



Summer Poems

FOR YOUR HOMESCHOOL



I Meant to Do My Work Today

BY RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

(JANUARY 20, 1866 - SEPTEMBER 15, 1947)

I meant to do my work today -
But a brown bird sang in the apple-tree,
And a butterfly flitted across the field,
And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,
Tossing the grasses to and fro,
And a rainbow held out its shining hand -
So what could I do but laugh and go?



Bed in Summer

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(NOVEMBER 13, 1850 - DECEMBER 3, 1894)

In winter I get up at night
And dress by yellow candle-light.
In summer, quite the other way,
I have to go to bed by day.

I have to go to bed and see
The birds still hopping on the tree,
Or hear the grown-up people's feet
Still going past me in the street.

And does it not seem hard to you,
When all the sky is clear and blue,
And I should like so much to play,
To have to go to bed by day?

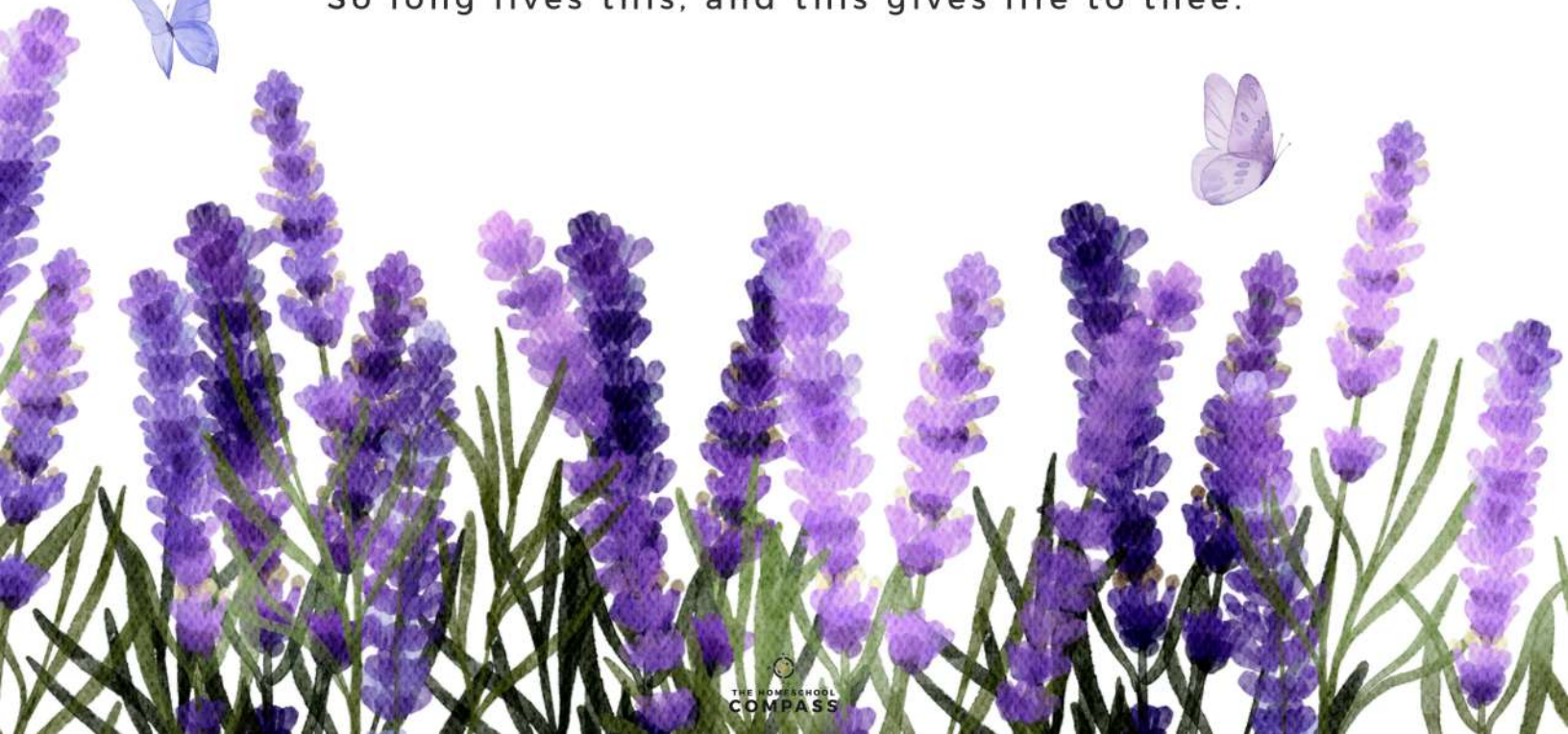


Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day? (Sonnet 18)

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

(1564-1616)

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to Time thou grow'st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.



Summer in the South

BY PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR

(JUNE 27, 1872 - FEBRUARY 9, 1906)

The oriole sings in the greening grove
As if he were half-way waiting,
The rosebuds peep from their hoods of green,
Timid and hesitating.

The rain comes down in a torrent sweep
And the nights smell warm and piney,
The garden thrives, but the tender shoots
Are yellow-green and tiny.


Then a flash of sun on a waiting hill,
Streams laugh that erst were quiet,
The sky smiles down with a dazzling blue
And the woods run mad with riot.



