



# Poetry-By-Heart

5th Grade Poetry Selections

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### Famous

Naomi Shihab Nye

The river is famous to the fish.

The loud voice is famous to silence,  
which knew it would inherit the earth  
before anybody said so.

The cat sleeping on the fence is famous to the birds  
watching him from the birdhouse.

The tear is famous, briefly, to the cheek.

The idea you carry close to your bosom  
is famous to your bosom.

The boot is famous to the earth,  
more famous than the dress shoe,  
which is famous only to floors.

The bent photograph is famous to the one who carries it  
and not at all famous to the one who is pictured.

I want to be famous to shuffling men  
who smile while crossing streets,  
sticky children in grocery lines,  
famous as the one who smiled back.

I want to be famous in the way a pulley is famous,  
or a buttonhole, not because it did anything spectacular,  
but because it never forgot what it could do.

### It Couldn't Be Done

Edgar A. Guest

Somebody said that it couldn't be done  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.  
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
On his face. If he worried he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it!

Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;  
At least no one ever has done it;"  
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat  
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.  
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,  
Without any doubting or quiddit,  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.

There are thousands to tell you it cannot be  
done,  
There are thousands to prophesy failure,  
There are thousands to point out to you one  
by one,  
The dangers that wait to assail you.  
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,  
Just take off your coat and go to it;  
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing  
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### **I Wave Good-Bye when Butterflies**

Jack Prelutsky

I wave good-bye when butterflies  
and cheer a boxing match,  
I've often watched my pillow fight,  
I've sewn a cabbage patch,  
I like to dance at basket balls  
or lead a rubber band,  
I've marveled at a spelling bee,  
I've helped a peanut stand.

It's possible a pencil points,  
but does a lemon drop?  
Does coffee break or chocolate kiss,  
and will a soda pop?  
I share my milk with drinking straws,  
my meals with chewing gum,  
and should I see my pocket change,  
I'll hear my kettle drum.

It makes me sad when lettuce leaves,  
I laugh when dinner rolls,  
I wonder if the kitchen sinks  
and if a salad bowls,  
I've listened to a diamond ring,  
I've waved a football fan,  
and if a chimney sweeps the floor,  
I'm sure the garbage can.

### **The Lizard**

Lydia Pender

Still is your delicate head,  
Like the head of an arrow;  
Still is your delicate throat,  
Rounded and narrow;  
Still is your delicate back,  
Patterned in silver and black,  
And bright with the burnished sheen that the gum-  
tips share;  
Even your delicate feet  
Are still, still as the heat,  
With a stillness alive and awake, and intensely  
aware.  
Why do I catch my breath,  
Held by your spell?  
Listening, waiting - for what?  
Will you not tell?  
More alive in your quiet than ever the locust can be,  
Shrilling his clamorous song from the shimmering  
tree; More alive in your motionless grace, as the  
slow minutes die,  
Than the scurrying ants that go hurrying busily by.  
I know, if my shadow but fall by your feet on the  
stone, In the wink of an eye,  
Let me try –  
Ah!  
He's gone!

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### **My Heart's in the Highlands**

Robert Burns

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,  
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;  
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,  
The birth-place of Valour, the country of Worth ;  
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,  
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewell to the mountains, high-cover'd with snow,  
Farewell to the straths and green vallies below;  
Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods,  
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods.

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,  
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;  
Chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,  
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go.

### **My Shadow**

By Robert Louis Stevenson

I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me,  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see.  
He is very, very like me from the heels up to the head;  
And I see him jump before me, when I jump into my bed.  
The funniest things about him is the way he likes to grow-  
Not at all like proper children, which is always very slow;  
For he sometimes shoots up taller like an India rubber ball,  
And he sometimes gets so little that there's none of him at all.  
He hasn't got a notion of how children ought to play,  
And can only make a fool of me in every sort of way.  
He stays so close beside me, he's a coward you can see;  
I'd think shame to stick to nursie as that shadow sticks to me!  
One morning, very early, before the sun was up,  
I rose and found the shining dew on every buttercup;  
But my lazy little shadow, like an arrant sleepy-head,  
Had stayed at home behind me and was fast asleep in bed.

### **from New Day's Lyric**

Amanda Gorman

May this be the day  
We come together.  
Mourning, we come to mend,  
Withered, we come to weather,  
Torn, we come to tend,  
Battered, we come to better.  
Tethered by this year of yearning,  
We are learning  
That though we weren't ready for this,  
We have been readied by it.  
We steadily vow that no matter  
How we are weighed down,  
We must always pave a way forward.

This hope is our door, our portal.  
Even if we never get back to normal,  
Someday we can venture beyond it,  
To leave the known and take the first steps.  
So let us not return to what was normal,  
But reach toward what is next.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### **The New Colossus**

Emma Lazarus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she  
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

### **From Roads Go Ever On**

by J. R. R. Tolkien

Roads go ever ever on,  
Over rock and under tree,  
By caves where never sun has shone,  
By streams that never find the sea;  
Over snow by winter sown,  
And through the merry flowers of June,  
Over grass and over stone,  
And under mountains in the moon.

Roads go ever ever on,  
Under cloud and under star.  
Yet feet that wandering have gone  
Turn at last to home afar.  
Eyes that fire and sword have seen,  
And horror in the halls of stone  
Look at last on meadows green,  
And trees and hills they long have known.

The Road goes ever on and on  
Down from the door where it began.  
Now far ahead the Road has gone,  
And I must follow, if I can,  
Pursuing it with eager feet,  
Until it joins some larger way,  
Where many paths and errands meet.

The Road goes ever on and on  
Down from the door where it began.  
Now far ahead the Road has gone,  
And I must follow, if I can,  
Pursuing it with weary feet,  
Until it joins some larger way,  
Where many paths and errands meet.  
And whither then? I cannot say.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### **The Road Not Taken**

Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveler, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black.  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence:  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference.

### **Sermons We See**

By Edward Guest

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day;  
I'd rather one should walk with me than merely tell the way.  
The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,  
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear;  
And the best of all the preachers are the men who live their creeds,  
For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it if you'll let me see it done;  
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.  
And the lecture you deliver may be very wise and true,  
But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do;  
For I might misunderstand you and the high advice you give,  
But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

### **Rock 'N' Roll Band**

Shel Silverstein

If we were a rock 'n' roll band,  
We'd travel all over the land.  
We'd play and we'd sing and wear spangly things.  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band,  
And we were up there on the stand,  
The people would here us and love us and cheer us.  
Hurray for that rock 'n' roll band.  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band,  
Then we'd have a million fans.  
We'd giggle and laugh and sign autographs,  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.  
The people would all kiss our hands.  
We'd be millionaires and have extra long hair,  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.  
But we ain't no rock 'n' roll band,  
We're just seven kids in the sand.  
With homemade guitars and pails and jars  
And drums of potato chip cans.  
Just seven kids in the sand.  
Talk'n and waven' our hands.  
And dreamin' and thinkin' oh wouldn't it be grand,  
If we were a rock 'n' roll band.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### **The Tide Rises, the Tide Falls**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

The tide rises, the tide falls,  
The twilight darkens, the curlew calls;  
Along the sea-sands damp and brown  
The traveller hastens toward the town,  
    And the tide rises, the tide falls.

Darkness settles on roofs and walls,  
But the sea, the sea in the darkness calls;  
The little waves, with their soft, white hands,  
Efface the footprints in the sands,  
    And the tide rises, the tide falls.

The morning breaks; the steeds in their stalls  
Stamp and neigh, as the hostler calls;  
The day returns, but nevermore  
Returns the traveller to the shore,  
    And the tide rises, the tide falls.

### **Trees**

Harry Behn

Trees are the kindest things I know,  
They do no harm, they simply grow  
And spread a shade for sleepy cows,  
And gather birds among their bows.

They give us fruit in leaves above,  
And wood to make our houses of,  
And leaves to burn on Halloween  
And in the Spring new buds of green.

They are first when day's begun  
To tough the beams of morning sun,  
They are the last to hold the light  
When evening changes into night.

And when a moon floats on the sky  
They hum a drowsy lullaby  
Of sleepy children long ago...  
Trees are the kindest things I know.

### **When Giving is All We Have**

Albert Rios

*One river gives  
    Its journey to the next.*

We give because someone gave to us.  
We give because nobody gave to us.

We give because giving has changed us.  
We give because giving could have changed us.

We have been better for it,  
We have been wounded by it—

Giving has many faces: It is loud and quiet,  
Big, though small, diamond in wood-nails.

Its story is old, the plot worn and the pages too,  
But we read this book, anyway, over and again:

Giving is, first and every time, hand to hand,  
Mine to yours, yours to mine.

You gave me blue and I gave you yellow.  
Together we are simple green. You gave me

What you did not have, and I gave you  
What I had to give—together, we made

Something greater from the difference.

## 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Speech Meet Poetry Selections

### Where the Sidewalk Ends

By Shel Silverstein

There is a place where the sidewalk ends  
And before the street begins,  
And there the grass grows soft and white,  
And there the sun burns crimson bright,  
And there the moon-bird rests from his flight  
To cool in the peppermint wind.

Let us leave this place where the smoke blows black  
And the dark street winds and bends.  
Past the pits where the asphalt flowers grow  
We shall walk with a walk that is measured and slow,  
And watch where the chalk-white arrows go  
To the place where the sidewalk ends.

Yes we'll walk with a walk that is measured and slow,  
And we'll go where the chalk-white arrows go,  
For the children, they mark, and the children, they know  
The place where the sidewalk ends.

### The Wind

E. Rendall

Why does the wind so want to be  
Here in my little room with me?  
He's all the world to blow about,  
But just because I keep him out  
He cannot be a moment still,  
But frets upon my window-sill.  
And sometimes brings a noisy rain  
To help him batter at the pane.  
He rattles, rattles at the lock  
And lifts the latch and stirs the key—  
Then waits a moment breathlessly, And soon, more  
fiercely than before,  
He shakes my little trembling door,  
And though "Come in, Come in!" I say,  
He neither comes nor goes away.  
Barefoot across the chilly floor  
I run and open wide the door;  
He rushes in and back again  
He goes to batter door and pane,  
Pleased to have blown my candle out.  
He's all the world to blow about,  
Why does he want so much to be  
Here in my little room with me?

### Woodman, Spare that Tree

By George Pope Morris

Woodman, spare that tree!  
Touch not a single bough!  
In youth it sheltered me,  
And I'll protect it now.  
'Twas my forefather's hand  
That placed it near his cot;  
There, woodman, let it stand,  
Thy axe shall harm it not.

That old familiar tree,  
Whose glory and renown  
Are spread o'er land and sea--  
And wouldst thou hew it down?  
Woodman, forebear thy stroke!  
Cut not its earth-bound ties;  
Oh, spare that aged oak,  
Now towering to the skies!

When but an idle boy,  
I sought its grateful shade;  
In all their gushing joy  
Here, too, my sisters played.  
My mother kissed me here;  
My father pressed my hand--  
Forgive this foolish tear,  
But let that old oak stand.

My heart-strings round thee cling,  
Close as thy bark, old friend!  
Here shall the wild-bird sing,  
And still thy branches bend.  
Old tree! the storm still brave!  
And, woodman, leave the spot;  
While I've a hand to save,  
thy axe shall harm it not.