

5th Grade Poetry Resources – Trinity Academy

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Brighten the Corner Where you Are

Helen Steiner Rice

We cannot all be famous
Or listed in "Who's Who,"
But every person great or small
Has important work to do,
For seldom do we realize
The importance of small deeds,
Or to what degree of greatness
unnoticed kindness leads—
For it's not the big celebrity
in a world of fame and praise.
But it's doing unpretentiously
in undistinguished ways,
The work that God assigned for us,
unimportant as it seems,
That makes our task outstanding
and bring reality to dreams—
So do not sit and idly wish
for wider, newer dimension,
Where you can put in practice
Your many good intentions—
But at the spot God placed you
begin at once to do
Little things to brighten up
the lives surrounding you,
For if everybody brightened up
the spot on which they're standing,
By being more considerate
And a little less demanding,
This dark cold world would very soon
eclipse the Evening Star,
If everybody brightened up
the corner where they are.

The Charge of the Light Brigade

Alfred Tennyson

Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
"Forward, the Light Brigade!
Charge for the guns!" he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

"Forward, the Light Brigade!"
Was there a man dismay'd?
Not tho' the soldier knew
Some one had blunder'd:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why.
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

Flash'd all their sabers bare,
Flash'd as they turn'd in air
Sab'ring the gunners there,

Charging an army, while
All the world wonder'd:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro' the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel'd from the saber-stroke
Shatter'd and sunder'd.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volleyed and thundered:
Stormed at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came through the jaws of death
Back from the mouth of hell,
All that was left of them—
Left of six hundred.

When can their glory fade?
Oh, the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honour the charge they made!
Honour the Light Brigade—
Noble six hundred!

Drop a Pebble in the Water

James W. Foley

Drop a pebble in the water: just a splash, and it is gone;
But there's half-a-hundred ripples, circling on and on and on,
Spreading, spreading from the center, flowing on out to the sea.
And there is no way of telling where the end is going to be.

Drop a pebble in the water: in a minute you forget,
But there's little waves a-flowing and there's ripples circling yet,
And those little waves a-flowing to a great big wave have grown;
You've disturbed a mighty river just by dropping in a stone.

Drop an unkind word, or careless: in a minute it is gone;
But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on.
They keep spreading, spreading, spreading from the center as they go,
And there is no way to stop them, once you've started them to flow.

Drop an unkind word, or careless: in a minute you forget;
But there's little waves a-flowing, and there's ripples circling yet,
And perhaps in some sad heart a mighty wave of tears you've stirred,
And disturbed a life was happy 'ere you dropped that unkind word.

Drop a word of cheer and kindness: just a flash and it is gone;
But there's half-a-hundred ripples circling on and on and on,
Bearing hope and joy and comfort on each splashing, dashing wave
Till you wouldn't believe the volume of the one kind word you gave.

Drop a word of cheer and kindness: in a minute you forget;
But there's gladness still a-swelling, and there's joy a-circling yet,
And you've rolled a wave of comfort whose sweet music can be heard
Over miles and miles of water just by dropping one kind word.

Excelsior

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth, who bore, 'mid snow and ice,
A banner with the strange device
 Excelsior!

His brow was sad; his eye beneath,
Flashed like a falchion from its sheath,
And like a silver clarion rung
The accents of that unknown tongue,
 Excelsior!

In happy homes he saw the light
Of household fires gleam warm and bright;
Above, the spectral glaciers shone,
And from his lips escaped a groan,
 Excelsior!

“Try not the Pass!” the old man said;
“Dark lowers the tempest overhead,
The roaring torrent is deep and wide!”
And loud that clarion voice replied
 Excelsior!

“O stay,” the maiden said, “and rest
Thy weary head upon this breast!”
A tear stood in his bright blue eye,
but still he answered with a sigh,
 Excelsior!

“Beware the pine-tree’s withered branch!
Beware the awful avalanche!”

This was the peasant's last Good-night,
A voice replied, far up the height,
 Excelsior!

At break of day, as heavenward
The pious monks of Saint Bernard
Uttered the oft-repeated prayer,
A voice cried through the startled air
 Excelsior!

A traveler, by the faithful hound,
Half-buried in the snow was found,
Still grasping in his hand of ice
That banner with the strange device
 Excelsior!

