**Poetry Comparison ‐ Poems List**

Nature

Spring

Spring in New Hampshire Nature, Poem 1: Mother Nature Follies

Nature: Challenge Options Spring Day

Blur

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud War

The War Works Hard Grass

In Flanders Fields War is Kind

The Hurt Locker War: Challenge Options

The Charge of the Light Brigade Memorial Day for the War Dead Gettysburg

Fugue of Death Love

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18) Sin of self­love possesseth all mine eye (Sonnet 62) When You Are Old

Love: Challenge Options Woman's Constancy

somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond Coming of Age/Aging

First Gestures

Childhood is the Kingdom Where Nobody Dies

The Human Seasons

Coming of Age/Aging: Challenge Options

Fern Hill

# Nature

## Spring

Edna St. Vincent Millay

To what purpose, April, do you return again? Beauty is not enough.

You can no longer quiet me with the redness Of little leaves opening stickily.

I know what I know.

The sun is hot on my neck as I observe The spikes of the crocus.

The smell of the earth is good.

It is apparent that there is no death. But what does that signify?

Not only under ground are the brains of men Eaten by maggots.

Life in itself Is nothing,

An empty cup, a flight of uncarpeted stairs. It is not enough that yearly, down this hill, April

Comes like an idiot, babbling and strewing flowers.

## Spring in New Hampshire

Claude McKay

Too green the springing April grass, Too blue the silver‐speckled sky, For me to linger here, alas,

While happy winds go laughing by, Wasting the golden hours indoors, Washing windows and scrubbing floors.

Too wonderful the April night,

Too faintly sweet the first May flowers,

The stars too gloriously bright,

For me to spend the evening hours,

When fields are fresh and streams are leaping,

Wearied, exhausted, dully sleeping.

## Nature, Poem 1: Mother Nature

Emily Dickinson

Nature, the gentlest mother, Impatient of no child,

The feeblest or the waywardest, — Her admonition mild

In forest and the hill By traveller is heard,

Restraining rampant squirrel Or too impetuous bird.

How fair her conversation, A summer afternoon, —

Her household, her assembly; And when the sun goes down

Her voice among the aisles Incites the timid prayer

Of the minutest cricket, The most unworthy flower.

When all the children sleep She turns as long away

As will suffice to light her lamps; Then, bending from the sky

With infinite affection And infiniter care,

Her golden finger on her lip,

Wills silence everywhere.

## Follies

Carl Sandburg

Shaken,

The blossoms of lilac, And shattered,

The atoms of purple. Green dip the leaves, Darker the bark, Longer the shadows.

Sheer lines of poplar

Shimmer with masses of silver

And down in a garden old with years And broken walls of ruin and story, Roses rise with red rain‐memories. May!

In the open world

The sun comes and finds your face, Remembering all.

# Nature: Challenge Options

## Spring Day

Amy Lowell

The day is fresh‐washed and fair, and there is a smell of tulips and narcissus in the air.

The sunshine pours in at the bath‐room window and bores through the water in the bath‐tub in lathes and planes of greenish‐white. It cleaves the water into flaws like a jewel, and cracks it to bright light.

Little spots of sunshine lie on the surface of the water and dance, dance, and their reflections wobble deliciously over the ceiling; a stir of my finger sets them whirring, reeling. I move a foot and the planes of light in the water jar. I lie back and laugh, and let the green‐white water, the sun‐flawed beryl water, flow over me. The day is almost too bright to bear, the green water covers me from the too bright day. I will lie here awhile and play with the water and the sun spots. The sky is blue and high. A crow flaps by the window, and there is a whiff of tulips and narcissus in the air.

## Blur

Andrew Hudgins

Storms of perfume lift from honeysuckle, lilac, clover—and drift across the threshold, outside reclaiming inside as its home.

Warm days whirl in a bright unnumberable blur, a cup—a grail brimmed with delirium

and humbling boredom both. I was a boy, I thought I'd always be a boy, pell—mell, mean, and gaily murderous one moment as I decapitated daises with a stick,

then overcome with summer's opium, numb—slumberous. I thought I'd always be a boy, each day its own millennium, each

one thousand years of daylight ending in the night watch, summer's pervigilium, which I could never keep because by sunset I was an old man. I was Methuselah,

the oldest man in the holy book. I drowsed.

