

POETRY

Serious Poetry - Kindergarten - Non-competitive

Class A100 - A

THE SQUIRREL Author unknown

Whisky, frisky,
Hippity hop,
Up he goes
To the tree top!

Whirly, twirly,
Round and round,
Down he scampers
To the ground.

Furly, curly,
What a tail!
Tall as a feather,
Broad as a sail!

Where's his supper?
In the shell,
Snappity, crackity,
Out it fell!

Class A100 - B

MICE - Rose Fyleman

I think mice
Are rather nice.

Their tails are long,
Their faces small,
They haven't any
Chins at all.
Their ears are pink,
Their teeth are white,
They run about
The house at night.
They nibble things
They shouldn't touch
And no one seems
To like them much.

But I think mice
Are nice.

Humorous Poetry - Kindergarten - Non-competitive

Class A100 - D

SNOWBALL - Shel Silverstein

I made myself a snowball
As perfect as could be.
I thought I'd keep it as a pet
And let it sleep with me.
I made it some pajamas
And a pillow for its head.
Then last night it ran away,
But first - it wet the bed.

Class A100 - E

PUZZLED - Margaret Hillert

I took a sip of lemon pop
And then a sip of lime,
A little orange soda too
A swallow at a time.
Some grape came next and cherry red,
And then I almost cried.
How could my stomach feel so bad
With rainbows down inside?

Serious Poetry - Grade 1 - Non-competitive

Class A101 - A

THE STORM by Sara Coleridge

See lightning is flashing,
The forest is crashing,
The rain will come dashing,
 A flood will be rising anon;

The heavens are scowling,
The thunder is growling,
The loud winds are howling,
 The storm has come suddenly on!

But now the sky clears,
The bright sun appears,
Now nobody fears,
 But soon every cloud will be gone.

Class A101 - B

MY DOG - Marchette Chute

His nose is short and scrubby;
 His ears hang rather low;
And he always brings the stick back,
 No matter how far I throw.

He gets spanked rather often
 For things he shouldn't do,
Like lying on beds, and barking,
 And chewing up shoes when they're new.

He always wants to be going
 Where he isn't supposed to go.
He tracks up the house when it's snowing
 Oh puppy, I love you so!

Humorous Poetry - Grade 1 - Non-competitive

Class A101 - D

GALOSHES - Rhoda Bacmeister

Susie's galoshes
Make splishes and sploshes
And slooshes and sloshes
As Susie steps slowly
Along in the slush.

They stamp and they tramp
On the ice and concrete,
They get stuck in the muck and the mud;
But Susie likes much best to hear

The slippery slush
As it slooshes and sloshes,
And splishes and sploshes,
All around her galoshes!

Class A101 - E

DO FISHES GO TO SCHOOL? By Ruth Whitman

After supper
before the dishes
we noticed suddenly
that fishes
were making little
leaps and swishes
under the setting sun.

Are they dolphins?
Brought in by some
far off gales?
Playing hopscotch
one by one?

Leda said, O silly fool,
these fishes clearly
are a school...
Davey interrupted
Yes,
but when do they have their
recess?

Serious Poetry - Grade 2 - Non-competitive

Class A102 – A

TREES - Joyce Kilmer

I think that I shall never see
A poem 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.

Class A102 – B

SOMEONE - Walter de la Mare

Someone came knocking
 At my wee, small, door;
Someone came knocking,
 I'm sure – sure – sure;
I listened, I opened,
 I looked to left and right,
But nought there was a-stirring
 In the still dark night
Only the busy beetle
 Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
 The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
 While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
 At all, at all, at all.

Humorous Poetry - Grade 2 - Non-competitive

Class A102 - D

MOTHER DOESN'T WANT A DOG - Judith Viorst

Mother doesn't want a dog.
Mother says they smell,
And never sit when you say sit,
Or even when you yell.
And when you come home late at night
And there is ice and snow,
You have to go back out because
The dumb dog has to go.

Mother doesn't want a dog.
Mother says they shed,
And always let the strangers in
And bark at friends instead,
And do disgraceful things on rugs,
And track mud on the floor,
And flop upon your bed at night
And snore their doggy snore.

Mother doesn't want a dog.
She's making a mistake.
Because, more than a dog, I think
She will not want this snake.

Class A102 - E

I BOUGHT OUR CAT A JETPACK - Kenn Nesbitt

I bought our cat a jetpack
which I think she liked a lot.
She strapped it on and instantly
she took off like a shot.

She zoomed around my bedroom
then she blasted down the hall.
She ricocheted off every piece
of furniture and wall.

Our dog freaked out and ran away.
Our hamster squeaked and fled.
I even saw my sister hiding
underneath her bed.

Our cat is so fired up
I almost hate to break the news:
She'll never catch our mouse;
I bought him rocket-powered shoes.

Serious Poetry - Grade 3

Class A103 - A

THE MOUSE - Elizabeth Coatsworth

I hear a mouse
Bitterly complaining
In a crack of moonlight
Aslant on the floor--

"Little I ask
And that little is not granted.
There are few crumbs
In this world any more.

"The bread box is tin
And I cannot get in.

"The jam's in a jar
My teeth cannot mar.

"The cheese sits by itself
On an ice-box shelf.

"All night I run
Searching and seeking;
All night I run
About on the floor.

"Moonlight is there
And a bare place for dancing,
But no little feast
Is spread anymore."

Class A103 - B

SOMETHING TOLD THE WILD GEESE - Rachel Field

Something told the wild geese
 It was time to go,
Though the fields lay golden
 Something whispered, "Snow!"
Leaves were green and stirring,
 Berries lustre-glossed,
But beneath warm feathers
 Something cautioned, "Frost!"
All the sagging orchards
 Steamed with amber spice,
But each wild beast stiffened
 At remembered ice.
Something told the wild geese
 It was time to fly -
Summer sun was on their wings,
 Winter in their cry.

Humorous Poetry - Grade 3

Class A103 – D

MILLICENT'S MOTHER - Jeff Moss

Millie buttons her coat, gives her mother a kiss,
then Millicent's mother says something like this:
"Millie, take your umbrella in case there's a storm,
and be sure to wear mittens to keep your hands warm,
and, since it may snow, take your snowshoes and parka,
and pack your big flashlight in case it gets dark-a.
This bicycle pump will help fix a flat tire,
this fire extinguisher puts out a fire,
and take this roast turkey, you may need a snack,
this map and this compass will help you get back,
and take your galoshes, there may be some mud,
and your scuba-dive outfit in case there's a flood,
and in case you get bored, take your toys in your wagon
and please wear your armor, in case there's a dragon."
"Oh, Mommy!" says Millie. "I don't need all that!"
"Okay," says her mother. "But wear a warm hat."

Class A103 - E

THE ELF AND THE DORMOUSE - Oliver Herford

UNDER a toadstool
Crept a wee Elf,
Out of the rain
To shelter himself.

Under the toadstool,
Sound asleep,
Sat a big Dormouse
All in a heap.

Trembled the wee Elf,
Frightened and yet
Fearing to fly away
Lest he get wet.

To the next shelter—
Maybe a mile!
Sudden the wee Elf
Smiled a wee smile

Tugged till the toadstool
Topped in two.
Holding it over him,
Gaily he flew.

Soon he was safe home,
Dry as could be.
Soon woke the Dormouse —
"Good gracious me!

"Where is my toadstool?"
Loud he lamented.
And that's how umbrellas
First were invented.

Serious Poetry – Grade 4

Class A104-A

AUNTIE AND UNCLE - John Hegly

My auntie gives me a colouring book and crayons.
I begin to colour.
After a while she looks over to see what I have done and says
you've gone over the lines
that's what you've done.
What do you think they're there for, ay ?
Some kind of statement is it?
Going to be a rebel are we?
I begin to cry.
My uncle gives me a hanky and some blank paper
do your own designs he says
I begin to colour.
When I have done he looks over and tells me they are all very good.
He is lying,
only some of them are.

Class A104 - B

THE BLUEBIRD - Emily Huntington Miller

I know the song that the bluebird is
singing,
Out in the apple-tree where he is swinging.
Brave little fellow! the skies may be
dreary,
Nothing cares he while his heart is so
cheery .

Hark! how the music leaps out from his
throat!
Hark! was there ever so merry a note?
Listen awhile, and you'll hear what he's
saying,
Up in the apple-tree, swinging and
swaying:

Dear little blossoms down under the snow,
You must be weary of winter, I know;
Hark! while I sing you a message of cheer,
Summer is coming and spring-time is
here!

“Little white snowdrop, I pray you arise;
Bright yellow crocus, come, open your
eyes;
Sweet little violets hid from the cold,
Put on your mantles of purple and gold;
Daffodils, daffodils! say, do you hear?
Summer is coming, and spring-time is
here!”

Humorous Poetry - Grade 4

Class A104 - D

NO THANK YOU - Shel Silverstein

No I do not want a kitten,
No cute, cuddly kitty-poo,
No more long hair in my cornflakes,
No more midnight meowing mews.

No more scratchin', snarlin' spitters,
No more sofas clawed to shreds,
No more smell of kitty litter,
No more mousies in my bed.

No I will not take that kitten -
I've had lice and I've had fleas,
I've been scratched and sprayed and bitten,
I've developed allergies.

If you've got an ape,
I'll take him,
If you have a lion, that's fine,
If you brought some walking bacon,
Leave him here, I'll treat him kind.

I have room for mice and gerbils,
I have beds for boars and bats,
But please, *please* take away that kitten -
Quick - 'fore it becomes a cat
Well. . . it *is* kind of cute at that.

Class A104 - E

THE NEW SUIT - Nidia Sanabria de Romero translated by Larrosa Morán with N. Nye

Striped suit,
a terrific tie,
buttoned shoes and brown socks -
my outfit for the party.

And the recommendations
drove me crazy -
- Don't eat ice cream
because it might drip.
- Juice, drink it slowly
since it dribbles.
- And nothing about

chocolate bombs
that might explode!
Happy birthday!
Who's that stuffed breathless
inside a tight suit?

Next year will be different.
I'll wear old clothes,
be ready to dribble,
and enjoy
ice cream, cake, and everything else.

Serious Poetry - Grade 5

Class A105 – A

HOT FOOD - Michael Rosen

We sit down to eat
and the potato's a bit hot
so I only put a little on my fork
and I blow
whooph whooph
until it's cool
just cool
then into the mouth
nice.
And there's my brother
he's doing the same
whooph whooph
into the mouth
nice.
There's my mum
she's doing the same
whooph whooph

into the mouth
nice. But my dad.
My dad.
What does he do?
He stuffs a great big chunk of potato
into his mouth.
Then
that really does it.
His eyes pop out
he flaps his hands
he blows, he puffs, he yells
he bobs his head up and down
he spits bits of potato
all over his plate
and he turns to us and he says,
"Watch out everybody--
the potato's very hot."

Class A105 - B

A MOSQUITO IN THE CABIN - Myra Stilborn

Although you bash her,
swat her, smash her,
and go to bed victorious,
happy and glorious
she will come winging,
zooming and zinging,
wickedly singing
over your bed.
You slap the air
but she's in your hair
cackling with laughter.
You smack your head,
but she isn't dead -
she's on the rafter.
She's out for blood -
yours, my friend,
and she will get it, in the end.
She brings it first to boiling point,
then lets it steam.
With a fee, fi, fo and contented fum
she sips it
while you dream.

Humorous Poetry - Grade 5

Class A105 - D

MY CHAUFFEUR - Bernice and Gordon Korman

My sister got her license,
And the future's looking sour .
She backs out of our driveway
At a hundred miles an hour!

She gives me lifts; I swear
My stomach's never been so tight.
We screech around the neighborhood
Well past the speed of light!

She's on and off the sidewalk,
Windows open, tape deck pounding,
As people run for cover,
Her obnoxious horn is sounding.

The whiplash doesn't bother me--
Nor even fear of death.
But on the way to school today
She sideswiped my friend Seth.

His bike's okay, but man oh man,
The guy is still in shock!
I should refuse to ride with her,
But then I'd have to walk!

Class A105 - E

DOING A GOOD DEED - John Ciardi

At the foot of the hill, the ice-cream truck
drove into a mudhole and got stuck.
We helped the driver back on the road.
But first we had to lighten the load.
When we had helped a gallon apiece,
the driver phoned the Chief of Police,
who drove a pole into the sludge
and measured five feet of chocolate fudge
that had to be lightened. Well, we turned to
and helped the man. What else could we do?
I even called my Boy Scout Troop.
By then there was nothing left but soup.
Still, ice-cream soup is very good.
And we wanted to help as much as we could.
It was our good deed for the day
to help the man get on his way.
At last we pulled him out of the muck,
and he drove away in his empty truck,
thanking us all for helping him out.
That made us happy. For there's no doubt
we must help our neighbor as much as we can.
Especially when he's the ice-cream man.

Serious Poetry - Grade 6

Class A106 – A

ALABAMA - Khe-Tha-A-Hi (Eagle Wing)

My brethren,
among the legends of my people
it is told how a chief,
leading the remnant of his people,
crossed a great river,
and striking his tipi-stake upon the ground,
exclaimed, "A-la-ba-ma!"
This in our language means
"Here we may rest!"
But he saw not the future.
The white man came:
he and his people could not rest there;
they were driven out,
and in a dark swamp
they were thrust down into the slime
and killed.
The word he so sadly spoke
has given a name to one of the white man's states.
There is no spot under those stars
that now smile upon us,
where the Indian can plant his foot
and sigh "A-la-ba-ma."

Class A106-B

SEUMAS BEG - James Stephens

A man was sitting underneath a tree
Outside the village; and he asked me what
Name was upon this place; and said that he
Was never here before - He told a lot

Of stories to me too. His nose was flat!
I asked him how it happened, and he said -
The first mate of the Holy Ghost did that
With a marling-spike one day; but he was
dead,

And jolly good job too; and he'd have gone
A long way to have killed him - Oh, he had
A gold ring in one ear; the other one
- 'Was bit off by a crocodile, bedad!' -

That's what he said. He taught me how to
chew!
He was a real nice man! He liked me too!

Humorous Poetry - Grade 6

Class A106 - D

FATHER WILLIAM - Lewis Carroll

“You are old, Father William,” the young man said,
“And your hair has become very white;
And yet you incessantly stand on your head –
Do you think, at your age, it is right?”

“In my youth,” Father William replied to his son,
“I feared it might injure the brain;
But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
Why, I do it again and again.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “as I mentioned before,
And have grown most uncommonly fat;
Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door –
Pray, what is the reason of that?”

“In my youth,” said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
“I kept all my limbs very supple
By the use of this ointment – one shilling the box –
Allow me to sell you a couple?”

“You are old,” said the youth, “and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak –
Pray how did you manage to do it?”

“In my youth,” said his father, “I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life.”

“You are old,” said the youth, “one would hardly suppose
That your eye was as steady as ever;
Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose –
What made you so awfully clever?”

“I have answered three questions, and that is enough,”
Said his father; “don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you downstairs!”

Humorous Poetry – Grade 6

Class A106 - E

NEGOTIATING BEDTIME - Bernice and Gordon Korman

Mom came in at nine P.M.,
I figured I'd start high.
I gave her half-past midnight
Hey, it was worth a try .

She jumped it to nine-thirty,
So I dropped to twelve-fifteen,
I had to give a little;
Look how sensible she's been!

She said, "Nine forty-five,"
I countered, "Twelve-o-seven-thirty ,"
Negotiated settlements
Are always down and dirty.

I mentioned it's one-thirty
Before Alvin goes to bed.
(Of course he looks like someone
From *Night of the Living Dead*.)

Mom dug in. I begged and pleaded,
"Just one more half hour!"
It's hard to bulldoze someone
Who already holds full power.

