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At Breakfast Time*Edgar A. Guest*

My Pa he eats his breakfast in a funny sort of way:
We hardly ever see him at the first meal of the day.
Ma puts his food before him and he settles in his place
An' then he props the paper up and we can't see his face;
We hear him blow his coffee and we hear him chew his toast,
But it's for the morning paper that he seems to care the most.
Ma says that little children mighty grateful ought to be
To the folks that fixed the evening as the proper time for tea.
She says if meals were only served to people once a day,
An' that was in the morning just before Pa goes away,
We'd never know how father looked when he was in his place,
'Coz he'd always have the morning paper stuck before his face.
He drinks his coffee steamin' hot, an' passes Ma his cup
To have it filled a second time, an' never once looks up.
He never has a word to say, but just sits there an' reads,
An' when she sees his hand stuck out Ma gives him what he needs.
She guesses what it is he wants, 'coz it's no use to ask:
Pa's got to read his paper an' sometimes that's quite a task.
One morning we had breakfast an' his features we could see,
But his face was long an' solemn an' he didn't speak to me,
An' we couldn't get him laughin' an' we couldn't make him smile,
An' he said the toast was soggy an' the coffee simply vile.
Then Ma said: "What's the matter? Why are you so cross an' glum?"
An' Pa 'most took her head off 'coz the paper didn't come.

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Barbara Frietchie (pronounced Fritchee)*John Greenleaf Whittier*

Up from the meadows rich with corn,
Clear in the cool September morn,
The clustered spires of Frederick stand
Green-walled by the hills of Maryland.
Round about them orchards sweep,
Apple and peach tree fruited deep,
Fair as the garden of the Lord
To the eyes of the famished rebel horde,
On that pleasant morn of the early fall
When Lee marched over the mountain wall,—
Over the mountain, winding down,
Horse and foot into Frederick town.
Forty flags with their silver stars,
Forty flags with their crimson bars,
Flapped in the morning wind; the sun
Of noon looked down, and saw not one.
Up rose old Barbara Frietchie then,
Bowed with her fourscore years and ten;
Bravest of all in Frederick town,
She took up the flag the men hauled down;
In her attic-window the staff she set,
To show that one heart was loyal yet.
Up the street came the rebel tread,
Stonewall Jackson riding ahead.
Under his slouched hat, left and right
He glanced: the old flag met his sight.
“Halt!”—the dust-brown ranks stood fast.
“Fire!”—out blazed the rifle-blast.
It shivered the window, pane and sash;
It rent the banner with seam and gash.
Quick, as it fell, from the broken staff
Dame Barbara snatched the silken scarf;
She leaned far out on the window-sill,
And shook it forth with a royal will.
“Shoot, if you must, this old gray head,
But spare your country’s flag,” she said.
A shade of sadness, a blush of shame,
Over the face of the leader came,

Barbara Frietchie (Continued)

The nobler nature within him stirred
To life at that woman's deed and word:
"Who touches a hair of yon gray head
Dies like a dog! March on!" he said.
All day long through Frederick street
Sounded the tread of marching feet:
All day long that free flag tost
Over the head of the rebel host.
Ever its torn folds rose and fell
On the loyal winds that loved it well;
And through the hill-gaps sunset light
Shone over it with a warm good-night.
Barbara Frietchie's work is o'er,
And the rebel rides on his raids no more.
Honor to her! and let a tear
Fall, for her sake, on Stonewall's bier.
Over Barbara Frietchie's grave,
Flag of freedom and union, wave!
Peace and order and beauty draw
Round thy symbol of light and law;
And ever the stars above look down
On thy stars below in Frederick town!

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Beowulf, an excerpt

Translation by Seamus Heaney

In off the moors,
Down through the mist bands
The God-cursed Frendel came greedily loping.
The bane of the race of men roamed forth, hunting
For a prey in the high hall.

Handsomely structured,
A sturdy frame braced with the best
Of blacksmith's work inside and out.
No shielding elder believed
There was any power or person upon earth
Capable of wrecking their horn-rigged hall.

Under the cloud-murk Grendel moved
Towards it until it shone above him,
A sheer keep of fortified gold.

Spurned and joyless, he journeyed on ahead
And arrived at the bawn. The iron-braced door
Turned on its hinge when his hands touched it.
Then his rage boiled over, he ripped open
The mouth of the building, maddening for blood,
Pacing the length of the patterned floor
With his loathsome tread, while a baleful light,
Flame more than light, flared from his eyes.
He saw many men in the mansion, sleeping,
A ranked company of kinsman and warriors quartered together.
And his glee was demonic,
Picturing the mayhem:
Before morning he would rip
Life from limb and devour them, feed on their flesh;
But his fate that night was due to change,
His days of ravening had come to an end.
For mighty and canny,
Hygelac's kinsman was keenly watching
For the first move the monster would make.
Nor did the creature keep him waiting
But struck suddenly and started in;
He grabbed and mauled a man on his bench,

Beowulf, an excerpt (Continued)

Bit into his bone-lappings, bolted down his blood
And gorged on him in lumps,
Leaving the body utterly lifeless,
Eaten up
Hand and foot.
Venturing clower, his talon was raised to attack Beowulf
Where he lay on the bed; he was bearing in with
Open claw when the alert hero's comeback
And armlock forestalled him utterly.
The captain of evil discovered himself
In a handgrip harder than anything
He had ever encountered in any man
On the face of the earth.
Every bone in his body
Quailed and recoiled,
But he could not escape.
He was desperate to flee to his den and hide
With the devil's litter, for in all his days
He had never been clamped or cornered like this.

Then Beowulf sprang to his feet
And got a firm hold.
Fingers were bursting,
The monster back-tracking,
The man overpowering.
The dread of the land was desperate to escape,
To take a roundabout road and flee
To his lair in the fens.
The latching power in his fingers weakened;
It was the worst trip
The terror-monger had taken to Heorot.
And now the timbers trembled and sang,
A hall-session that harrowed every Dane inside the stockade.