I nodded, slept—and without my watching, the world, whose permanence I doubted, returned again, bluebell and blue jay, speedwell and cardinal

still there when the light swept back, and so was I, which I had also doubted. I understood with horror then with joy,

dubious and luminous joy: it simply spins. It doesn't need my feet to make it turn.

It doesn't even need my eyes to watch it, and I, though a latecomer to its surface, I'd

be leaving early. It was my duty to stay awake and sing if I could keep my mind on singing, not extinction, as blurred green summer, lifted to its apex, succumbed to gravity and fell

to autumn, Ilium, and ashes. In joy

we are our own uncomprehending mourners,

and more than joy I longed for understanding

and more than understanding I longed for joy.

## I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills, When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine And twinkle on the milky way,

They stretched in never‐ending line Along the margin of a bay:

Ten thousand saw I at a glance, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they Out‐did the sparkling waves in glee:

A poet could not but be gay, In such a jocund company:

I gazed—and gazed—but little thought What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie In vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye Which is the bliss of solitude;

And then my heart with pleasure fills, And dances with the daffodils.

# War

**The War Works Hard**

Dunya Mikhail

How magnificent the war is!

How eager and efficient!

Early in the morning

it wakes up the sirens

and dispatches ambulances to various places

swings corpses through the air rolls stretchers to the wounded summons rain

from the eyes of mothers digs into the earth dislodging many things from under the ruins...

Some are lifeless and glistening others are pale and still throbbing...

It produces the most questions in the minds of children entertains the gods

by shooting fireworks and missiles into the sky

sows mines in the fields

and reaps punctures and blisters urges families to emigrate

stands beside the clergymen as they curse the devil

(poor devil, he remains

with one hand in the searing fire)...

The war continues working, day and night.

It inspires tyrants

to deliver long speeches awards medals to generals and themes to poets

it contributes to the industry of artificial limbs

provides food for flies

adds pages to the history books achieves equality

between killer and killed teaches lovers to write letters

accustoms young women to waiting fills the newspapers

with articles and pictures builds new houses

for the orphans

invigorates the coffin makers gives grave diggers

a pat on the back

and paints a smile on the leader’s face. It works with unparalleled diligence!

Yet no one gives it a word of praise.

## Grass

Carl Sandburg

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo. Shovel them under and let me work—

I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg

And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun. Shovel them under and let me work.

Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor: What place is this?

Where are we now?

I am the grass. Let me work.

## In Flanders Fields

John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow Between the crosses, row on row, That mark our place, and in the sky, The larks, still bravely singing, fly,

Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead; short days ago

We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow, Loved and were loved, and now we lie In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe! To you from failing hands we throw The torch; be yours to hold it high! If ye break faith with us who die

We shall not sleep, though poppies grow In Flanders fields.

## War is Kind

Stephen Crane

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.

Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky And the affrighted steed ran on alone,

Do not weep. War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment, Little souls who thirst for fight,

These men were born to drill and die. The unexplained glory flies above them,

Great is the battle‐god, great, and his kingdom— A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.

Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches, Raged at his breast, gulped and died,

Do not weep. War is kind.

Swift, blazing flag of the regiment, Eagle with crest of red and gold, These men were born to drill and die.

Point for them the virtue of slaughter, Make plain to them the excellence of killing And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button On the bright splendid shroud of your son,

Do not weep, war is kind.

## The Hurt Locker

Brian Turner

Nothing but hurt left here. Nothing but bullets and pain and the bled‐out slumping

and all the *fucks* and *goddamns* and *Jesus Christs* of the wounded. Nothing left here but the hurt.

Believe it when you see it. Believe it when a twelve‐year‐old rolls a grenade into the room.

Or when a sniper punches a hole deep into someone’s skull.

Believe it when four men step from a taxicab in Mosul to shower the street in brass

and fire. Open the hurt locker and see what there is of knives

and teeth. Open the hurt locker and learn how rough men come hunting for souls.

# War: Challenge Options

## The Charge of the Light Brigade

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

## I

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.

## II

“Forward, the Light Brigade!” Was there a man dismayed?

Not though the soldier knew Someone had blundered. 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.

