

Level 3 Speaking Verse and Prose:

Grade 7 – Verse

Titles in Level 3 Speaking Verse and Prose: Grade 7 – Verse

The Football Phone-In

Smiles

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Valentine

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The Football Phone-In

The second time that my Dad lost his hair
we'd speak about football over the phone,
my hand on the arm of the fake leather chair
where I'd sit through the nights in my bedroom alone.

I'd ring every Sunday and spin him some lies
like 'dinner was fine' and he'd tell me some too
then we'd talk about Gerrard and feign our surprise
at his plans for LA when the season was through.

See football was safe. We both knew the score.
We could talk about losses for hours at length
but no matter the outcome – a win or a draw –
we could gather some hope and turn it to strength.

You could trust that. Sometimes I think the world
would have to end for football to die.
A nuclear bomb tears through banners unfurled
on the kop end and plumes like a flare through the sky

But were that to happen, I'd still have it here.
Being pulled up the stand, held tight in his arm
through the noise and me grinning from ear to ear.
My Dad and his pride. The warmth in his palm.

So to sit on those Sundays and speak through a phone,
it never seemed hard to pretend that my heart wasn't breaking.
Though I never said it, I'm sure it was known;
he could call me whenever, and he'd never walk alone.

*By Benjamin Bridson
(LAMDA Graduate)*

Smiles

Smile a little, smile a little,
As you go along,
Not alone when life is pleasant,
But when things go wrong.
Care delights to see you frowning,
Loves to hear you sigh;
Turn a smiling face upon her—
Quick the dame will fly.

Smile a little, smile a little,
All along the road;
Every life must have its burden,
Every heart its load.
Why sit down in gloom and darkness
With your grief to sup?
As you drink Fate's bitter tonic,
Smile across the cup.

Smile upon the troubled pilgrims
Whom you pass and meet;
Frowns are thorns, and smiles are blossoms
Oft for weary feet.
Do not make the way seem harder
By a sullen face;
Smile a little, smile a little,
Brighten up the place.

Smile upon your undone labour;
Not for one who grieves
O'er his task waits wealth or glory;
He who smiles achieves.
Though you meet with loss and sorrow
In the passing years,
Smile a little, smile a little,
Even through your tears.

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox

After I Wake Up

*After I wake up and before I get up
I lie in bed each day and think: Supposing,
Only supposing, the leader of some country,
Some party, union, faction, should stand up,
Rise on his hind legs in a public manner,
Get out his sheaf of notes, adjust his glasses,
Sip at his tumbler, hem and haw a little,
Then address his opposition:*

Gentlemen,

Gentlemen, we were wrong, we have much wronged you,
The quarrel was of our seeking and our cause,
We owed you thanks and paid you with resentment,
Some truths we hid and others we perverted,
The abstract words we used were always empty.

Gentlemen,

Gentlemen, we were wrong and with full knowledge
And have no right to count upon forgiveness:
Yet we are human, yet we are both human—
Though you were right, our quarrel grew from difference
And in that difference lies the birth of richness
As well as of dispute. Let us exchange then,
And build together what we broke together,

Gentlemen,

And live in peace before eternal darkness.

I dream of that awhile, then sick at heart

Go down to find the newspaper on the mat.

By Hilary Corke

The Life of a Digger

Henry from the island of Jamaica

Jamaican digging crews have to sleep
eighty men to a room, in huge warehouses
like the ones where big wooden crates
of dynamite are stored.

My hands feel like scorpion claws,
clamped on to a hard hard shovel all day,
then curled into fists at night.

At dawn, the steaming labor trains
deliver us by the thousands, down into
that snake pit where we dig
until my muscles feel
as weak as water
and my backbone
is like shattered glass.

But only half the day
is over.

At lunchtime, we see sunburned
American engineers and foremen
eating at tables, in shady tents
with the flaps left open,
so that we have to watch

how they sit on nice chairs,
looking restful.

We also watch the medium-dark
Spanish men, relaxing as they sit
on their train tracks, grinning
as if they know secrets.

We have no place to sit. Not even
a stool. So we stand, plates in hand,
uncomfortable
and undignified.

Back home, I used to dream of saving
enough Panama money
to buy a bit of good farmland
for Momma and my little brothers
and sisters, so that we would all
have plenty to eat.
Now all I want is a chair.
And food with some spice.
And fair treatment.
Justice.

By Margarita Engle

Valentine

Not a red rose or a satin heart.

I give you an onion.
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
like the careful undressing of love.

Here.
It will blind you with tears
like a lover.
It will make your reflection
a wobbling photo of grief.

I am trying to be truthful.

Not a cute card or a kissogram.

I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
possessive and faithful
as we are,
for as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-ring,
if you like.

Lethal.

Its scent will cling to your fingers,
cling to your knife.

By Carol Ann Duffy

You are Old, Father William

'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 down stairs!'

By Lewis Carroll

Parting

There's no use in weeping,
Though we are condemned to part:
There's such a thing as keeping
A remembrance in one's heart:

There's such a thing as dwelling
On the thought ourselves have nursed,
And with scorn and courage telling
The world to do its worst.

We'll not let its follies grieve us,
We'll just take them as they come;
And then every day will leave us
A merry laugh for home.

When we've left each friend and brother,
When we're parted wide and far,
We will think of one another,
As even better than we are.

Every glorious sight above us,
Every pleasant sight beneath,
We'll connect with those that love us,
Whom we truly love till death!

In the evening, when we're sitting
By the fire, perchance alone,

Then shall heart with warm heart meeting,
Give responsive tone for tone.

We can burst the bonds which chain us,
Which cold human hands have wrought,
And where none shall dare restrain us
We can meet again, in thought.

So there's no use in weeping,
Bear a cheerful spirit still;
Never doubt that Fate is keeping
Future good for present ill!

By Charlotte Brontë

Lifted

The land says – *come uphill*: and water says
I will. But take it slow.

A workman's ask and nothing fancy –
Will you? Here's an answer, engineered.

A leisurely machine, a box of oak and stone;
the mitred lock, the water's *YES*.

We're stopped. The bow bumps softly
at the bottom gate, and drifts.

All water wants, all water ever wants,
is to fall. So, we use the fall to lift us,

make of water its own tool, as simple
as a crowbar or a well-tied knot;

open up the paddles, let it dam and pucker,
lift and with it, lift us like a bride, a kite,

a wanted answer, breath no longer held
or like a boat. We're on our way

and rising. Water rushes in like fools;
these tonnages that slip across the cill,

all dirty-bottle green and gathering, into
a giddy hurl then slower, slow until

it ends in glassy bulges, hints of aftermath:
a cool and thorough spending.

Wait, then, for the shudder in the gate,
the backward-drifting boat that tells you

there and here are equal, an imbalance
righted. Ask of water, *help me rise*

and water says: *I will.*

By Jo Bell