There in the twilight cold and gray,
Lifeless, but beautiful, he lay,
And from the sky, serene and far,
A voice fell, like a falling star,
 Excelsior!

Fear

Martha Snell Nicholson

How strange that we who are the sons of God
Should be familiar with the face of fear,
So sure that every cloud will bring a storm,
So fearful lest tomorrow be not clear.

We shrink from woes which never come to pass,
Mere phantoms, with no substance and no strength;
But even if they had, would not our Lord provide
His strength to meet the need of each day's length?

Children of God, with quaking, craven hearts
Consumed by the corrosive power of dread!...
And yet He holds us in His hallowed hand,
And counts the very hairs upon our head.

What strong firm bulwarks He has built around
The daily lives of those He holds so dear:
The blessed Holy Spirit in our hearts,
His guardian angels ever hovering near

Lest we should dash our feet against a stone.
The unseen hosts of God camp round about.
We dwell there safely in His secret place,
And still we tremble, wracked with fear and doubt!

O child of God, it is so safe, so sweet,
To trust the One who never knew defeat!

The Fish

Elizabeth Bishop

I caught a tremendous fish
and held him beside the boat
half out of water, with my hook
fast in a corner of his mouth
He didn't fight.
He hadn't fought at all.
He hung a grunting weight,
battered and venerable
and homely. Here and there
his brown skin hung in strips
like ancient wallpaper,
and its pattern of darker brown
was like wallpaper:
shapes like full-blown roses
stained and lost through age.
He was speckled with barnacles,
fine rosettes of lime,
and infested
with tiny white sea-lice,
and underneath two or three
rags of green weed hung down.
While his gills were breathing in
the terrible oxygen
- the frightening gills,
fresh and crisp with blood,
that can cut so badly-
I thought of the coarse white flesh
Packed in like feathers,
the big bones and the little bones,
the dramatic reds and blacks
of his shiny entrails,
and the pink swim-bladder

like a big peony.

I looked into his eyes
which were far larger than mine
but shallower, and yellowed,
the irises backed and packed
with tarnished tinfoil
seen through the lenses
of old scratched isinglass.

They shifted a little, but not
to return my stare.

- It was more like the tipping
of an object toward the light.

I admired his sullen face,
the mechanism of his jaw,
and then I saw

that from his lower lip - if you could call it a lip
grim, wet, and weaponlike,
hung five old pieces of fish-line,
or four and a wire leader
with the swivel still attached,
with all their five big hooks
grown firmly in his mouth.

A green line, frayed at the end
where he broke it, two heavier lines,
and a fine black thread
still crimped from the strain and snap
when it broke and he got away.

Like medals with their ribbons
frayed and wavering,
a five-haired beard of wisdom
trailing from his aching jaw.

I stared and stared
and victory filled up
the little rented boat,
from the pool of bilge

where oil had spread a rainbow
around the rusted engine
to the bailer rusted orange,
the sun-cracked thwarts,
the oarlocks on their strings,
the gunnels- until everything
was rainbow, rainbow, rainbow!
And I let the fish go.

Grandpapa's Spectacles

Author Unknown

Grandpapa's spectacles cannot be found;
He has searched all the rooms, high and low, 'round and 'round;
Now he calls to the young ones, and what does he say?
"Ten cents for the child who will find them today."

Then Henry and Nelly and Edward all ran,
And a most thorough hunt for the glasses began,
And dear little Nell, in her generous way,
Said: "I'll look for them, Grandpa, without any pay."

All through the big Bible she searches with care
That lies on the table by Grandpapa's chair.
They feel in his pockets, they peep in his hat,
They pull out the sofa, they shake out the mat.

Then down on all fours, like two good natured bears,
Go Henry and Ed under tables and chairs,
'Til, quite out of breath, Ed is heard to declare
He believes that those glasses are not anywhere.

But Nelly, who, leaning on Grandpapa's knee,
Was thinking most earnestly where they could be,
Looked suddenly up in the kind, faded eyes,
And her own shining brown ones grew big with surprise.

She clapped both her hands—all her dimples came out—
She turned to the boys with a bright roguish shout:
"You may leave off your looking, both Henry and Ed,
For there are the glasses on Grandpapa's head!"

