

Poems about Death

Death Snips Proud Men by Carl Sandburg

Death is stronger than all the governments because the governments are men and men die and then death laughs: Now you see 'em, now you don't.

Death is stronger than all proud men and so death snips proud men on the nose, throws a pair of dice and says: Read 'em and weep.

Death sends a radiogram every day: When I want you I'll drop in—and then one day he comes with a master-key and lets himself in and says: We'll go now.

Death is a nurse mother with big arms: 'Twon't hurt you at all; it's your time now; you just need a long sleep, child; what have you had anyhow better than sleep?

Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter



John Crowe Ransom

There was such speed in her little body,
And such lightness in her footfall,
It is no wonder her brown study
Astonishes us all.

Her wars were bruited in our high window.
We looked among orchard trees and beyond
Where she took arms against her shadow,
Or harried unto the pond

The lazy geese, like a snow cloud
Dripping their snow on the green grass,
Tricking and stopping, sleepy and proud,
Who cried in goose, Alas,

For the tireless heart within the little
Lady with rod that made them rise
From their noon apple-dream and scuttle
Goose-fashion under the skies!

But now go the bells, and we are ready,
In one house we are stern stopped
To say we are vexed at her brown study,
Lying so primly propped.

The Missing

Thomas Gunn

Now as I watch the progress of the plague,
The friends surrounding me fall sick, grow thin,
and drop away. Bared, is my shape less vague
—Sharply exposed and with a sculpted skin?
I do not like the statue's chill contour,
Not nowadays. The warmth investing me
Led outward through mind, limb, feeling, and more
In an involved increasing family.
Contact of friend led to another friend
Supple entwinement through the living mass
Which for all that I knew might have no end,
Image of an unlimited embrace.
I do not just feel ease, though comfortable:
Aggressive as in some ideal of sport,
With ceaseless movement thrilling through the
whole,
their push kept me as firm as their support.
But death—Their deaths have left me less defined:
It was their pulsing presence made me clear.
I borrowed from it, I was unconfined,
Who tonight balance unsupported here,

Eyes glaring from raw marble, in a pose
Languorously part-buried in the block,
Shins perfect and no calves, as if I froze
Between potential and a finished work.
—Abandoned incomplete, shape of a shape,
In which exact detail shows the more strange,
Trapped in unwholeness, I find no escape
Back to the play of constant give and change.

**All but Death, can be Adjusted --
by Emily Dickinson**

All but Death, can be Adjusted --
Dynasties repaired --
Systems -- settled in their Sockets --
Citadels -- dissolved --

Wastes of Lives -- resown with Colors
By Succeeding Springs --
Death -- unto itself -- Exception --
Is exempt from Change --