

15 Best Poems about Time You Must Read

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Poems about time explore the passage of time and its impact on human existence. In these poems, authors reflect on the fleeting nature of time, the beauty and tragedy of its passing, and the inevitability of its effects on our lives.

Here, I have selected the 15 best poems on the theme of time from the works of renowned poets such as William Shakespeare, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Herrick, and P.B. Shelley.

1. To Daffodils by Robert Herrick

When it comes to poems about time, one notable poem is "[To Daffodils](#)" by [Robert Herrick](#) (1591-1674). The poem was published in Herrick's only collection of poems, *Hesperides*, in 1648.

In this poem, the poet reflects on the fleeting nature of time and encourages the reader to seize the present moment.

We have short time to stay, as you, We have as short a spring; As quick a growth to meet decay, As you, or anything. We die As your hours do, and dry Away, Like to the summer's rain;

"To Daffodils" compares daffodils to humans, emphasizing how quickly time passes. The poem urges readers to appreciate the beauty of nature and live in the present moment. It reminds us that life is transient and encourages us to make the most of each day.

2. Ozymandias by P.B. Shelley

"[Ozymandias](#)" is a sonnet by [Percy Bysshe Shelley](#) (1792-1822). The poem was written in 1817 and was published on January 11, 1818, in *The Examiner*.

The sonnet explores the theme of the passing of time. It depicts a ruined statue of a once mighty ruler, Ozymandias, and highlights the transient nature of power and the inevitable decay of all things.

And on the pedestal, these words appear: My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings; Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair! Nothing beside remains. Round the decay Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare The lone and level sands stretch far away.

The speaker uses vivid imagery and descriptive language to convey the irony of the statue's inscription, which claims that the ruler's power is eternal. However, the broken statue and barren surroundings are a stark reminder of the fleeting nature of human achievements. Through this poem, Shelley reminds us that time is the ultimate conqueror of all.

3. Fern Hill by Dylan Thomas

[Dylan Thomas' "Fern Hill"](#) is a timeless poem that reflects on the passing of time and the fleeting nature of youth. The poem was first published in *Horizon* magazine in October 1945 and included in the *Deaths and Entrances* in 1946.

"Fern Hill" portrays the innocence and joy of childhood, as well as the inevitable transition into adulthood.

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs About the lilting house and happy as the grass was green, The night above the dingle starry, Time let me hail and climb Golden in the heydays of his eyes,

The poem captures the bittersweet nostalgia and the longing to hold onto moments that slip away. Thomas's vivid imagery and lyrical language paint a picture of a carefree existence in the countryside, where time stands still. The poem serves as a reminder to cherish and appreciate the present as time waits for no one.

4. Sonnet 19 by Shakespeare

["Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws," - Sonnet 19](#) by [William Shakespeare](#) (1564-1616) is a beautiful poem that explores the concept of time and its impact on beauty and mortality. This poem is one of 154 sonnets by Shakespeare in 1609.

In this sonnet, the poet echoes the transient nature of youth and beauty and how time inevitably leads to their decay.

Devouring Time, blunt thou the lion's paws, And make the earth devour her own sweet brood; Pluck
the keen teeth from the fierce tiger's jaws, And burn the long-liv'd Phoenix in her blood;

Through vivid imagery and skilful use of metaphor, Shakespeare conveys the idea that the power of poetry can transcend time and preserve the beauty of its subject.

5. Piano By D. H. Lawrence

[D. H. Lawrence](#)'s "[Piano](#)" explores the theme of nostalgia and the passing of time. The poem was published in Lawrence's 1913 collection *Love Poems and Others*.

The speaker calls back his childhood memories of sitting beneath the piano as his mother played melodiously.

Softly, in the dusk, a woman is singing to me; Taking me back down the vista of years, till I see A
child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings And pressing the small, poised feet
of a mother who smiles as she sings.

In this poem, the nostalgia is heightened by imagery and sensory details, such as the "tingling strings" and the "ecstasy" of the music. The piano symbolizes the speaker's past, a time of innocence and joy, contrasting with the present reality of the speaker's adult life filled with responsibilities and "weary" days.

6. To His Coy Mistress by Andrew Marvell

"[To His Coy Mistress](#)" by [Andrew Marvell](#) (1621-1678) is a well-known poem that discusses the concept of time. The poem was published posthumously in 1681.

It is written in the form of a metaphysical poem and explores themes of love, desire, and the passing of time.

In the poem, a lover speaker argues that time is fleeting and that one should seize the moment and not waste precious time. The poem is divided into three sections, each representing a different aspect of the speaker's argument.

An hundred years should go to praise Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze; Two hundred to adore
each breast, But thirty thousand to the rest; An age at least to every part, And the last age should
show your heart. For, lady, you deserve this state, Nor would I love at lower rate.

In the first section, the speaker describes how he would spend more time praising the beauty of his beloved if he had all the time in the world. In the second section, the speaker emphasizes the urgency of time and argues that he and his beloved should act on their desires now. In the final section, the speaker urges the coy mistress to yield to their desires.