Beowulf, an excerpt (Continued)

Then an extraordinary wail arose, and bewildering fear
Came over the Danes,
Everyone felt it
Who heard that cry as it echoed off the wall,
A God-cursed scream and strain of catastrophe.
The howl of the loser, the lament of the hell-serf
Keening his wound.

Grendel:
Overwhelmed and manacled tight
By Beowulf who of all men
Was foremost and strongest
In the days of this life.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Birches*Robert Frost*

When I see birches bend to left and right
Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
But swinging doesn't bend them down to stay.
Ice-storms do that. Often you must have seen them
Loaded with ice a sunny winter morning
After a rain. They click upon themselves
As the breeze rises, and turn many-coloured
As the stir cracks and crazes their enamel.
Soon the sun's warmth makes them shed crystal shells
Shattering and avalanching on the snow-crust
Such heaps of broken glass to sweep away
You'd think the inner dome of heaven had fallen.
They are dragged to the withered bracken by the load,
And they seem not to break; though once they are bowed
So low for long, they never right themselves:
You may see their trunks arching in the woods
Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground,
Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
Before them over their heads to dry in the sun.
But I was going to say when Truth broke in
With all her matter-of-fact about the ice-storm,
I should prefer to have some boy bend them
As he went out and in to fetch the cows--
Some boy too far from town to learn baseball,
Whose only play was what he found himself,
Summer or winter, and could play alone.
One by one he subdued his father's trees
By riding them down over and over again
Until he took the stiffness out of them,
And not one but hung limp, not one was left
For him to conquer. He learned all there was
To learn about not launching out too soon
And so not carrying the tree away
Clear to the ground. He always kept his poise
To the top branches, climbing carefully
With the same pains you use to fill a cup
Up to the brim, and even above the brim.
Then he flung outward, feet first, with a swish,

Birches (Continued)

Kicking his way down through the air to the ground.
So was I once myself a swinger of birches.
And so I dream of going back to be.
It's when I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
Where your face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
Broken across it, and one eye is weeping
From a twig's having lashed across it open.
I'd like to get away from earth awhile
And then come back to it and begin over.
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.
I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree
And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
Toward heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
But dipped its top and set me down again.
That would be good both going and coming back.
One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Blind Men and the Elephant*John Godfrey Sax*

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind)
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.
The First approached the Elephant
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! But the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"
The Second, feeling of the tusk,
Cried "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"
The Third approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake;
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"
The Fourth reached out an eager hand
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he;
'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"
The Fifth, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"
The Sixth no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail

The Blind Men and the Elephant (Continued)

That fell within his scope,
“I see,” quoth he, “the Elephant
Is very like a rope!”
And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right
And all were in the wrong!

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Castor Oil*Edgar A. Guest*

I don't mind lickin's, now an'then,
An' I can even stand it when
My mother calls me in from play
To run some errand right away.
There's things 'bout bein' just a boy
That ain't all happiness an' joy,
But I suppose I've got to stand
My share o' trouble in this land,
An' I ain't kickin' much—but, say,
The worst of parents is that they
Don't realize just how they spoil
A feller's life with castor oil.
Of all the awful stuff, Gee Whiz!
That is the very worst there is.
An' every time if I complain,
Or say I've got a little pain,
There's nothing else that they can think
'Cept castor oil for me to drink.
I notice, though, when Pa is ill,
That he gets fixed up with a pill,
An' Pa don't handle Mother rough
An' make her swallow nasty stuff;
But when I've got a little ache,
It's castor oil I've got to take.
I don't mind goin' up to bed
Afore I get the chapter read;
I don't mind bein' scolded, too,
For lots of things I didn't do;
But, Gee! I hate it when they say,
"Come! Swallow this—an' right away!"
Let poets sing about the joy
It is to be a little boy,
I'll tell the truth about my case:
The poets here can have my place,
An' I will take their life of toil
If they will take my castor oil.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

The Chambered Nautilus*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

This is the ship of pearl, which, poets feign,
Sails the unshadowed main,
The venturous bark that flings
On the sweet summer wind its purpled wings
In gulfs enchanted, where the Siren sings,
And coral reefs lie bare,
Where the cold sea-maids rise to sun their streaming hair.
Its webs of living gauze no more unfurl;
Wrecked is the ship of pearl!
And every chambered cell,
Where its dim dreaming life was wont to dwell,
As the frail tenant shaped his growing shell,
Before thee lies revealed,
Its irised ceiling rent, its sunless crypt unsealed!
Year after year beheld the silent toil
That spread his lustrous coil;
Still, as the spiral grew,
He left the past year's dwelling for the new,
Stole with soft steps its shining archway through,
Built up its idle door,
Stretched in his last-found home, and knew the old no more.
Thanks for the heavenly message brought by thee,
Child of the wandering sea,
Cast from her lap, forlorn!
From thy dead lips a clearer note is born
Than ever Triton blew from wreathèd horn!
While on mine ear it rings,
Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings:
Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea! †

Degree of Difficulty: 4

The Children's Hour*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Between the dark and the daylight,
When the night is beginning to lower,
Comes a pause in the day's occupations,
That is known as the Children's Hour.
I hear in the chamber above me
The patter of little feet,
The sound of a door that is opened
And voices soft and sweet.
From my study I see in the lamplight,
Descending the broad hall stair,
Grave Alice, and laughing Allegra,
And Edith with golden hair.
A whisper, and then a silence;
Yet I know by their merry eyes
They are plotting and planning together
To take me by surprise.
A sudden rush from the stairway,
A sudden raid from the hall!
By three doors left unguarded
They enter my castle wall!
They climb up into my turret
O'er the arms and back of my chair;
If I try to escape, they surround me;
They seem to be everywhere.
They almost devour me with kisses,
Their arms about me entwine,
Till I think of the Bishop of Bingen
In his Mouse-Tower on the Rhine!
Do you think, O blue-eyed banditti
Because you have scaled the wall,
Such an old mustache as I am
Is not a match for you all!