## III

Cannon to right of them, Cannon to left of them, Cannon in front of them

Volleyed and thundered; Stormed at with shot and shell, Boldly they rode and well,

Into the jaws of Death, Into the mouth of hell

Rode the six hundred.

## IV

Flashed all their sabres bare, Flashed as they turned in air Sabring the gunners there, Charging an army, while

All the world wondered. Plunged in the battery‐smoke Right through the line they broke; Cossack and Russian

Reeled from the sabre stroke Shattered and sundered.

Then they rode back, but not Not the six hundred.

## V

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.

## VI

When can their glory fade?

O the wild charge they made! All the world wondered.

Honour the charge they made! Honour the Light Brigade,

Noble six hundred!

## Memorial Day for the War Dead

Yehuda Amichai

Memorial day for the war dead. Add now the grief of all your losses to their grief, even of a woman that has left you. Mix

sorrow with sorrow, like time‐saving history, which stacks holiday and sacrifice and mourning on one day for easy, convenient memory.

Oh, sweet world soaked, like bread,

in sweet milk for the terrible toothless God. “Behind all this some great happiness is hiding.” No use to weep inside and to scream outside.

Behind all this perhaps some great happiness is hiding.

Memorial day. Bitter salt is dressed up as a little girl with flowers.

The streets are cordoned off with ropes,

for the marching together of the living and the dead. Children with a grief not their own march slowly,

like stepping over broken glass.

The flautist’s mouth will stay like that for many days.

A dead soldier swims above little heads

with the swimming movements of the dead, with the ancient error the dead have

about the place of the living water.

A flag loses contact with reality and flies off.

A shopwindow is decorated with

dresses of beautiful women, in blue and white. And everything in three languages:

Hebrew, Arabic, and Death.

A great and royal animal is dying

all through the night under the jasmine tree with a constant stare at the world.

A man whose son died in the war walks in the street like a woman with a dead embryo in her womb. “Behind all this some great happiness is hiding.”

## Gettysburg

Herman Melville

O Pride of the days in prime of the months Now trebled in great renown,

When before the ark of our holy cause Fell Dagon down‐

Dagon foredoomed, who, armed and targed, Never his impious heart enlarged

Beyond that hour; God walled his power, And there the last invader charged.

He charged, and in that charge condensed His all of hate and all of fire;

He sought to blast us in his scorn, And wither us in his ire.

Before him went the shriek of shells‐ Aerial screamings, taunts and yells;

Then the three waves in flashed advance Surged, but were met, and back they set: Pride was repelled by sterner pride,

And Right is a strong‐hold yet. Before our lines it seemed a beach

Which wild September gales have strown With havoc on wreck, and dashed therewith

Pale crews unknown‐

Men, arms, and steeds. The evening sun Died on the face of each lifeless one,

And died along the winding marge of fight And searching‐parties lone.

Sloped on the hill the mounds were green, Our centre held that place of graves,

And some still hold it in their swoon, And over these a glory waves.

The warrior‐monument, crashed in fight, Shall soar transfigured in loftier light,

A meaning ampler bear;

Soldier and priest with hymn and prayer Have laid the stone, and every bone

Shall rest in honor there.

## Fugue of Death

Paul Celan

Black milk of daybreak we drink it at nightfall

we drink it at noon in the morning we drink it at night we drink it and drink it

we are digging a grave in the sky it is ample to lie there A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden

hair Margarete

he writes it and walks from the house the stars glitter he whistles his dogs up

he whistles his Jews out and orders a grave to be dug in the earth

he commands us strike up for the dance

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night

we drink you in the morning at noon we drink you at nightfall

drink you and drink you

A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes he writes when the night falls to Germany your golden

hair Margarete

Your ashen hair Shulamith we are digging a grave in the sky it is

ample to lie there

He shouts stab deeper in earth you there and you others you sing and you play

he grabs at the iron in his belt and swings it and blue are his eyes

stab deeper your spades you there and you others play on for the dancing

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at nightfall

we drink you at noon in the mornings we drink you at nightfall

drink you and drink you

a man in the house your golden hair Margarete

your ashen hair Shulamith he plays with the serpents

He shouts play sweeter death’s music death comes as a master from Germany

he shouts stroke darker the strings and as smoke you shall climb to the sky

then you’ll have a grave in the clouds it is ample to lie there

Black milk of daybreak we drink you at night

we drink you at noon death comes as a master from Germany

we drink you at nightfall and morning we drink you and drink you

a master from Germany death comes with eyes that are blue

with a bullet of lead he will hit in the mark he will hit you

a man in the house your golden hair Margarete

he hunts us down with his dogs in the sky he gives us a grave

he plays with the serpents and dreams death comes as a master from Germany

your golden hair Margarete your ashen hair Shulamith.

