

# **The Rose**

William Butler Yeats

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# The Rose

William Butler Yeats

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## To The Rose Upon The Rood Of Time

Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days!  
Come near me, while I sing the ancient ways:  
Cuchulain battling with the bitter tide;  
The Druid, grey, wood-nurtured, quiet-eyed,  
Who cast round Fergus dreams, and ruin untold;  
And thine own sadness, where of stars, grown old  
In dancing silver-sandalled on the sea,  
Sing in their high and lonely melody.  
Come near, that no more blinded by man's fate,  
I find under the boughs of love and hate,  
In all poor foolish things that live a day,  
Eternal beauty wandering on her way.

## The Rose

Come near, come near, come near – Ah, leave me still  
A little space for the rose–breath to fill!  
Lest I no more bear common things that crave;  
The weak worm hiding down in its small cave,  
The field–mouse running by me in the grass,  
And heavy mortal hopes that toil and pass;  
But seek alone to hear the strange things said  
By God to the bright hearts of those long dead,  
And learn to chaunt a tongue men do not know.  
Come near; I would, before my time to go,  
Sing of old Eire and the ancient ways:  
Red Rose, proud Rose, sad Rose of all my days.

## Fergus And The Druid

**Fergus.** This whole day have I followed in the rocks,  
And you have changed and flowed from shape to shape,  
First as a raven on whose ancient wings  
Scarcely a feather lingered, then you seemed  
A weasel moving on from stone to stone,  
And now at last you wear a human shape,  
A thin grey man half lost in gathering night.

**Druid.** What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

**Fergus.** This would I Say, most wise of living souls:  
Young subtle Conchubar sat close by me  
When I gave judgment, and his words were wise,  
And what to me was burden without end,  
To him seemed easy, So I laid the crown  
Upon his head to cast away my sorrow.

**Druid.** What would you, king of the proud Red Branch kings?

**Fergus.** A king and proud! and that is my despair.  
I feast amid my people on the hill,  
And pace the woods, and drive my chariot–wheels  
In the white border of the murmuring sea;  
And still I feel the crown upon my head

**Druid.** What would you, Fergus?

**Fergus.** Be no more a king  
But learn the dreaming wisdom that is yours.

**Druid.** Look on my thin grey hair and hollow cheeks  
And on these hands that may not lift the sword,  
This body trembling like a wind-blown reed.  
No woman's loved me, no man sought my help.

**Fergus.** A king is but a foolish labourer  
Who wastes his blood to be another's dream.

**Druid.** Take, if you must, this little bag of dreams;  
Unloose the cord, and they will wrap you round.

**Fergus.** I See my life go drifting like a river  
From change to change; I have been many things –  
A green drop in the surge, a gleam of light  
Upon a sword, a fir-tree on a hill,  
An old slave grinding at a heavy quern,  
A king sitting upon a chair of gold –  
And all these things were wonderful and great;  
But now I have grown nothing, knowing all.  
Ah! Druid, Druid, how great webs of sorrow  
Lay hidden in the small slate-coloured thing!

## Cuchulan's Fight With The Sea

A MAN came slowly from the setting sun,  
To Emer, raddling raiment in her dun,  
And said, "I am that swineherd whom you bid  
Go watch the road between the wood and tide,  
But now I have no need to watch it more.'

Then Emer cast the web upon the floor,  
And raising arms all raddled with the dye,  
Parted her lips with a loud sudden cry.

That swineherd stared upon her face and said,  
"No man alive, no man among the dead,  
Has won the gold his cars of battle bring.'

"But if your master comes home triumphing  
Why must you blench and shake from foot to crown?"

Thereon he shook the more and cast him down  
Upon the web-heaped floor, and cried his word:  
"With him is one sweet-throated like a bird.'

"You dare me to my face,' and thereupon  
She smote with raddled fist, and where her son  
Herded the cattle came with stumbling feet,  
And cried with angry voice, "It is not meet  
To ide life away, a common herd.'

"I have long waited, mother, for that word:  
But wherefore now?'

"There is a man to die;  
You have the heaviest arm under the sky.'

"Whether under its daylight or its stars  
My father stands amid his battle-cars.'

"But you have grown to be the taller man.'