Johnny Appleseed

Rosemary and Stephen V. Bene

Of Jonathan Chapman
Two things are known
That he loved apples,
That he walked alone.

At seventy-odd
He was gnarled as could be.
But ruddy and sound
As a good apple tree.

For fifty years over
Of harvest and dew,
He planted his apples
Where no apples grew.

The winds of the prairie
Might blow through his rags,
But he carried his seeds
In the best deerskin bags.

From old Ashtabula
To frontier Fort Wayne
He planted and pruned
And he planted again.

He had not a hat
To encumber his head.
He wore a tin pan
On his white hair instead.

He nested with owl,
And with bear cub and 'possum,

And knew all his orchards,
Root, tendril and blossom.

A fine old man,
As ripe as a pippin,
His heart still light,
And his step still skipping.

The stalking Indian,
The beast in its lair
Did no hurt
While he was there.

For they could tell,
As wild things can
That Jonathan Chapman
Was God's own man.

Why did he do it?
We do not know.
He wished that apples
Might root and grow.

He has no statue
He has no tomb.
He has his apple trees
Still in bloom.

Consider, consider,
Think well upon
The marvelous story
Of Appleseed John.

Last Words Before Winter

Louis Untermeyer

Farewell, flocks,
Farewell. But let me find you
Safe in your stall and barn and box
With your winter's tale behind you.

Farewell my cattle (both);
I leave you just as loath
As though you were a hundred head,
Instead
Of two-and-a-half –
Two cows and a calf.

Farewell, my apple trees;
You have learned what it is to freeze,
With the drift on your knees.
But, oh, beware
Those first kind of days, the snare
Of the too promising air,
The cost
Of over-sudden trust –
And then the killing frost.

Farewell, beloved acres.
I leave you in the hands
Of one whose earliest enterprise was lands –
Your Maker's.

Yard, hutch, and house, farewell.
It is for you to tell
How you withstood the great, white wolf, whose fell
Is softer than a lambskin's
But whose breath

Is death.

Farewell,, hoof, claw, and wing,
Finned, furred, and feathered thing,
Till Spring.

Manners

Elizabeth Bishop

My grandfather said to me
as we sat on the wagon seat,
"Be sure to remember to always
speak to everyone you meet."

We met a stranger on foot.
My grandfather's whip tapped his hat.
"Good day, sir. Good day. A fine day."
And I said it and bowed where I sat.

Then we overtook a boy we knew
with his big pet crow on his shoulder.
"Always offer everyone a ride;
don't forget that when you get older,"

my grandfather said. So Willy
climbed up with us, but the crow
gave a "Caw!" and flew off. I was worried.
How would he know where to go?

But he flew a little way at a time
from fence post to fence post, ahead;
and when Willy whistled he answered.
"A fine bird," my grandfather said,

"and he's well brought up. See, he answers
nicely when he's spoken to.
Man or beast, that's good manners.
Be sure that you both always do."

When automobiles went by,
the dust hid the people's faces,

but we shouted, "Good day! Good day!
Fine day!" at the top of our voices.
When we came to Hustler Hill,
he said that the mare was tired,
so we all got down and walked,
as our good manners required.

My Kingdom

Louisa May Alcott

A little kingdom I possess
Where thoughts and feelings dwell.
And very hard I find the task
Of governing it well;
For passion tempts and troubles me,
A wayward will misleads,
And selfishness its shadow casts
On all my words and deeds.
How can I learn to rule myself,
To be the child I should,
Honest and brave, nor ever tire
Of trying to be good?
How can I keep a sunny soul
To shine along life's way?
How can I tune my little heart
To sweetly sing all day?
Dear Father, help me with the love
That casteth out my fear,
Teach me to lean on Thee, and feel
That Thou are very near,
That no temptation is unseen,
No childish grief too small,
Since Thou, with patience infinite,
Doth soothe and comfort all.
I do not ask for any crown
But that which all may win,
Nor seek to conquer any world,
Except the one within.
Be Thou my guide until I find,
Led by a tender hand,
Thy happy kingdom in myself,
And dare to take command.

O Captain! My Captain!

Walt Whitman

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weathered 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 ribboned 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 anchored 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.