The Children's Hour (Continued)

I have you fast in my fortress
And will not let you depart,
But put you down into the dungeon
In the round-tower of my heart.
And there I will keep you forever,
Yes, forever and a day,
Till the walls shall crumble to ruin,
And moulder in dust away!

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Country Mouse and the City Mouse*Richard Scrafton Sharpe*

In a snug little cot lived a fat little mouse,
Who enjoyed, unmolested, the range of the house;
With plain food content, she would breakfast on cheese,
She dined upon bacon, and supped on grey peas.
A friend from the town to the cottage did stray,
And he said he was come a short visit to pay;
So the mouse spread her table as gay as you please,
And brought the nice bacon and charming grey peas.
The visitor frowned, and he thought to be witty:
Cried he, "You must know, I am come from the city,
Where we all should be shocked at provisions like these,
For we never eat bacon and horrid grey peas.
"To town come with me, I will give you a treat:
Some excellent food, most delightful to eat.
With me shall you feast just as long as you please;
Come, leave this fat bacon and shocking grey peas."
This kind invitation she could not refuse,
And the city mouse wished not a moment to lose;
Reluctant she quitted the fields and the trees,
The delicious fat bacon and charming grey peas.
They slyly crept under a gay parlor door,
Where a feast had been given the evening before;
And it must be confessed they on dainties did seize,
Far better than bacon, or even grey peas.
Here were custard and trifle, and cheesecakes good store,
Nice sweetmeats and jellies, and twenty things more;
All that art had invented the palate to please,
Except some fat bacon and smoking grey peas.
They were nicely regaling, when into the room
Came the dog and the cat, and the maid with a broom:
They jumped in a custard both up to their knees;
The country mouse sighed for her bacon and peas.
Cried she to her friend, "Get me safely away,
I can venture no longer in London to stay;
For if oft you receive interruptions like these,
Give me my nice bacon and charming grey peas."

Degree of Difficulty: 5

The Creation

James Weldon Johnson

And God stepped out on space,
And He looked around and said,
"I'm lonely --
I'll make me a world."
And far as the eye of God could see
Darkness covered everything,
Blacker than a hundred midnights
Down in a cypress swamp.
Then God smiled,
And the light broke,
And the darkness rolled up on one side,
And the light stood shining on the other,
And God said, "That's good!"
Then God reached out and took the light in His hands,
And God rolled the light around in His hands
Until He made the sun;
And He set that sun a-blazing in the heavens.
And the light that was left from making the sun
God gathered it up in a shining ball
And flung it against the darkness,
Spangling the night with the moon and stars.
Then down between
The darkness and the light
He hurled the world;
And God said, "That's good!"
Then God himself stepped down --
And the sun was on His right hand,
And the moon was on His left;
The stars were clustered about His head,
And the earth was under His feet.
And God walked, and where He trod
His footsteps hollowed the valleys out
And bulged the mountains up.
Then He stopped and looked and saw
That the earth was hot and barren.

The Creation (Continued)

So God stepped over to the edge of the world
And He spat out the seven seas;
He batted His eyes, and the lightnings flashed;
He clapped His hands, and the thunders rolled;
And the waters above the earth came down,
The cooling waters came down.
Then the green grass sprouted,
And the little red flowers blossomed,
The pine tree pointed his finger to the sky,
And the oak spread out his arms,
The lakes cuddled down in the hollows of the ground,
And the rivers ran down to the sea;
And God smiled again,
And the rainbow appeared,
And curled itself around His shoulder.
Then God raised His arm and He waved His hand
Over the sea and over the land,
And He said, "Bring forth! Bring forth!"
And quicker than God could drop His hand.
Fishes and fowls
And beasts and birds
Swam the rivers and the seas,
Roamed the forests and the woods,
And split the air with their wings.
And God said, "That's good!"
Then God walked around,
And God looked around
On all that He had made.
He looked at His sun,
And He looked at His moon,
And He looked at His little stars;
He looked on His world
With all its living things,
And God said, "I'm lonely still."

The Creation (Continued)

Then God sat down
On the side of a hill where He could think;
By a deep, wide river He sat down;
With His head in His hands,
God thought and thought,
Till He thought, "I'll make me a man!"
Up from the bed of the river
God scooped the clay;
And by the bank of the river
He kneeled Him down;
And there the great God Almighty
Who lit the sun and fixed it in the sky,
Who flung the stars to the most far corner of the night,
Who rounded the earth in the middle of His hand;
This Great God,
Like a mammy bending over her baby,
Kneeled down in the dust
Toiling over a lump of clay
Till He shaped it in His own image;
Then into it He blew the breath of life,
And man became a living soul.
Amen. Amen.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Cross Was His Own*Author Unknown*

They borrowed a bed to lay His head,
The Christ the Lord came down;
They borrowed a donkey in the mountain pass
For Him to ride to town.
But the crown that He wore
And the cross that He bore
were His own.
He borrowed the bread when the crowd he fed
On the grassy mountain side;
He borrowed the dish of broken fish
With which He satisfied.
But the crown that He wore
And the cross that He bore
were His own.
He borrowed the ship in which to sit
To teach the multitude;
He borrowed the nest in which to rest.
He had never a home as crude;
But the crown that He wore
And the cross that He bore
were His own.
He borrowed a room on the way to the tomb.
The passover lamb to eat.
They borrowed a cave, for Him a grave,
They borrowed a winding sheet.
But the crown that He wore
And the cross that He bore
were His own.
The thorns on His head were worn in my stead.
For me the Savior died.
For guilt of my sin the nails drove in
When Him they crucified.
Though the crown that He wore
And the cross that He bore
were His own.
They rightly were mine—instead.

