

An Earth Song

[Langston Hughes](#) - A poet, novelist, fiction writer, and playwright known for his insightful, colorful portrayals of black life in America and helped shaped the artistic contributions of the Harlem Renaissance.

It's an earth song,—
And I've been waiting long for an earth song.
It's a spring song,—
And I've been waiting long for a spring song.
 Strong as the shoots of a new plant
 Strong as the bursting of new buds
 Strong as the coming of the first child from its mother's womb.
It's an earth song,
A body song,
A spring song,
I have been waiting long for this spring song.

Interim

[Lola Ridge](#) – An Irish-American poet and activist who often wrote about race, class, and gender issues

The earth is motionless
And poised in space ...
A great bird resting in its flight
Between the alleys of the stars.
It is the wind's hour off
The wind has nestled down among the corn
The two speak privately together,
Awaiting the whirr of wings.

The Call of the Wild

[Alexander Posey](#) – A Muskogee Creek poet, journalist, and humorist.

I'm tired of the gloom

In a four-walled room;

Heart-weary, I sigh

For the open sky,

And the solitude

Of the greening wood;

Where the bluebirds call,

And the sunbeams fall,

And the daisies lure

The soul to be pure.

I'm tired of the life

In the ways of strife;

Heart-weary, I long

For the river's song,

And the murmur of rills

In the breezy hills;

Where the pipe of Pan—

The hairy half-man—

The bright silence breaks

By the sleeping lakes.

Wind

[Gwendolyn Bennett](#) – A Texan teacher, artist, and writer a dedicated to supporting African American writers and artists through support groups, community centers, and schools.

The wind was a care-free soul
That broke the chains of earth,
And strode for a moment across the land
With the wild halloo of his mirth.
He little cared that he ripped up trees,
That houses fell at his hand,
That his step broke calm on the breast of seas,
That his feet stirred clouds of sand.

But when he had had his little joke,
Had shouted and laughed and sung,
When the trees were scarred, their branches broke,
And their foliage aching hung,
He crept to his cave with a stealthy tread,
With rain-filled eyes and low-bowed head.

Garden

[H. D.](#) - One of the leaders of the Imagist movement.

I

You are clear
O rose, cut in rock,
hard as the descent of hail.

I could scrape the colour
from the petals
like spilt dye from a rock.

If I could break you
I could break a tree.

If I could stir
I could break a tree—
I could break you.

II

O wind, rend open the heat,
cut apart the heat,
rend it to tatters.

Fruit cannot drop
through this thick air—
fruit cannot fall into heat
that presses up and blunts
the points of pears
and rounds the grapes.

Cut the heat—
plough through it,
turning it on either side
of your path.

Magdalen Walks

[Oscar Wilde](#) – An Irish poet and advocate for the aesthetic movement, emphasizing the value of beauty in art.

The little white clouds are racing over the sky,
And the fields are strewn with the gold of the flower of March,
The daffodil breaks under foot, and the tasselled larch
Sways and swings as the thrush goes hurrying by.

A delicate odour is borne on the wings of the morning breeze,
The odour of leaves, and of grass, and of newly upturned earth,
The birds are singing for joy of the Spring's glad birth,
Hopping from branch to branch on the rocking trees.

And all the woods are alive with the murmur and sound of Spring,
And the rose-bud breaks into pink on the climbing briar,
And the crocus-bed is a quivering moon of fire
Girdled round with the belt of an amethyst ring.

And the plane to the pine-tree is whispering some tale of love
Till it rustles with laughter and tosses its mantle of green,
And the gloom of the wych-elm's hollow is lit with the iris sheen
Of the burnished rainbow throat and the silver breast of a dove.

See! the lark starts up from his bed in the meadow there,
Breaking the gossamer threads and the nets of dew,
And flashing adown the river, a flame of blue!
The kingfisher flies like an arrow, and wounds the air.

In Summer Time

[Paul Laurence Dunbar](#) - One of the first African American poets to gain national recognition.

When summer time has come, and all
The world is in the magic thrall
Of perfumed airs that lull each sense
To fits of drowsy indolence;
When skies are deepest blue above,
And flow'rs aflush,—then most I love
To start, while early dews are damp,
And wend my way in woodland tramp
Where forests rustle, tree on tree,
And sing their silent songs to me;
Where pathways meet and pathways part,—
To walk with Nature heart by heart,
Till wearied out at last I lie
Where some sweet stream steals singing by
A mossy bank; where violets vie
In color with the summer sky,—
Or take my rod and line and hook,
And wander to some darkling brook,
Where all day long the willows dream,
And idly droop to kiss the stream,
And there to loll from morn till night—
Unheeding nibble, run, or bite—
Just for the joy of being there
And drinking in the summer air,
The summer sounds, and summer sights,
That set a restless mind to rights
When grief and pain and raging doubt
Of men and creeds have worn it out;
The birds' song and the water's drone,
The humming bee's low monotone,
The murmur of the passing breeze,
And all the sounds akin to these,
That make a man in summer time

Feel only fit for rest and rhyme.
Joy springs all radiant in my breast;
Though pauper poor, than king more blest,
The tide beats in my soul so strong
That happiness breaks forth in song,
And rings aloud the welkin blue
With all the songs I ever knew.
O time of rapture! time of song!
How swiftly glide thy days along
Adown the current of the years,
Above the rocks of grief and tears!
'Tis wealth enough of joy for me
In summer time to simply be.