I Sought the Wood in Winter

BY WILLA CATHER


(DECEMBER 7, 1873 - APRIL 24, 1947)



I sought the wood in summer
When every twig was green;
The rudest boughs were tender,
And buds were pink between.
Light-fingered aspens trembled
In fitful sun and shade,
And daffodils were golden
In every starry glade.
The brook sang like a robin—
My hand could check him where
The lissome maiden willows
Shook out their yellow hair.

“How frail a thing is Beauty,”
I said, “when every breath
She gives the vagrant summer
But swifter woos her death.
For this the star dust troubles,
For this have ages rolled:
To deck the wood for bridal
And slay her with the cold.”

I sought the wood in winter
When every leaf was dead;
Behind the wind-whipped branches
The winter sun set red.
The coldest star was rising
To greet that bitter air,
The oaks were writhen giants;
Nor bud nor bloom was there.



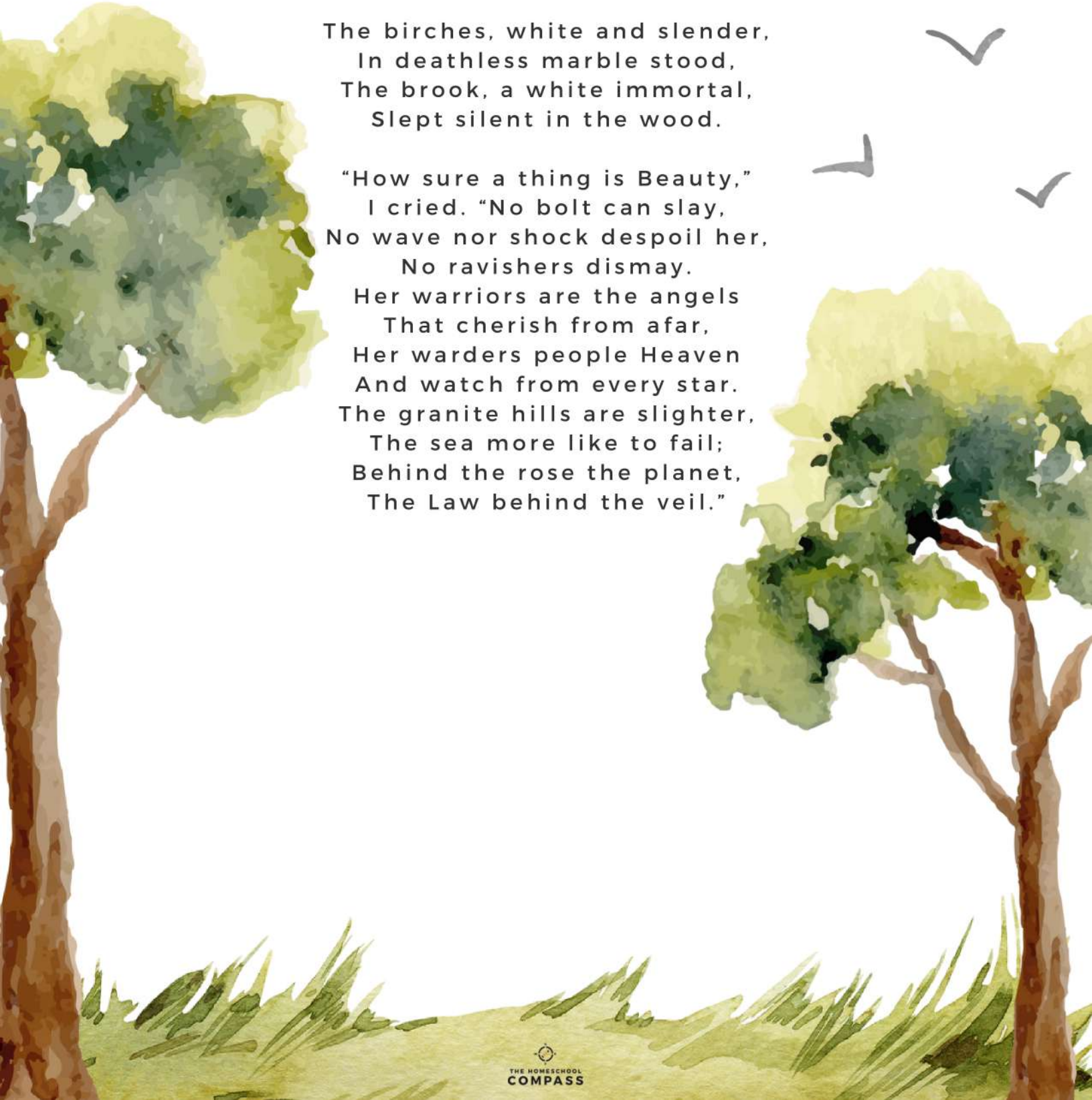
I Sought the Wood in Winter

BY WILLA CATHER

(DECEMBER 7, 1873 - APRIL 24, 1947)

The birches, white and slender,
In deathless marble stood,
The brook, a white immortal,
Slept silent in the wood.

"How sure a thing is Beauty,"
I cried. "No bolt can slay,
No wave nor shock despoil her,
No ravishers dismay.
Her warriors are the angels
That cherish from afar,
Her warders people Heaven
And watch from every star.
The granite hills are slighter,
The sea more like to fail;
Behind the rose the planet,
The Law behind the veil."