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Daniel Boone*Arthur Guiterman*

Daniel Boone at twenty-one
Came with his tomahawk, knife, and gun
Home from the French and Indian War
To North Carolina and the Yadkin shore.
He married his maid with a golden band,
Built his house and cleared his land;
But the deep woods claimed their son again
And he turned his face from the homes of men.
Over the Blue Ridge, dark and lone,
The Mountains of Iron, the Hills of Stone,
Braving the Shawnee's jealous wrath,
He made his way on the Warrior's Path.
Alone he trod the shadowed trails;
But he was lord of a thousand vales
As he roved Kentucky, far and near,
Hunting the buffalo, elk, and deer.
What joy to see, what joy to win
So fair a land for his kith and kin,
Of streams unstained and woods unhewn!
"Elbow room!" laughed Daniel Boone.
On the Wilderness Road that his axmen made
The settlers flocked to the first stockade;
The deerskin shirts and the coonskin caps
Filed through the glens and the mountain gaps;
And hearts were high in the fateful spring
When the land said "Nay!" to the stubborn king.
While the men of the East of farm and town
Strove with the troops of the British Crown,
Daniel Boone from a surge of hate
Guarded a nation's westward gate.
Down in the fort in a wave of flame
The Shawnee horde and the Mingo came,
And the stout logs shook in a storm of lead;
But Boone stood firm and the savage fled.

Daniel Boone (Continued)

Peace! And the settlers flocked anew,
The farm lands spread, the town lands grew;
But Daniel Boone was ill at ease
When he saw the smoke in his forest trees.
“There’ll be no game in the country soon.
Elbow room!” cried Daniel Boone.
Straight as a pine at sixty-five—
Time enough for a man to thrive—
He launched his bateau on Ohio’s breast
And his heart was glad as he oared it west;
There was kindly folk and his own true blood
Where great Missouri rolls his flood;
New woods, new streams, and room to spare,
And Daniel Boone found comfort there.
Yet far he ranged toward the sunset still,
Where the Kansas runs and the Smoky Hill,
And the prairies toss, by the south wind blown;
And he killed his bear on the Yellowstone.
But ever he dreamed of new domains
With vaster woods and wider plains;
Ever he dreamed of a world-to-be
Where there are no bounds and the soul is free.
At fourscore-five, still stout and hale,
He heard a call to a farther trail;
So he turned his face where the stars are strewn;
“Elbow room!” sighed Daniel Boone.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

First Chorale Ode from Antigone*Sophocles*

Creation is a marvel
And man its masterpiece:
He scuds before the southern wind
Between the loud white-piling swell.
He drives his thoroughbreds
Through Earth (perpetual
Great goddess inexhaustible)
Exhausting her each year.
The light-balanced light-headed birds
He snares; wild beasts according to their kind.
In his nets the deep sea fish are caught—
O master mind of Man!
The free forest animal he herds,
The roaming upland deer.
The shaggy horse he breaks to yoke
The mountain-powered bull.
He's trained his agile thoughts
(Volatile as air)
To civilizing words.
He's roofed against the sky
The javelin crystal frosts
The arrow-lancing rains.
All fertile in resource
He's provident for all
(Not beaten by disease)
All but death, and death—
He never cures.
Beyond imagining he's wise
Through labyrinthine ways both good and bad:
He is law-abiding, pious;
But displaced when he promotes
Unsavory ambition.
And then, I want no part with him,
No parcel of his thoughts.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

How Do You Tackle Your Work?*Edgar A. Guest*

How do you tackle your work each day?
Are you scared of the job you find?
Do you grapple the task that comes your way
With a confident, easy mind?
Do you stand right up to the work ahead
Or fearfully pause to view it?
Do you start to toil with a sense of dread
Or feel that you're going to do it?
You can do as much as you think you can,
But you'll never accomplish more;
If you're afraid of yourself, young man,
There's little for you in store.
For failure comes from the inside first,
It's there if we only knew it,
And you can win, though you face the worst,
If you feel that you're going to do it.
Success! It's found in the soul of you,
And not in the realm of luck!
The world will furnish the work to do,
But you must provide the pluck.
You can do whatever you think you can,
It's all in the way you view it.
It's all in the start that you make, young man:
You must feel that you're going to do it.
How do you tackle your work each day?
With confidence clear, or dread?
What to yourself do you stop and say
When a new task lies ahead?
What is the thought that is in your mind?
Is fear ever running through it?
If so, just tackle the next you find
By thinking you're going to do it.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

A Hymn to God the Father*John Donne*

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

If*Rudyard Kipling*

If you can keep your head when all about you
 Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
 If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
 But make allowance for their doubting too;
 If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
 Or being lied about don't deal in lies,
 Or being hated don't give away to hating,
 And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;
 If you can dream and not make dreams your master;
 If you can think and not make thoughts your aim;
 If you can meet with triumph and disaster
 And treat those two imposters just the same;
 If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
 Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
 Or watch the things you gave your life to broken,
 And stoop to build 'em up with wornout tools;
 If you can make one heap of all your winnings
 And risk it on one turn of pitch and toss,
 And lose, and start again at your beginnings
 And never breathe a word about your loss;
 If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
 To serve your turn long after they are gone,
 And so hold on when there is nothing in you
 Except the Will which say to them: "Hold on!"
 If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
 Or walk with Kings nor lose the common touch;
 If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you;
 If all men count with you, but none too much;
 If you can fill the unforgiving minute
 With sixty seconds' worth of distance run
 Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
 And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son! †
 In Times Like These

Helen Steiner Rice

We read the headlines daily
 and listen to the news,
 We shake our heads despairingly
 and glumly sing the blues—

If (Continued)