She offered up eleven,
With the TV off by ten,
I accepted with conditions,
And we started off again.

Like, midnight on the weekends,
And I had a perfect reason
To ask the same for Monday nights
Throughout the football season.

She had no answer; this had put her
On the ropes for real.
I threw in garbage take-out;
And she folded. "*It's a deal!*"

Serious Poetry - Grade 7

Class A107 - A

THE WAY THROUGH THE WOODS - Rudyard Kipling

They shut the road through the woods
Seventy years ago.
Weather and rain have undone it again,
 And now you would never know
There was once a road through the woods
 Before they planted the trees. It is underneath the coppice and heath,
 And the thin anemones.
 Only the keeper sees
That, where the ring-dove broods,
 And the badgers roll at ease,
There was once a road through the woods.
Yet, if you enter the woods
 Of a summer evening late,
When the night-air cools on the trout-ringed pools
 Where the otter whistles his mate
(They fear not men in the woods
 Because they see so few),
You will hear the beat of a horse's feet
 And the swish of a skirt in the dew,
 Steadily cantering through
The misty solitudes,
 As though they perfectly knew
The old lost road through the woods. . .
But there is no road through the woods.

Class A107 - B

RIVERDALE LION - John Robert Columbo

Bound lion, almost blind from meeting their gaze and popcorn
the Saturday kids love you. It is their parents
who would paint your mane with polkadots to match their California shirts
and would trim your nails for tieclips.

Your few roars delight them. But they wish you would quicken your pace
and not disappear so often into your artificial cave
for there they think you partake of secret joys and race
under an African sun as gold as your mane.

But you fool them. You merely suffer the heat and scatter the flies
with your tail. You never saw Africa.
The sign does not tell them that you were born here, in captivity,
that you are as much a Canadian as they are.

Humorous Poetry - Grade 7

Class A107 – D

THE CANE - Allan Ahlberg

The teacher
had some thin springy sticks
for making kites.

Reminds me
of the old days, he said;
and swished one.

The children
near his desk laughed nervously,
and pushed closer.

A cheeky girl
held out her cheeky hand.
Go on, Sir!

said her friends.
Give her the stick,
she's always playing up!

The teacher
paused, then did as he was told.
Just a tap.

Oh, Sir!
We're going to tell on you,
The children said.

Other children
left their seats and crowded round
the teacher's desk.

Other hands went out.
Making kites was soon
forgotten.

My turn next!
He's had one go already!
That's not fair!

Soon the teacher,
to save himself from the crush,
called a halt.

(It was
either that or use the cane
for real.)

Reluctantly,
the children did as they were told
and sat down.

If you behave yourselves,
the teacher said,
I'll cane you later.

Class A107 - E

TIME TO QUIT - Bernice and Gordon Korman

When the coach's wife makes liver
for the team's preseason bash,
and you're the only one to show up
in a tie,

And the shortstop's brother hates you
for no reason, and he's massive,
with a tattoo that says CRUSHER
on his thigh,

Continued

Class A107 - E (Continued)

When your uniforms
are ugly polyester,
and the night before your first game
you're developing a zit,

And your father's Buick
breaks down on the freeway
while you're en route to the ballpark,
then you know it's time to quit!

When you take your lead off second,
and your jockstrap needs adjusting,
and they tag you
with your hand inside your belt,

And the coach gives you a lecture
from a distance of an inch
and he had onions
on his lunchtime tuna-melt,

When the other team erupts in celebration
when you come up to the plate
because they know
you'll never hit,

And the dugout smells like mothballs, and the
shortstop's brother taunts you from the bleachers,
then you're sure
it's time to quit!

BUT. . .

When you're down eleven-nothing
in the bottom of the second,
and the thunderstorm you pray for does arrive,

And the shortstop's brother has to go to Utah,
and you're thinking that you just might make it
through this year alive,

When you hit the winning homer
in a game in extra innings,
you're a hero, and you really must admit

That in baseball there is no such thing
as lying down and dying --
you're a *player* and it's never time to quit.

Serious Poetry - Grade 8

Class A108 - A

HIGHWAYMAN'S HOLLOW - Gilbert V. Yonge

“Where the cliff hangs hollow, where the gloom falls chill,
You hear a something, follow, follow, follow down the hill;
Where the horses sweat and lather and the dusk begins to gather
It is there that I will meet you and will greet you,
You, Sir Traveller.

“Where the leaves lie rotting and the night falls blind,
You hear a someone trotting, trotting, trotting down the wind,
And you listen all a-shiver to my ghostly 'Stand, deliver,'
Yes, although my bones have whitened, you are frightened
Yet, Sir Traveller.

“ 'Twas a traveller who slew me where the dark firs frown,
'Twas his small sword through me and the blood dripped down.
Where the horses sweat and lather and the dusk begins to gather,
It is there I ride behind you to remind you,
You, Sir Traveller.”

Class A108 - B

HIGH FLIGHT by John Gillespie Magee

Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds of earth
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds - and done a hundred things
You have not dreamed of - wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along and flung
My eager craft through footless halls of air.
Up, up the long delirious, burning blue
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace,
Where never lark, or even eagle, flew;
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,
Put out my hand and touched the face of God.

Humorous Poetry - Grade 8

Class A108 - D

Excerpt from **ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND** - Lewis Carroll

“Stand up and repeat ‘*Tis the voice of the sluggard*,’” said the Gryphon.
Alice got up, and began to repeat it, but her head was so full of the
Lobster-Quadrille that she hardly knew what she was saying; and the words came very
queer indeed:

*“’Tis the voice of the Lobster,” I heard him declare.
“You have baked me too brown, I must sugar my hair.”
As a duck with his eyelids, so he with his nose
Trims his belt and his buttons, and turns out his toes.
When the sands are all dry, he is gay as a lark,
And will talk in contemptuous tones of the Shark:
But, when the tide rises and sharks are around,
His voice has a timid and tremulous sound.*

“That’s different from what *I* used to say when I was a child,” said the Gryphon.

*I passed by his garden, and marked, with one eye,
How the Owl and the Panther were sharing a pie:
The Panther took pie crust, and gravy, and meat,
While the Owl had the dish as its share of the treat.
When the pie was all finished, the Owl, as a boon,
Was kindly permitted to pocket the spoon:
While the Panther received knife and fork with a growl,
And concluded the banquet by -*

“What *is* the use of repeating all that stuff?” the Mock Turtle interrupted, “if you don’t explain it as you go on? It’s by far the most confusing thing *I* ever heard!”

Humorous Poetry – Grade 8

Class A108 - E

AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A MAD DOG - Oliver Goldsmith

Good people all, of every sort,
Give ear unto my song,
And if you find it wondrous short,
It cannot hold you long.

In Islington there was a man
Of whom the world might say,
That still a godly race he ran,
Whene'er he went to pray.

A kind and gentle heart he had,
 To comfort friends and foes;
The naked every day he clad,
 When he put on his clothes.

And in that town a dog was found,
 As many dogs there be,
Both mongrel, puppy, whelp and hound
 And curs of low degree.

This dog and man at first were friends,
 But when a pique began,
The dog, to gain some private ends,
 Went mad, and bit the man.

Around from all the neighbouring streets
 The wond'ring neighbours ran,
And swore the dog had lost its wits,
 To bite so good a man.

The wound it seemed both sore and sad
 To every Christian eye;
And while they swore the dog was mad,
 They swore the man would die.

But soon a wonder came to light,
 That showed the rogues they lied;
The man recovered of the bite,
 The dog it was that died.

Serious Poetry - Grades 9 and 10

Class A109 - A

THE THREE TALL MEN - Thomas Hardy

THE FIRST TAPPING

"What's that tapping at night: tack, tack,
In some house in the street at the back?"

"O, 'tis a man who, when he has leisure,
Is making himself a coffin to measure.
He's so very tall that no carpenter
Will make it long enough, he's in fear.
His father's was shockingly short for his limb
And it made a deep impression on him "

THE SECOND TAPPING

"That tapping has begun again,
Which ceased a year back, or near then ?"

"Yes, 'tis the man you heard before
Making his coffin. The first scarce done
His brother died -- his only one --
And, being of his own height, or more,
He used it for him; for he was afraid
He'd not get a long enough one quick made.
He's making a second now, to fit
Himself when there shall be need for it.
Carpenters work so by rule of thumb
That they make mistakes when orders come."

THE THIRD TAPPING

"It's strange, but years back, when I was here,
I used to notice a tapping near;
A man was making a coffin at night,
And he made a second, if I am right?
I have heard again the self-same tapping
Yes, late last night - or was I napping?"

"O no. It's the same man. He made one
Which his brother had; and a second was done
For himself, as he thought. But lately his son,
As tall as he, died; aye, and as trim,
And his sorrowful father bestowed it on him.
And now the man is making a third,
To be used for himself when he is interred. "

"Many years later was brought to me
News that the man had died at sea."

Serious Poetry – Grades 9 and 10

Class A109 - B

ITHAKA - Cavafy

When you set out for Ithaka
ask that your way be long,
full of adventure, full of instruction.
The Laistrygonians and the Cyclops,
angry Poseidon - do not fear them:
such as these you will never find
as long as your thought is lofty, as long as a rare
emotion touch your spirit and your body.
The Laistrygonians and the Cyclops,
angry Poseidon - you will not meet them
unless you carry them in your soul,
unless your soul raise them up before you.

Ask that your way be long.
At many a summer dawn to enter
--with what gratitude, what joy--
ports seen for the first time;
to stop at Phoenician trading centres,
and to buy good merchandise,
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,
and sensuous perfumes of every kind,
sensuous perfumes as lavishly as you can;
to visit many Egyptian cities,
to gather stores of knowledge from the learned.

Have Ithaka always in your mind.
Your arrival there is what you are destined for.
But do not in the least hurry the journey.
Better that it last for years,
so that when you reach the island you are old,
rich with all you have gained on the way,
not expecting Ithaka to give you wealth.

Ithaka gave you the splendid journey.
Without her you would not have set out.
She hasn't anything else to give you.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka has not deceived you.
So wise have you become, of such experience,
that already you will have understood what these Ithakas mean.

Humorous Poetry - Grades 9 and 10

Class A109 – D

THE DEATH OF ROMEO AND JULIET - Anonymous

Romeo rode to the sepulchre, 'mong dead folks, bats, and creepers;
And swallowed down the burning dose - when Juliet oped her peepers.
"Are you alive? Or is't your ghost? Speak quick, before I go."
"Alive!" she cried, "and kicking too; art thou my Romeo?"
"It is your Romeo, my faded little blossom;
O Juliet! is it possible that you were acting possum?"
"I was indeed; now let's go home; pa's spite will have abated;
What ails you, love, you stagger so; are you intoxicated?"
"No, no, my duck; I took some stuff that caused a little fit;"
He struggled hard to tell her all, but couldn't, so he quit.
In shorter time than't takes a lamb to wag his tail, or jump,
Poor Romeo was stiff and pale as any whitewashed pump.
Then Juliet seized that awful knife, and in her bosom stuck it,
Let out a most terrific yell, fell down, and kicked the bucket.

Class A109 - E

A TRIP TO MORROW - Anonymous

I started on a journey just about a week ago
For the little town of Morrow in the State of Ohio.
I never was a traveler and really didn't know
That Morrow had been ridiculed a century or so.
I went down to the depot for my ticket and applied
For tips regarding Morrow, interviewed the station guide.
Said I, "My friend, I want to go to Morrow and return
Not later than to-morrow, for I haven't time to burn."

Said he to me, "Now let me see, if I have heard you right,
You want to go to Morrow and come back to-morrow night,
You should have gone to Morrow yesterday and back to-day,
For if you started yesterday to Morrow, don't you see
You should have got to Morrow and returned to-day at three.
The train that started yesterday, now understand me right,
To-day it gets to Morrow and returns to-morrow night. "

"Now if you start to Morrow, you will surely land
To-morrow into Morrow, not to-day you understand,
For the train to-day to Morrow, if the schedule is right
Will get you into Morrow by about to-morrow night."
Said I, "I guess you know it all, but kindly let me say,
How can I go to Morrow if I leave the town to-day ?"
Said he, "You cannot go to Morrow any more to-day,
For the train that goes to Morrow is a mile upon its way.

Serious Poetry - Grades 11 and 12

Class A110 - A

Excerpt from ULYSSES – Alfred, Lord Tennyson

There lies the port; the vessel puffs her sail;
There gloom the dark, broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me, -
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads, - you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil.
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends.
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven, that which we are, we are, -
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Serious Poetry – Grades 11 and 12

Class A110 – B

THE IDENTIFICATION - Roger McGough

So you think it's Stephen?
Then I'd best make sure
Be on the safe side as it were.
Ah, there's been a mistake. The hair
you see, it's black, now Stephen's fair. . .
What's that? The explosion?
Of course, burnt black. Silly of me.
I should have known. Then let's get on.

The face, is that the face I ask?
That mask of charred wood
blistered, scarred could
that have been a child's face?
The sweater, where intact, looks
in fact all too familiar.
But one must be sure.

The scoutbelt. Yes that's his.
I recognise the studs he hammered in
not a week ago. At the age
when boys get clothes-conscious
now you know. It's almost
certainly Stephen. But one must
be sure. Remove all trace of doubt.
Pull out every splinter of hope.

Pockets. Empty the pockets.
Handkerchief? Could be any schoolboy's.
Dirty enough. Cigarettes?
Oh this can't be Stephen.
I don't allow him to smoke you see.
He wouldn't disobey me. Not his father.

But that's his penknife. That's his alright.
And that's his key on the keyring
Gran gave him just the other night.
So this must be him.

I think I know what happened
. about the cigarettes
No doubt he was minding them
for one of the older boys.
Yes that's it.
That's him.
That's our Stephen.

Humorous Poetry - Grades 11 and 12

Class A110 - D

MACAVITY: THE MYSTERY CAT - T. S. Eliot

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:
For when they reach the scene of crime - *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,
And when you reach the scene of crime - *Macavity's not there!*
You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air
But I tell you once and once again, *Macavity's not there!*

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;
You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly domed;
His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.
He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake;
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.
Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square
But when a crime's discovered, then *Macavity's not there!*

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)
And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,
Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled,
Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! *Macavity's not there!*

And when the Foreign Office find a Treaty's gone astray,
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair
But it's useless to investigate - *Macavity's not there!*
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:
"It *must* have been Macavity!" - but he's a mile away.
You'll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs,
Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,
There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.
He always has an alibi, and one or two to spare:
At whatever time the deed took place - **MACAVITY WASN'T THERE!**
And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known
(I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)
Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time
Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime!

Humorous Poetry – Grades 11 and 12

Class A110 - E

CASEY AT THE BAT - Ernest L. Thayer

It looked extremely rocky for the Mudville nine that day;
The score stood two to four, with but an inning left to play.
So, when Cooney died at second, and Burrows did the same,
A pallor wreathed the features of the patrons of the game.

A straggling few got up to go, leaving there the rest,
With that hope which springs eternal within the human breast.
For they thought: "If only Casey could get a whack at that,"
they'd put even money now, with Casey at the bat.

But Flynn preceded Casey, and likewise so did Blake,
And the former was a pudd'n and the latter was a fake.
So on that stricken multitude a deathlike silence sat;
For there seemed but little chance of Casey's getting to the bat.

But Flynn let drive a "single," to the wonderment of all.
And the much-despised Blakey "tore the cover off the ball."
And when the dust had lifted, and they saw what had occurred,
There was Blakey safe at second, and Flynn a-huggin' third.

Then from the gladdened multitude went up a joyous yell--
It rumbled in the mountaintops, it rattled in the dell;
It struck upon the hillside and rebounded on 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 on 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 when the writhing pitcher ground the ball into his hip,
Defiance glanced in Casey's eye, a sneer curled Casey's lip.