Summer

BY CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

(DECEMBER 5, 1830 - DECEMBER 29, 1894)

Winter is cold-hearted,
Spring is yea and nay,
Autumn is a weathercock
Blown every way.
Summer days for me
When every leaf is on its tree;

When Robin's not a beggar,
And Jenny Wren's a bride,
And larks hang singing, singing, singing,
Over the wheat-fields wide,
And anchored lilies ride,
And the pendulum spider
Swings from side to side;

And blue-black beetles transact business,
And gnats fly in a host,
And furry caterpillars hasten
That no time be lost,
And moths grow fat and thrive,
And ladybirds arrive.

Before green apples blush,
Before green nuts embrown,
Why one day in the country
Is worth a month in town;
Is worth a day and a year
Of the dusty, musty, lag-last fashion
That days drone elsewhere.



A Time to Talk

BY ROBERT FROST

(MARCH 26, 1874 - JANUARY 29, 1963)

When a friend calls to me from the road
And slows his horse to a meaning walk,
I don't stand still and look around
On all the hills I haven't hoed,
And shout from where I am, 'What is it?'
No, not as there is a time talk.
I thrust my hoe in the mellow ground,
Blade-end up and five feet tall,
And plod: I go up to the stone wall
For a friendly visit.





Casey at the Bat

BY ERNEST LAWRENCE THAYER

(AUGUST 14, 1863 - AUGUST 21, 1940)



The outlook wasn't brilliant for the Mudville nine that day:
The score stood four to two, with but one inning more to play,
And then when Cooney died at first, and Barrows did the same,
A pall-like silence fell upon the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go in deep despair. The rest
Clung to the hope which springs eternal in the human breast;
They thought, "If only Casey could but get a whack at that—
We'd put up even money now, with Casey at the bat."

But Flynn preceded Casey, as did also Jimmy Blake,
And the former was a hoodoo, while the latter was a cake;
So upon that stricken multitude grim melancholy sat,
For there seemed but little chance of Casey getting to the bat.



But Flynn let drive a single, to the wonderment of all,
And Blake, the much despised, tore the cover off the ball;
And when the dust had lifted, and men saw what had occurred,
There was Jimmy safe at second and Flynn a-hugging third.

Then from five thousand throats and more there rose a lusty yell;
It rumbled through the valley, it rattled in the dell;
It pounded on the mountain and recoiled upon the flat,
For Casey, mighty Casey, was advancing to the bat.

There was ease in Casey's manner as he stepped into his place;
There was pride in Casey's bearing and a smile lit Casey's face.
And when, responding to the cheers, he lightly doffed his hat,
No stranger in the crowd could doubt 'twas Casey at the bat.



Ten thousand eyes were on him as he rubbed his hands with dirt;
Five thousand tongues applauded when he wiped them on his shirt;
Then while the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance flashed in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.



Casey at the Bat

BY ERNEST LAWRENCE THAYER

(AUGUST 14, 1863 - AUGUST 21, 1940)

And now the leather-covered sphere came hurtling through the air,
And Casey stood a-watching it in haughty grandeur there.
Close by the sturdy batsman the ball unheeded sped—
"That ain't my style," said Casey. "Strike one!" the umpire said.

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm-waves on a stern and distant shore;
"Kill him! Kill the umpire!" shouted someone on the stand;
And it's likely they'd have killed him had not Casey raised his hand.

With a smile of Christian charity great Casey's visage shone;
He stilled the rising tumult; he bade the game go on;
He signaled to the pitcher, and once more the dun sphere flew;
But Casey still ignored it and the umpire said, "Strike two!"

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and echo answered "Fraud!"
But one scornful look from Casey and the audience was awed.
They saw his face grow stern and cold, they saw his muscles strain,
And they knew that Casey wouldn't let that ball go by again.

The sneer is gone from Casey's lip, his teeth are clenched in hate,
He pounds with cruel violence his bat upon the plate;
And now the pitcher holds the ball, and now he lets it go,
And now the air is shattered by the force of Casey's blow.

Oh, somewhere in this favoured land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light;
And somewhere men are laughing, and somewhere children shout,
But there is no joy in Mudville—mighty Casey has struck out.



Foreign Lands

BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(NOVEMBER 13, 1850 - DECEMBER 3, 1894)