# Love

## Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? (Sonnet 18)

William Shakespeare Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate. Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May, And summer's lease hath all too short a date. Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines, And often is his gold complexion dimmed;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed; But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,

Nor shall death brag thou wand'rest in his shade, When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see, So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

## Annabel Lee

Edgar Allan Poe

It was many and many a year ago, In a kingdom by the sea,

That a maiden there lived whom you may know

By the name of ANNABEL LEE;

And this maiden she lived with no other thought Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child, In this kingdom by the sea;

But we loved with a love that was more than love‐ I and my Annabel Lee;

With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago, In this kingdom by the sea,

A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling My beautiful Annabel Lee;

So that her highborn kinsman came And bore her away from me,

To shut her up in a sepulchre In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven, Went envying her and me‐

Yes!‐ that was the reason (as all men know, In this kingdom by the sea)

That the wind came out of the cloud by night, Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love Of those who were older than we‐

Of many far wiser than we‐

And neither the angels in heaven above, Nor the demons down under the sea, Can ever dissever my soul from the soul Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And so, all the night‐tide, I lie down by the side Of my darling‐ my darling‐ my life and my bride, In the sepulchre there by the sea,

In her tomb by the sounding sea.

## Sin of self‐love possesseth all mine eye (Sonnet 62)

William Shakespeare Sin of self‐love possesseth all mine eye,

And all my soul, and all my every part; And for this sin there is no remedy,

It is so grounded inward in my heart. Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,

No shape so true, no truth of such account; And for my self mine own worth do define, As I all other in all worths surmount.

But when my glass shows me myself indeed Beated and chapped with tanned antiquity, Mine own self‐love quite contrary I read; Self so self‐loving were iniquity.

'Tis thee, myself, that for my self I praise, Painting my age with beauty of thy days.

## When You Are Old

W.B. Yeats When you are old and grey and full of sleep,

And nodding by the fire, take down this book,

And slowly read, and dream of the soft look Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace, And loved your beauty with love false or true, But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you, And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars, Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled

And paced upon the mountains overhead And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

# Love: Challenge Options

## Woman's Constancy

John Donne

Now thou hast loved me one whole day, Tomorrow when thou leav'st, what wilt thou say? Wilt thou then antedate some new‐made vow?

Or say that now

We are not just those persons which we were? Or, that oaths made in reverential fear

Of love, and his wrath, any may forswear? Or, as true deaths, true marriages untie, So lovers' contracts, images of those,

Bind but till sleep, death's image, them unloose?

Or your own end to justify,

For having purposed change, and falsehood, you Can have no way but falsehood to be true?

Vain lunatic, against these 'scapes I could Dispute, and conquer, if I would,

Which I abstain to do,

For by tomorrow, I may think so too.

## somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond

e.e. cummings somewhere i have never travelled, gladly beyond

any experience,your eyes have their silence:

in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,

or which i cannot touch because they are too near

your slightest look easily will unclose me though i have closed myself as fingers,

you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens (touching skilfully,mysteriously)her first rose

or if your wish be to close me, i and

my life will shut very beautifully ,suddenly, as when the heart of this flower imagines the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals the power of your intense fragility:whose texture compels me with the color of its countries,

rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes and opens;only something in me understands the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses) nobody,not even the rain,has such small hands

# Coming of Age/Aging

## First Gestures

Julia Spicher Kasdorf

Among the first we learn is good‐bye, your tiny wrist between Dad’s forefinger

and thumb forced to wave bye‐bye to Mom, whose hand sails brightly behind a windshield. Then it’s done to make us follow:

in a crowded mall, a woman waves, “Bye, we’re leaving,” and her son stands firm sobbing, until at last he runs after her, among shoppers drifting like sharks

who must drag their great hulks underwater, even in sleep, or drown.

