

## Examiner

The routine trickery of the examination  
Baffles these hot and discouraged youths.  
Driven by they know not what external pressure,  
They pour their hated self-analysis  
Through the nib of confession, onto the accusatory page.

I, who have plotted their immediate downfall,  
I am entrusted with the divine categories,  
ABCD and the hell of E,  
The parade of prize and the backdoor of pass.

In the tight silence  
Standing by a green grass window  
Watching the fertile earth graduate its sons  
With more compassion — not commanding the shape  
Of stem and stamen, bringing the trees to pass  
By shift of sunlight and increase of rain,  
For each seed the whole soil, for the inner life  
The environment receptive and contributory —  
I shudder at the narrow frames of our text-book schools  
In which we plant our so various seedlings.  
Each brick-walled barracks  
Cut into numbered rooms, black-boarded,  
Ties the venturing shoot to the master's stick;  
The screw-desk rows of lads and girls  
Subdued in the shade of an adult —  
Their acid subsoil —  
Shape the new to the old in the ashen garden.

Shall we open the whole skylight of thought  
To these tiptoe minds, bring them our frontier worlds  
And the boundless uplands of art for their field of growth?  
Or shall we pass them the chosen poems with the foot-notes,  
Ring the bell on their thoughts, period their play,  
Make laws for averages and plans for means,  
Print one history book for a whole province, and  
Let ninety thousand reach page 10 by Tuesday?

As I gather the inadequate paper evidence, I hear  
Across the neat campus lawn  
The professional mowers drone, clipping the inch-high green.

*F. R. Scott*

*Impact, p. 29*

## Ballad of Birmingham

Dudley Randall

Mother dear may I go downtown  
Instead of out to play  
and march the streets of Birmingham  
In a freedom march today?

No baby no, you may not go  
For the dogs are fierce and wild,  
And clubs and hoses, guns and jails  
Aren't for a little child.

But mother I won't be alone,  
Other children will go with me  
And march the streets of Birmingham  
To make our people free.

No baby no, you may not go  
I fear the guns will fire,  
But you may go to church instead and sing in the  
children's choir.

She's combed and brushed her night dark hair  
And bathed rose petal sweet,  
And drawn white gloves on small brown hands,  
White shoes on her feet.

Her mother smiled to know her child  
Was in that sacred place,  
But that smile was the last  
Smile to come to her face.

For when she heard the explosion  
Her eyes grew wet and wild,  
She raced through the streets of Birmingham  
Yelling for her child.

She dug in bits of glass and brick,  
Then pulled out a shoe —  
O here is the shoe my baby wore  
But baby where are you?

*Poetry in Focus, p. 53*

## The Universal Soldier

Buffy Sainte-Marie

He's five foot two and he's six feet four,  
he fights with missiles and with spears,  
He's all of thirty-one and he's only seventeen,  
he's been a soldier for a thousand years.

He's a Catholic, a Hindu, an Atheist, a Jain,  
a Buddhist and a Baptist and a Jew,  
And he knows he shouldn't kill and he knows he always will  
kill you for me, my friend, and me for you;

And he's fighting for Canada, he's fighting for France,  
he's fighting for the U.S.A.,  
And he's fighting for the Russians and he's fighting for Japan,  
and he thinks we'll put an end to war that way.

And he's fighting for democracy, he's fighting for the Reds,  
he says it's for the peace of all,  
He's the one who must decide who's to live and who's to die,  
and he never sees the writing on the wall.

But without him how would Hitler have condemned him at Dachau,  
without him Caesar would have stood alone,  
He's the one who gives his body as a weapon of the war,  
and without him all this killing can't go on.

He's the Universal Soldier and he really is to blame,  
his orders come from far away no more,  
They come from him and you and me, and, brothers can't you see,  
This is not the way we put an end to war.

*Poetry in Focus, p. 54*

## Shooting the Sun

Poem by Amy Lowell

Four horizons cozen me  
To distances I dimly see.

Four paths beckon me to stray,  
Each a bold and separate way.

Monday morning shows the East  
Satisfying as a feast.

Tuesday I will none of it,  
West alone holds benefit.

Later in the week 'tis due  
North that I would hurry to.

While on other days I find  
To the South content of mind.

So I start, but never rest  
North or South or East or West.

Each horizon has its claim  
Solace to a different aim.

Four-souled like the wind am I,  
Voyaging an endless sky  
And yet no destination.

Cross Roads 9, p. 150

# If

Poem by Rudyard Kipling

If you can keep your head when all about you  
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;  
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,  
But make allowance for their doubting too;  
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,  
Or, being lied about, don't deal in lies,  
Or, being hated, don't give way to hating,  
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;  
If you can dream—and not make dreams your master;  
If you can think—and not make thoughts your aim;  
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster  
And treat those two imposters just the same;  
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken  
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,  
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;  
If you can make one heap of all your winnings  
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,  
And lose, and start again at your beginnings  
And never breathe a word about your loss;  
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew  
To serve your turn long after they are gone,  
And so hold on when there is nothing in you  
Except the Will which says to them: "Hold On!"  
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,  
Or walk with Kings—nor lose the common touch,  
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,  
If all men count with you, but none too much;  
If you can fill the unforgiving minute  
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,  
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,  
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Nelson Literacy 9b, p. 60

## A Tanned Version

BY HUMMARAH QUDDOOS

And there is a huge immeasurable distance between us,  
Between me and them.  
They close their minds,  
Ask the same repetitive questions,  
Arranged marriages, strictness, trousers,  
Same order.  
Wherever I go.  
What will they ask next:  
Do you sleep, do you eat, can we touch?  
I'm only a different colour  
A tanned version of you.  
They think we're all stereotypes  
Carbon copies of each other.  
We don't think they're all Princess Diana.  
They're always amazed  
When I can talk, can answer, have a mind,  
As if to say this one's clever,  
What other tricks do you do?  
I'm not so very different  
Just a tanned version of you.  
How come I have to fight so hard  
When you just have to show your face?

Transitions, p. 124