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

[Robert Frost](#) - One of the most celebrated figures in American poetry.

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

O Sea, That Knowest Thy Strength

[Effie Lee Newsome](#) - One of the first African American poets who primarily published poems for children.

Hast thou been known to sing,
 O sea, that knowest thy strength?
Hast thou been known to sing?
 Thy voice, can it rejoice?
Naught save great sorrowing,
 To me, thy sounds incessant
Do express, naught save great sorrowing.
Thy lips, they daily kiss the sand,
 In wanton mockery.
Deep in thine awful heart
 Thou dost not love the land.
 Thou dost not love the land.
 O sea, that knowest thy strength.

“These sands, these listless, helpless,
 Sun-gold sands, I’ll play with these,
Or crush them in my white-fanged hands
 For leagues, to please
The thing in me that is the Sea,
 Intangible, untamed,
 Untamed and wild,
 And wild and weird and strong!”

Waterfall Sound

[Mark Van Doren](#) - a Pulitzer prize winning poet, novelist, and critic

In the middle of the wood it starts,
Then over the wall and the meadow
And into our ears all day. But it departs—
Sometimes—like a shadow.

There is an instant when it grows
Too weak to climb a solid fence,
And creeps to find a crack. But the wind blows,
Scattering it hence

In whimpering fragments like the leaves
That every autumn drives before.
Then rain again in the hills—and the brook receives
It home with a roar.

From the middle of the wood again,
Over the wall and the meadow,
It comes one day to the minds of waiting men
Like a shadow.

In April

Rainer Maria Rilke – A poet who come to be universally regarded as a master of verse.

Again the woods are odorous, the lark
Lifts on upsoaring wings the heaven gray
That hung above the tree-tops, veiled and dark,
Where branches bare disclosed the empty day.

After long rainy afternoons an hour
Comes with its shafts of golden light and flings
Them at the windows in a radiant shower,
And rain drops beat the panes like timorous wings.

Then all is still. The stones are crooned to sleep
By the soft sound of rain that slowly dies;
And cradled in the branches, hidden deep
In each bright bud, a slumbering silence lies.

Raindrops

[Mrs. Minot Carter](#) - A fairly unknown poet from California.

Have you heard the raindrops
On a field of corn,
Pattering ov'r the green leaves
Dusty and forlorn?
Did you ever fancy
They were little feet
Hurrying out with water
Thirsty ones to meet?

Have you seen the raindrops
Falling on the lake?
How they flash and sparkle
Tiny splashes make.
Did you ever fancy
They were diamonds rare
Scattered by an aeroplane
Sailing through the air?

To Winter

[Claude McKay](#) – A poet who wrote about social and political concerns from his perspective as a black man in the United States, as well as a variety of subjects ranging from his Jamaican homeland to romantic love.

Stay, season of calm love and soulful snows!
There is a subtle sweetness in the sun,
The ripples on the stream's breast gaily run,
The wind more boisterously by me blows,
And each succeeding day now longer grows.
The birds a gladder music have begun,
The squirrel, full of mischief and of fun,
From maple's topmost branch the brown twig throws.
I read these pregnant signs, know what they mean:
I know that thou art making ready to go.
Oh stay! I fled a land where fields are green
Always, and palms wave gently to and fro,
And winds are balmy, blue brooks ever sheen,
To ease my heart of its impassioned woe.

A Winter Twilight

[Angelina Weld Grimké](#) - One of the first African-American women to have one of her plays publicly performed, and was a prominent figure in the Harlem Renaissance.

A silence slipping around like death,
Yet chased by a whisper, a sigh, a breath;
One group of trees, lean, naked and cold,
Inking their cress 'gainst a sky green-gold;
One path that knows where the corn flowers were;
Lonely, apart, unyielding, one fir;
And over it softly leaning down,
One star that I loved ere the fields went brown.

Revery

Fenton Johnson – A poet and forerunner of the Harlem Renaissance.

1.

I was the starlight
I was the moonlight
I was the sunset,
Before the dawning
 Of my life;
I was the river
Forever winding
To purple dreaming,
I was the glowing
Of youthful Springtime,
I was the singing
Of golden songbirds,—
 I was love.

2.

I was the sunlight,
I was the twilight,
I was the humming
Of winged creatures
 Ere my birth;
I was the blushing
Of lily maiden,
I was the vision
Of youthful striving,
I was the summer,
I was the autumn,
I was the All-time—
 I was love.