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.

Continued

Class A110 E (Continued)

From the benches, black with people, there went up a muffled roar,
Like the beating of the storm waves on the 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 made the game go on;
He signalled to the pitcher, and once more the spheroid flew;
But Casey still ignored it, and the umpire said, "Strike Two."

"Fraud!" cried the maddened thousands, and the 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 the ball go by again.
The sneer is gone from Casey's lips, 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.

READINGS

Class A500-A Serious Reading - Grades 3 and 4

Excerpt from an adaptation of **THE JUNGLE BOOKS** - Rudyard Kipling

But just as Teddy was stooping, something flinched in the dust, and a tiny voice said, "Be careful. I am death!" It was Karait, the dusty brown snakeling. His bite is as dangerous as the cobra's; but he is so small that nobody thinks of him and so he does more harm.

Rikki-tikki's eyes grew red again. He rocked back and forth, looking for the best fighting position. Karait struck out. Rikki jumped sideways to miss the bite. Then Rikki struck back, missed, and avoided a return lunge by Karait.

Teddy shouted, "Oh, Look! Our mongoose is killing a snake!"

His father came out with a stick, but by the time he came up, Karait had lunged out too far, and Rikki-tikki had sprung. Rikki's bite killed Karait.

Teddy's mother picked Rikki-tikki up from the dust and hugged him, crying that he had saved Teddy.

That night Teddy carried him off to bed and insisted on Rikki-tikki sleeping under his chin.

Class A500-B Serious Reading - Grades 3 and 4

Excerpt from **A BUMPY RIDE FOR A BEAR** - Shirley Benton Kerr

"Dad! Dad!" I called. "There's a bear down by the barn."

Dad pushed back his cap, shook his head, and muttered. I couldn't hear what he said, but it was probably something like, "What an imagination!"

He yelled, "Get on with your chores. There hasn't been a bear around these parts for twenty years or more."

I knew there was no use arguing with him so I ran to the house and shouted, "Mom! There's a bear down by the barn."

Mom called out the door, "Really, Jason? Well bring him in for some honey buns."

I could hear her chuckle.

I went right into the house and said, "Mom, there really is a bear down by the barn. I mean it."

Mom scolded. "This is too much, Jason. I don't mind you having an active imagination, but you have to know when to stop pretending."

"Please come down by the barn, Mom," I pleaded. "I'm not imagining anything. There is a bear there. Honest!"

I walked slowly out of the house, hoping she would call me back; she didn't of course. She remembered too many other times I guess. Like when my "ghost" down in the cornfield was one of her sheets that had blown off the clothes-line.

I saw Dad heading for the barn. "He must have believed me, after all," I thought. I ran to meet him.

"The bear must have gone inside the barn," I said.

"Are you still on about that bear?" Dad asked. He walked over to the tractor that was parked beside the barn. He climbed up, and started it. The noise of the tractor must have made the bear curious, because he poked his head out of the barn door.

"There he is," I shouted.

Dad looked where I was pointing and saw the bear. "My stars!" he exclaimed. "There really is a bear."

Class A500-D Humorous Reading - Grades 3 and 4

THE ELEPHANT AND HIS SON - Arnold Lobel

The Elephant and his son were spending an evening at home. Elephant Son was singing a song.

"You must be silent," said Father Elephant. "Your papa is trying to read his newspaper. Papa cannot listen to a song while he is reading his newspaper."

"Why not?" asked Elephant Son.

"Because Papa can think about only one thing at a time, that is why," said Father Elephant.

After a while, Elephant Son asked, "Papa, can you still think about only one thing at a time?"

"Yes, my boy," said Father Elephant, "that is correct."

"Well then," said Elephant Son, "you might stop thinking about your newspaper and begin to think about the slipper that is on your left foot."

"But my boy," said Father Elephant, "Papa's newspaper is far more important and interesting and informative than the slipper that is on his left foot."

"That may be true," said Elephant Son, "but while your newspaper is not on fire from the ashes of your cigar, the slipper that is on your left foot certainly is!"

Father Elephant ran to put his foot in a bucket of water. Softly, Elephant Son began to sing again.

Class A500-E Humorous Reading - Grades 3 and 4

Excerpt from **BUNNICULA** - Deborah and James Howe

Bunnicula opened his eyes wide and turned his face, as best he could, to me. I jumped up onto the nearest chair and placed the rabbit safely on the table's edge.

"Okay," I whispered, "there's your dinner. Go to it! Get your fill as fast as you can, poor bunny. I'll stand guard." I don't know that Bunnicula fully understood what was going on, but the sight of the vegetables piled high in the center of the table sent him scurrying in their direction. He was *very* hungry!

As luck would have it (and I should have anticipated), Chester's sense of timing was as astute as my own. No sooner had Bunnicula reached the edge of the salad bowl than the door swung open and Chester bounded into the room. He surveyed the scene frantically. I was unable to act fast enough. Upon seeing Bunnicula about to enjoy his first bit of nourishment in days, Chester leaped across the table, seemingly without touching floor, chairs, or anything else between himself and our furry friend and landed directly on top of the bunny.

"Oh no, you don't!" he shrieked. Bunnicula, not sure what to do, jumped high in the air and landed, with a great scattering of greens, smack in the centre of the salad bowl. Lettuce and tomatoes and carrots and cucumbers went flying all over the table and onto the floor. Chester flattened his ears, wiggled his rear end and smiled in anticipation. To cat observers, this is known as the "attack position."

"Run, Bunnicula!" I shouted. Bunnicula turned in my direction, as if to ask where.

"Anywhere!" I cried. "Just get out of his way!"

Chester sprang.

Bunnicula jumped.

And in the flash of a second, they had changed positions. Chester now found himself flat on his back (owing to the slipperiness of the salad dressing) in the bowl. And Bunnicula, too dazed to even think about food now, hovered quivering on the table.

Chester was having a great deal of difficulty getting back on his feet, but I knew it was only a matter of seconds before he'd attack again. And I knew also that Bunnicula was too petrified to do anything to save himself. So I did the only thing I could: I barked. Very loudly and very rapidly.

The whole family rushed through the doors. Mr. Monroe must have just come home because his coat was still on.

"Oh, no!" cried Mrs. Monroe. "That's it, Chester. This is Chester's last stand!"

Chester rolled his eyes heavenward and didn't even try to move.

Class A501-A Serious Reading - Grades 5 and 6

Excerpt from **THE BIRDS' PEACE** - Jean Craighead George

Fluter went on singing. After a few moments he flew across the meadow and boldly sang from a raspberry patch.

Dulce, his mate, flew off their nest in the thicket, where she had been incubating their eggs. She ate a bristlegrass seed and serenely preened her feathers. She was quite at ease.

Fluter was not. He turned this way and that. He flicked his tail and raised his crest, then flew to the bracken fern and sang. He flitted briskly to the sugar maple limb and sang from a conspicuous twig. He winged to the dogwood tree and sang from a high limb. As he flew and sang, Kristy became aware of what he was doing. He was making a circle, an invisible fence of song around his meadow and his nest in the thicket.

Suddenly Fluter clicked out what Kristy's father had told her were notes of warning. Dulce became alarmed. She flattened her feathers to her body and flew silently back to their nest.

Kristy checked to see what was the matter. The strange song sparrow was in Fluter's raspberry bush. He was pointing his bill at Fluter, who crouched as if he were going to fly at the stranger. But he did not. Instead, he sang.

The stranger heard Fluter's "stay-off-my-property" song and swiftly departed. He flew over Fluter's invisible fence of song and alighted on his own sapling. There he sang at Fluter.

Fluter flew to the sugar maple limb on the border of his territory and sang right back at him. The stranger answered with a flood of melody from his trees and bushes. When each understood where the other's territory lay, they rested and preened their feathers.

Kristy was fascinated. She sat up and crossed her legs.

"Even Daddy doesn't know about this," she said.

Putting her chin in her hands, she watched the birds until the day's long shadows told her she must go home. And all that time, Fluter did not fly or sing beyond the raspberry bush, nor did the stranger come back to Fluter's territory. But sing they did, brightly and melodically, while their mates sat serenely on their brown-splotched eggs.

Dear Daddy, Kristy wrote that night. I know how the birds keep the peace.

Class A501-B Serious Reading - Grades 5 and 6

Excerpt from **THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TREADER** - C. S. Lewis

Meanwhile Eustace slept and slept - and slept. What woke him was a pain in his arm. The moon was shining in at the mouth of the cave, and the bed of treasures seemed to have grown much more comfortable: in fact he could hardly feel it at all. He was puzzled by the pain in his arm at first, but presently it occurred to him that the bracelet which he had shoved up above his elbow had become strangely tight. His arm must have swollen while he was asleep (it was his left arm).

He moved his right arm in order to feel his left, but stopped before he had moved it an inch and bit his lip in terror. For just in front of him, and a little on his right, where the moonlight fell clear on the floor of the cave, he saw a hideous shape moving. He knew that shape: it was a dragon's claw. It had moved as he moved his hand and became still when he stopped moving his hand.

"Oh, what a fool I've been," thought Eustace. "Of course, the brute had a mate and it's lying beside me."

For several minutes he did not dare to move a muscle. He saw two thin columns of smoke going up before his eyes, black against the moonlight; just as there had been smoke coming from the other dragon's nose before it died. This was so alarming that he held his breath. The two columns of smoke vanished. When he could hold his breath no longer he let it out stealthily; instantly two jets of smoke appeared again. But even yet he had no idea of the truth.

Presently he decided that he would edge very cautiously to his left and try to creep out of the cave. Perhaps the creature was asleep - and anyway it was his only chance. But of course before he edged to the left he looked to the left. Oh horror! there was a dragon's claw on that side, too.

No one will blame Eustace if at this moment he shed tears. He was surprised at the size of his own tears as he saw them splashing on to the treasure in front of him. They also seemed strangely hot; steam went up from them.

But there was no good crying. He must try to crawl out from between the two dragons. He began extending his right arm. The dragon's foreleg and claw on his right went through exactly the same motion. Then he thought he would try his left. The dragon limb on that side moved, too.

Two dragons, one on each side, mimicking whatever he did! His nerve broke and he simply made a bolt for it.

Continued

Class A501-B (Continued)

There was such a clatter and rasping, and clinking of gold, and grinding of stones, as he rushed out of the cave that he thought they were both following him. He daren't look back. He rushed to the pool. The twisted shape of the dead dragon lying in the moonlight would have been enough to frighten anyone but now he hardly noticed it. His idea was to get into the water.

But just as he reached the edge of the pool two things happened. First of all it came over him like a thunderclap that he had been running on all fours - and why on earth had he been doing that? And secondly, as he bent towards the water, he thought for a second that yet another dragon was staring up at him out of the pool. But in an instant he realised the truth. That dragon face in the pool was his own reflection. There was no doubt of it. It moved as he moved: it opened and shut its mouth as he opened and shut his.

He had turned into a dragon while he was asleep. Sleeping on a dragon's hoard with greedy, dragonish thoughts in his heart, he had become a dragon himself.

Class A501-D Humorous Reading - Grades 5 and 6

Excerpt from **HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE** - J. K. Rowling

The repaired alarm clock rang at six o'clock the next morning. Harry turned it off quickly and dressed silently. He mustn't wake the Dursleys. He stole downstairs without turning on any of the lights.

He was going to wait for the postman on the corner of Privet Drive and get the letters for number four first. His heart hammered as he crept across the dark hall toward the front door - "AAAAARRRGH!"

Harry leapt into the air; he'd trodden on something big and squashy on the doormat - something alive!

Lights clicked on upstairs and to his horror Harry realized that the big, squashy something had been his uncle's face. Uncle Vernon had been lying at the foot of the front door in a sleeping bag, clearly making sure that Harry didn't do exactly what he'd been trying to do. He shouted at Harry for about half an hour and then told him to go and make a cup of tea. Harry shuffled miserably off into the kitchen and by the time he got back, the mail had arrived, right into Uncle Vernon's lap. Harry could see three letters addressed in green ink.

"I want - " he began, but Uncle Vernon was tearing the letters into pieces before his eyes.

Uncle Vernon didn't go to work that day. He stayed at home and nailed up the mail slot.

"See," he explained to Aunt Petunia through a mouthful of nails, "if they can't *deliver* them they'll just give up."

"I'm not sure that'll work, Vernon."

"Oh, these people's minds work in strange ways, Petunia, they're not like you and me," said Uncle Vernon, trying to knock in a nail with the piece of fruitcake Aunt Petunia had just brought him.

On Friday, no less than twelve letters arrived for Harry. As they couldn't go through the mail slot they had been pushed under the door, slotted through the sides, and a few even forced through the small window in the downstairs bathroom.

Uncle Vernon stayed at home again. After burning all the letters, he got out a hammer and nails and boarded up the cracks around the front and back doors so no one could go out. He hummed "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" as he worked, and jumped at small noises.

Continued

Class A501-D (Continued)

On Saturday, things began to get out of hand. Twenty-four letters to Harry found their way into the house, rolled up and hidden inside each of the two dozen eggs that their very confused milkman had handed Aunt Petunia through the living room window. While Uncle Vernon made furious telephone calls to the post office and the dairy trying to find someone to complain to, Aunt Petunia shredded the letters in her food processor.

"Who on earth wants to talk to *you* this badly?" Dudley asked Harry in amazement.

On Sunday morning, Uncle Vernon sat down at the breakfast table looking tired and rather ill, but happy.

"No post on Sundays," he reminded them cheerfully as he spread marmalade on his newspapers, "no letters today - "

Something came whizzing down the kitchen chimney as he spoke and caught him sharply on the back of the head. Next moment, thirty or forty letters came pelting out of the fireplace like bullets. The Dursleys ducked, but Harry leapt into the air trying to catch one -

"Out! OUT!"

Uncle Vernon seized Harry around the waist and threw him into the hall. When Aunt Petunia and Dudley had run out with their arms over their faces, Uncle Vernon slammed the door shut. They could hear the letters still streaming into the room, bouncing off the walls and floor.

"That does it," said Uncle Vernon, trying to speak calmly but pulling great tufts out of his mustache at the same time. "I want you all back here in five minutes ready to leave. We're going away. Just pack some clothes. No arguments!"

Class A501-E Humorous Reading - Grades 5 and 6

Except from **MANIAC MAGEE** - Jerry Spinelli

Now what?

Maniac uncrumpled the page, flattened it out as best he could. How could he return the book to Amanda in this condition? He couldn't. But he had to. It was hers. Judging from that morning, she was pretty finicky about her books. What would make her madder - to not get the book back at all, or to get it back with a page ripped out? Maniac cringed at both prospects.

He wandered around the East End, jogging slowly, in no hurry now to find 728 Sycamore Street. He was passing a vacant lot when he heard an all-too-familiar voice: "Hey, fishbelly!" He stopped, turned. This time Mars Bar wasn't alone. A handful of other kids trailed him down the sidewalk.

Maniac waited.

Coming up to him, Mars Bar said, "Where you runnin', boy?"

"Nowhere."

"You runnin' from us. You afraid."

"No, I just like to run."

"You wanna run?" Mars Bar grinned. "Go ahead. We'll give you a head start."

Maniac grinned back. "No thanks."

Mars Bar held out his hand. "Gimme my book."

Maniac shook his head.

Mars Bar glared. "Gimme it."

Maniac shook his head.

Mars Bar reached for it. Maniac pulled it away.

Continued

Class A501-E (Continued)

They moved in on him now. They backed him up. Some high-schoolers were playing basketball up the street, but they weren't noticing. And there wasn't a broom-swinging lady in sight. Maniac felt a hard flatness against his back. Suddenly his world was very small and very simple: a brick wall behind him, a row of scowling faces in front of him. He clutched the book with both hands. The faces were closing in. A voice called: "That you, Jeffrey?"