We are restless and dissatisfied
and we do not feel secure,
We are vaguely discontented
with the things we must endure ...
This violent age we live in
is filled with nameless fears
As we listen to the newscasts
that come daily to our ears,
And we view the threatening future
with sad sobriety
As we're surrounded daily
by increased anxiety ...
How can we find security
or stand on solid ground
When there's violence and dissension
and confusion all around;
Where can we go for refuge
from the rising tides of hate,
Where can we find a haven
to escape this shameful fate...
So instead of reading headlines
that disturb the heart and mind,
Let us open up the BIBLE
and in doing so we'll find
That this age is no different
from the millions gone before,
But in every hour of crisis
God has opened up a door
For all who seek His guidance
and trust His all-wise plan,
For God provides protection
beyond that devised by man...
And we learn that each TOMORROW
is not ours to understand,

If (Continued)

But lies safely in the keeping
of the great Creator's Hand,
And to have the steadfast knowledge
that WE NEVER WALK ALONE
And to rest in the assurance
that our EVERY NEED IS KNOWN
Will help dispel our worries,
our anxieties and care,
For doubt and fear are vanquished
in THE PEACEFULNESS OF PRAYER

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Marco Comes Late*Dr. Seuss*

“Young man!” said Miss Block,
“It’s eleven o’clock!
This school begins promptly at 8:15.
Why, THIS is a terrible time to arrive!
Why didn’t you come just as fast as you could?
What IS your excuse? It had better be good!”
Marco looked at the clock.
Then he looked at Miss Block.
“Excuse?” Marco stuttered.
“Er ... Well, it’s like this ...
Something happened to me.
“This morning, Miss Block,
when I left home for school,
I hurried off early according to rule.
I said when I started a quarter past eight
I MUST not, I WILL not, I SHALL not be late!
I’ll be the first pupil to be in my seat.
Then BANG!
Something happened on Mulberry Street!
“I heard a strange ‘peep’ and I took a quick look
And you know what I saw
with the look that I took?
A bird laid an egg on my ‘rithmetic book!
I couldn’t believe it, Miss Block, but it’s true!
I stopped and I didn’t quite know what to do.
I didn’t dare run and I didn’t dare walk.
I didn’t dare yell and I didn’t dare talk.
I didn’t dare sneeze and I didn’t dare cough.
Because, if I did, I would knock the egg off.
So I stood there stock-still and it worried me pink
Then my feet got quite tired
and I sat down to think.
“And while I was thinking
down there on the ground,
I saw something move and I heard a loud sound
Of a worm who was having a fight with his wife.
The most terrible fight that I’ve heard in my life!
The worm he was yelling,
‘That boy should not wait!

Marco Comes Late (Continued)

He MUST not, he DARE not, he SHALL not be late!
That boy ought to smash that egg off of his head.'
Then the wife of the worm shouted back—and
SHE said,
'To break that dear egg would be terribly cruel.
An egg's more important than going to school.
That egg is that mother bird's pride and her joy.
If he smashes that egg,
he's the world's meanest boy!'
"And while the worms argued
'bout what I should do
A couple big cats started arguing too!
'You listen to me!' I heard one of them say,
'If this boy doesn't go on to school right away
Miss Block will be frightfully horribly mad
If the boy gets there late she will punish the lad!'
Then the other cat snapped.
'I don't care if she does,
This boy must not move!' So I stayed where I was
With the egg on my head,
And my heart full off fears
And the shouting of cats and worms in my ears.
"Then, while I lay wondering
When all this would stop,
The egg on my book burst apart with a POP!
And out of the pieces of red and white shell
Jumped a strange brand-new bird
and he said with a yell,
'I thank you, young fellow,
you've been simply great.
But, now that I'm hatched,
you no longer need wait.
I'm sorry, I kept you till 'leven o'clock.
It's really my fault. You tell THAT to Miss Block.
I wish you good luck and I bid you good day.'
That's what the bird said. Then he fluttered away.
And THEN I got here just as fast as I could
And that's my excuse and I think it's quite good."

Marco Comes Late (Continued)

Miss Block didn't speak for a moment or two,
Her eyes looked at Marco
and looked him clean through.
Then she smiled.
"That's a very good tale, if it's true.
Did ALL of those things REALLY happen to you?"
"Er ... well," answered Marco
with sort of a squirm.
"Not QUITE all, I guess. But I DID see a worm."

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Mending Wall*Robert Frost*

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun,
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors'.
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows?
But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there

Mending Wall (Continued)

Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Mother's Ugly Hands*Mary Mason*

When Jean was just a little girl
She used to play for hours
With Tinker-Cat or Peter-Dog,
Or help Mom with her flowers.
But then sometimes her mom would stop
The work she had to do
To read to Jean or play with her;
And as God planned, Jean grew.
But then one day she realized
Her mom was not the same
As those of other little girls;
And Jean grew up with shame,
For Mother's hands were ugly hands,
Misformed and scarred and red.
And somehow love for Mother changed
To selfishness and dread.
Somehow she never asked her mom
How those scars came to be,
Too busy with the selfish fear
That other eyes might see.
But then one time Jean's grandma came
With suitcase packed to stay,
And it was at her grandma's feet
The truth came out one day.
"When you were just a tiny thing,
About the age of two
One day your clothing caught on fire,
Though how we never knew;
Your mother said she scarcely felt
The searing tongues of flame,
As with her hands she fought the fire.
And that is how she came
To have the scars you hate so much;
She did it all for you.
You were not burned as bad as she,
And so you never knew."
"Oh, Grandma, I am so ashamed!"
And Jean began to weep.
"To think my mother loved me so!"

