
cells of scattered airports,

it came clear as over a tannoy
that in restlessness, in anony
mity:
was some kind of destiny.

So whether it was the scare stories about Larium
– the threats of delirium
and baldness – that led me, not to a Western Union
wiring money with six words of Lithuanian,

but to this post office with a handful of bills
or a giro; and why, if I'm stuffing smalls
hastily into a holdall, I am less likely
to be catching a Greyhound from Madison to
Milwaukee

than to be doing some overdue laundry
is really beyond me.
However,
when, during routine evictions, I discover

alien pants, cinema stubs, the throwaway
comment – on a Post-it – or a tiny stowaway
pressed flower amid bottom drawers,
I know these are my souvenirs

and, from these crushed valentines, this unraveled
sports sock, that the furthest distances I've travelled
have been those between people. And what survives
of holidaying briefly in their lives.

Breathing by Gillian Clarke

Prowl the house sniffing out gas leaks,
a cloth festering somewhere,
spilt milk, cat–piss, drains.

Such talent needs exercise.
Putting the cat out, inhale her musk
as she pours herself into the night

like your long ago mother, her fur, her Chanel no. 5,
before the whiff of a moonlighting fox,
and frost, and the coats in the hall.

Some smells are faint, the distinct breath
of tap-water from each place you have lived,
the twig of witchhazel two rooms away.

Some are stolen like honey, the secretive salts
of skin, in Waterstones, say, or the Bank,
as you lean together, breathing.

Or the new-born that smell like the sea
and the darkness we came from, that gasp
of all the drowned in a breaking wave.

The
Reader



Love books?
Love people?

Be part of a bigger story



**Why not join us
for more *Shared Reading*?**

www.thereader.org.uk/joinagroup

Enter your postcode
to find a group near you.

WE NEED YOU

“The reading groups are a different kind of medicine, it’s through them that I’ve found a way back to life”
Shared Reading group member

Enriching volunteering opportunities with a difference

Who we are

The Reader is a national charity and social enterprise with a mission to build a world where *Shared Reading* - weekly informal read aloud groups, where great literature is shared and connections are made - is part of the fabric of life.

What is *Shared Reading*?

It’s a purposeful and enjoyable experience that benefits people of all ages, backgrounds and life situations.

Group members take pleasure in getting together each week to read great literature, build social links and share experiences.

Volunteer-led

Across the UK, our *Shared Reading* groups are run by a network of dedicated volunteers. You’ll find them in places as diverse as mental health wards, prisons, workplaces, high street cafés, schools, care homes and community centres.

By being part of The Reader’s story, our volunteers are actively making a difference to people’s lives by helping to build connected communities, tackle loneliness and improve health and well-being.

Our Volunteer Reader Leaders receive full training and support, beginning with our inspiring Read to Lead programme - an invigorating and thought-provoking flexible series of sessions.



The
Reader



Volunteer with us

Growing numbers of people around the country – and the world – are experiencing the benefits of *Shared Reading* but we know that there are many others who we are yet to reach.

The Reader is now actively recruiting people just like you to help us to put *Shared Reading* into the hands of the people who need it most.

As one of our volunteers you can expect to . . .

- make a lasting difference in your local area
- meet new like-minded people and enjoy a sense of community
- gain a real sense of reward
- develop new skills with high quality training

How you can get involved

If you have the enthusiasm and commitment to lead a *Shared Reading* group or read one-to-one with a looked-after-child, or if you would like to help to spread the word about The Reader and hear about our wider volunteering opportunities, we'd love to hear from you.

Speak to us

0151 729 2200

Find out more online

www.thereader.org.uk

Connect with us



#SharedReading

Want to check out a group first?

Find your closest group at:

www.thereader.org.uk/joinagroup

“The Reader is the best organisation I have ever belonged to. The training is outstanding and there is excellent ongoing support. I am always made to feel that I am a valued member of the community.”

Volunteer Reader Leader



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