The faces parted. At the curb was a girl on a bike - Amanda! She hoisted the bike to the sidewalk and walked it over. She looked at the book, at the torn page. "Who ripped my book?"

Mars Bar pointed at Maniac. "He did."

Amanda knew better. "*You* ripped my book."

Mars Bar's eyes went big as headlights. "I did *not*!"

"You *did*. You lie."

"I *didn't*!"

"You *did*!" She let the bike fall to Maniac. She grabbed the book and started kicking Mars Bar in his beloved sneakers. "I got a little brother and a little sister that crayon all over my books, and I got a dog that eats them and poops on them and that's just inside my own family, and I'm *not* - gonna have *nobody* - else *messin'* - with my *books*! You *under-stand*?"

By then Mars Bar was hauling on up the street past the basketball players, who were rolling on the asphalt with laughter.

Amanda took the torn page from Maniac. To her, it was the broken wing of a bird, a pet out in the rain. She turned misty eyes to Maniac. "It's one of my favourite pages."

Maniac smiled. "We can fix it."

The way he said it, she believed. "Want to come to my house?" she said.

"Sure," he said.

Class A502-A Serious Reading - Grades 7 and 8

Excerpt from **FAMILY SECRETS** - Susan Shreve

I cheated on a unit test in math class this morning during second period with Mr. Burke. Afterward, I was too sick to eat lunch just thinking about it.

I came straight home from school, went to my room, and lay on the floor trying to decide whether it would be better to run away from home now or after supper. Mostly I wished I was dead....

The fact is, I couldn't believe what I'd done in cold blood. I began to wonder about myself - really wonder - things like whether I would steal from stores or hurt someone on purpose or do some other terrible thing I couldn't even imagine. I began to wonder whether I was plain bad to the core.

I've never been a wonderful kid that everybody in the world loves and thinks is swell, like Nicho. I have a bad temper and I like to have my own way and I argue a lot. Sometimes I can be mean. But most of the time I've thought of myself as a pretty decent kid. Mostly I work hard, I stick up for little kids, and I tell the truth. Mostly I like myself fine - except I wish I were better at basketball.

Now all of a sudden I've turned into this criminal. It's hard to believe I'm just a boy. And all because of one stupid math test.

Lying on the floor of my room, I begin to think that probably I've been bad all along. It just took this math test to clinch it. I'll probably never tell the truth again.

I tell my mother I'm sick when she calls me to come down for dinner. She doesn't believe me, but puts me to bed anyhow. I lie there in the early winter darkness wondering what terrible thing I'll be doing next when my father comes in and sits down on my bed.

"What's the matter?" he asks.

"I've got a stomachache," I say. Luckily, it's too dark to see his face.

"Is that all?"

"Yeah."

"Mommy says you've been in your room since school."

"I was sick there, too," I say.

"She thinks something happened today and you're upset."

Continued

Class A502-A (Continued)

That's the thing that really drives me crazy about my mother. She knows things sitting inside my head same as if I was turned inside out.

"Well," my father says. I can tell he doesn't believe me.

"My stomach *is* feeling sort of upset." I hedge.

"Okay," he says and he pats my leg and gets up.

Just as he shuts the door to my room I call out to him in a voice I don't even recognize as my own that I'm going to have to run away.

"How come?" he calls back not surprised or anything.

So I tell him I cheated on this math test. To tell the truth, I'm pretty much surprised at myself. I didn't plan to tell him anything.

He doesn't say anything at first and that just about kills me. I'd be fine if he'd spank me or something. To say nothing can drive a person crazy.

And then he says I'll have to call Mr. Burke.

It's not what I had in mind.

"Now?" I ask, surprised.

"Now," he says. He turns on the light and pulls off my covers.

"I'm not going to," I say.

But I do it. I call Mr. Burke, probably waking him up, and I tell him exactly what happened, even that I decided to cheat the night before the test. He says I'll come in Saturday to take another test, which is okay with me, and I thank him a whole lot for being understanding and all. He's not friendly but he's not absolutely mean either.

"Today I thought I was turning into a criminal," I tell my father when he turns out my light.

Sometimes my father kisses me good night and sometimes he doesn't. I never know. But tonight he does.

Class A502-B Serious Reading - Grades 7 and 8

Excerpt from **LES MISÉRABLES** - Victor Hugo

Jean Valjean listened, but there was not a sound; he gave the door - a push with the tip of his finger lightly, and with the gentleness of a cat that wants to get in. The door yielded to the pressure, and made an almost imperceptible and silent movement, which slightly widened the opening. He waited for a moment, and then pushed the door again more boldly. It continued to yield silently, and the opening was soon large enough for him to pass through. But near the door stood a small table which formed an awkward angle with it, and barred the entrance.

Jean Valjean noticed the difficulty; the opening must be enlarged at all hazards. He made up his mind, and pushed the door a third time, more energetically still. This time there was a badly oiled hinge, which suddenly uttered a hoarse, prolonged cry in the darkness. Jean Valjean started; the sound of the hinge smote his ear startlingly and formidably, as if it had been the trumpet of the day of judgment. He almost imagined that the hinge had become alive, had barked like a dog to warn and awaken the sleepers. He stopped, shuddering and dismayed, and fell back from tiptoes to his heels. He felt the arteries of his temples beat like two forge hammers, and it seemed to him that his breath issued from his lungs with the noise of the wind roaring out of a cavern. For a moment he believed himself lost.

He remained where he was, petrified like the pillar of salt, not daring to make a movement. A few minutes passed, during which the door remained wide open. He ventured to look into the room, and found that nothing had stirred. He listened; no one was moving in the house, the creaking of the rusty hinge had not awakened any one. The first danger had passed, but still there was fearful tumult within him. But he did not recoil, he had not done so when he thought himself lost; he thought only of finishing the job as speedily as possible, and entered the bedroom. He advanced cautiously and carefully, avoiding coming into collision with the furniture. He heard from the end of the room the calm and regular breathing of the sleeping Bishop. Suddenly he stopped, for he was close to the bed; he had reached it sooner than he had anticipated.

Nature at times blends her scenes with our actions, with a kind of gloomy and intelligent design, as if wishing to make us reflect. For nearly half an hour a heavy cloud had covered the sky, but at the moment when Jean Valjean stopped at the foot of the bed, this cloud was rent asunder, and a moonbeam passing through the tall window suddenly illumined the Bishop's pale face. He was sleeping peacefully, wrapped in a long garment of brown wool, which covered his arms down to the wrists. His head was thrown back on the pillow in the easy attitude of repose, and his hand, which had done so many good deeds, hung out of the bed. His entire face was lit up by a vague expression of satisfaction, hope, and felicity - it was more than a smile and almost a radiance.

Continued

Class A502-B (Continued)

At the moment when the ray of moonlight shone upon his face, the sleeping Bishop seemed as in a glory. His countenance, however, remained gentle and veiled in the half-light. The moon in the sky, the slumbering nature, the garden without a quiver, the house which was so calm, the hour of the night, the moment, the silence, added some solemn and indescribable quality to the venerable repose of this man, and enveloped in a serene and majestic halo that white hair, those closed eyes, that face in which all was hope and all was confidence, that head of an old man, and that slumber of an infant.

There was something almost divine in this unconsciously august man.

Jean Valjean, in the shadow with his iron bar in his hand, stood motionless and terrified by this luminous old man. Never had he seen anything like this; such confidence terrified him. He looked at the Bishop, that was all; but what his thoughts were it would be impossible to divine. He was moved and shaken, but of what nature was this emotion? It seemed as if he were hesitating between two abysses, the one that saves and the one that destroys; he was ready to dash out the Bishop's brains or to kiss his hand. At the expiration of a few minutes his left arm slowly rose to his cap, which he took off; then his arm fell again with the same slowness, and Jean Valjean recommenced his meditation, with his cap in his left hand, his iron bar in his right, his hair bristling on his savage head.

Class A502-D Humorous Reading - Grades 7 and 8

Excerpt from **THE RANSOM OF RED CHIEF** - O. Henry

"What am I to do?" asks Bill, looking at the kid suspiciously.

"You are the hoss," says Black Scout. "Get down on your hands and knees. How can I ride to the stockade without a hoss?"

"You'd better keep him interested," said I, "till we get the scheme going. Loosen up."

Bill gets down on his all fours, and a look comes in his eye like a rabbit's when you catch it in a trap.

"How far is it to the stockade, kid?" he asks in a husky manner of voice.

"Ninety miles," says the Black Scout. "And you have to hump yourself to get there on time. Whoa, now!"

The Black Scout jumps on Bill's back and digs his heels in his side.

"For heaven's sake," says Bill, "hurry back, Sam, as soon as you can. I wish we hadn't made the ransom more than a thousand. Say, you quit kicking me or I'll get up and warm you good."

I walked over to Poplar Cove and sat around the post office and store, talking with the chawbacons that came in to trade. One whiskerando says that he hears Summit is all upset on account of Elder Ebenezer Dorset's boy having been lost or stolen. That was all I wanted to know. I bought some smoking tobacco, referred casually to the price of black-eyed peas, posted my letter surreptitiously and came away. The postmaster said the mail-carrier would come by in an hour to take the mail on to Summit.

When I got back to the cave Bill and the boy were not to be found. I explored the vicinity of the cave, and risked a yodel or two, but there was no response.

So I lighted my pipe and sat down on a mossy bank to await developments.

In about half an hour I heard the bushes rustle, and Bill wobbled out into the little glade in front of the cave. Behind him was the kid stepping softly like a scout, with a broad grin on his face. Bill stopped, took off his hat and wiped his face with a red handkerchief. The kid stopped about eight feet behind him.

Continued

Class A502-D (Continued)

"Sam," says Bill, "I suppose you'll think I'm a renegade, but I couldn't help it. I'm a grown person with masculine proclivities and habits of self-defence, but there is a time when all systems of egotism and predominance fail. The boy is gone. I have sent him home. All is off. There was martyrs in old times," goes on Bill, "that suffered death rather than give up the particular graft they enjoyed. None of 'em ever was subjugated to such supernatural tortures as I have been. I tried to be faithful to our articles of depredation; but there comes a limit."

"What's the trouble, Bill?" I asks him.

"I was rode," says Bill, "the ninety miles to the stockade, not barring an inch. Then, when the settler was rescued, I was given oats. Sand ain't a palatable substitute. And then, for an hour I had to try to explain to him why there was nothin' in holes, how a road can run both ways and what makes the grass green. I tell you, Sam, a human can only stand so much. I takes him by the neck of his clothes and drags him down the mountain. On the way he kicks my legs black-and-blue from the knees down; and I've got to have two or three bites on my thumb and hand cauterized.

"But he's gone"--continues Bill--"gone home. I showed him the road to Summit and kicked him about eight feet nearer there at one kick. I'm sorry we lose the ransom; but it was either that or Bill Driscoll to the madhouse."

Bill is puffing and blowing, but there is a look of ineffable peace and growing content on his rose-pink features.

"Bill," says I, "there isn't any heart disease in your family, is there?"

"No," says Bill, "nothing chronic except malaria and accidents. Why?"

"Then you might turn round," says I, "and have a look behind you."

Bill turns and sees the boy, and loses his complexion and sits down plump on the ground and begins to pluck aimlessly at grass and little sticks. For an hour I was afraid of his mind. And then I told him that my scheme was to put the whole job through immediately and that we would get the ransom and be off with it by midnight if old Dorset fell in with our proposition. So Bill braced up enough to give the kid a weak sort of a smile and a promise to play the Russian in a Japanese war with him as soon as he felt a little better.

Class A502-E Humorous Reading - Grades 7 and 8

Excerpt from **OWLS IN THE FAMILY** - Farley Mowat

Although Wol loved practical jokes, the funny thing was that he never really harmed other animals if he could help it. Of course, if something tried to hurt him - that was different. Then Wol could be dangerous. But he certainly wasn't the fierce and bloodthirsty kind of bird that owls are supposed to be. He wouldn't even go hunting on his own; if a gopher or a white rat happened to get loose on the lawn, he wouldn't touch it. However, there was one kind of animal he would attack, and that was a skunk.

It seems that all horned owls just naturally hate skunks, though no one knows the reason why. What's more, horned owls are the only things I know of that will eat a skunk, and they even seem to like the taste.

Our house in Saskatoon stood close to the river, and along the bank of the river was a regular jungle of bushes and poplar trees which made an ideal place for skunks to live. Because they didn't have any enemies in town, the riverbank skunks had become so cocky they would stroll along the sidewalk in front of our place as boldly as if they owned it.

That was before Wol came to live with us.

Cocky as ever, one of the riverbank skunks decided to take a walk down Crescent Avenue one summer evening just after Wol had learned to fly. The skunk came strutting along the sidewalk quite sure nothing in the world would dare to bother him. He ambled along, taking his own time, until he got under the overhanging branches of our poplar trees . . .

Mother and Dad and I were having dinner. The dining room windows were open because it had been such a hot day. All of a sudden there was a great swoooooosh of wings - and there, on the window sill, sat Wol. Before any of us had time to move, he gave a leap and landed on the floor beside my chair. And he hadn't come empty-handed. Clutched in his talons was an enormous skunk. The skunk was dead, but that didn't help matters much because, before he died, he had managed to soak himself and Wol with his own special brand of perfume.

"Hoo-hoohoohoo-HOO!" Wol said proudly.

Which probably meant: "Mind if I join you? I've brought my supper with me."

Nobody stopped to answer. We three people were already stampeding through the door of the dining room, coughing and choking. Wol had to eat his dinner by himself.

Continued

Class A502-E (Continued)

It was two weeks before we could use the dining room again, and when Mother sent the rug and drapes to the cleaners, the man who owned the shop phoned her right back and wanted to know if she was trying to ruin him.

Wol didn't smell so sweet either, but he couldn't understand why he was so unpopular all of a sudden. His feelings must have been hurt by the way everybody kept trying to avoid him. After two or three days, when even I wouldn't go near him, or let him come near me, he became very unhappy. Then an idea must have come into his funny head. He must have decided we were mad at him because he hadn't shared his skunk with us! So one day he went down to the riverbank and caught a second skunk, and brought it home for us.

By this time he was so soaked in skunk oil that you could smell him a block away. Some of our neighbours complained about it, and so finally my father had to give Wol a bath in about a gallon of tomato juice. Tomato juice is the only thing that will wash away the smell of skunk.

Poor Wol ! By the time Dad was through with him he looked like a rag mop that had been dipped in ketchup. But he got the idea, and he never again brought his skunks home to us.

Class A503-A Serious Reading - Grades 9 and 10

MY DECLARATION OF SELF-ESTEEM - Virginia Satir

I am me.

In all the world, there is no one else exactly like me. There are people who have some parts like me but no one adds up exactly like me. Therefore, everything that comes out of me is authentically mine because I alone choose it.

I own everything about me - my body, including everything it does; my mind, including all my thoughts and ideas; my eyes, including the images of all they behold; my feelings, whatever they might be - anger, joy, frustration, love, disappointment, excitement; my mouth and all the words that come out of it - polite, sweet and rough, correct or incorrect; my voice, loud and soft; all my actions, whether they be to others or myself.

I own my fantasies, my dreams, my hopes, my fears.

I own all my triumphs and successes, all my failures and mistakes.

Because I own all of me, I can become intimately acquainted with me. By so doing, I can love me and be friendly with me in all my parts. I can then make it possible for all of me to work in my best interests.

I know there are aspects about myself that puzzle me, and other aspects that I do not know. But as long as I am friendly and loving to myself, I can courageously and hopefully look for the solutions to the puzzles and for ways to find out more about me.