"Yet somewhere under starlight or the sun  
My father stands.'

"Aged, worn out with wars  
On foot. on horseback or in battle-cars.'

"I only ask what way my journey lies,  
For He who made you bitter made you wise.'

"The Red Branch camp in a great company  
Between wood's rim and the horses of the sea.  
Go there, and light a camp-fire at wood's rim;  
But tell your name and lineage to him  
Whose blade compels, and wait till they have found  
Some feasting man that the same oath has bound.'

Among those feasting men Cuchulain dwelt,  
And his young sweetheart close beside him knelt,  
Stared on the mournful wonder of his eyes,  
Even as Spring upon the ancient skies,  
And pondered on the glory of his days;  
And all around the harp-string told his praise,  
And Conchubar, the Red Branch king of kings,  
With his own fingers touched the brazen strings.  
At last Cuchulain spake, "Some man has made  
His evening fire amid the leafy shade.  
I have often heard him singing to and fro,  
I have often heard the sweet sound of his bow.  
Seek out what man he is.'

One went and came.



## The Rose Of The World

WHO dreamed that beauty passes like a dream?  
For these red lips, with all their mournful pride,  
Mournful that no new wonder may betide,  
Troy passed away in one high funeral gleam,  
And Usna's children died.

We and the labouring world are passing by:  
Amid men's souls, that waver and give place  
Like the pale waters in their wintry race,  
Under the passing stars, foam of the sky,  
Lives on this lonely face.

Bow down, archangels, in your dim abode:  
Before you were, or any hearts to beat,  
Weary and kind one lingered by His seat;  
He made the world to be a grassy road  
Before her wandering feet.

## The Rose Of Peace

IF Michael, leader of God's host  
When Heaven and Hell are met,  
Looked down on you from Heaven's door—post  
He would his deeds forget.

Brooding no more upon God's wars  
In his divine homestead,  
He would go weave out of the stars  
A chaplet for your head.

And all folk seeing him bow down,  
And white stars tell your praise,  
Would come at last to God's great town,  
Led on by gentle ways;

And God would bid His warfare cease,  
Saying all things were well;  
And softly make a rosy peace,

A peace of Heaven with Hell.

## The Rose Of Battle

ROSE of all Roses, Rose of all the World!  
The tall thought-woven sails, that flap unfurled  
Above the tide of hours, trouble the air,  
And God's bell buoyed to be the water's care;  
While hushed from fear, or loud with hope, a band  
With blown, spray-dabbled hair gather at hand,  
Turn if you may from battles never done,  
I call, as they go by me one by one,  
Danger no refuge holds, and war no peace,  
For him who hears love sing and never cease,  
Beside her clean-swept hearth, her quiet shade:  
But gather all for whom no love hath made  
A woven silence, or but came to cast  
A song into the air, and singing passed  
To smile on the pale dawn; and gather you  
Who have sought more than is in rain or dew,  
Or in the sun and moon, or on the earth,  
Or sighs amid the wandering, starry mirth,  
Or comes in laughter from the sea's sad lips,  
And wage God's battles in the long grey ships.  
The sad, the lonely, the insatiable,  
To these Old Night shall all her mystery tell;  
God's bell has claimed them by the little cry  
Of their sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

Rose of all Roses, Rose of all the World!  
You, too, have come where the dim tides are hurled  
Upon the wharves of sorrow, and heard ring  
The bell that calls us on; the sweet far thing.  
Beauty grown sad with its eternity  
Made you of us, and of the dim grey sea.  
Our long ships loose thought-woven sails and wait,  
For God has bid them share an equal fate;  
And when at last, defeated in His wars,  
They have gone down under the same white stars,  
We shall no longer hear the little cry  
Of our sad hearts, that may not live nor die.

## A Faery Song

Sung by the people of Faery over Diarmuid and Grania,  
in their bridal sleep under a Cromlech.

WE who are old, old and gay,  
O so old!  
Thousands of years, thousands of years,  
If all were told:

Give to these children, new from the world,  
Silence and love;  
And the long dew-dropping hours of the night,  
And the stars above:

Give to these children, new from the world,  
Rest far from men.  
Is anything better, anything better?  
Tell us it then:

Us who are old, old and gay,  
O so old!  
Thousands of years, thousands of years,  
If all were told.