Living, we cover vast territories; imagine your life drawn on a map–

a scribble on the town where you grew up, each bus trip traced between school

and home, or a clean line across the sea

to a place you flew once. Think of the time

and things we accumulate, all the while growing more conscious of losing and leaving. Aging,

our bodies collect wrinkles and scars

for each place the world would not give under our weight. Our thoughts get laced with strange aches, sweet as the final chord that hangs in a guitar’s blond torso.

Think how a particular ridge of hills

from a summer of your childhood grows in significance, or one hour of light–

late afternoon, say, when thick sun flings the shadow of Virginia creeper vines across the wall of a tiny, white room where a girl makes love for the first time. Its leaves tremble like small hands against the screen while she weeps

in the arms of her bewildered lover. She’s too young to see that as we gather losses, we may also grow in love;

as in passion, the body shudders and clutches what it must release.

## Childhood is the Kingdom Where Nobody Dies

Edna St. Vincent Millay

Childhood is not from birth to a certain age and at a certain age The child is grown, and puts away childish things.

Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies.

Nobody that matters, that is. Distant relatives of course Die, whom one never has seen or has seen for an hour,

And they gave one candy in a pink‐and‐green stripéd bag, or a jack‐knife,

And went away, and cannot really be said to have lived at all.

And cats die. They lie on the floor and lash their tails, And their reticent fur is suddenly all in motion

With fleas that one never knew were there,

Polished and brown, knowing all there is to know, Trekking off into the living world.

You fetch a shoe‐box, but it's much too small, because she won't curl up now:

So you find a bigger box, and bury her in the yard, and weep. But you do not wake up a month from then, two months

A year from then, two years, in the middle of the night

And weep, with your knuckles in your mouth, and say Oh, God! Oh, God!

Childhood is the kingdom where nobody dies that matters,

—mothers and fathers don't die.

And if you have said, "For heaven's sake, must you always be kissing a person?"

Or, "I do wish to gracious you'd stop tapping on the window with your thimble!"

Tomorrow, or even the day after tomorrow if you're busy having fun,

Is plenty of time to say, "I'm sorry, mother."

To be grown up is to sit at the table with people who have died, who neither listen nor speak;

Who do not drink their tea, though they always said Tea was such a comfort.

Run down into the cellar and bring up the last jar of raspberries; they are not tempted.

Flatter them, ask them what was it they said exactly

That time, to the bishop, or to the overseer, or to Mrs. Mason; They are not taken in.

Shout at them, get red in the face, rise,

Drag them up out of their chairs by their stiff shoulders and shake them and yell at them;

They are not startled, they are not even embarrassed; they slide back into their chairs.

Your tea is cold now. You drink it standing up, And leave the house.

## The Human Seasons

John Keats

Four Seasons fill the measure of the year;

There are four seasons in the mind of man: He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear

Takes in all beauty with an easy span: He has his Summer, when luxuriously

Spring's honied cud of youthful thought he loves To ruminate, and by such dreaming high

Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings He furleth close; contented so to look

On mists in idleness—to let fair things

Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook. He has his Winter too of pale misfeature, Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

# Coming of Age/Aging: Challenge Options

## Fern Hill

Dylan Thomas

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green, The night above the dingle starry,

Time let me hail and climb

Golden in the heydays of his eyes,

And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves

Trail with daisies and barley

Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home, In the sun that is young once only,

Time let me play and be

Golden in the mercy of his means,

And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and

cold,

And the sabbath rang slowly

In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay

Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air

And playing, lovely and watery And fire green as grass.

And nightly under the simple stars

As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away, All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars

Flying with the ricks, and the horses Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white

With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all Shining, it was Adam and maiden,

The sky gathered again

And the sun grew round that very day.

So it must have been after the birth of the simple light

In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm

Out of the whinnying green stable On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long, In the sun born over and over,

I ran my heedless ways,

My wishes raced through the house high hay

And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allows In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs Before the children green and golden

Follow him out of grace.

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me

Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand, In the moon that is always rising,

Nor that riding to sleep

I should hear him fly with the high fields

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land. Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means, Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea.