**Poems to practice scanning—a collection**

Pitcherby Robert Francis

His art is eccentricity, his aimHow not to hit the mark he seems to aim at,

His passion how to avoid the obvious,His technique how to vary the avoidance.

The others throw to be comprehended. HeThrows to be a moment misunderstood.

Yet not too much. Not errant, arrant, wild,But every seeming aberration willed.

Not to, yet still, still to communicateMaking the batter understand too late.

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Tell all the truth but tell it slant

by [Emily Dickinson](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/emily-dickinson)

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —

Success in Circuit lies

Too bright for our infirm Delight

The Truth's superb surprise

As Lightning to the Children eased

With explanation kind

The Truth must dazzle gradually

Or every man be blind —

Riddles in the Dark (a series)

by J.R.R. Tolkein

1

This thing all things devours:  
Birds, beasts, trees, flowers;  
Gnaws iron, bites steel;  
Grinds hard stones to meal;  
Slays king, ruins town,  
And beats high mountain down.

2

Thirty white horses on a red hill,  
First they champ,  
Then they stamp,  
Then they stand still.

3

Alive without breath,  
As cold as death;  
Never thirsty, ever drinking,  
All in mail never clinking.

4

It cannot be seen, cannot be felt,  
Cannot be heard, cannot be smelt.  
It lies behind stars and under hills,  
And empty holes it fills.  
It comes first and follows after,  
Ends life, kills laughter.

Answers: 1. time 2. teeth 3. Fish 4. Dark

Break, Break, Break

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

Break, break, break,

         On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!

And I would that my tongue could utter

         The thoughts that arise in me.

O, well for the fisherman's boy,

         That he shouts with his sister at play!

O, well for the sailor lad,

         That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on

         To their haven under the hill;

But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,

         And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break

         At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!

But the tender grace of a day that is dead

         Will never come back to me.

Dream Boogie

by Langston Hughes

Good morning, daddy!  
Ain't you heard  
The boogie-woogie rumble  
Of a dream deferred?  
  
Listen closely:  
You'll hear their feet  
Beating out and beating out a -  
 *You think  
 It's a happy beat?*  
  
Listen to it closely:  
Ain't you heard  
something underneath  
like a -  
 *What did I say?*  
  
Sure,  
I'm happy!  
Take it away! *Hey, pop!  
 Re-bop!  
 Mop!  
  
 Y-e-a-h!*

[in Just-]

By [e. e. cummings](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poets/detail/e-e-cummings)

in Just-

spring          when the world is mud-

luscious the little

lame balloonman

whistles          far          and wee

and eddieandbill come

running from marbles and

piracies and it's

spring

when the world is puddle-wonderful

the queer

old balloonman whistles

far          and             wee

and bettyandisbel come dancing

from hop-scotch and jump-rope and

it's

spring

and

         the

                  goat-footed

balloonMan          whistles

far

and

wee

The Tyger - by William Blake

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright,   
In the forests of the night,   
What immortal hand or eye   
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies   
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?   
On what wings dare he aspire?   
What the hand dare sieze the fire?   
  
And what shoulder, & what art,   
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?   
And when thy heart began to beat,   
What dread hand? & what dread feet?   
  
What the hammer? what the chain?   
In what furnace was thy brain?   
What the anvil? what dread grasp   
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?   
  
When the stars threw down their spears,   
And water'd heaven with their tears,   
Did he smile his work to see?   
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?   
  
Tyger! Tyger! burning bright   
In the forests of the night,   
What immortal hand or eye   
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?