**AP Poetry Packet**

**Quarter 4**

**“Promises Like Pie-Crust”**

**Christina Georgina Rossetti**

Promise me no promises,   
So will I not promise you:   
Keep we both our liberties,   
Never false and never true:   
Let us hold the die uncast,   
Free to come as free to go:   
For I cannot know your past,   
And of mine what can you know?   
  
You, so warm, may once have been   
Warmer towards another one:   
I, so cold, may once have seen   
Sunlight, once have felt the sun:   
Who shall show us if it was   
Thus indeed in time of old?   
Fades the image from the glass,   
And the fortune is not told.   
  
If you promised, you might grieve   
For lost liberty again:   
If I promised, I believe   
I should fret to break the chain.   
Let us be the friends we were,   
Nothing more but nothing less:   
Many thrive on frugal fare   
Who would perish of excess.

## “Theme for English B”

### Langston Hughes

The instructor said,

Go home and write   
a page tonight.   
And let that page come out of you---   
Then, it will be true.

I wonder if it's that simple?   
I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.   
I went to school there, then Durham, then here   
to this college on the hill above Harlem.   
I am the only colored student in my class.   
The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem   
through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,   
Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,   
the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator   
up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me   
at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what   
I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:   
hear you, hear me---we two---you, me, talk on this page.   
(I hear New York too.) Me---who?   
Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.   
I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.   
I like a pipe for a Christmas present,   
or records---Bessie, bop, or Bach.   
I guess being colored doesn't make me NOT like   
the same things other folks like who are other races.   
So will my page be colored that I write?   
Being me, it will not be white.   
But it will be   
a part of you, instructor.   
You are white---   
yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.   
That's American.   
Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.   
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.   
But we are, that's true!   
As I learn from you,  
I guess you learn from me---   
although you're older---and white---   
and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

**“Grading”**

**Mark Halliday**

On the whole this is quite successful work:   
your main argument about the poet's ambivalence?  
how he loves the very things he attacks?  
is most persuasive and always engaging.

At the same time,   
there are spots   
where your thinking becomes, for me,   
alarmingly opaque, and your syntax seems to jump   
backwards through unnecessary hoops,   
as on p. 2 where you speak of "precognitive awareness   
not yet disestablished by the shell that encrusts   
each thing that a person actually says"   
or at the top of p. 5 where your discussion of   
"subverbal undertow miming the subversion of self-belief   
woven counter to desire's outreach"   
leaves me groping for firmer footholds.   
(I'd have said it differently,   
or rather, said something else.)   
And when you say that women "could not fulfill themselves" (p.6)   
"in that era" (only forty years ago, after all!)   
are you so sure that the situation is so different today?   
Also, how does Whitman bluff his way into   
your penultimate paragraph? He is the last poet   
I would have quoted in this context!   
What plausible way of behaving   
does the passage you quote represent? Don't you think   
literature should ultimately reveal possiblities for *action*?

Please notice how I've repaired your use of semicolons.

And yet, despite what may seem my cranky response,   
I do admire the freshness of   
your thinking and your style; there is   
a vitality here; your sentences thrust themselves forward   
with a confidence as impressive as it is cheeky. . . .   
You are not   
me, finally,   
and though this is an awkward problem, involving   
the inescapable fact that you are so young, so young   
it is also a delightful provocation.

***A-***

**“Forth went the candid man”**

**Stephen Crane**

Forth went the candid man   
And spoke freely to the wind --   
When he looked about him he was in a far strange country.   
  
Forth went the candid man   
And spoke freely to the stars --   
Yellow light tore sight from his eyes.   
  
"My good fool," said a learned bystander,   
"Your operations are mad."   
  
"You are too candid," cried the candid man,   
And when his stick left the head of the learned bystander   
It was two sticks.

**“Seeker of Truth”**

**e.e. cummings**

seeker of truth  
  
follow no path  
all paths lead where  
  
truth is here

**“Mirror”  
Sylvia Plath**

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.  
What ever you see I swallow immediately  
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.  
I am not cruel, only truthful---  
The eye of a little god, four-cornered.  
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.  
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long  
I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.  
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.  
Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,  
Searching my reaches for what she really is.  
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.  
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.  
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.  
I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

**“The Love-Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”**

**By T.S. Eliot**

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| [http://people.virginia.edu/~sfr/enam312/2004/tseepigram2.jpg](javascript:Start('2004/tseepigram2.html'))  Let us go then, you and I,  When the evening is spread out against the sky  Like a patient etherized upon a table;  Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,  The muttering retreats  Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  Streets that follow like a tedious argument  Of insidious intent  To lead you to an overwhelming question. . .                               10  Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"  Let us go and make our visit.     In the room the women come and go  Talking of Michelangelo.     The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes  The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes  Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening  Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,                               20  And seeing that it was a soft October night  Curled once about the house, and fell asleep.     And indeed there will be time  For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  There will be time, there will be time  To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  There will be time to murder and create,  And time for all the works and days of hands  That lift and drop a question on your plate;                                30  Time for you and time for me,  And time yet for a hundred indecisions  And for a hundred visions and revisions  Before the taking of a toast and tea.     In the room the women come and go  Talking of Michelangelo.     And indeed there will be time  To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  Time to turn back and descend the stair,  With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—                               40  [They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]  My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,  My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—  [They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!"]  Do I dare  Disturb the universe?  In a minute there is time  For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse.     For I have known them all already, known them all;  Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,                       50  I have measured out my life with coffee spoons;  I know the voices dying with a dying fall  Beneath the music from a farther room.    So how should I presume?     And I have known the eyes already, known them all—  The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,  And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,  When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,  Then how should I begin  To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways?                    60    And how should I presume?     And I have known the arms already, known them all—  Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  [But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!]  Is it perfume from a dress  That makes me so digress?  Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl.    And should I then presume?    And how should I begin?         .     .     .     .     .  Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets              70  And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows? . . .   I should have been a pair of ragged claws  Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.         .     .     .     .     .  And the afternoon, the evening, sleeps so peacefully!  Smoothed by long fingers,  Asleep . . . tired . . . or it malingers,  Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me.  Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?                  80  But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,  I am no prophet–and here's no great matter;  I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  And in short, I was afraid.     And would it have been worth it, after all,  After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  Would it have been worth while,                                             90  To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  To have squeezed the universe into a ball  To roll it toward some overwhelming question,  To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"  If one, settling a pillow by her head,    Should say, "That is not what I meant at all.    That is not it, at all."     And would it have been worth it, after all,  Would it have been worth while,                                           100  After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,  After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—  And this, and so much more?—  It is impossible to say just what I mean!  But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  Would it have been worth while  If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  And turning toward the window, should say:    "That is not it at all,    That is not what I meant, at all."                                          110         .     .     .     .     .  No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  Am an attendant lord, one that will do  To swell a progress, start a scene or two  Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,  Deferential, glad to be of use,  Politic, cautious, and meticulous;  Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;  At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—  Almost, at times, the Fool.     I grow old . . . I grow old . . .                                              120  I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.     Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?  I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.  I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.     I do not think they will sing to me.     I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  When the wind blows the water white and black.     We have lingered in the chambers of the sea  By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown               130  Till human voices wake us, and we drown. |