7. 'To The Virgins, To Make Much Of Time' by Robert Herrick

'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time' is a famous poem by Robert Herrick. The poem was published in 1648 during the Renaissance period.

It is a lyrical poem emphasizing the importance of seizing the present moment and enjoying life while young and in their prime. The poem's theme revolves around the concept that time is fleeting and one should make the most of it.

Then be not coy, but use your time, And while ye may, go marry; For having lost but once your
prime, You may forever tarry.

The poet advises the young virgins to make the most of their youth as it will not last forever.

8. A Clock Stopped by Emily Dickinson

[Emily Dickinson](#)'s poem "A Clock Stopped," explores the concept of time and its passing. The poem was published in 1896.

It depicts the timeless nature of eternity by describing a stopped clock. By focusing on the clock's silence and stillness, Dickinson raises questions about the human perception of time and its significance.

A Clock stopped - Not the Mantel's - Geneva's farthest skill Can't put the puppet bowing That just
now dangled still -

The poem encourages readers to contemplate the fleeting nature of moments and the eternal questions that arise from contemplating time. Through her evocative language and powerful imagery, Dickinson invites us to reflect on the complexities of time and its impact on our lives.

9. "Hope" is the Thing with Feathers by Emily Dickinson

Regarding poems about time, Emily Dickinson's "'Hope' is the thing with feathers" is a beloved choice. The poem first appeared in *Poems by Emily Dickinson*, the second series in 1891.

It pictures hope as a powerful force that sustains individuals during difficult times.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers - That perches in the soul - And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

Written in Dickinson's signature concise and evocative style, the poem compares hope to a bird with feathers. The bird's song amid storms and adversity is a metaphor for the resilience and strength of hope. It suggests that even in the darkest time, hope can provide comfort and uplift spirits.

10. I Look into My Glass by Thomas Hardy

[Thomas Hardy](#)'s "I Look into My Glass" is a contemplative and introspective poem that explores the passage of time and the inevitable march toward ageing and mortality. The poem was published in Thomas Hardy's first volume of poetry, *Wessex Poems*, in 1898.

The speaker laments mortality and the loss of youthful beauty and vigour.

I look into my glass, And view my wasting skin, And say, "Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!

In the poem, the mirror becomes a symbol of self-reflection and a reminder of the passage of time. It serves as a poignant reminder to appreciate the present moment and to acknowledge the transient nature of life.

11. Clocks by Carl Sandburg

Carl Sandburg's (1878–1967) poem 'Clocks' explores the concept of time and its impact on our lives.

The poem portrays the ticking of clocks and the passing of time. It emphasizes the fleeting nature of our existence.

HERE is a face that says half-past seven the same way whether a murder or a wedding goes on,
whether a funeral or a picnic crowd passes.

The poem encourages readers to contemplate the significance of time in their lives and the importance of cherishing each moment.

12. Days by Philip Larkin

"Days" by Philip Larkin is a thought-provoking poem that explores the passing of time and the fleeting nature of life, first published on February 28, 1964.

Larkin reflects on how time seems to slip away quickly, leaving the speaker nostalgic for the past.

What are days for? Days are where we live. They come, they wake us Time and time over.

The poem emphasizes the idea that as time passes, we become more aware of its transience and the limited time we have. Larkin captures the essence of the human experience and the profound impact that time has on our lives.

13. Timer by Tony Harrison

'Timer' by Tony Harrison is a wonderful poem about the passage of time and its impact on our lives. The poem was published in the poet's 1981 collection *The School of Eloquence*.

It explores the concept of time through the metaphor of a timer, which represents the inevitability of mortality.

I feel your ashes, head, arms, breasts, womb, legs, sift through its circle slowly, like that thing you used to let me watch to time the eggs.

14. Passing Time by Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's poem "*Passing Time*"

explores the concept of time as an unstoppable force. The poem was first published in Angelou's anthology *Oh Pray My Wings Are Gonna Fit Me Well*, published in **1975**.

The poet ponders the idea of the minutes slipping away and the memories fading. She reminds us to cherish each moment and maximize our time.

One paints the beginning of a certain end. The other, the end of a sure beginning.

15. Hour by Carol Ann Duffy

In Carol Ann Duffy's poem "Hour", she explores the concept of time and its impact on relationships and love. The poem was published in the poet's 2005 poetry collection *Rapture*. It portrays an hour as a precious and fleeting moment, emphasizing the importance of seizing the present and cherishing every second.

Love's time's beggar, but even a single hour, bright as a dropped coin, makes love rich. We find an hour together, spend it not on flowers or wine, but the whole of the summer sky and a grass ditch.

"Hour" is a poignant reminder to slow down and savour the moments that make up our lives, for time waits for no one. It urges us to seize the day, to love deeply and passionately, and to treasure each passing hour as a gift.

In poetry, the concept of time has been a perennial exploration subject. From Shakespeare's sonnets to Maya Angelou's "Passing Time," poets have grappled with the fleeting nature of time and its impact on our lives. Give a good read to these poems if you love to think about the nature of time.