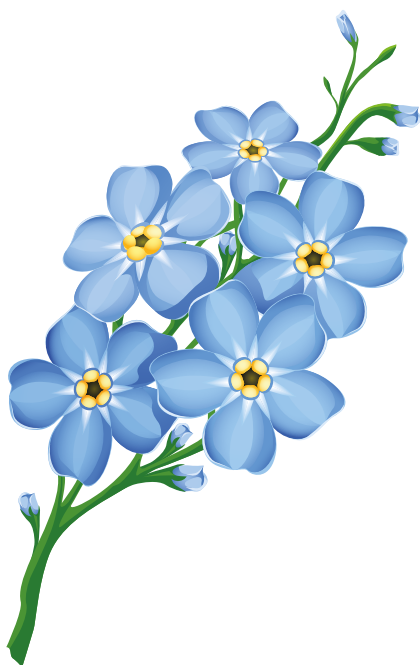


Love

Poems on the Underground



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Love Poems on the Underground

What is love? 'Tis not hereafter;
Present love hath present laughter;
 What's to come is still unsure.
In delay there lies no plenty;
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty;
 Youth's a stuff will not endure.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

POEMS ON THE UNDERGROUND

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FOREWORD

Many people may not consider the position of Commissioner for Transport for London to be a romantic job. But in the over 150 years of running London Underground services, we have heard stories of people meeting and indeed falling in love on the tube (and other parts of our transport network). There is even a column in one of our Capital's daily newspapers through which our passengers can reveal their crushes on fellow commuters.

My primary responsibility is to ensure that millions of customers get to their destination safely and reliably every day. But I also take pride in the role our operations sometimes play in bringing people together – often for life – or just doing our best to ensure a first date goes smoothly or a family outing is a success, or a reunion with old friends goes to plan.

The poems in this booklet are some of those chosen over thirty years of featuring poetry in our Tube carriages. I hope you enjoy them and maybe even share them with someone you love!

Mike Brown, MVO
Commissioner
Transport for London

TWO FRAGMENTS

Love holds me captive again
and I tremble with bittersweet longing

As a gale on the mountainside bends the
oak tree
I am rocked by my love

SAPPHO
translated by Cicely Herbert

LONGINGS

Like the beautiful bodies of those who died
before growing old,
sadly shut away in a sumptuous mausoleum,
roses by the head, jasmine at the feet –
so appear the longings that have passed
without being satisfied, not one of them
granted
a single night of pleasure, or one of its radiant
mornings.

C. P. CAVAFY
translated by Edmund Keeley
and Philip Sherrard

for John Coltrane

Propped against the crowded bar
he pours into the curved and silver horn
his old unhappy longing for a home

the dancers twist and turn
he leans and wishes he could burn
his memories to ashes like some old notorious
emperor

of rome. but no stars blazed across the sky
when he was born
no wise men found his hovel. this crowded bar
where dancers twist and turn

holds all the fame and recognition he will
ever earn
on earth or heaven. he leans against the bar
and pours his old unhappy longing in the
saxophone

KAMAU BRATHWAITE

‘WESTERN WIND WHEN WILT THOU BLOW’

Western wind when wilt thou blow
the small rain down can rain
Christ that my love were in my arms
and I in my bed again

ANON.
(16th-century song)

LOVE WITHOUT HOPE

Love without hope, as when the young
bird-catcher
Swept off his tall hat to the Squire's own
daughter,
So let the imprisoned larks escape and fly
Singing about her head, as she rode by.

ROBERT GRAVES

HER ANXIETY

Earth in beauty dressed
Awaits returning spring.
All true love must die,
Alter at the best
Into some lesser thing.
Prove that I lie.

Such body lovers have,
Such exacting breath,
That they touch or sigh.
Every touch they give,
Love is nearer death.
Prove that I lie.

W.B. YEATS

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments; love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no, it is an ever-fixèd mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height
 be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and
 cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
 If this be error, and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

HOURL

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.