However I look and sound, whatever I say and do, and whatever I think and feel at a given moment in time is me. This is authentic and represents where I am at that moment in time.

When I review later how I looked and sounded, what I said and did, and how I thought and felt, some parts may turn out to be unfitting. I can discard that which is unfitting and keep that which proved fitting, and invent something new for that which I discarded.

I can see, hear, feel, think, say and do. I have the tools to survive, to be close to others, to be productive, to make sense and order out of the world of people and things outside of me.

I own me and therefore I can engineer me.

I am me and I am okay.

Class A503-B Serious Reading - Grades 9 and 10

Excerpt from **TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD** - Harper Lee

Atticus was in the middle of Windy Seaton's column one evening when the telephone rang.

He answered it, then went to the hat rack in the hall. "I'm going down to Mrs. Dubose's for a while," he said. "I won't be long."

But Atticus stayed away until long past my bedtime. When he returned he was carrying a candy box. Atticus sat down in the livingroom and put the box on the floor beside his chair.

"What'd she want?" asked Jem.

We had not seen Mrs. Dubose for over a month. She was never on the porch any more when we passed.

"She's dead, son," said Atticus. "She died a few minutes ago."

"Oh," said Jem. "Well."

"Well is right," said Atticus. "She's not suffering any more. She was sick for a long time. Son, didn't you know what her fits were?"

Jem shook his head.

"Mrs. Dubose was a morphine addict," said Atticus. "She took it as a pain-killer for years. The doctor put her on it. She'd have spent the rest of her life on it and died without so much agony, but she was too contrary - "

"Sir?" said Jem.

Atticus said, "Just before your escapade she called me to make her will. Dr. Reynolds told her she had only a few months left. Her business affairs were in perfect order but she said, 'There's still one thing out of order.'"

"What was that?" Jem was perplexed.

"She said she was going to leave this world beholden to nothing and nobody. Jem, when you're sick as she was, it's all right to take anything to make it easier, but it wasn't all right for her. She said she meant to break herself of it before she died, and that's what she did."

Jem said, "You mean that's what her fits were?"

Continued

Class A503-B (Continued)

"Yes, that's what they were. Most of the time you were reading to her I doubt if she heard a word you said. Her whole mind and body were concentrated on that alarm clock. If you hadn't fallen into her hands, I'd have made you go read to her anyway. It may have been some distraction. There was another reason - "

"Did she die free?" asked Jem.

"As the mountain air," said Atticus. "She was conscious to the last, almost. Conscious," he smiled, "and cantankerous. She still disapproved heartily of my doings, and said I'd probably spend the rest of my life bailing you out of jail. She had Jessie fix you this box - "

Atticus reached down and picked up the candy box. He handed it to Jem.

Jem opened the box. Inside, surrounded by wads of damp cotton, was a white, waxy, perfect camellia. It was a Snow-on-the-Mountain.

Jem's eyes nearly popped out of his head. "Old hell-devil, old hell-devil!" he screamed, flinging it down. "Why can't she leave me alone?"

In a flash Atticus was up and standing over him. Jem buried his face in Atticus's shirt front. "Sh-h," he said. "I think that was her way of telling you - everything's all right now, Jem, everything's all right. You know, she was a great lady."

"A lady?" Jem raised his head. His face was scarlet. "After all those things she said about you, a lady?"

"She was. She had her own views about things, a lot different from mine, maybe . . . son, I told you that if you hadn't lost your head I'd have made you go read to her. I wanted you to see something about her - I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand. It's when you know you're licked before you begin but you begin anyway and you see it through no matter what. You rarely win, but sometimes you do. Mrs. Dubose won, all ninety-eight pounds of her. According to her views, she died beholden to nothing and nobody. She was the bravest person I ever knew."

Class A503-D Humorous Reading - Grades 9 and 10

MAN, YOU'RE A GREAT PLAYER - Gary Lautens

Occasionally I run into sports figures at cocktail parties, on the street, or on their way to the bank.

"Nice game the other night," I said to an old hockey-player pal.

"Think so?" he replied.

"You've come a long way since I knew you as a junior."

"How's that?"

"Well, you high-stick better for one thing - and I think the way you clutch sweaters is really superb. You may be the best in the league."

He blushed modestly. "For a time," I confessed, "I never thought you'd get the hang of it."

"It wasn't easy," he confided. "It took practice and encouragement. You know something like spearing doesn't come naturally. It has to be developed."

"I'm not inclined to flattery but, in my book, you've got it made. You're a dirty player."

"Stop kidding."

"No, no," I insisted. "I'm not trying to butter you up. I mean it. When you broke in, there were flashes of dirty play - but you weren't consistent. That's the difference between a dirty player and merely a colourful one."

"I wish my father were alive to hear you say that," he said quietly. "He would have been proud."

"Well, it's true. There isn't a player in the league who knows as many obscene gestures."

"I admit I have been given a few increases in pay in recent years. Management seems to be treating me with new respect."

"You're selling tickets," I said. "You're a gate attraction now - not some bum who only can skate and shoot and the rest of it. Your profanity is beautiful."

"C'mon."

Continued

Class A503-D (Continued)

"No, I'm serious. I don't think anyone in the league can incite a riot the way you can."

"I've had a lot of help along the way. You can't make it alone," he stated generously.

"No one does," I said.

"Take that play where I skate up to the referee and stand nose-to-nose with my face turning red. It was my old junior coach who taught me that. He was the one who used to toss all the sticks on the ice and throw his hat into the stands and pound his fist on the boards."

"You were lucky to get that sort of training. A lot of players never learn the fundamentals."

"I think there are a few boys in the league who can spit better than me."

"Farther, perhaps, but not more accurately," I corrected.

"Well, thanks anyway. I've always considered it one of my weaknesses."

"That last brawl of yours was perfectly executed. Your sweater was torn off, you taunted the crowd, you smashed your stick across the goal posts. Really a picture Donnybrook."

"The papers gave me a break. The coverage was outstanding."

"Do you ever look back to the days when you couldn't cut a forehead or puff a lip or insult an official?"

"Everyone gets nostalgic," he confessed. "It's a good thing I got away from home by the time I was fifteen. I might never have been any more than a ham-and-egger, you know, a twenty-goal man who drifts through life unnoticed."

"What was the turning point?"

"I had heard prominent sportsmen say that nice guys finish last, and that you have to beat them in the alley if you hope to beat them in the rink. But it didn't sink in."

"Nobody learns overnight."

"I wasted a few years learning to play my wing and to check without using the butt of the stick. But I noticed I was being passed by. I skated summers to keep in shape, exercised, kept curfew."

"Don't tell me. They said you were dull."

Continued

Class A503-D (Continued)

"Worse than that. They said I was clean. It's tough to live down that sort of reputation."

I nodded.

"Anyway, during a game in the sticks, I was skating off the ice - we had won five - one and I had scored three goals. The home crowd was pretty listless and there was some booing. Then it happened."

"What?"

"My big break. My mother was in the stands and she shouted to me. I turned to wave at her with my hockey stick and I accidentally caught the referee across the face. He bled a lot - took ten stitches later."

"Is that all?"

"Well someone pushed me and I lost my balance and fell on the poor man. A real brawl started. Luckily, I got credit for the whole thing - went to jail overnight, got a suspension. And, talk about fate! A big league scout was in the arena. He offered me a contract right away."

"It's quite a success story," I said.

"You've got to get the breaks," he replied humbly.

Class A503-E Humorous Reading - Grades 9 and 10

Excerpt from **WHEN YOU LOOK LIKE YOUR PASSPORT PHOTO,
IT'S TIME TO GO HOME** - Erma Bombeck

Vacations fade fast. Their memories are obliterated by little things. You arrive home to discover your car has died. Neighbours inform you the power went off while you were gone and your freezer will smell like a fertilizer plant when you open the door. Somehow, it escaped someone's attention that your garden hose was left running and floated your house to a new zip code.

If all that doesn't take the hats and horns out of your trip, distribution of the souvenirs will.

Rarely does anyone appreciate what you have gone through to get these gifts home. They have no meaning. The primitive necklace that you bargained for in Tanzania is held at arm's length by a friend who sniffs, "Is this another one of these things that I have to put in the freezer first to kill bugs?"

Children are the worst. I once babied a large Mexican hat the size of a satellite dish. It wouldn't fit under the seat on the plane or in the overhead bin. I had to wear it most of the time. Our son looked at it, said it smelled, and kicked it under his bed.

The fur drum we dragged home for one of them from the Bahamas literally came alive when we turned the furnace on. We saw it scaling the wall one day.

A couple of years ago when we returned from the Orient, I spread all my souvenirs out on the dining room table and circled it slowly for hours trying to figure out who deserved any of it.

My husband came into the room and said, "Did you give the silk kimono to your mother yet?"

"You know," I said slowly, "I have to think about that. She likes to get dressed as soon as she rolls out of bed. It would just hang there in her closet. Besides, it's not her colour so I'm keeping it for myself."

"You could give her the tea set."

"I could, but I'm not. I don't have a nice tea set, and besides, I heard her say once that tea upsets her stomach."

"So you're going with the woodblock print," he said.

"I was until I got to thinking you would have to have been at the factory to appreciate all the work that goes into them. Actually, I've got the perfect spot for it in the living room."

Continued

Class A503-E (Continued)

"How about the glass necklace?"

"You really think so? I don't think Mother has the chest for it. I'll keep that for myself. I'm leaning toward the T-shirt."

"I thought you bought those for your aunts."

"We never see them," I said, "so I kept three for myself and decided to give each of them a pair of chopsticks."

"Smart idea. They're nice ones. They were expensive."

"On the other hand, I might have a dinner party with a theme some night. Maybe I'll give them a Christmas ornament and brochure on the history of the silkworm."

"They'll be choked up."

"What kind of a crack is that! Maybe I'll keep all of the T-shirts and give Mother a fan."

"I thought you were giving the fan to Brenda who watered your plants and brought in our mail."

"She's down to boxes of matches from the hotel. Look, it's not how much something cost, it's the thought that counts."

"So you're still looking for something for your mother."

I took the fan out of the box and opened it. It would just fit into my purse and I could . . .

I saw my husband looking at me. "Is that the best you can do for a woman who gave you life, raised you, and stood by you during the good times and the bad times of your life?"

I threw in a panda bear entwined around a pencil. "Now are you happy?" I asked.

ClassA504-A Serious Reading - Grades 11, 12

Excerpt from **THE BLACKWATER POT** - Charles G. D. Roberts

The log to which he was bound was on the extreme outer edge of the procession, and Henderson realized that there was every probability of its being at once crowded out the moment it came to the exit. With a desperate effort he succeeded in catching the log nearest to him, pushing it ahead, and at last, just as they came opposite the cleft, steering his own log into its place. The next second it shot quivering forth into the sluice, and Henderson with a sudden cold sweat jumping out all over him, circled slowly past the awful cleft. A shout of ironical congratulation came to him from the watchers on the brink above. But he hardly heard it, and heeded it not at all. He was striving frantically, paddling forward with one hand and backward with the other, to steer his sluggish, deep-floating log from the outer to the inner circle. He had already observed that to be on the outer edge would mean instant doom for him, because the outward suction was stronger underneath than on the surface, and his weighted log caught its force before the others did. His arms were so bound that only from the elbows down could he move them freely. He did, however, by a struggle which left him gasping, succeed in working in behind another log - just in time to see that log, too, sucked out into the abyss, and himself once more on the deadly outer flank of the circling procession.

This time Henderson did not know whether the watchers on the brink laughed or not as he won past the cleft. He was scheming desperately to devise some less exhausting tactics. Steadily and rhythmically, but with his utmost force, he back-paddled with both hands and feet, till the progress of his log was almost stopped. Then he succeeded in catching yet another log as it passed and manoeuvring in behind it. By this time he was halfway around the pot again. Yet again, by his desperate backpaddling, he checked his progress, and presently, by most cunning manipulation, managed to edge in behind yet another log, so that when he again came round to the cleft there were two logs between him and doom. The outermost of these, however, was dragged instantly forth into the fury of the sluice, thrust forward, as it was, by the grip of the suction upon Henderson's own deep log. Feeling himself on the point of utter exhaustion, he nevertheless continued back-paddling, and steering and working inward, till he had succeeded in getting three files of logs between himself and the outer edge. Then, almost blind and with the blood roaring so loud in his ears that he could hardly hear the trampling of the falls, he hung on his log, praying that strength might flow back speedily into his veins and nerves.

Not till he had twice more made the circuit of the pot, and twice more seen a log sucked out from his very elbow to leap into the white horror of the abyss, did Henderson stir. The brief stillness, controlled by his will, had rested him for the moment. He was cool now, keen to plan, cunning to husband his forces. Up to the very last second that he could he would maintain his hold on life, counting always on the chance of the unexpected.

Continued

Class A504-A (Continued)

With now just one log remaining between himself and death, he let himself go past the cleft, and saw that one log go out. Then, being close to the wall of the pot, he tried to delay his progress by clutching at the stone with his left hand and by dragging upon it with his foot. But the stone surface was worn so smooth by the age-long polishing of the eddy that these efforts availed him little. Before he realized it he was almost round again, and only by the most desperate struggle did he succeed in saving himself. There was no other log near by this time for him to seize and thrust forward in his place. It was simply a question of his restricted paddling, with hands and feet, against the outward draught of the current. For nearly a minute the log hung in doubt just before the opening, the current sucking at its head to turn it outward, and Henderson paddling against it not only with hands and feet, but with every ounce of will and nerve that his body contained. At last, inch lay inch, he conquered. His log moved past the gate of death; and dimly, again, that ironical voice came down to him, piercing the roar.

Once past, Henderson fell to back-paddling again - not so violently now - till other logs came by within his reach and he could work himself into temporary safety behind them. He was soon forced to the conviction that if he strove at just a shade under his utmost he was able to hold his own and keep one log always between himself and the opening. But what was now his utmost, he realized, would very soon be far beyond his powers. Well, there was nothing to do but to keep on trying. Around and around, and again and again around the terrible, smooth, deliberate circuit he went, sparing himself every ounce of effort that he could, and always shutting his eyes as the log beside him plunged out into the sluice. Gradually, then, he felt himself becoming stupefied by the ceaselessly recurring horror, with the prolonged suspense between. He must sting himself back to the full possession of his faculties by another burst of fierce effort. Fiercely he caught at log after log, without a let-up, till, luck having favoured him for once, he found himself on the inner instead of the outer edge of the procession. Then an idea flashed into his fast-clouding brain, and he cursed himself for not having thought of it before. At the very centre of the eddy, of course, there must be a sort of core of stillness. By a vehement struggle he attained it and avoided crossing it. Working gently and warily he kept the log right across the axis of the eddy, where huddled a crowd of chips and sticks. Here the log turned slowly, very slowly, on its own centre; and for a few seconds of exquisite relief Henderson let himself sink into a sort of lethargy. He was roused by a sudden shot, and the spat of a heavy bullet into the log about three inches before his head.

Class A504-B Serious Reading - Grades 11, 12

Excerpt from **THE GRAPES OF WRATH** - John Steinbeck

"Come on," said Pa, "come on in now. She got to see you. I got to see her face when she sees you. Come on. She'll yell breakfast in a minute. I heard her slap the salt pork in the pan a good time ago." He led the way across the fine-dusted ground. There was no porch on this house, just a step and then the door; a chopping block beside the door, its surface matted and soft from years of chopping. The graining in the sheathing wood was high, for the dust had cut down the softer wood. The smell of burning willow was in the air, and, as the three men neared the door, the smell of frying side meat and the smell of high brown biscuits and the sharp smell of coffee rolling in the pot. Pa stepped up into the open doorway and stood there blocking it with his wide short body. He said, "Ma, there's a coupla fellas jus' come along the road, an' they wonder if we could spare a bite."