The Pearl

Ernestine Cobern

Beyer Among the fish that swim and swish beneath the stormy sea
There lived a little oyster, and most melancholy, he!
Inside his clammy cloister, weeping sadly was the oyster.
And this made him even moister than an oyster ought to be!

His brother-fish said "Pooh and pish. He isn't worth a pin!"
"Poor fish" they often called him with a patronizing grin.
And it has to be admitted that the teasing title fitted,
For the oyster, humble-witted, didn't own a single "fin!"

In sad distress he would, I guess, have lived his life in vain
If something had not happened, to the oyster's happy gain:
One morning, something nicked him. Some gritty sand had pricked him!
To wall it up, its victim built a pearl around the pain!

Thus did he do what we can, too, if we but have the wit:
He turned bad luck to good-and yet his shell remained a fit.
He'd say, when he was feted, that his pearl was overrated;
"Shucks!" he often shyly stated; "It just took a little grit!"

The Potter

Norman P. Woodruff

Today as I watched the potter
He molded a beautiful vase.
As he picked up the clay to shape it,
Each particle fell into place.
It seemed as if he crushed it and pressed it
Every flaw had dissolved in his hands;
And soon he had fashioned a vessel,
Exactly as first he had planned.

Then I saw him open an oven
And the vessel was placed in the heat.
The surface began to harden;
To glisten and shine as a sheet.
So often we're placed in the furnace,
We're tried and crushed to pure gold.
As a potter turns out his vessel,
So our lives are shaped I am told.

Now I thought as I saw him in action,
How God molds our lives every day,
How He irons out all our defects
And works every blemish away.
Then I prayed, "Oh, may I be pliant,
That I may be easily bent,
That I may fit into the pattern,
Of the mission for which I am sent."

The Pup

Edgar A. Guest

He tore the curtains yesterday,
And scratched the paper on the wall;
Ma's boots, too, have gone astray—
She says she left them in the hall;
He tugged the tablecloth and broke
A fancy saucer and a cup;
Though Bud and I think it a joke
Ma scolds a lot about the pup.
The sofa pillows are a sight,
The rugs are looking somewhat frayed,
And there is ruin, left and right
That little Boston bull has made.
He slept on Buddy's counterpane—
Ma found him there when she woke up.
I think it needless to explain
She scolds a lot about the pup.
And yet he comes and licks her hand
And sometimes climbs into her lap
And there, Bud lets me understand,
He very often takes his nap.
And Bud and I have learned to know
She wouldn't give the rascal up:
She's really fond of him, although
she scolds a lot about the pup.

The Star-Spangled Banner

Francis Scott Key

O! say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming—
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming!
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O! say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?

On that shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream;
'Tis the star-spangled banner; O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps, pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave;
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,

And this be our motto—"In God is our trust":
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

Thy Will Be Done

Helen Steiner Rice

Do you want what you want when you want it?
Do you pray and expect a reply?
And when it's not instantly answered,
Do you feel that God passed you by?
Well, prayers that are prayed in this manner
Are really not prayers at all,
For you can't go to God in a hurry
And expect Him to answer your call ...
For prayers are not meant for obtaining
What we selfishly wish to acquire,
For God in His wisdom refuses
The things that we wrongly desire.
Don't pray for freedom from trouble,
Or ask that life's trials pass you by,

Instead pray for strength and for courage
To meet life's "dark hours" and not cry
That God was not there when you called Him,
And He turned a deaf ear to your prayer
And just when you needed Him most,
He left you alone in despair ...
Wake up! You are missing completely
The reason and purpose for prayer,
Which is really to keep us contented
That God holds us safe in His care.
And God only answers our pleadings
When He knows that our wants fill a need,
And whenever "our will" becomes "His will"
There is no prayer that God does not heed.

The Touch of the Master's Hand

Myra Welch

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But he held it up with a smile.

"What am I bidden, good folks?" he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?
"A dollar, one dollar"—then
"Two! Only two! Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"

"Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
And going for three"—But no,
From the room far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;

Then wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loosened strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice,
And going, and gone!" said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not understand

What changed its worth?" Swift came the reply.
"The touch of the master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine,
A game — and he travels on;
He's "going" once and "going" twice—
He's "going" and almost "gone!"

