

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Sonnet 12:

*When I do count the clock
that tells the time*

*When I do count the clock that tells the time,
And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
 When I behold the violet past prime,
 And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
 When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
 Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
 And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
 Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
 Then of thy beauty do I question make,
 That thou among the wastes of time must go,
 Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
 And die as fast as they see others grow;
And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.*

LINDA PASTAN

Counting backwards

*How did I get so old,
I wonder,
contemplating
my 67th birthday.
Dyslexia smiles:
I'm 76 in fact.*

*There are places
where at 60 they start
counting backwards;
in Japan
they start again
from one.*

LINDA PASTAN

*Counting backwards
(cont.)*

*But the numbers
hardly matter.*

*It's the physics
of acceleration I mind,
the way time speeds up
as if it hasn't guessed*

*the destination—
where look!*

*I see my mother
and father bearing a cake,
waiting for me
at the starting line.*

ANDREW MARVELL

To His Coy Mistress

Had we but world enough and time,
This coyness, lady, were no crime.
We would sit down, and think which way
To walk, and pass our long love's day.
Thou by the Indian Ganges' side
Shouldst rubies find; I by the tide
Of Humber would complain. I would
Love you ten years before the flood,
And you should, if you please, refuse
Till the conversion of the Jews.
My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than empires and more slow;
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.
But at my back I always hear
Time's wingèd chariot hurrying near;
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity.

ANDREW MARVELL

To His Coy Mistress
(cont.)

Thy beauty shall no more be found;
Nor, in thy marble vault, shall sound
My echoing song; then worms shall try
That long-preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust;
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none, I think, do there embrace.
Now therefore, while the youthful hue
Sits on thy skin like morning dew,
And while thy willing soul transpires
At every pore with instant fires,
Now let us sport us while we may,
And now, like amorous birds of prey,
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapped power.
Let us roll all our strength and all
Our sweetness up into one ball,
And tear our pleasures with rough strife
Through the iron gates of life:
Thus, though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.

MARY RUEFLE

The Passing of Time

*My mother has been dead six months
when my father remembers, as if for
the first time, that she is dead
and pads out across his deck
to lower the flag to half-mast.*

*Seeing that it already hangs midway
on the pole (snapping at the wind,
collapsed in damp heat, as if it were
her hair) he is startled, and asks
Who died? I say Mother and after a while
he says Ah! Then let it fly a little longer.*

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

*Time, Real And Imaginary.
An Allegory*

*On the wide level of a mountain's head
(I knew not where, but 'twas some faery place),
Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails outspread,
Two lovely children run an endless race,
A sister and a brother!
This far outstripp'd the other;
Yet ever runs she with reverted face,
And looks and listens for the boy behind:
For he, alas! is blind!
O'er rough and smooth with even step he pass'd,
And knows not whether he be first or last.*