Tom heard his mother's voice, the remembered cool, calm drawl, friendly and humble. "Let 'em come," she said. "We got a plenty. Tell 'em they got to wash their han's. The bread is done. I'm jus' takin' up the side-meat now." And the sizzle of the angry grease came from the stove.

Pa stepped inside, clearing the door, and Tom looked in at his mother. She was lifting the curling slices of pork from the frying pan. The oven door was open, and a great pan of high brown biscuits stood waiting there. She looked out the door, but the sun was behind Tom, and she saw only a dark figure outlined by the bright yellow sunlight. She nodded pleasantly. "Come in," she said. "Jus' lucky I made plenty bread this morning."

Tom stood looking in. Ma was heavy, but not fat; thick with child-bearing and work. She wore a loose Mother Hubbard of gray cloth in which there had once been colored flowers, but the color was washed out now, so that the small flowered pattern was only a little lighter gray than the background. The dress came down to her ankles, and her strong, broad, bare feet moved quickly and deftly over the floor. Her thin, steel-gray hair was gathered in a sparse wispy knot at the back of her head. Strong, freckled arms were bare to the elbow, and her hands were chubby and delicate, like those of a plump little girl. She looked out into the sunshine. Her full face was not soft; it was controlled, kindly. Her hazel eyes seemed to have experienced all possible tragedy and to have mounted pain and suffering like steps into a high calm and a superhuman understanding. She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken. And since old Tom and the children could not know hurt or fear unless she acknowledged hurt and fear, she had practiced denying them in herself. And since, when a joyful thing happened, they looked to see whether joy was on her, it was her habit to build up laughter out of inadequate materials. But better than joy was calm. Imperturbability could be depended upon. And from her great and humble position in the family she had taken dignity and a clean calm beauty. From her position as healer, her hands had grown sure and cool and quiet; from her position as arbiter she had become as remote and faultless in judgment as a goddess. She seemed to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family would fall, the family will to function would be gone.

Continued

Class A504-B (Continued)

She looked out into the sunny yard, at the dark figure of a man. Pa stood near by, shaking with excitement. "Come in," he cried. "Come right in, mister." And Tom a little shamefacedly stepped over the doorsill.

She looked up pleasantly from the frying pan. And then her hand sank slowly to her side and the fork clattered to the wooden floor. Her eyes opened wide, and the pupils dilated. She breathed heavily through her open mouth. She closed her eyes. "Thank God," she said. "Oh, thank God!" And suddenly her face was worried. "Tommy, you ain't wanted? You didn' bust loose?"

"No, Ma. Parole. I got the papers here." He touched his breast.

She moved toward him lithely, soundlessly in her bare feet, and her face was full of wonder. Her small hand felt his arm, felt the soundness of his muscles. And then her fingers went up to his cheek as a blind man's fingers might. And her joy was nearly like sorrow. Tom pulled his underlip between his teeth and bit it. Her eyes went wonderingly to his bitten lip, and she saw the little line of blood against his teeth and the trickle of blood down his lip. Then she knew, and her control came back, and her hand dropped. Her breath came out explosively. "Well!" she cried. "We come mighty near to goin' without ya. An' we was wonderin' how in the worl' you could ever find us." She picked up the fork and combed the boiling grease and brought out a dark curl of crisp pork. And she set the pot of tumbling coffee on the back of the stove.

Class A504-D Humorous Reading - Grades 11, 12

OFFICER, ARREST THAT BOOK! - Gary Lautens

"Gentlemen, you've been called together to form a new squad in the police department. Our task will be to examine all bookstands and confiscate the dirty stuff. First of all, can you all read? Never mind, Smedley, you'll be travelling in pairs."

"Do we have a name, Chief?"

"Any ideas from the floor?"

"As I see it, our job is to Harass and Expurgate Lewd Literature. We could shorten that to HELL Squad."

"Hmmm. Catchy. But the people might get the wrong impression, Johnson. Forces of HELL, and that sort of thing. Good thinking though. We can leave the name till later. Right now I should mention some basic rules and hand out the equipment."

"No gun?"

"No. You each get spectacles, a library card and a dictionary. There's also an automatic scanner which picks out all four-letter words on a page with a glance. Beeps like a geiger counter. I think a good safe rule of thumb is one *double entendre* per chapter. Use your own judgement on innuendo."

"Could you give us some specific examples of what we're looking for, Chief?"

"Well, take Robin Hood. Now why were his men so merry? It's something we should look into. And that leads us to the business of Maid Marian. You should check to see if there is any evidence of a marriage certificate; we don't want another Tarzan scandal on our hands."

"I take it, Chief, that anyone who chops off the tails of blind nice is definitely sadistic."

"You're getting the idea, Johnson. Check into those old stories. What was the relationship between Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs? Were they just friends, or something more? Why was Red Riding Hood chased by the old wolf? Was he interested in her picnic basket or do we have an early, symbolic form of the Lolita theme? You can never be too sure."

"I have often wondered why Jack and Jill went all the way up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Seems pretty suggestive, to me."

"Keep up the good work, Thompkins. Remember our motto: Be suspicious. I've obtained some books so that we can practise right here in class. Think of yourselves as Smut-Busters. Now read - especially between the lines."

"But . . ."

Continued

Class A504-D (Continued)

"Smedley, you'll be assigned to the picture-book division for now, so don't worry. Blue pencil the prurient and lascivious."

"I don't like this title, Chief. *Black Beauty*. We could get some complaints. Why not change it to *Charcoal Beauty*? Get the meaning across - and eliminate any hint of race."

I'll make a note of that, Johnson. With that kind of thinking you may make sergeant. And, Johnson, explain to Smedley what I mean by prurient and lascivious."

"Wow! Hahaha."

"What is it, Thompkins?"

"It's this bit on page forty-six, sir. Positively scandalous. You see, this couple, haha, is shipwrecked on a desert island and, haha, they . . ."

"Tear out the page and pass it around, Thompkins. I want the others to see what I mean by obscene writing. After that page has been around, send it up here. I think we should make a collection of the confiscated stuff. It might even be the beginning of a best-selling text book."

"Pretty nasty description, Chief?"

"Yes, Williams. I think we'd all better take another look at that page. No need to underline the worst bits with pencil, however. And no drawing in the margins, please, men. Perhaps I should mention now that I expect our squad to have the cleanest lavatory walls in the division."

"Here, here."

Smedley! Any objectionable, disgusting pictures yet? Don't nod. Bring them up and pass them around. I think we should get a bulletin board where these photographs could be posted so that our men will have a clear idea of what we're looking for. Sort of a 'most wanted' list."

"Look at this one, Chief. Absolutely shameful. If you hold it close, you can see all sorts of hidden meanings."

"Don't push, men. We'll all get a look. You can tell even from this distance that it's meant to arouse and ruin the young. Don't bend the corners, Wilson. Must be careful of the evidence."

"Here's an odd book, Chief. Doesn't have any pages. It's a phony with a secret compartment."

"Looks like microfilm inside, Wilson."

"Apparently it came in with that batch of books from the embassies."

"I remember. The one book had all that white powder inside and now this one with microfilm. Can't understand it. Well, throw it away. We haven't got time to waste on nonsense. There's work to be done."

"Were Adam and Eve ever churched, Chief?"

"I think we can let that one go, Johnson. All right, Smedley speak up . . ."

Class A504-E Humorous Reading - Grades 11, 12

FINDING A COFFIN FOR A DEAD SNAKE IS NO EASY MATTER - Alexander Ross

Two weeks ago, when I was lying flat on my back in a hospital bed, recovering from an appendicitis operation and bored out of my mind, I made a resolution: I will not write a column about getting my appendix out. Even when Kildare Dobbs reminisced about his appendix, I stuck to my vow. Last week, when George Bryant devoted most of his column to how he almost got his appendix out in Nepal, I was sorely tempted, but finally resisted the impulse to inform you about the state of my peritoneum.

And so I won't. Instead, I give you the actual transcript of an actual telephone conversation with an actual animal clinic right here in an actual Canadian city. It is amazing what can happen when you're lying there, with a telephone beside your bed. I dialled up a number, and a nice lady with a brisk Scottish accent answered the phone:

“Uh, this is Mr. Ross. Do you have a pet cemetery?”

“Yes we do.”

“Oh. Uh, I've got this snake that, ah, seems to have died, and he's been with me a long time and I'd like to, you know, enquire about your service.”

“What kind of a snake is it?”

“Well, it's an Eastern Fox Snake. That's what they told me at the museum. He's five, five and a half feet long.”

“Well, I'd think the snake would possibly be the same as what a cat grave would be, and that would be \$50.”

“Fifty dollars, eh . . . Well, the trouble is, I mean, he's nearly six feet long.”

“What's that got to do with it?”

“Well, he wouldn't fit in a cat grave, would he?”

“Well, you don't have him stretched out six feet long. Even a dog isn't stretched out like that.”

“Well, he's sort of stretched out like that right now, I mean. I've got him at home.”

“Yes, I mean, a snake is just turned around. I mean, he doesn't have to lie straight out.”

“Well, I'd want him to lie straight out.”

“Well then, we couldn't do that.”

Continued

Class A504-E (Continued)

“You couldn’t. Um . . . well then what about a coffin? Do you supply those?”

“No. They go into a wooden box, and it goes to the size that we give them. But if you want your snake in a box six feet long we cannot give that, we cannot accommodate you.”

“So my snake would have to be curled up?”

“That’s right.”

“How big is the box?”

“He would go in a box the size for a cat would be.”

“I see. And how big is that?”

“I haven’t measured it, sir. Maybe 14 inches by 20, something like that.”

“Well, do you think he’d fit in?”

“I would think so. I can’t see why not.”

“My snake is...”

“A snake doesn’t sleep all stretched out, does he? You’d put him into a natural sleeping position, the same way as you would with a dog or a cat. When a dog goes into a box his legs aren’t straight out. He’s in a sleeping position. I mean, let’s just face it, you’ll have quite a difference in cost and everything else together. We just cannot give you a bigger crate.”

“Well, I’d be willing to pay extra.”

“Well, we can’t do it. I’m sorry.”

“All right then: my snake would have to be curled up.”

“I think so. In a natural position.”

“Well the trouble is, he’s sort of pretty straight right now, and he’s pretty stiff Ah, what should I do - just bring him to you? Or do you”

“Yes, he would have to be brought to us, yes. Now how would you bring him?”

“Well, I guess in my car. I have a station wagon. But how would you curl him up? I mean.... I’m concerned about this, because”

Continued

Class A504-E (Continued)

“Well, I don’t know, I think I would have to face it once I see it. I’ve never come across this problem before. But as far as I know, there isn’t anything very particular in a snake. I mean, there’s no bone structure or anything. There’s no reason - I can’t see why we couldn’t curl him up.”

“Even with rigor mortis?”

“Well, how long is he dead?”

“Well, I don’t know. For a long time there, I thought he might be asleep. I mean, for about four days. You know, he didn’t move and I thought, you know, it’s spring or something. But then, you know, I’ve been looking at him, examining him, and there’s no sign of life. I’m pretty sure he’s dead. I’m sure he’s dead. Anyway, you say it would cost \$50. Does that include a marker?”

“Yes, it does.”

“What will the marker say?”

“It will just have your name on it, and the snake’s name....”

“His name is Albert”

“... and how old he was and when he died?”

“And \$50 would be the only cost, eh?”

“I would think so. You make it sound as if this was something that’s almost impossible - because he’s a snake, being so big, and you can’t turn him around, and everything else together. If I find out there is no way of him curling up into a small box, then it will cost you much more. But we would tell you before we would get involved. Now, the only thing that you can do is bring your snake here, so we can see what is involved. Okay?”

“Thank you, ma’am.”

I hereby apologize to that nice lady from the pet hospital. But it’s amazing what you’re driven to when you’re laid up with appendicitis and have taken a vow not to write about it.

CHORAL SPEAKING

Class A700-A Choral Speaking - Kindergarten

WHEN YOUR SUCKER STICKS - Sheree Fitch

My sucker stuck to my sweater;
my sucker stuck in my hair.
Mum had to get the scissors
to cut it out of there.

All because of my sucker,
there's a bald spot on my head.
To tell the truth
I'd rather have
that sucker stuck instead.

Class A700-B Choral Speaking - Kindergarten

BABY'S DRINKING SONG - James Kirkup

Sip a little
Sup a little
From your little
Cup a little
Sup a little
Sip a little
Put it to your
Lip a little
Tip a little
Tap a little
Not into your
Lap or it'll
Dip a little
Drop a little
On the table
Top a little.

Class A701-A Choral Speaking - Grade 1

MY FAVORITE WORD - Lucia and James L. Hymes, Jr.

There is one word -
My favourite -
The very, very best.
It isn't No or Maybe
It's Yes, Yes, Yes, *Yes*, YES!

"Yes, yes, you may," and
"Yes, of course," and
"Yes, please help yourself."
And when I want a piece of cake,
"Why, yes, it's on the shelf."

Some candy? "Yes."
A cookie? "Yes."
A movie? "Yes, we'll go."

I love it when they say my word:
Yes, *Yes*, YES! (*Not No.*)

Class A701-B Choral Speaking - Grade 1

HIDING - Dorothy Aldis

I'm hiding. I'm hiding,
And no one knows where;
For all they can see is my
Toes and my hair.

And I just heard my father
Say to my mother--
"But, darling, he must be
Somewhere or other;

"Have you looked in the ink well?"
And Mother said, "Where?"
"In the INK WELL," said Father. But
I was not there.

Then "Wait!" cried my mother--
"I think that I see
Him under the carpet." But
It was not me.

"Inside the mirror's
A pretty good place,"
Said Father and looked, but saw
Only his face.

"We've hunted," sighed Mother,
As hard as we could
And I AM so afraid that we've
Lost him for good."

Then I laughed out loud
And I wiggled my toes
And Father said-- "Look, dear,
I wonder if those

Toes could be Benny's.
There are ten of them. See?"
And they WERE so surprised to find
Out it was me!

Class A702-A Choral Speaking - Grade 2

COPYCAT - Robert Heidbreder

Copycat, copycat
Shadow's a copycat!

Out in the sun
Whenever I run,
It runs.
Whenever I twirl,
It twirls.
I curl up small.
It curls up small.
I stand up tall.
It stands up tall.

Copycat, copycat,
Shadow's a copycat.

Whenever I hide,
It hides.
I spread out wide.
It spreads out wide.
I pat my head.
It pats its head.
I fall down dead.
It falls down dead.

But when I go inside to stay,
Copycat, copycat goes away!

Class A702-B Choral Speaking - Grade 2

THE GRASSHOPPER - Conrad Aiken

Grasshopper
grasshopper
all day long
we hear your scraping
summer song
like
rusty
fiddles
in
the
grass
as through
the meadow
path
we pass
such funny legs
such funny feet
and how we wonder
what you eat
maybe a single blink of dew
sipped from a clover leaf would do
then high in air
once more you spring
to fall in grass again
and sing.

Class A703-A Choral Speaking - Grade 3

THE OWL - Conrad Aiken

To whit
to whoo
he stares
right through
whatever
he looks at
maybe
YOU
and so
whatever
else
you do
don't
 ever
 ever
 be
 a
 mouse
 or
 if
 you
are
 STAY
 IN
 YOUR
 HOUSE

old owl
can you be really
wise
and do those great big
sunflower eyes
see THINGS
that WE
can never see
perched on the tiptop of our tree
or by jiminy
on a chimney
or whooshing by
on velvet wings?
Let's hie to bed
and leave him be.