Mother's Ugly Hands (Continued)

That night she couldn't sleep
And made her way to Mother's room
And in a rush of tears
Received forgiveness for the hate
She harbored all those years.
That's how it is with Mother love;
Of death it's unafraid.
So very much like dying love
On Calvary's hill portrayed.
Our Jesus too, bears ugly marks
Of suffering and of pain.
He did it all for you and me,
But it was not in vain.
For, as we view His suffering,
We, too, must cry, "Forgive!"
For only through His dying love
Are we prepared to live.
I'm thankful, God, for Mother love
Which bravely fought the fire,
And for my Jesus' dying love
Which—that love did inspire.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Naming Of Cats*T. S. Eliot*

The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games;
You may think at first I'm as mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.
First of all, there's the name that the family use daily,
Such as Peter, Augustus, Alonzo or James,
Such as Victor or Jonathan, George or Bill Bailey--
All of them sensible everyday names.
There are fancier names if you think they sound sweeter,
Some for the gentlemen, some for the dames:
Such as Plato, Admetus, Electra, Demeter--
But all of them sensible everyday names.
But I tell you, a cat needs a name that's particular,
A name that's peculiar, and more dignified,
Else how can he keep up his tail perpendicular,
Or spread out his whiskers, or cherish his pride?
Of names of this kind, I can give you a quorum,
Such as Munkustrap, Quaxo, or Coricopat,
Such as Bombalurina, or else Jellylorum--
Names that never belong to more than one cat.
But above and beyond there's still one name left over,
And that is the name that you never will guess;
The name that no human research can discover--
But THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS, and will never confess.
When you notice a cat in profound meditation,
The reason, I tell you, is always the same:
His mind is engaged in a rapt contemplation
Of the thought, of the thought, of the thought of his name:
His ineffable effable
Effanineffable
Deep and inscrutable singular Name.

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Nathan Hale*Francis Miles Finch*

To drumbeat, and heartbeat,
A soldier marches by;
There is color in his cheek,
There is courage in his eye,
Yet to drumbeat and heartbeat
In a moment he must die.
By the starlight and moonlight,
He seeks the Briton's camp;
He hears the rustling flag,
And the armed sentry's tramp;
And the starlight and moonlight
His silent wanderings lamp.
With slow tread and still tread,
He scans the tented line;
And he counts the battery guns,
By the gaunt and shadowy pine;
And his slow tread and still tread
Gives no warning sign.
The dark wave, the plumed wave,
It meets his eager glance;
And it sparkles 'neath the stars,
Like the glimmer of a lance-
A dark wave, a plumed wave,
On an emerald expanse.
A sharp clang, a steel clang,
And terror in the sound!
For the sentry, falcon-eyed,
In the camp a spy hath found;
With a sharp clang, a steel clang,
The patriot is bound.
With calm brow, and steady brow,
He listens to his doom;
In his look there is no fear,
Nor a shadow-trace of gloom;
But with calm brow and steady brow,
He robes him for the tomb.
In the long night, the still night
He kneels upon the sod;
And the brutal guards withhold

Nathan Hale (Continued)

E'en the solemn Word of God!
In the long night, the still night,
He walks where Christ hath trod.
'Neath the blue morn, the sunny morn,
He dies upon the tree;
And he mourns that he can lose
But one life for Liberty;
And in the blue morn, the sunny morn,
His spirit wings are free.
But his last words, his message-words,
They burn, lest friendly eye
Should read how proud and calm
A patriot could die,
With his last words, his dying words,
A soldier's battle cry.
From the Fame-leaf and Angel-leaf,
From monument and urn,
The sad of earth, the glad of heaven,
His tragic fate shall learn;
But on Fame-leaf and Angel-leaf
The name of HALE shall burn!

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Classical Christian Speech Meet

One, Two, Three*Harry C. Bunner*

It was an old, old, old lady
And a boy that was half-past three;
And the way that they played together
Was beautiful to see.
She couldn't go running and jumping,
And the boy, no more could he,
For he was a thin little fellow,
With a thin little twisted knee.
They sat in the yellow sunlight
Out under the maple trees,
And the game that they played I'll tell you
Just as it was told to me.
It was hide-and-go-seek they were playing,
Though you'd never have known it to be—
With an old, old, old, old lady,
And a boy with a twisted knee.
The boy would bend his face down
On his one little sound right knee,
And he'd guess where she was hiding,
In guesses One, Two, Three.
"You are in the china closet,"
He would cry, and laugh with glee—
It wasn't the china closet,
But he still had Two and Three.
"You are up in Papa's big bedroom,
In the chest with the queer old key,"
And she said; "You are wann and warmer
But you're not quite right," said she.
"It can't be the little cupboard
Where Mama's things used to be;
So it must be the clothes press, Grandma."
And he found her with his Three.
Then she covered her face with her fingers,
That were wrinkled and white and wee

One, Two, Three (Continued)

And she guessed where the boy was hiding,
With a One and a Two and a Three.
And they never had stirred from their places,
Out under the maple tree—
This old, old, old, old lady
And the boy with the lame little knee
This dear, dear, dear old lady
And the boy who was half-past three.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Paradise Lost, an excerpt*John Milton*

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heav'nly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
Rose out of Chaos; or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my advent'rous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dovelike sat'st brooding on the vast abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine; what is low, raise and support;
That, to the height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Peace Hymn of the Republic*Henry van Dyke*

O Lord, our God, Thy mighty hand
Hath made our country free;
From all her broad and happy land
May praise arise to Thee.
Fulfill the promise of her youth,
Her liberty defend;
By law and order, love and truth,
America befriend!
The strength of every state increase
In Union's golden chain;
Her thousand cities fill with peace,
Her million fields with grain.
The virtues of her mingled blood
In one new people blend;
By unity and brotherhood
America befriend!
O suffer not her feet to stray;
But guide her untaught might,
That she may walk in peaceful day,
And lead the world in light.
Bring down the proud, lift up the poor,
Unequal ways amend;
By justice, nation-wide and sure.
America befriend!
Through all the waiting land proclaim
Thy gospel of good-will;
And may the music of Thy name
In every bosom thrill.
O'er hill and vale, from sea to sea,
Thy holy reign extend;
By faith and hope and charity,
America befriend!