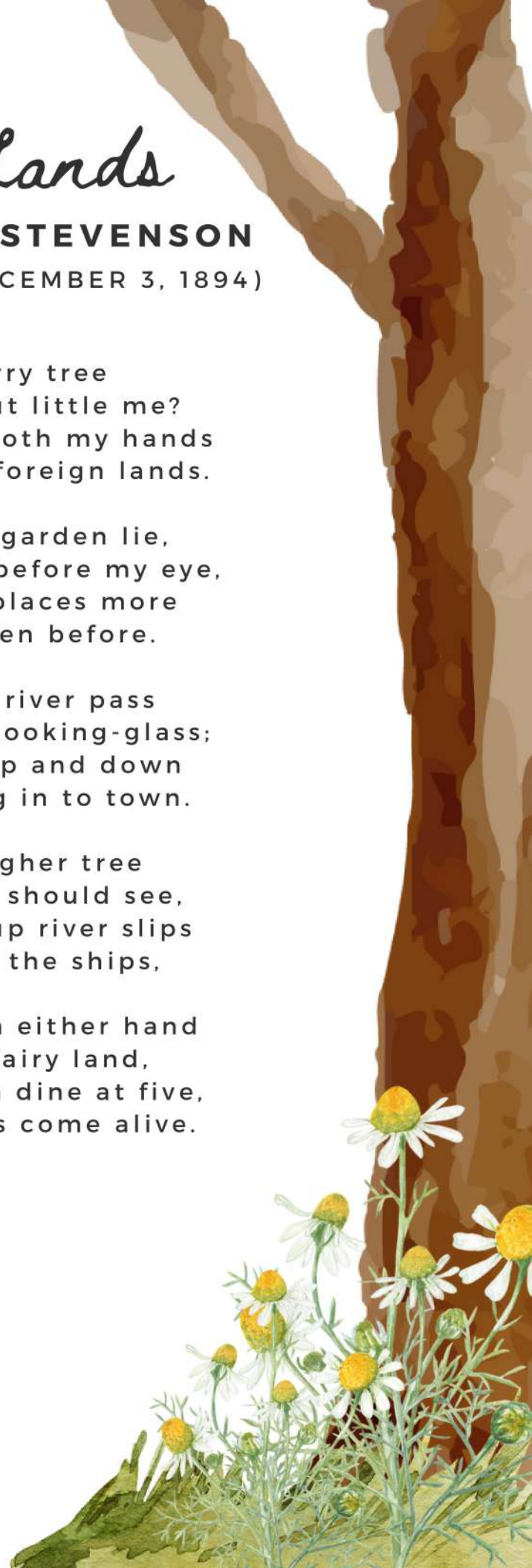
Up into the cherry tree
Who should climb but little me?
I held the trunk with both my hands
And looked abroad in foreign lands.

I saw the next door garden lie,
Adorned with flowers, before my eye,
And many pleasant places more
That I had never seen before.

I saw the dimpling river pass
And be the sky's blue looking-glass;
The dusty roads go up and down
With people tramping in to town.

If I could find a higher tree
Farther and farther I should see,
To where the grown-up river slips
Into the sea among the ships,

To where the roads on either hand
Lead onward into fairy land,
Where all the children dine at five,
And all the playthings come alive.



A Bird Came Down the Walk

BY EMILY DICKINSON

(DECEMBER 10, 1830 - MAY 15, 1886)

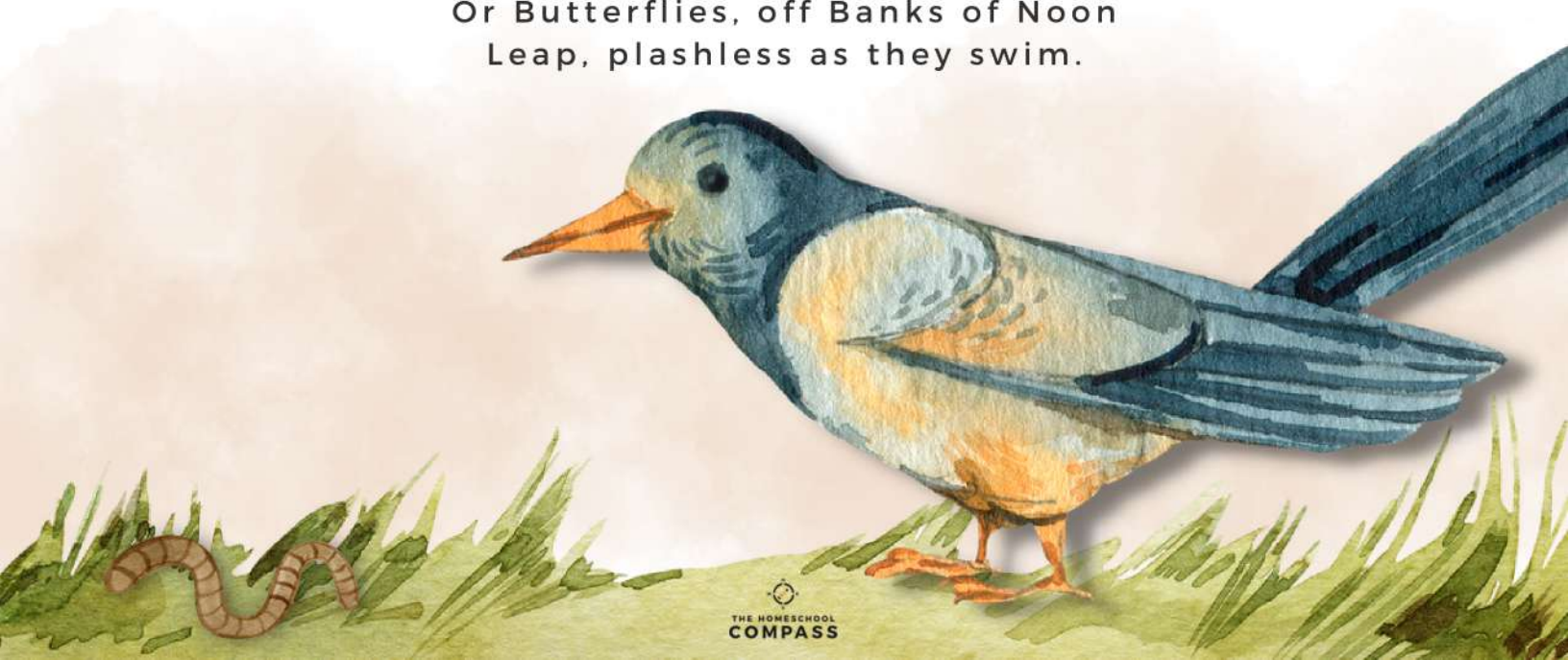
A Bird came down the Walk -
He did not know I saw -
He bit an Angeworm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,