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand,
The worth of a soul, and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

The Trial of Derek Drew

Allan Ahlberg

The charges:

Derek Drew:

For leaving his reading book at home.

For scribbling his handwriting practice.

For swinging on the pegs in the cloakroom.

For sabotaging the girls' skipping.

For doing disgusting things with his dinner.

Also charged

Mrs. Alice Drew (nee Alice Jukes):

For giving birth to Derek Drew.

Mr. Dennis Drew:

For aiding and abetting Mrs. Drew.

Mrs. Muriel Drew and Mr. Donald Drew;

For giving birth to Dennis Drew, etc.

Mrs. Jane Jukes and Mr. Paul Jukes:

For giving birth to Alice Jukes, etc.

Previous generations of the Drew and Juke families:

for being born, etc., etc.

Witnesses

'He's always forgetting his book.' Mrs. Pine.

'He can write neatly, if he wants to.' Ditto.

'I seen him on the pegs, Miss!'

'And me!' 'And me!' Friends of the accused.

'He just kept jumpin' in the rope!' Eight third grade girls.

In Miss Hodge's class.

'It was disgusting!' Mrs. Foot (dinner lady).

For the defense

'I was never in the cloakroom!' Derek Drew.

Mitigating circumstances

This boy is ten years old.

He asks for 386 other charges to be taken into consideration.

'He's not like this at home,' his mother says.

The verdict:

Guilty.

The sentence:

Life!

And do his handwriting again.

The Wind and the Moon

George Macdonald

Said the Wind to the Moon, "I will blow you out,
 You stare
 In the air
 Like a ghost in a chair,
Always looking what I am about—
I hate to be watched; I'll blow you out."

The Wind blew hard, and out went the Moon.
 So, deep
 On a heap
 Of clouds to sleep,
Down lay the Wind, and slumbered soon,
Muttering low, "I've done for that Moon."

He turned in his bed; she was there again!
 On high
 In the sky,
 With her one ghost eye,
The Moon shone white and alive and plain.
Said the Wind, "I will blow you out again."

The Wind blew hard, and the Moon grew dim.
 "With my sledge,
 And my wedge,
 I have knocked off her edge!
If only I blow right fierce and grim,
The creature will soon be dimmer than dim."

He blew and he blew, and she thinned to a thread.
 "One puff
 More's enough
 To blow her to snuff!

One good puff more where the last was bred,
And glimmer, glimmer, glum will go the thread."

He blew a great blast, and the thread was gone
 In the air
 Nowhere
 Was a moonbeam bare;
Far off and harmless the shy stars shone—
Sure and certain the Moon was gone!

The Wind he took to his revels once more;
 On down,
 In town,
 Like a merry-mad clown,
He leaped and halloed with whistle and roar—
"What's that?" The glimmering thread once more!

He flew in a rage—he danced and blew;
 But in vain
 Was the pain
 Of his bursting brain;
For still the broader the Moon-scap grew,
The broader he swelled his big cheeks and blew.

Slowly she grew—till she filled the night,
 And shone
 On her throne
 In the sky alone,
A matchless, wonderful silvery light,
Radiant and lovely, the queen of the night.

Said the Wind: "What a marvel of power am I
 With my breath,
 Good faith!
 I blew her to death—

First blew her away right out of the sky—
Then blew her in; what strength have I!"

But the Moon she knew nothing about the affair;

For high

In the sky,

With her one white eye,

Motionless, miles above the air,

She had never heard the great Wind blare.

The World We Make

Alfred Grant Walton

We make the world in which we live
By what we gather and what we give
By our daily deeds and the things we say,
By what we keep or we cast away.

We make our world by the beauty we see
In a skylark's song or a lilac tree,
In a butterfly's wing, in the pale moon's rise,
And the wonder that lingers in midnight skies.

We make our world by the life we lead,
By the friends we have, by the books we read,
By the pity we show in the hour of care,
By the loads we lift and the love we share.

We make our world by the goals we pursue,
By the heights we seek and the higher view,
By hopes and dreams that reach the sun
And a will to fight till the heights are won.

What is the place in which we dwell,
A hut or a palace, a heaven or hell
We gather and scatter, we take and we give,
We make our world—and there we live.