## The Lake Isle Of Innisfree

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the mourning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,

## The Rose

And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

## A Cradle Song

THE angels are stooping  
Above your bed;  
They weary of trooping  
With the whimpering dead.

God's laughing in Heaven  
To see you so good;  
The Sailing Seven  
Are gay with His mood.

I sigh that kiss you,  
For I must own  
That I shall miss you  
When you have grown.

## The Pity Of Love

A PITY beyond all telling  
Is hid in the heart of love:  
The folk who are buying and selling,  
The clouds on their journey above,  
The cold wet winds ever blowing,  
And the shadowy hazel grove  
Where mouse-grey waters are flowing,  
Threaten the head that I love.

## The Sorrow Of Love

THE brawling of a sparrow in the eaves,  
The brilliant moon and all the milky sky,  
And all that famous harmony of leaves,  
Had blotted out man's image and his cry.

A girl arose that had red mournful lips  
And seemed the greatness of the world in tears,  
Doomed like Odysseus and the labouring ships  
And proud as Priam murdered with his peers;

Arose, and on the instant clamorous eaves,  
A climbing moon upon an empty sky,  
And all that lamentation of the leaves,  
Could but compose man's image and his cry.

## When You Are Old

WHEN you are old and grey and full of sleep,  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim Soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,  
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

## The White Birds

I WOULD that we were, my beloved, white birds on the foam of the sea!  
We tire of the flame of the meteor, before it can fade and flee;  
And the flame of the blue star of twilight, hung low on the rim of the sky,  
Has awaked in our hearts, my beloved, a sadness that may not die.  
A weariness comes from those dreamers, dew-dabbled, the lily and rose;  
Ah, dream not of them, my beloved, the flame of the meteor that goes,  
Or the flame of the blue star that lingers hung low in the fall of the dew:  
For I would we were changed to white birds on the wandering foam: I and you!  
I am haunted by numberless islands, and many a Danaan shore,  
Where Time would surely forget us, and Sorrow come near us no more;  
Soon far from the rose and the lily and fret of the flames would we be,  
Were we only white birds, my beloved, buoyed out on the foam of the sea!

## A Dream Of Death

I DREAMED that one had died in a strange place  
Near no accustomed hand,  
And they had nailed the boards above her face,  
The peasants of that land,  
Wondering to lay her in that solitude,  
And raised above her mound  
A cross they had made out of two bits of wood,  
And planted cypress round;  
And left her to the indifferent stars above  
Until I carved these words:  
She was more beautiful than thy first love,  
But now lies under boards.

## The Countess Cathleen In Paradise

ALL the heavy days are over;  
Leave the body's coloured pride  
Underneath the grass and clover,  
With the feet laid side by side.

Bathed in flaming founts of duty  
She'll not ask a haughty dress;  
Carry all that mournful beauty  
To the scented oaken press.

Did the kiss of Mother Mary  
Put that music in her face?  
Yet she goes with footstep wary,  
Full of earth's old timid grace.

'Mong the feet of angels seven  
What a dancer glimmering!  
All the heavens bow down to Heaven,  
Flame to flame and wing to wing.

## Who Goes With Fergus?

WHO will go drive with Fergus now,  
And pierce the deep wood's woven shade,  
And dance upon the level shore?  
Young man, lift up your russet brow,  
And lift your tender eyelids, maid,  
And brood on hopes and fear no more.

And no more turn aside and brood  
Upon love's bitter mystery;  
For Fergus rules the brazen cars,  
And rules the shadows of the wood,  
And the white breast of the dim sea  
And all dishevelled wandering stars.

## The Man Who Dreamed Of Faeryland

HE stood among a crowd at Dromahair;  
His heart hung all upon a silken dress,  
And he had known at last some tenderness,  
Before earth took him to her stony care;  
But when a man poured fish into a pile,  
It Seemed they raised their little silver heads,  
And sang what gold morning or evening sheds  
Upon a woven world—forgotten isle  
Where people love beside the ravelled seas;  
That Time can never mar a lover's vows  
Under that woven changeless roof of boughs:  
The singing shook him out of his new ease.