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

A Psalm of Life*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

Tell me not, in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream!-
For the soul is dead that slumbers,
And things are not what they seem.
Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal;
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.
Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us farther than to-day.
Art is long, and Time is fleeting,
And our hearts, though stout and brave,
Still, like muffled drums, are beating
Funeral marches to the grave.
In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of Life,
Be not like dumb, driven cattle!
Be a hero in the strife!
Trust no Future, how'er pleasant!
Let the dead Past bury its dead!
Act,—act in the living Present!
Heart within, and God o'erhead!
Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time;
Footprints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
A forlorn and shipwrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.
Let us, then, be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labor and to wait.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Real Successes*Edgar A. Guest*

You think that the failures are many,
You think the successes are few,
But you judge by the rule of the penny,
And not by the good that men do.
You judge men by standards of treasure
That merely obtain upon earth,
When the brother you're snubbing may measure
Full-length to God's standard of worth.
The failures are not in the ditches,
The failures are not in the ranks,
They have missed the acquirement of riches,
Their fortunes are not in the banks.
Their virtues are never paraded,
Their worth is not always in view,
But they're fighting their battles unaided,
And fighting them honestly, too.
There are failures today in high places
The failures aren't all in the low;
There are rich men with scorn in their faces
Whose homes are but castles of woe.
The homes that are happy are many,
And numberless fathers are true;
And this is the standard, if any,
By which we must judge what men do.
Wherever loved ones are awaiting
The toiler to kiss and caress,
Though in Bradstreet's he hasn't a rating,
He still is a splendid success.
If the dear ones who gather about him
And know what he's striving to do
Have never a reason to doubt him,
Is he less successful than you?
You think that the failures are many,
You judge by men's profits in gold;
You judge by the rule of the penny-In
this true success isn't told.
This falsely man's story is telling,
For wealth often brings on distress,
But wherever love brightens a dwelling,
There lives, rich or poor, a success.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Rereading Frost*Linda Pastan*

Sometimes I think all the best poems
Have been written already,
And no one has time to read them,
So why try to write more?

At other times though,
I remember how one flower
In a meadow already full of flowers
Somehow adds to the general fireworks effect

As you get to the top of a hill
In Colorado, say, in high summer
And just look down at all that brimming color.
I also try to convince myself

That the smallest note of the smallest
Instrument in the band,
The triangle for instance,
Is important to the conductor

Who stands there, pointing his finger
In the direction of the percussions,
Demanding that one silvery ping,
And I decide not to stop trying,

At least not for a while, though in truth
I'd rather just sit here reading
How someone else has been acquainted
With the night already, and perfectly.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Sandpiper*Celia Thaxter*

Across the narrow beach we flit,
One little sandpiper and I,
And fast I gather, bit by bit,
The scattered driftwood bleached and dry.
The wild waves reach their hands for it,
The wild wind raves, the tide runs high,
As up and down the beach we flit,—
One little sandpiper and I.
Above our heads the sullen clouds
Scud black and swift across the sky;
Like silent ghosts in misty shrouds
Stand out the white lighthouses high.
Almost as far as an eye can reach
I see the close-reefed vessels fly,
As fast we flit along the beach,—
One little sandpiper and I.
I watch him as he skims along,
Uttering his sweet and mournful cry.
He starts not at my fitful song,
Nor flash of fluttering drapery.
He has no thought of any wrong;
He scans me with a fearless eye:
Staunch friends are we, well tried and strong,
The little sandpiper and I.
Comrade, where wilt thou be tonight,
When the loosed storm breaks furiously?
My driftwood fire will bum so bright!
To what warm shelter canst thou fly?
I do not fear for thee, through wroth
The tempest rushes through the sky:
For are we not God's children both,
Thou, little sandpiper, and I?

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Singer's Revenge*Edgar A. Guest*

It was a singer of renown who did a desperate thing,
For all who asked him out to dine requested him to sing.
This imposition on his art they couldn't seem to see.
For friendship's sake they thought he ought to work without a fee.
And so he planned a dinner, too, of fish and fowl and wine
And asked his friends of high degree to come with him to dine.
His banker and his tailor came, his doctor, too, was there,
Likewise a leading plumber who'd become a millionaire.
The singer fed his guests and smiled, a gracious host was he;
With every course he ladled out delicious flattery,
And when at last the meal was done, he tossed his man a wink,
"Good friends," said he, "I've artists here you'll all enjoy, I think.
"I've trousers needing buttons, Mr. Tailor, if you please,
Will you oblige us all tonight by sewing some on these?
I've several pairs all handy-by, now let your needle jerk;
My guests will be delighted to behold you as you work.
"Now, doctor, just a moment, pray, I cannot sing a note;
I asked you here because I thought you'd like to spray my throat;
I know that during business hours for this you charge a fee,
But surely you'll be glad to serve my friends, tonight, and me?"
The plumber then was asked if he would mend a pipe or two;
A very simple thing, of course, to urge a friend to do;
But reddest grew the banker's face and reddest grew his neck,
Requested in his dinner clothes to cash a good sized check.
His guests astounded looked at him. Said they: "We are surprised!
To ask us here to work for you is surely ill-advised.
'Tis most improper, impolite!" The singer shrieked in glee:
"My friends, I've only treated you as you have treated me."