And then he drank a Dew
From a convenient Grass -
And then hopped sidewise to the Wall
To let a Beetle pass -

He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all around -
They looked like frightened Beads, I thought -
He stirred his Velvet Head

Like one in danger, Cautious,
I offered him a Crumb
And he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home -

Than Oars divide the Ocean,
Too silver for a seam -
Or Butterflies, off Banks of Noon
Leap, plashless as they swim.



The Use of Flowers

BY MARY HOWITT

(MARCH 12, 1799 - JANUARY 30, 1888)

God might have bade the earth bring forth
Enough for great and small,
The oak tree, and the cedar tree,
Without a flower at all.

He might have made enough, enough,
For every want of ours;
For luxury, medicine, and toil,
And yet have had no flowers.

The ore within the mountain mine
Requireth none to grow,
Nor doth it need the lotus flower
To make the river flow.

The clouds might give abundant rain,
The nightly dews might fall,
And the herb that keepeth life in man
Might yet have drunk them all.

Then wherefore, wherefore were they made
All dyed with rainbow light,
All fashioned with supremest grace,
Upspringing day and night--

Springing in valleys green and low,
And on the mountains high,
And in the silent wilderness,
Where no man passes by?



The Use of Flowers

BY MARY HOWITT

(MARCH 12, 1799 - JANUARY 30, 1888)

Our outward life requires them not,
Then wherefore had they birth?
To minister delight to man,
To beautify the earth;

To comfort man -- to whisper hope
Whene'er his faith is dim;
For whoso careth for the flowers
Will care much more for Him!