He wandered by the sands of Lissadell;  
His mind ran all on money cares and fears,  
And he had known at last some prudent years  
Before they heaped his grave under the hill;  
But while he passed before a plashy place,  
A lug—worm with its grey and muddy mouth  
Sang that somewhere to north or west or south  
There dwelt a gay, exulting, gentle race  
Under the golden or the silver skies;  
That if a dancer stayed his hungry foot  
It seemed the sun and moon were in the fruit:  
And at that singing he was no more wise.

He mused beside the well of Scanavin,  
He mused upon his mockers: without fail  
His sudden vengeance were a country tale,  
When earthy night had drunk his body in;  
But one small knot—grass growing by the pool  
Sang where — unnecessary cruel voice —  
Old silence bids its chosen race rejoice,  
Whatever ravelled waters rise and fall  
Or stormy silver fret the gold of day,  
And midnight there enfold them like a fleece  
And lover there by lover be at peace.  
The tale drove his fine angry mood away.

He slept under the hill of Lugnagall;  
And might have known at last unhaunted sleep  
Under that cold and vapour—turbaned steep,  
Now that the earth had taken man and all:

Did not the worms that spired about his bones  
proclaim with that unwearied, reedy cry  
That God has laid His fingers on the sky,  
That from those fingers glittering summer runs  
Upon the dancer by the dreamless wave.  
Why should those lovers that no lovers miss  
Dream, until God burn Nature with a kiss?  
The man has found no comfort in the grave.

## **The Dedication To A Book Of Stories Selected From The Irish Novelists**

THERE was a green branch hung with many a bell  
When her own people ruled this tragic Eire;  
And from its murmuring greenness, calm of Faery,  
A Druid kindness, on all hearers fell.

It charmed away the merchant from his guile,  
And turned the farmer's memory from his cattle,  
And hushed in sleep the roaring ranks of battle:  
And all grew friendly for a little while.

Ah, Exiles wandering over lands and seas,  
And planning, plotting always that some morrow  
May set a stone upon ancestral Sorrow!  
I also bear a bell-branch full of ease.

I tore it from green boughs winds tore and tossed  
Until the sap of summer had grown weary!  
I tore it from the barren boughs of Eire,  
That country where a man can be so crossed;

Can be so battered, badgered and destroyed  
That he's a loveless man: gay bells bring laughter  
That shakes a mouldering cobweb from the rafter;  
And yet the saddest chimes are best enjoyed.

Gay bells or sad, they bring you memories  
Of half-forgotten innocent old places:  
We and our bitterness have left no traces  
On Munster grass and Connemara skies.

## The Lamentation Of The Old Pensioner

ALTHOUGH I shelter from the rain  
Under a broken tree,  
My chair was nearest to the fire  
In every company  
That talked of love or politics,  
Ere Time transfigured me.

Though lads are making pikes again  
For some conspiracy,  
And crazy rascals rage their fill  
At human tyranny,  
My contemplations are of Time  
That has transfigured me.

There's not a woman turns her face  
Upon a broken tree,  
And yet the beauties that I loved  
Are in my memory;  
I spit into the face of Time  
That has transfigured me.

## The Ballad Of Father Gilligan

THE old priest Peter Gilligan  
Was weary night and day;  
For half his flock were in their beds,  
Or under green sods lay.

Once, while he nodded on a chair,  
At the moth-hour of eve,  
Another poor man sent for him,  
And he began to grieve.

"I have no rest, nor joy, nor peace,  
For people die and die";  
And after cried he, "God forgive!  
My body spake, not I!"

## The Rose

He knelt, and leaning on the chair  
He prayed and fell asleep;  
And the moth-hour went from the fields,  
And stars began to peep.

They slowly into millions grew,  
And leaves shook in the wind;  
And God covered the world with shade,  
And whispered to mankind.

Upon the time of sparrow-chirp  
When the moths came once more.  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
Stood upright on the floor.

"Mavrone, mavrone! the man has died  
While I slept on the chair';  
He roused his horse out of its sleep,  
And rode with little care.

He rode now as he never rode,  
By rocky lane and fen;  
The sick man's wife opened the door:  
"Father! you come again!"