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Classical Christian Speech Meet

Song*Celia Thaxter*

We sail toward evening's lonely star
That trembles in the tender blue;
One single cloud, a dusky bar,
Burnt with dull carmine through and through,
Slow smouldering in the summer sky,
Lies low along the fading west.
How sweet to watch its splendors die,
Wave-cradled thus and wind-caressed!
The soft breeze freshens, leaps the spray
To kiss our cheeks, with sudden cheer;
Upon the dark edge of the bay
Lighthouses kindle, far and near,
And through the warm deeps of the sky
Steal faint star-clusters, while we rest
In deep refreshment, thou and I,
Wave-cradled thus and wind-caressed.
How like a dream are earth and heaven,
Star-beam and darkness, sky and sea;
Thy face, pale in the shadowy even,
Thy quiet eyes that gaze on me!
O realize the moment's charm,
Thou dearest! we are at life's best,
Folded in God's encircling arm,
Wave-cradled thus and wind-caressed.

Degree of Difficulty: 3

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Spider and the Fly*Mary Howitt*

“Will you walk into my parlor?” said the Spider to the Fly,
‘Tis the prettiest little parlor that ever you did spy.
The way into my parlor is up a winding stair,
And I have many curious things to show when you are there.”
“Oh no, no,” said the little Fly, “to ask me is in vain,
For who goes up your winding stair can ne’er come down again.”
“I’m sure you must be weary, dear, with soaring up so high;
Will you rest upon my little bed?” said the Spider to the Fly.
“There are pretty curtains drawn around, the sheets are fine and thin;
And if you like to rest awhile, I’ll snugly tuck you in!”
“Oh no, no,” said the little Fly, “for I’ve often heard it said,
They never, never wake up again, who sleep upon your bed!”
Said the cunning Spider to the Fly, “Dear friend, what can I do,
To prove the warm affection I’ve always felt for you?
I have within my pantry good store of all that’s nice;
I’m sure you’re very welcome—will you please to take a slice?”
“Oh no, no,” said the little Fly, “kind sir, that cannot be,
I’ve heard what’s in your pantry, and I do not wish to see.”
“Sweet creature,” said Spider, “you’re witty and you’re wise;
How handsome are your gauzy wings, how brilliant are your eyes!
I have a little looking-glass upon my parlour shelf,
If you’ll step in a moment dear, you shall behold yourself.”
“I thank you gentle sir,” she said, “for what you’re pleased to say,
And bidding you good morning now, I’ll call another day.”
The Spider turned him round about, and went into his den,
For well he knew the silly Fly would soon come back again;
So he wove a subtle web, in a little corner sly,
And set his table ready, to dine upon the Fly.
Then he came out to his door again, and merrily did sing:
“Come hither, hither, pretty Fly, with the pearl and silver wing;
Your robes are green and purple—there’s a crest upon your head;
Your eyes are like the diamond bright, but mine are dull as lead.”
Alas, alas! how very soon this silly little Fly,
Hearing his wily, flattering words, came slowly flitting by;
With buzzing wings she hung aloft, then near and nearer drew,
Thinking only of her brilliant eyes, and green and purple hue;
Thinking only of her crested head—poor foolish thing! At last,
Up jumped the cunning Spider, and fiercely held her fast.
He dragged her up his winding stair, into his dismal den
Within his little parlour—but she ne’er came out again!

Degree of Difficulty: 5

To a Waterfowl*William Cullen Bryant*

Whither, 'midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far, through their rosy depths, dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?
Vainly the fowler's eye
Might mark thy distant flight to do thee wrong,
As, darkly painted on the crimson sky,
Thy figure floats along.
Seek'st thou the plashy brink
Of weedy lake, or marge of river wide,
Or where the rocking billows rise and sink
On the chafed ocean side?
There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,—
The desert and illimitable air,—
Lone wandering, but not lost.
All day thy wings have fann'd
At that far height, the cold thin atmosphere:
Yet stoop not, weary, to the welcome land,
Though the dark night is near.
And soon that toil shall end,
Soon shalt thou find a summer home, and rest,
And scream among thy fellows; reed shall bend
Soon o'er thy sheltered nest.
Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet, on my heart
Deeply hath sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.
He, who, from zone to zone,
Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone,
Will lead my steps aright.

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night*Walt Whitman*

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a look I shall never forget,
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay on the ground,
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle,
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made my way,
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body son of
responding laughter, (never again on earth responding,)
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew the moderate night-wind,
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the battlefield spreading,
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent night,
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I gazed,
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning my chin in my hands,
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you dearest comrade - not a tear, not a
word,
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my soldier,
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward stole,
Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was your death,
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we shall surely meet again,)
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn appear'd,
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and carefully under feet,
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I
deposited,
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-field dim,
Vigil for boy of responding laughter, (never again on earth responding,)
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how as day brighten'd,
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his blanket,
And buried him where he fell.

Degree of Difficulty: 5

Classical Christian Speech Meet

The Village Blacksmith*Henry W. Longfellow*

Under a spreading chestnut tree
The village smithy stands;
The smith, a mighty man is he
With large and sinewy hands;
And the muscles of his brawny arms
Are strong as iron bands.
His hair is crisp, and black and long,
His face is like the tan;
His brow is wet with honest sweat,
He earns whate'er he can,
And looks the whole world in the face
For he owes not any man.
Week in, week out, from morn 'til night,
You can hear his bellows blow;
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge,
With measured beat and slow,
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,
When evening sun is low.
And children coming home from school
Look in at the open door;
They love to see the flaming forge,
And hear the bellows roar,
And catch the burning sparks that fly
Like chaff from a threshing floor.
He goes on Sunday to the church
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.
It sounds to him like her mother's voice,
Singing in Paradise!
He needs must think of her once more,
How in the grave she lies;
And with his hard, rough hands he wipes
A tear out of his eyes.
Toiling—rejoicing—sorrowing,
Onward through life he goes;
Each morning sees some task begun,

The Village Blacksmith (Continued)

Each evening sees it close;
Something attempted, something done,
Has earned a night's repose.
Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,
For the lesson thou hast taught!
Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.

Degree of Difficulty: 4

Classical Christian Speech Meet