Class A703-B Choral Speaking - Grade 3

SKELETON HOUSE - Laurence Smith

Push, push the heavy door
CREE . . . CREE . . . CREEEEK!
Tip-Toe the rotten floor
SQUEE . . . SQUEEE . . . SQUEEEEEK!
Step across the missing stair
EER . . . EEER . . . EEEERK!
Is that something over there?
SWISH . . . SWISH . . . SWISH . . .
Behind the curtain, what is that?
SCRITTER . . . SCRITTER . . . BUMP!
A red-eyed rat, a swooping bat
OOOW . . . OOOOOW . . . OOOOOW!
There's something sitting on that chair
SSH . . . SSSH . . . SSSSH!
His head is white with cobweb hair
OH! . . . NO! . . . SSH!
He starts to speak with clacking jaws
CLACK . . . CLACK . . . CLACK!
I grab his leg with all my force
PULL . . . PULL PULL PULL . . .
Just like I'm pulling yours!

Class A704-A Choral Speaking - Grade 4

HOW TO DELAY YOUR BEDTIME - Bruce Landsky

Refuse to turn off the TV.
Say, "All my friends watch this show."

Say, "No fair!" when you're told to go to bed.
Then ask, "Why can't I stay up till ten
like all my friends?"

When Dad says, "If all your friends
jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge,
would you jump too?"
sneer, "Yes!"

Whine, "I'm too tired to walk upstairs to bed."
Make Dad carry you up the stairs.
.

Continued

Class A704-A (Continued)

Pout, "I'm too tired to brush my teeth."
Wait till Dad squeezes the toothpaste
onto your brush and starts brushing
your teeth for you.
Then groan, "Ouch, you're hurting me."

When Mom comes in to say good night
and asks you to pick up your clothes,
yawn, "I'm too tired to pick up my clothes."
Watch while Mom picks them up for you.

Beg, "I need a bedtime story."
When Mom finishes the story,
ask, "And then what happened?"

Tell her, "That story got me excited.
Now I need a backrub to make me sleepy."
When Mom starts rubbing, give directions:
"Rub a little higher.
No, a little to the left.
No, more in the middle."
When Mom stops rubbing,
grumble, "I was just starting to feel sleepy -
don't stop now."
When Mom says, "For the last time, good night!"
whine, "I'm thirsty.
Can I have a glass of water?"
When Mom asks you to promise
you won't wet the bed,
say, "I promise" - but cross your fingers.

Start crying.
When Dad comes to comfort you,
sob, "There's a monster under my bed."
When he turns on the lights,
You'll see it's only your shoes, socks, crayons,
and the toy you got last Christmas,
but only played with once because you lost it.
Tell him, "Leave the door open
so I can see the hall light!"
When he opens up the door
plead, "Open it wider!"

When Dad leaves,
get the toy from under your bed
and play with it in the light
shining through your doorway.

Class A704-B Choral Speaking - Grade 4

I'M THANKFUL - Jack Prelutsky

I'm thankful for my baseball bat,
I cracked it yesterday,
I'm thankful for my checker set,
I haven't learned to play,
I'm thankful for my mittens,
one is missing in the snow,
I'm thankful for my hamsters,
they escaped a month ago.

I'm thankful for my basketball,
it's sprung another leak,
I'm thankful for my parakeet,
it bit me twice last week,
I'm thankful for my bicycle,
I crashed into a tree,
I'm thankful for my roller skates.
I fell and scraped my knee.

I'm thankful for my model plane
it's short a dozen parts,
I'm thankful for my target game,
I'm sure I'll find the darts,
I'm thankful for my bathing suit,
it came off in the river,
I'm thankful for so many things,
except, of course, for LIVER!

Class A705-A Choral Speaking - Grade 5

OUR HAMSTER'S LIFE - Kit Wright

Our hamster's life:
there's not much
to it,
not much
to it.

He presses his pink nose
to the door of his cage
and decides for the fifty six
millionth time
that he can't get
through it.

Our hamster's life;
there's not much
to it,
not much
to it.

It's about the most boring
life in the world,
if he only
knew it.
He sleeps and he drinks and he eats.
He eats and he drinks and he sleeps.

He slinks and he dreeps.
He eats.

This process
he repeats.

Our hamster's life:
there's not much
to it,
not much
to it.

You'd think it would drive him bonkers,
going round and round on his wheel.
It's certainly driving me bonkers,

watching him
do it.

But he may be thinking:
'That boy's life, there's not much
to it,
not much
to it:

watching a hamster go round on a wheel.
It's driving me bonkers if he only knew it,

watching him
watching me
do it.'

Class A705-B Choral Speaking - Grade 5

THE OCTOPUS - Conrad Aiken

The many-handed octopus
does not INTEND to frighten us:
his family name is octopod
and certainly he is odd.
A kind of spider of the sea
is he.
Lovely to watch him waver round
under the sea without a sound
and how he folds
 and then unfolds
 shapes
 and then reshapes
 drapes
 and then undrapes
each slithery arm and hand
and
still always can
come back to where he first began.
O what a juggler he could be:
the greatest juggler of the sea:
eight balls at once he'd keep with ease
above his head beneath the seas
passing from one to other
without the slightest bother.
But if WE frighten HIM
then suddenly all goes dim
behind a cloud of ink
he seems to shrink
and off unseen he'll swiftly swim
upon a pearly oyster bed
to lay his troubled head.

Class A706-A Choral Speaking - Grade 6

THE TIGER - William Blake

Tiger! Tiger! 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 seize the fire?

And what shoulder and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and 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 watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

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

Class A706-B Choral Speaking - Grade 6

PAUL BUNYAN - Arthur Stanley Bourinot

He came
striding
over the mountain,
the moon slung on his back,
like a pack.
A great pine,
stuck on his shoulder,
swayed as he walked,
as he talked
to his blue ox
Babe;
a huge, looming shadow
of a man,
clad
in a mackinaw coat,
his logger's shirt
open at the throat
and the great mane of hair
matching,
meeting
the locks of night,
the smoke from his cauldron pipe
a cloud on the moon;
and his laugh
rolled through the mountains
like thunder
on a summer night
while the lightning of his smile
split the heavens
asunder.
His blue ox, Babe,
pawed the ground
till the earth
trembled
and shook
and a high
cliff toppled and fell;

and Babe's bellow
was fellow
to the echo
of Bunyan's laughter;
and then
with one step
he was in the next valley
dragging the moon after,
the stars
tangled,
spangled
in the branches of the great pine.
And as he left,
he whistled in the dark
like a far-off train
blowing for a crossing,
and plainly heard
were the plodding grunts
of Babe, the blue ox,
trying
to keep pace
from hill to hill,
and then, the sounds,
fading,
dying,
were lost
in the churn of night, -
and all was still.

Class A707-A Choral Speaking - Grade 7

THE MEADOW MOUSE - Theodore Roethke

1.

In a shoe box stuffed in an old nylon stocking
Sleeps the baby mouse I found in the meadow,
Where he trembled and shook beneath a stick
Till I caught him by the tail and brought him in,
Cradled in my hand.
A little quaker, the whole body of him trembling,
His absurd whiskers sticking out like a cartoon-mouse,
His feet like small leaves,
Little lizard-feet,
Whitish and spread wide when he tried to struggle away,
Wriggling like a minuscule puppy.

Now he's eaten three kinds of cheese and drunk from his bottle-cap watering-trough -
So much he just lies in one corner,
His tail curled under him, his belly big
As his head; his bat-like ears
Twitching, tilting toward the least sound.

Do I imagine he no longer trembles
When I come close to him?
He seems no longer to tremble.

2.

But this morning his shoe-box house on the back porch is empty.
Where has he gone, my meadow mouse,
My thumb of a child that nuzzled in my palm? -
To run under the hawk's wing,
Under the eye of the great owl watching from an elm-tree,
To live by courtesy of the shrike, the snake, the tom-cat.

Class A707-B Choral Speaking - Grade 7

SIR SMASHAM UPPE by E.V. Rieu

Good afternoon, Sir Smasham Uppe!
We're having tea: do take a cup!
Sugar and milk? Now let me see –
Two lumps, I think?... good gracious me!
The silly thing slipped off your knee!
Pray don't apologize, old chap:
A very trivial mishap!
So clumsy of you? How absurd!
My dear Sir Smasham, not a word!
Now do sit down and have another,
And tell us all about your brother –
You know, the one who broke his head.
Is the poor fellow still in bed! –
A chair – allow me, sir! ... Great Scott!
That *was* a nasty smash! Eh, what?
Oh, not at all: the chair was old –
Queen Anne, or so we have been told.
We've got at least a dozen more:
Just leave the pieces on the floor.
I want you to admire our view:
Come nearer to the window, do;
And look how beautiful... Tut, tut!
You didn't see that it was shut?
I hope you are not badly cut!
Not hurt? A fortunate escape!
Amazing! Not a single scrape!
And now, if you have finished tea,
I fancy you might like to see
A little thing or two I've got.
That china plate? Yes, worth a lot:
A beauty too... Ah, there it goes!
I trust it didn't hurt your toes?
Your elbow pushed it off the shelf?
Of course: I've done the same myself.
And now, my dear Sir Smasham – oh,
You surely don't intend to go?
You *must* be off? Well, come again.
So glad you're fond of porcelain!

Class A708-A Choral Speaking - Grade 8

SONG OF THE SHIRT by Thomas Hood

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the "Song of the Shirt."

"Work! work! work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work! work! work!
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It's Oh! to be a slave
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

"Work! work! work!
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work! work! work!
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

"Oh, Men, with Sisters dear!
Oh, Men, with Mothers and Wives!
It is not linen you're wearing out,
But human creatures' lives!
Stitch stitch stitch,
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
Sewing at once with a double thread,
A Shroud as well as a Shirt.

"But why do I talk of Death?
That Phantom of grisly bone,
I hardly fear its terrible shape,
It seems so like my own
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep;
Oh, God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!

"Work! work! work!
My Labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread and rags.
That shatter'd roof and this naked floor

A table, a broken chair
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!

"Work! work! work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work! work! work!
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumb'd,
As well as the weary hand.

"Work! work! work!
In the dull December light,
And work! work! work!
When the weather is warm and bright
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling
As if to show me their sunny backs
And twit me with the spring.

"Oh! but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet
For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal!

"Oh! but for one short hour!
A respite however brief!
No blessed leisure for Love or Hope,
But only time for Grief!
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread!"

With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread
Stitch! stitch! stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt,
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,
Would that its tone could reach the Rich!
She sang this "Song of the Shirt!"

Class A708-B Choral Speaking - Grade 8

THE LISTENERS - Walter de la Mare

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
 Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
 Of the forest's ferny floor;
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
 Above the Traveller's head;
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
 "Is there anybody there?" he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
 No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
 Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
 That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
 To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,
 That goes down to the empty hall,
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken
 By the lonely Traveller's call.

And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
 Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
 'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
 Louder, and lifted his head:
"Tell them I came, and no one answered
 That I kept my word," he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
 Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
 From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
 And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
 When the plunging hoofs were gone.

FRENCH POETRY

Class F100 - A - French Poetry - Kindergarten – Non-competitive

LES OIGNONS - Sylvie Dufresne

Oui, je pleure amèrement
Non, je ne suis pas triste, voyons!
C'est que, je coupe des oignons,
Tout bonnement.

Class F100 - B - French Poetry - Kindergarten – Non-competitive

SAUTERELLE - André Vigeant

Vite, vite sauterelle
Miniscule gazelle
Fais battre tes ailes
Avec plus de zèle
Sinon l'hirondelle
Te gobera sans appel...

Class F100 - C - French Poetry - Kindergarten – Non-competitive

(UNTITLED) - André Rochedy

Patte pelée, patte pelue
le mille-pattes boite, boite
Patte pelée, patte tordue
le mille-pattes trotte menu.

Class F101 - A - French Poetry - Grades 1 and 2 – Non-competitive

FRAMBOISINE - Chantal Dion

si j'étais un fruit
je serais une framboise
rouge rubis
globuleuse et gonflée
juteuse et sucrée
je me tiendrais cachée
sous une feuille fraîche
à l'abri du gosier serré
de l'oiseau effronté

Class F101 - B - French Poetry - Grades 1 and 2 – Non-competitive

BONBONS - Ernest Pallascio-Morin

Je ne suis pas gourmand
mais je dis franchement
que j'aime les bonbons:
c'est si bon des bonbons!

Et puis, quand on est sage,
je crois qu'il est d'usage
que l'on nous récompense.

Notre comportement,
plaisant à nos parents,
vaut bien cette dépense!

Class F101 - C - French Poetry - Grades 1 and 2 – Non-competitive

TROIS PETITS OISEAUX - Marie Vaucalys

Trois petits oiseaux dans une cage,
Le chat est bien sage.

Trois petits oiseaux endormis,
Le chat qui sourit.

Trois petits oiseaux réveillés,
Le chat va les manger.

Le jet d'eau s'élance
Il fouette le chat.
Allons, en bas, plus vite que ça!

Les oiseaux sont sauvés,
Le chat est tout mouillé,
C'est bien fait!

Class 102 - A - French Poetry - Grades 3 and 4

MON CHAT - Simone Bussières

J'ai un chat gris bleu,
qui aime les oeufs,
et c'est bien curieux,
il n'a pas de queue.

Mon petit chat bleu,
qui aime les oeufs,
a de beaux grands yeux
bien affectueux.

J'ai un chat gris bleu
qui aime les oeufs;
il est silencieux,
mais non paresseux.

S'il aime les oeufs,
mon petit chat bleu,
il aime encore mieux
du bon lait crémeux.

Class F102 - B - French Poetry - Grades 3 and 4

LE BROUILLARD - Maurice Carême

Le brouillard a tout mis
Dans son sac de coton;
Le brouillard a tout pris
Autour de ma maison.

Plus de fleurs au jardin
Plus d'arbres dans l'allée;
La serre du voisin
Semble s'être envolée.

Et je ne sais vraiment
Où peut s'être posé
Le moineau que j'entends
Si tristement crier.

Class F102 - C - French Poetry - Grades 3 and 4

POURQUOI? - Sylvie Dufresne

Pourquoi les parents disent-ils, ennuyés,
"Va te coucher, on est fatigués!"
Quand il est huit heures bien sonnées
Et que nous n'avons pas fini de jouer?

Pourquoi derrière les oreilles faut-il se laver
Quand, par les cheveux, tout est caché?

Pourquoi faut-il manger
Toute notre viande, sans hésiter,
Pour avoir un dessert sucré?

Pourquoi faut-il prendre notre bain
Si on est pour se salir le lendemain?

Pourquoi on ne doit jamais bouger,
Ni se chicaner,
Quand on visite la parenté?

Pourquoi faut-il se brosser les dents
Si on doit manger si souvent?

Pourquoi les grands
N'écoutent pas plus souvent...
Les enfants?

Class F103 - A - French Poetry - Grades 5 and 6

LE GROS BONHOMME - Maurice Carême

Jeudi matin, pour m'amuser,
J'avais dessiné un bonhomme
Aussi rouge qu'un géranium.
A peine l'avais-je achevé,
Il a demandé un voilier,
Des poissons dans un aquarium,
Un jardin rempli de rosiers.
Alors, j'ai pris ma gomme
Pour effacer le mobilier
Décoré de tiroirs dorés
Que je lui avais crayonné.
Il voulut encore un verger
Avec, au milieu, des pommiers
Et, dessous, des paniers de pommes.
Mais, soudainement agacé
Par ses demandes répétées,
Je l'ai effacé, lui aussi,
Pour ne plus avoir de souci.

Class F103 - B - French Poetry - Grades 5 and 6

LA POULE NOIRE - Octave Aubert

La poule noire de grand-mère
A douze petits poulets gris.
La pauvre poule a fort à faire
Pour nourrir ses poussins chéris.