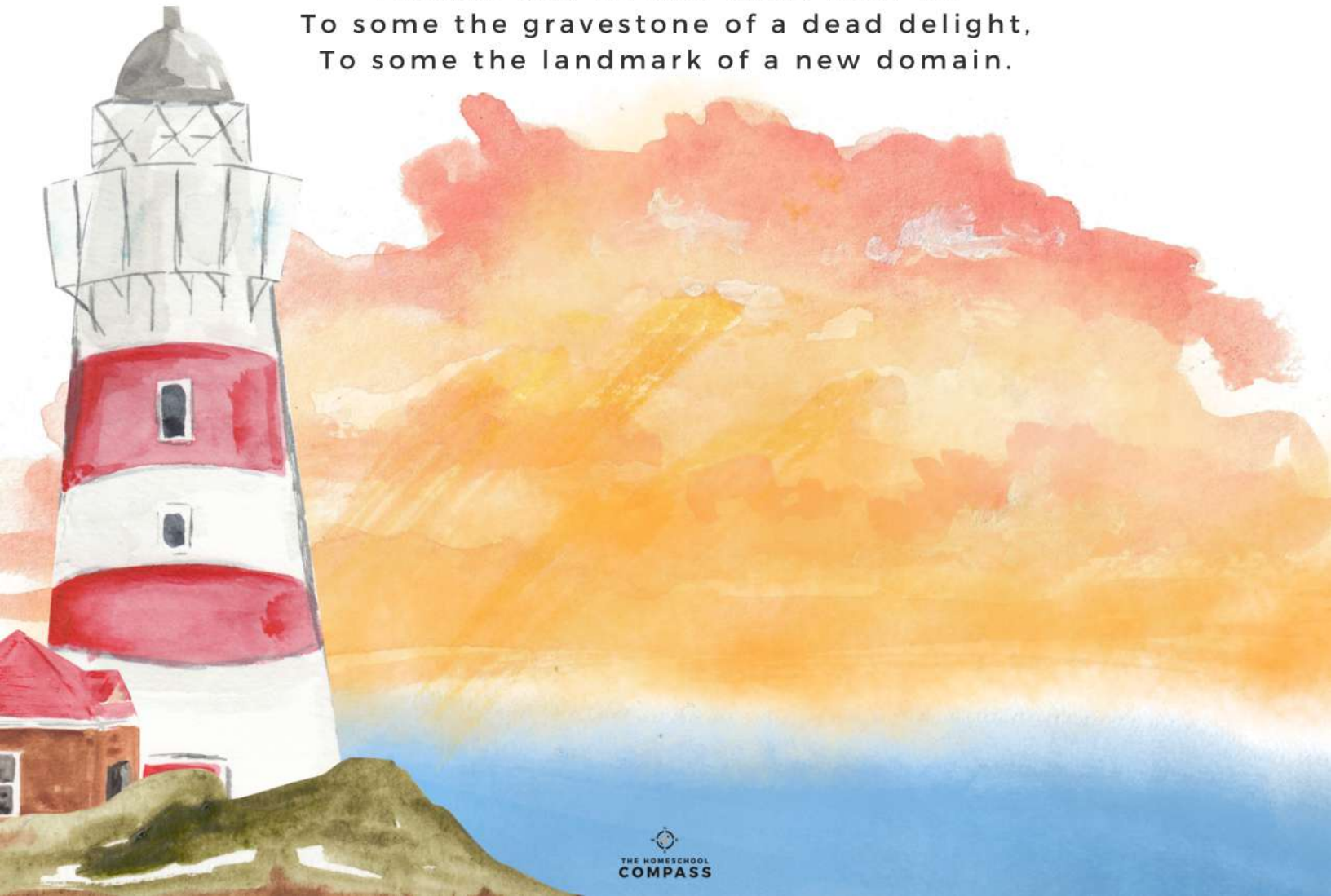


A Summer Day By the Sea

BY HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

(FEBRUARY 27, 1807 - MARCH 24, 1882)

The sun is set; and in his latest beams
Yon little cloud of ashen gray and gold,
Slowly upon the amber air unrolled,
The falling mantle of the Prophet seems.
From the dim headlands many a light-house gleams,
The street-lamps of the ocean; and behold,
O'erhead the banners of the night unfold;
The day hath passed into the land of dreams.
O summer day beside the joyous sea!
O summer day so wonderful and white,
So full of gladness and so full of pain!
Forever and forever shalt thou be
To some the gravestone of a dead delight,
To some the landmark of a new domain.



The Fly

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

(NOVEMBER 28, 1757 - AUGUST 12, 1827)

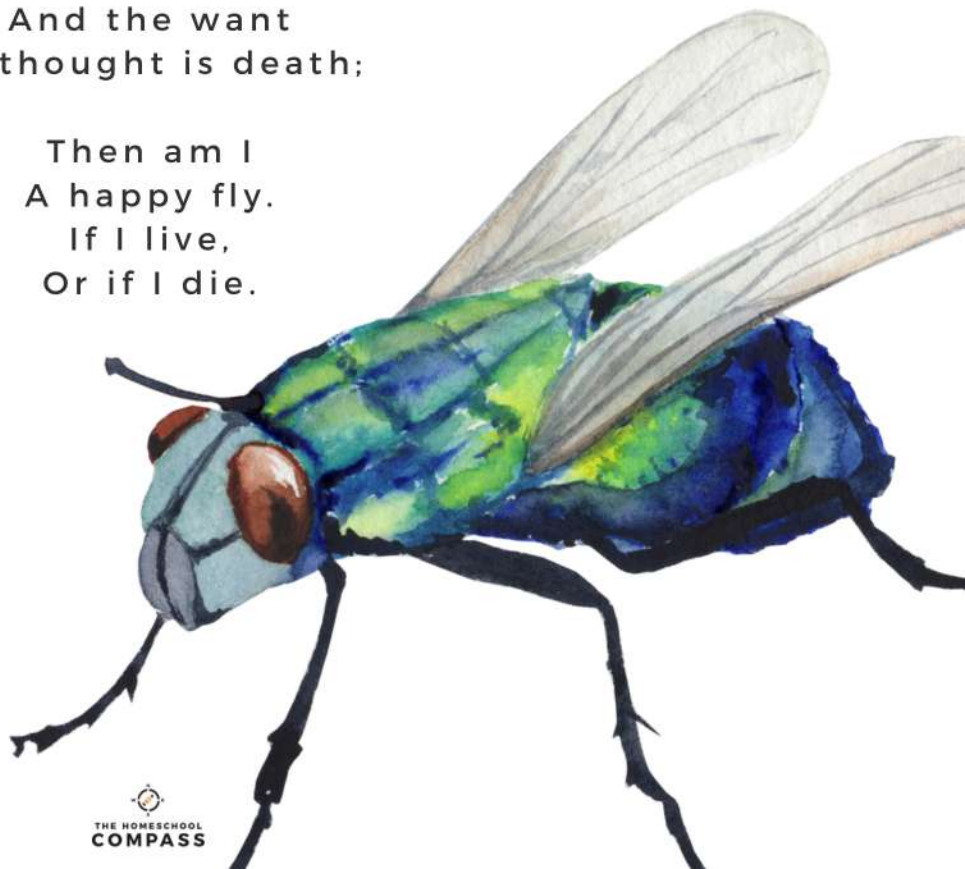
Little Fly,
Thy summer's play
My thoughtless hand
Has brushed away.

Am not I
A fly like thee?
Or art not thou
A man like me?

For I dance,
And drink, and sing,
Till some blind hand
Shall brush my wing.

If thought is life
And strength and breath,
And the want
Of thought is death;

Then am I
A happy fly.
If I live,
Or if I die.