"And is the poor man dead?' he cried.  
'He died an hour ago.'  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
In grief swayed to and fro.

"When you were gone, he turned and died  
As merry as a bird.'  
The old priest Peter Gilligan  
He knelt him at that word.

"He Who hath made the night of stars  
For souls who tire and bleed,  
Sent one of His great angels down  
To help me in my need.

"He Who is wrapped in purple robes,  
With planets in His care,  
Had pity on the least of things  
Asleep upon a chair.'

## The Two Trees

BELOVED, gaze in thine own heart,  
The holy tree is growing there;  
From joy the holy branches start,  
And all the trembling flowers they bear.  
The changing colours of its fruit  
Have dowered the stars with metry light;  
The surety of its hidden root  
Has planted quiet in the night;  
The shaking of its leafy head  
Has given the waves their melody,  
And made my lips and music wed,  
Murmuring a wizard song for thee.  
There the Joves a circle go,  
The flaming circle of our days,  
Gyring, spiring to and fro  
In those great ignorant leafy ways;  
Remembering all that shaken hair  
And how the winged sandals dart,  
Thine eyes grow full of tender care:

Beloved, gaze in thine own heart.  
Gaze no more in the bitter glass  
The demons, with their subtle guile.  
Lift up before us when they pass,  
Or only gaze a little while;  
For there a fatal image grows  
That the stormy night receives,  
Roots half hidden under snows,  
Broken boughs and blackened leaves.  
For ill things turn to barrenness  
In the dim glass the demons hold,  
The glass of outer weariness,  
Made when God slept in times of old.  
There, through the broken branches, go  
The ravens of unresting thought;  
Flying, crying, to and fro,  
Cruel claw and hungry throat,  
Or else they stand and sniff the wind,  
And shake their ragged wings; alas!  
Thy tender eyes grow all unkind:  
Gaze no more in the bitter glass.

## To Some I Have Talked With By The Fire

WHILE I wrought out these fitful Danaan rhymes,  
My heart would brim with dreams about the times  
When we bent down above the fading coals  
And talked of the dark folk who live in souls  
Of passionate men, like bats in the dead trees;  
And of the wayward twilight companies  
Who sigh with mingled sorrow and content,  
Because their blossoming dreams have never bent  
Under the fruit of evil and of good:  
And of the embattled flaming multitude  
Who rise, wing above wing, flame above flame,  
And, like a storm, cry the Ineffable Name,  
And with the clashing of their sword-blades make  
A rapturous music, till the morning break  
And the white hush end all but the loud beat  
Of their long wings, the flash of their white feet.

## To Ireland In The Coming Times

Know, that I would accounted be  
True brother of a company  
That sang, to sweeten Ireland's wrong,  
Ballad and story, rann and song;  
Nor be I any less of them,  
Because the red-rose-bordered hem  
Of her, whose history began  
Before God made the angelic clan,  
Trails all about the written page.  
When Time began to rant and rage  
The measure of her flying feet  
Made Ireland's heart begin to beat;  
And Time bade all his candles flare  
To light a measure here and there;  
And may the thoughts of Ireland brood  
Upon a measured quietude.  
Nor may I less be counted one  
With Davis, Mangan, Ferguson,  
Because, to him who ponders well,

## The Rose

My rhymes more than their rhyming tell  
Of things discovered in the deep,  
Where only body's laid asleep.  
For the elemental creatures go  
About my table to and fro,  
That hurry from unmeasured mind  
To rant and rage in flood and wind,  
Yet he who treads in measured ways  
May surely barter gaze for gaze.  
Man ever journeys on with them  
After the red-rose-bordered hem.  
Ah, faerics, dancing under the moon,  
A Druid land, a Druid tune.!  
While still I may, I write for you  
The love I lived, the dream I knew.  
From our birthday, until we die,  
Is but the winking of an eye;  
And we, our singing and our love,  
What measurer Time has lit above,  
And all benighted things that go  
About my table to and fro,  
Are passing on to where may be,  
In truth's consuming ecstasy,  
No place for love and dream at all;  
For God goes by with white footfall.  
I cast my heart into my rhymes,  
That you, in the dim coming times,  
May know how my heart went with them  
After the red-rose-bordered hem.