**Sonnet 116: Let me not to the marriage of true minds**

By [William Shakespeare](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-shakespeare)

Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments. Love is not love

Which alters when it alteration finds,

Or bends with the remover to remove.

O no! it is an ever-fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;

It is the star to every wand'ring bark,

Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks

Within his bending sickle's compass come;

Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,

But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error and upon me prov'd,

I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

# Sonnet 7: How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth

J[ohn Milton](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-milton)

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,

       Stol'n on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!

       My hasting days fly on with full career,

       But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th.

Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth

       That I to manhood am arriv'd so near;

       And inward ripeness doth much less appear,

       That some more timely-happy spirits endu'th.

Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,

       It shall be still in strictest measure ev'n

       To that same lot, however mean or high,

Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heav'n:

       All is, if I have grace to use it so

       As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.

**A Slumber did my Spirit Seal**

By [William Wordsworth](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-wordsworth)

A slumber did my spirit seal;

I had no human fears:

She seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,

With rocks, and stones, and trees.

**The Cloud**

By [Percy Bysshe Shelley](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/percy-bysshe-shelley)

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,

From the seas and the streams;

I bear light shade for the leaves when laid

In their noonday dreams.

From my wings are shaken the dews that waken

The sweet buds every one,

When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,

As she dances about the sun.

I wield the flail of the lashing hail,

And whiten the green plains under,

And then again I dissolve it in rain,

And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,

And their great pines groan aghast;

And all the night 'tis my pillow white,

While I sleep in the arms of the blast.

Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,

Lightning my pilot sits;

In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,

It struggles and howls at fits;

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,

This pilot is guiding me,

Lured by the love of the genii that move

In the depths of the purple sea;

Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,

Over the lakes and the plains,

Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,

The Spirit he loves remains;

And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,

Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,

And his burning plumes outspread,

Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,

When the morning star shines dead;

As on the jag of a mountain crag,

Which an earthquake rocks and swings,

An eagle alit one moment may sit

In the light of its golden wings.

And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,

Its ardours of rest and of love,

And the crimson pall of eve may fall

From the depth of Heaven above,

With wings folded I rest, on mine aëry nest,

As still as a brooding dove.

That orbèd maiden with white fire laden,

Whom mortals call the Moon,

Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,

By the midnight breezes strewn;

And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,

Which only the angels hear,

May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,

The stars peep behind her and peer;

And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,

Like a swarm of golden bees,

When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,

Till calm the rivers, lakes, and seas,

Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,

Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,

And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;

The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim,

When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.

From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,

Over a torrent sea,

Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,

The mountains its columns be.

The triumphal arch through which I march

With hurricane, fire, and snow,

When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,

Is the million-coloured bow;

The sphere-fire above its soft colours wove,

While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,

And the nursling of the Sky;

I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;

I change, but I cannot die.

For after the rain when with never a stain

The pavilion of Heaven is bare,

And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams

Build up the blue dome of air,

I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,

And out of the caverns of rain,

Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,

I arise and unbuild it again.

**“Bright star, would I were stedfast as thou art”**

By [John Keats](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/john-keats)

Bright star, would I were stedfast 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 stedfast, still unchangeable,

         Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,

To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,

         Awake for ever in a sweet unrest,

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,

And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

**Ulysses**

By [Alfred, Lord Tennyson](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/alfred-tennyson)

It little profits that an idle king,

By this still hearth, among these barren crags,

Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole

Unequal laws unto a savage race,

That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.

I cannot rest from travel: I will drink

Life to the lees: All times I have enjoy'd

Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those

That loved me, and alone, on shore, and when

Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades

Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;

For always roaming with a hungry heart

Much have I seen and known; cities of men

And manners, climates, councils, governments,

Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,

Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.

I am a part of all that I have met;

Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'

Gleams that untravell'd world whose margin fades

For ever and forever when I move.

How dull it is to pause, to make an end,

To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use!

As tho' to breathe were life! Life piled on life

Were all too little, and of one to me

Little remains: but every hour is saved

From that eternal silence, something more,

A bringer of new things; and vile it were

For some three suns to store and hoard myself,

And this gray spirit yearning in desire

To follow knowledge like a sinking star,

Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.

         This is my son, mine own Telemachus,

To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle,—

Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil

This labour, by slow prudence to make mild

A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees

Subdue them to the useful and the good.

Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere

Of common duties, decent not to fail

In offices of tenderness, and pay

Meet adoration to my household gods,

When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.

         There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail:

There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,

Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—

That ever with a frolic welcome took

The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed

Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old;

Old age hath yet his honour and his toil;

Death closes all: but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,

Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:

The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep

Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,

'T is not too late to seek a newer world.

Push off, and sitting well in order smite

The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds

To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

Of all the western stars, until I die.

It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:

It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,

And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.

Tho' much is taken, much abides; and tho'

We are not now that strength which in old days

Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

**Strange Meeting**

By [Wilfred Owen](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/wilfred-owen)

It seemed that out of battle I escaped

Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped

Through granites which titanic wars had groined.

Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,

Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.

Then, as I probed them, one sprang up, and stared

With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,

Lifting distressful hands, as if to bless.

And by his smile, I knew that sullen hall,—

By his dead smile I knew we stood in Hell.

With a thousand fears that vision's face was grained;

Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,

And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.

“Strange friend,” I said, “here is no cause to mourn.”

“None,” said that other, “save the undone years,

The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours,

Was my life also; I went hunting wild

After the wildest beauty in the world,

Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,

But mocks the steady running of the hour,

And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.

For by my glee might many men have laughed,

And of my weeping something had been left,

Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,

The pity of war, the pity war distilled.

Now men will go content with what we spoiled.

Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.

They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress.

None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.

Courage was mine, and I had mystery;

Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery:

To miss the march of this retreating world

Into vain citadels that are not walled.

Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,

I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,

Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.

I would have poured my spirit without stint

But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.

Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.

“I am the enemy you killed, my friend.

I knew you in this dark: for so you frowned

Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.

I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.

Let us sleep now. . . .”

**The Lake Isle of Innisfree**

By [William Butler Yeats](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-butler-yeats)

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;

Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,

And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;

There midnight’s all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,

And evening full of the linnet’s wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day

I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;

While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,

I hear it in the deep heart’s core.