Trees

BY JOYCE KILMER

(DECEMBER 6, 1886 - JULY 30, 1918)

I think that I shall never see
A poem as lovely as a tree,

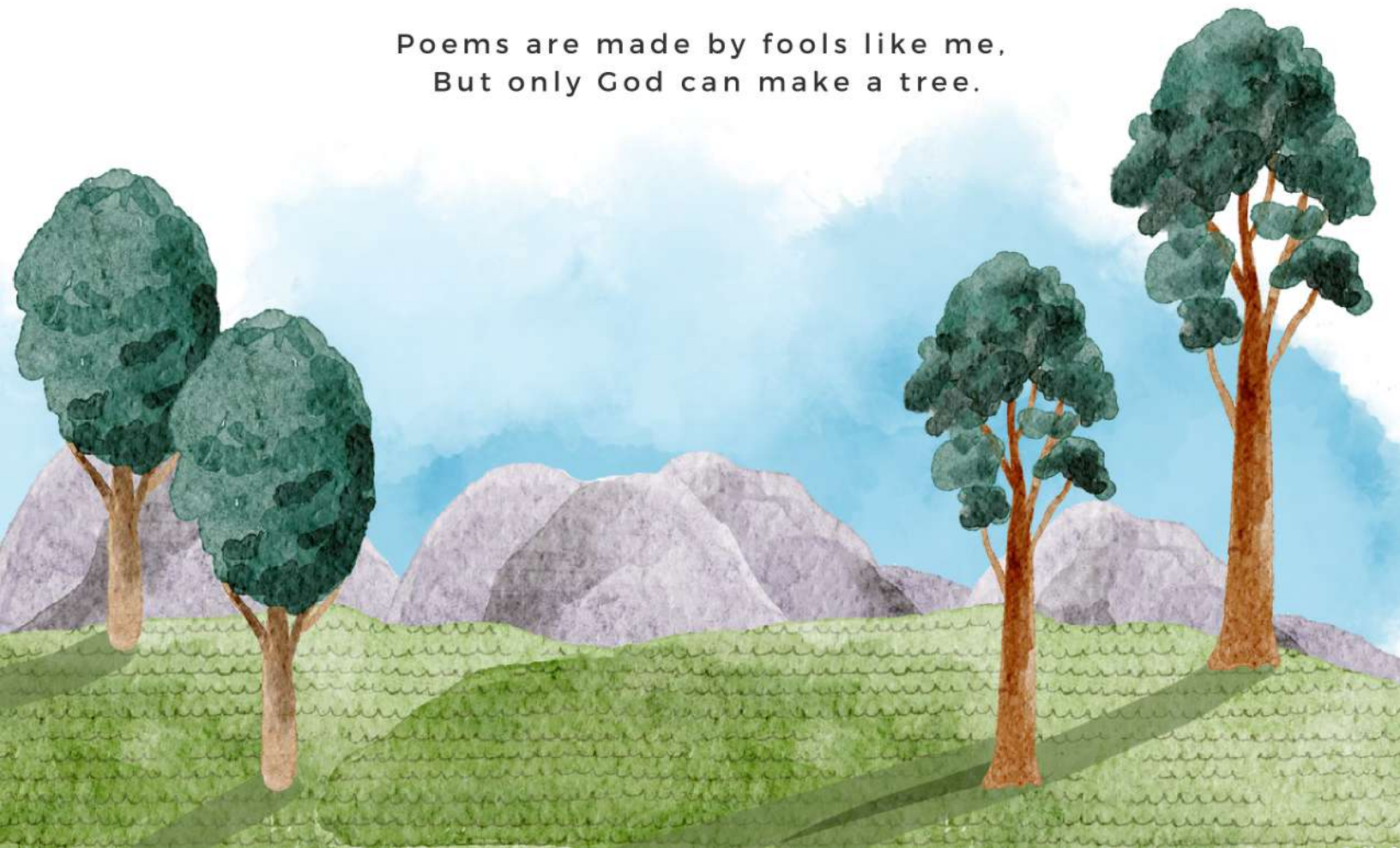
A tree whose hungry mouth is pressed
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,
and lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.



The Schoolboy

BY WILLIAM BLAKE

(NOVEMBER 28, 1757 - AUGUST 12, 1827)

I love to rise in a summer morn,
When the birds sing on every tree;
The distant huntsman winds his horn,
And the skylark sings with me:
O what sweet company!

But to go to school in a summer morn,
-O it drives all joy away!
Under a cruel eye outworn,
The little ones spend the day
In sighing and dismay.

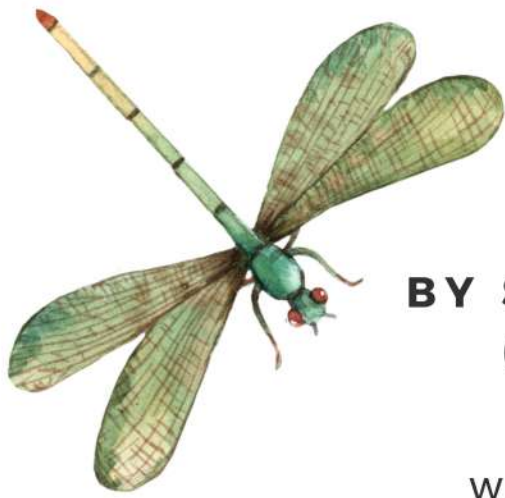
Ah then at times I drooping sit,
And spend many an anxious hour;
Nor in my book can I take delight,
Nor sit in learning's bower,
Worn through with the dreary shower.

How can the bird that is born for joy
Sit in a cage and sing?
How can a child, when fears annoy,
But droop his tender wing,
And forget his youthful spring!

O father and mother if buds are nipped,
And blossoms blown away;
And if the tender plants are stripped
Of their joy in the springing day,
By sorrow and care's dismay, -

How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year,
When the blasts of winter appear?