Lorsque dans son bec elle porte
Un peu de graine pour chacun,
Le gros chat, tapi sous la porte,
Voudrait, bien sûr, en croquer un.

Mais la poule noire le guette
Et le chat craint son bec pointu.
Elle est très forte, la poulette;
Le chat a peur d'être battu.

Douze poulets n'ont qu'une mère
Pour les défendre et les nourrir.
Moi j'ai ma mère et mon père...
Ah! combien je dois les chérir!

Class F103 - C - French Poetry - Grades 5 and 6

MATHIEU LE PEUREUX - Sylvie Dufresne

Mathieu le peureux a peur de tout.
Depuis qu'il est né, il se cache partout
Et ne veut rien essayer du tout.

Il marche à côté de sa bicyclette dorée,
De peur de tomber.

A tous les jours, debout il doit manger,
De peur de s'asseoir sur une chaise cassée.

Il ne se lave pas, malgré tous les bons conseils,
De peur de ne pas trouver son gant noir.

Il ne lit jamais trop,
De peur de ne pas comprendre certains mots.

Jamais il ne s'amuse quand il doit sortir,
De peur d'avoir trop de plaisir.

Il ne parle pas (et chaque jour est pire),
De peur de ne pas savoir quoi dire.

Mathieu le peureux
Est bien malheureux.

Class F104 - A - French Poetry - Grades 7 and 8

LE MONSTRE DE MA CHAMBRE - Sylvie Dufresne

A chaque soir,
Quand il fait noir
Dans ma chambre, petite et coquette,
Le monstre sort de sa cachette.

Il prend un malin plaisir
A grimacer pour m'empêcher de dormir.
De ses treize doigts très longs,
Il semble venir me prendre pour de bon.

Il a une grosse queue fourchue,
Trois cornes assez pointues
Et des yeux exorbitants
Qui me laissent tout de peur tremblant.

De le faire partir, j'ai bien essayé
Caché sous les couvertures, j'ai crié.
J'ai appelé ma mère, prié, bu de l'eau.
Rien n'y a fait...même me coucher sur le dos.

Mais l'autre jour, j'ai trouvé
Le moyen de m'en débarrasser.
J'ai fermé les yeux, couché dans mon lit
Et me suis endormi.

Class F104 - B - French Poetry - Grades 7 and 8

MÉDITATION - Jacques Charpentreau

On m'a conté qu'autrefois,
En des temps pourtant austères,
Les gens biens crachaient par terre
Et se mouchaient dans leurs doigts.

Aujourd'hui mon petit frère,
Culotte comme il se doit,
A sa couche au bon endroit,
Bien serrée devant-derrrière,

Mais je constate parfois
Qu'un grand progrès reste à faire
Car il crache encore par terre
Et se mouche dans ses doigts.

Comme disait ma grand-mère,
On bouche un coin, et l'on voit
Tout fuir par un autre endroit.
Ah! La vie est bien amère!

Class F104 - C - French Poetry - Grades 7 and 8

LE TEMPS A LAISSÉ SON MANTEAU - Charles d'Orléans

Le temps a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluie,
Et s'est vêtu de broderie,
De soleil luisant, clair et beau.

Il n'y a bête ni oiseau
Qu'en son jargon ne chante ou crie:
"Le temps a laissé son manteau
De vent, de froidure et de pluie."

Rivière, fontaine et ruisseau
Portent, en livrée jolie,
Gouttes d'argent d'orfèvrerie
Chacun s'habille de nouveau:
Le temps a laissé son manteau.

Class F105 - A - French Poetry - Grades 9 and Up

LES BONNES MANIERES - Jacques Charpentreau

Oui, ma petite Marianne,
Tu peux manger ta banane
A la moutarde,
Mais prends garde,
Une petite fille comme il faut
Ne trempe pas sa banane
Directement dans le pot.
Elle enlève d'abord la peau,
Puis, elle prend un peu de moutarde
Sur son assiette
- Pas trop -
Elle tient sa banane avec sa fourchette,
Elle l'enduit de moutarde avec son couteau,
Elle en coupe de petits morceaux,
La petite fille comme il faut.

Non, ma petite Marianne,
Même après la tisane,
Jamais on ne se hasarde
A fourrer de la moutarde
Dans les narines de grand-père
Pour le voir se mettre en colère
En lui faisant monter
La moutarde au nez;
Une petite fille comme il faut
Doit être une bonne ménagère
Et savoir que la moutarde est trop chère
Pour être ainsi gaspillée.

Class F105 - B - French Poetry - Grades 9 and Up

AIR TRISTE ET CONNU - René Guy Cadou

Un caillou lancé
Une vitre saute
Un homme qui tombe
Le coeur fracassé

Celui-ci chantait
Pour ne pas entendre
Le pas de la mort
Dans son escalier

Celui-là mourait
De ne pas comprendre
Les ordres brutaux
Dits en étranger

Celui-ci vivait
Mais de son mensonge
Celui-là est mort
Au lieu de parler

De tous les vivants
Pas deux ne s'accordent
Sur le nom secret
De la liberté

Un caillou lancé
Une vitre saute
Un autre homme tombe
Ah c'en est assez.

Class F105 - C - French Poetry - Grades 9 and Up

LE JEU - Sylvain Garneau

J'ai nagé jusqu'à l'autre rive
Pour y chercher des jeux nouveaux.
Je n'ai trouvé qu'un nid de grives
Caché à l'ombre d'un ormeau.

J'ai marché le long de la rive
Pour y chercher des cailloux bleus.
J'ai trouvé quatre sources vives
Et j'ai recommencé le jeu.

J'ai traversé le marécage
Pour faire des tresses d'osier.
Les poissons parmi les herbages
Me prenaient pour un échassier.

Au soleil couchant, quatre grues
Ont essayé de m'entraîner
J'aimais leurs mines incongrues
Mais je voulais m'en retourner.

J'ai raconté ce long voyage
Le même soir à mes voisins.
Ils ne m'ont pas cru. C'est dommage.
C'est dommage pour mes cousins

Qui sont si fiers de leur famille
Mais qui ont si peur de leurs fous.
Et tant pis pour la belle fille.
On devait se marier, en août.

Demain matin, sur l'autre rive,
J'irai recommencer le jeu.
Ceux qui n'ont pas peur, qu'ils me suivent.
Ça fera moins de malheureux.

FRENCH READINGS

Class F200 - A - French Reading - Grades 3 and 4

UNE VIE DE CHIEN - Marie-Noëlle Blin

- Uranus, appelle discrètement Jérémie. Viens, mon chien!

Depuis quelques jours, Jérémie connaît son nom.

Le chien le suit jusque dans la maison. Jérémie monte l'escalier qui mène à sa chambre: c'est derrière son bureau qu'il cache les provisions pour chiens. Le petit chiot grimpe les marches avec difficulté. Finalement, Jérémie le prend sous son bras et l'amène ainsi jusqu'au second étage.

Dans la chambre, il lui lance une de ces petites balles de caoutchouc qui ressemblent à des billes en verre, puis une balle de base-ball, et une balle de tennis. Le chien ne sait plus laquelle poursuivre, laquelle ramener. Il danse sur place en roulant des yeux fous. Jérémie est mort de rire.

Class F200 - B - French Reading - Grades 3 and 4

BARBOTTE ET LÉOPOLD - Pierre Roy

Comme maman a la clé de la maison, elle décide d'entrer jeter un coup d'oeil. Pendant qu'elle ouvre la porte, je me penche pour flatter Barbotte qui se faufile aussitôt à l'intérieur. Il fait le tour de toutes les pièces, puis, voyant qu'il n'y a personne, il va se coucher en rond sur son vieux tapis. Mais il ne ferme pas les yeux. Ses oreilles pointues sont relevées. Je crois qu'il se doute qu'il y a quelque chose d'anormal.

Pendant ce temps, maman ramasse les plats que mon grand-père utilisait pour le chat. C'est écrit BARBOTTE sur chacun d'eux. Elle les lave et les met dans un sac avec des boîtes de nourriture.

- Enroule Barbotte dans son vieux tapis. On le ramène à la maison.

Class F201 - A - French Reading - Grades 5 and 6

VALENTINE PICOTÉE - Dominique Demers

Elle a de longs cheveux noirs qui coulent comme une rivière sur ses épaules et dans son dos en faisant des vagues. Je gage qu'ils sont encore plus soyeux que les poils de Boboule, notre gros minou.

Ses yeux bruns chocolat brillent comme des billes. Et son sourire est aussi éclatant qu'un soleil de vacances.

Pendant que tous les zozos de la classe apprenaient qu'il faut traverser l'océan Atlantique pour passer de l'Espagne au Canada, Katarina m'a regardé. Et elle a compris que je suis le plus gentil, le plus intelligent et le plus beau de tous les garçons de la classe.

La preuve? Elle m'a souri

Quand j'y pense, ça me fait drôle. J'ai comme de chatouilles dans l'estomac.

Class F201 - B - French Reading - Grades 5 and 6

CHALET, SECRET ET GROS BILLETS - Sonia Sarfati

A vrai dire, la simple vue de patins donne la chair de poule à Raphaël.

Pour la bonne raison que personne ne lui a appris à se déplacer avec ces engins bizarres aux pieds.

Son père ne patine pas. Sa mère patine comme si elle avait trois jambes de bois. Sa petite soeur Sarah hurle à la seule vue d'une patinoire. Sa chienne Taxi se transforme en tapis dès qu'elle pose une patte sur une surface glacée.

- Voilà! dit-il à son amie en soupirant, après lui avoir révélé ce lourd secret.

Myriam n'en revient pas. Elle a toujours cru que patiner, c'était comme monter à vélo: tout le monde apprend ça de ses parents avant d'entrer à l'école! Cela fait partie de leur rôle, non?

Class F202 - A - French Reading - Grades 7 and 8

LES YEUX D'ÉMERAUDE - Denis Côté

Pendant que je bûchais un problème de maths, la chatte s'est enfin décidée à manger. Elle a nettoyé l'assiette de poulet en un temps record, avant de régler son compte au bol de lait.

Elle a passé l'heure suivante à m'observer du coin de l'oeil. Son repas semblait l'avoir revigorée.

Lorsque je lui ai souhaité bonne nuit, son dos est venu rencontrer mes caresses. J'ai éteint et je me suis couché.

A vrai dire, je ne me reconnaissais plus tout à fait moi-même.

Pourquoi est-ce que j'imposais ce chat à mon père allergique? Pourquoi était-ce si important que je m'en occupe?

J'ignorais aussi où j'avais pris cette autre résolution saugrenue: cacher à Jo et à Pouce l'existence de cet animal.

Tandis que je m'endormais, son doux ronronnement chatouillait le silence.

Je me suis réveillé en sursaut. J'ai tourné la tête.

En pleine obscurité, les yeux de la chatte faisaient deux taches lumineuses!

Je savais que, la nuit, les yeux d'un chat peuvent refléter la lumière. Celle des phares d'une voiture, par exemple.

Autour de moi pourtant, il n'y avait aucune lumière à refléter.

Les yeux se sont éteints au bout de quelques secondes.

Class F202 - B - French Reading - Grades 7 and 8

LA COMÉDIENNE DISPARUE - Sonia Sarfati

Ce qui m'a coupé le souffle, en sortant de l'aéroport, c'est la couleur du ciel. D'un bleu plus bleu que bleu. Un bleu brillant, un bleu de vacances. Je me demande d'ailleurs pourquoi certaines personnes disent "J'ai les bleus" pour exprimer leur mélancholie, leur tristesse

Le bleu est en fait une couleur de joie. Surtout celui de la Côte d'Azur, qui borde la mer Méditerranée, en France. Ce bleu-là, celui du ciel dans lequel je volais tout à l'heure et celui de la mer que je survolais, est extraordinaire.

Sébastien et Jocelyne, mes parents, partagent mon avis...même si mon père semble déjà avoir la tête ailleurs. Pas qu'il soit particulièrement distrait de nature. C'est plutôt que ce voyage signifie beaucoup pour lui.

Sébastien est comédien. Un super bon comédien, même. Pas encore très connu, mais les choses vont bientôt changer. Il y a quelque temps, il a joué dans un film intitulé Tristan et Iseult, inspiré de la légende qui porte ce nom.

Or, ce long métrage est présenté au Festival international des films de Cannes. Et il a des chances de remporter la Palme d'or, le premier prix, quoi!

Class F203 - A - French Reading - Grades 9 and Up

DES HOT DOGS SOUS LE SOLEIL - Raymond Plante

Il faut vraiment de tout pour faire un monde. Il y a les impatientes, ceux qu'on devrait servir avant qu'ils aient commandé. En les voyant sortir de leur voiture, simplement à leur démarche, il faudrait deviner qu'ils désirent un hamburger moutarde-oignons ou un cheeseburger all dressed. Il y a ceux qui ne savent pas ce qu'ils veulent. Pendant qu'ils hésitent, les pressés s'impatientent. Et ceux qui changent d'idée comme Madonna change de bikini.

- Dans mon cheeseburger, mets donc une tranche de tomate...Non, laisse faire, j'vais prendre du ketchup à la place... Ah! j'pense qu j'vais plutôt prendre une poutine et un steamé oignons seulement.

Il y a ceux qui me surveillent pendant que je prépare leur commande. Ils sont persuadés que je vais me tromper. Il y a ceux qui ne savent pas compter et qui s'imaginent que je ne leur remets pas leur monnaie au complet. Il y a aussi les clients ordinaires de qui il n'y a rien à dire. Il y a enfin ceux que je ne m'attendais jamais à voir là. Comme Moins-Cinq qui est venue avec ses deux filles. Moins-Cinq, s'est Mme Labelle, mon prof de français, dont le cou a l'allure de la Tour de Pise.

Class F203 - B - French Reading - Grades 9 and Up

NE FAITES PAS MAL A L'AVENIR - Roch Carrier

Nouvelle: Les enfants humiliés

Le midi, à la cafétéria, Linda, seule à une table, mangeait, la tête penchée sur son plateau. Benoit hésita, regarda autour de lui et vint se placer en face d'elle. Il n'avait pas faim. La nourriture était plutôt mauvaise, mais devant un banquet de roi, il n'aurait pas eu plus d'appétit. Linda pignochait dans son plateau. Pour rompre le silence, Benoit risqua:

- Ça m'a surpris que le professeur de français parle de ce problème-là.

- Je connais quelqu'un, moi, qui est battu par son père.

- Ah oui! Moi aussi je connais quelqu'un.

- Son père la frappe, continua Linda, la frappe jusqu'à ce qu'elle s'écrase par terre. Alors il commence à pleurer, et avec des sanglots il prie le bon Dieu de bien vouloir chasser les mauvaises idées de la tête de sa fille...

Linda fixa Benoit des yeux:

- Je sais, moi, que cette jeune fille n'a pas de mauvaises idées... Cette jeune fille ne sait pas pourquoi son père, bon la plupart du temps, devient tout à coup furieux et la bat.

Ils grignotèrent quelques bouchées sans parler.

- Moi, dit Benoit, le garçon que je connais est menacé de recevoir des coups de couteau. Quand ça va mal au bureau, son père revient avec une odeur d'alcool dans la bouche; c'est le signe de la tempête. Il se plaint que sa femme et ses enfants lui donnent tant de soucis qu'il ne peut plus travailler. Puis il accuse. Il crie. Et tout à coup, il les menace avec un couteau à dépecer. Le garçon que je connais a voulu se défendre - c'est l'aîné -, mais il a reçu un coup ici.

Benoit releva sa manche et Linda remarqua une cicatrice sur l'avant-bras. Benoit, étonné de son mouvement spontané, rebassa aussitôt sa manche.

- On est des enfants battus, dit Linda.