July

BY SUSAN HARTLEY SWETT

(1843 - DECEMBER 31, 1907)

When the scarlet cardinal tells
Her dream to the dragonfly,
And the lazy breeze makes a nest in the trees,
And murmurs a lullaby,
It's July.

When the tangled cobweb pulls
The cornflower's cap awry,
And the lilies tall lean over the wall
To bow to the butterfly,
It's July.

When the heat like a mist veil floats,
And poppies flame in the rye,
And the silver note in the streamlet's throat
Has softened almost to a sigh,
It's July.

When the hours are so still that time
Forgets them, and lets them lie
Underneath petals pink till the night stars wink
At the sunset in the sky,
It's July.



Warm Summer Sun

BY MARK TWAIN

(NOVEMBER 30, 1835 - APRIL 21, 1910)

Warm summer sun,
Shine kindly here,
Warm southern wind,
Blow softly here.
Green sod above,
Lie light, lie light.
Good night, dear heart,
Good night, good night.



The New Colossus

BY EMMA LAZARUS

(JULY 22, 1849 - NOVEMBER 19, 1887)

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's 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 be free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

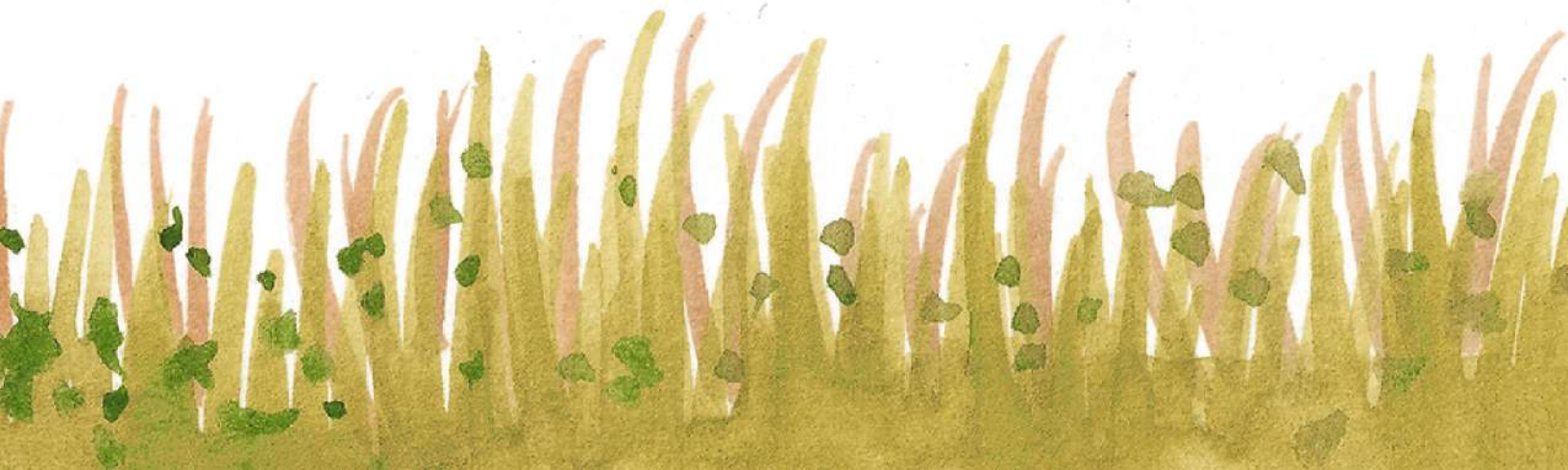


The Exposed Nest

BY ROBERT FROST

(MARCH 26, 1874 - JANUARY 29, 1963)

You were forever finding some new play.
So when I saw you down on hands and knees
In the meadow, busy with the new-cut hay,
Trying, I thought, to set it up on end,
I went to show you how to make it stay,
If that was your idea, against the breeze,
And, if you asked me, even help pretend
To make it root again and grow afresh.
But 'twas no make-believe with you today,
Nor was the grass itself your real concern,
Though I found your hand full of wilted fern,
Steel-bright June-grass, and blackening heads of clover.
'Twas a nest full of young birds on the ground
The cutter-bar had just gone champing over
(Miraculously without tasting flesh)
And left defenseless to the heat and light.
You wanted to restore them to their right
Of something interposed between their sight
And too much world at once, could means be found.
The way the nest-full every time we stirred
Stood up to us as to a mother-bird
Whose coming home has been too long deferred,



The Exposed Nest

BY ROBERT FROST

(MARCH 26, 1874 - JANUARY 29, 1963)

Made me ask would the mother-bird return
And care for them in such a change of scene
And might out meddling make her more afraid.
That was a thing we could not wait to learn.

We saw the risk we took in doing good,
But dared not spare to do the best we could
Though harm should come of it; so built the screen
You had begun, and gave them back their shade.
All this to prove we cared. Why is there then
No more to tell? We turned to other things.

I haven't any memory - have you?,
Of ever coming to the place again
To see if the birds lived the first night through,
And so at last to learn to use their wings.



As imperceptibly as grief

BY EMILY DICKINSON

(DECEMBER 10, 1830 - MAY 15, 1886)

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away—
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy—
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon—
The Dusk drew earlier in—
The Morning foreign shone—
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone—
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.