For thousands of seconds we kiss; your hair
like treasure on the ground; the Midas light
turning your limbs to gold. Time slows, for here
we are millionaires, backhanding the night

so nothing dark will end our shining hour,
no jewel hold a candle to the cuckoo spit
hung from the blade of grass at your ear,
no chandelier or spotlight see you better lit

than here. Now. Time hates love, wants love
 poor,
but love spins gold, gold, gold from straw.

CAROL ANN DUFFY

THE GOOD MORROW

I wonder, by my troth, what thou and I
Did, till we loved; were we not weaned till then,
But sucked on country pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the Seven Sleepers' den?
'Twas so; but this, all pleasures fancies be.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desired, and got, 'twas but a dream of
thee.

And now good morrow to our waking souls,
Which watch not one another out of fear;
For love, all love of other sights controls,
And makes one little room, an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let maps to others, worlds on worlds have
shown,
Let us possess our world; each hath one, and
is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Where can we find two better hemispheres,
Without sharp North, without declining West?
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one; or thou and I
Love so alike that none do slacken, none can
die.

JOHN DONNE

SEPARATION

Your absence has gone through me
Like thread through a needle.
Everything I do is stitched with its colour.

W. S. MERWIN

‘MUSIC, WHEN SOFT VOICES DIE’

to Emilia Viviani

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory –
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed –
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

WILD NIGHTS!

Wild Nights - Wild Nights!
Were I with thee
Wild Nights should be
Our luxury!

Futile - the Winds -
To a Heart in port -
Done with the Compass -
Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden -
Ah, the Sea!
Might I but moor - Tonight -
In thee!

EMILY DICKINSON

THE RESCUE

In drifts of sleep I came upon you
Buried to your waist in snow.
You reached your arms out: I came to
Like water in a dream of thaw.

SEAMUS HEANEY

MEETING AT NIGHT

The grey sea and the long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

ROBERT BROWNING

HOPS

Beneath the willow wound round with ivy
we take cover from the worst
of the storm, with a greatcoat round
and my hands around your waist.
I've got it wrong. That isn't ivy
entwined in the bushes round
the wood, but hops. You intoxicate me!
Let's spread the greatcoat on the ground.

BORIS PASTERNAK
translated by Jon Stallworthy
and Peter France

CONTENT

Like walking in fog, in fog and mud,
do you remember, love? We kept,
for once, to the tourist path, boxed in mist,
conscious of just our feet and breath,
and at the peak, sat hand in hand, and let
the cliffs we'd climbed and cliffs to come
reveal themselves and be veiled again
quietly, with the prevailing wind.

KATE CLANCHY

THE PRESENT

For the present there is just one moon,
though every level pond gives back another.

But the bright disc shining in the black lagoon,
perceived by astrophysicist and lover,

is milliseconds old. And even that light's
seven minutes older than its source.

And the stars we think we see on moonless
nights
are long extinguished. And, of course,

this very moment, as you read this line,
is literally gone before you know it.

Forget the here-and-now. We have no time
but this device of wantonness and wit.

Make me this present then: your hand in mine,
and we'll live out our lives in it.

MICHAEL DONAGHY

At the gates
of the fabulous
city of gold

out of the blue
he told her
the truth

and the whole world
tipped, was dipped
in sudden indigo

like a late-running messenger
or working beyond dark
in the fields.

JANE DRAYCOTT

THE MAIDENS' SONG

When I was in my mother's bower
I had all that I would

*The bailey beareth the bell away
The lily, the rose, the rose I lay*

The silver is white, red is the gold
The robes they lay in fold

*The bailey beareth the bell away
The lily, the rose, the rose I lay*

And through the glass window shines the sun
How should I love and I so young?

*The bailey beareth the bell away
The lily, the rose, the rose I lay
The bailey beareth the bell away*

ELIZABETHAN BRIDAL SONG

JOHN ANDERSON MY JO

John Anderson my jo, John,
 When we were first acquent,
Your locks were like the raven,
 Your bonie brow was brent;
But now your brow is beld, John,
 Your locks are like the snaw;
But blessings on your frosty pow,
 John Anderson my jo.

John Anderson my jo, John,
 We clamb the hill the gither;
And mony a canty day, John,
 We've had wi' ane anither:
Now we maun totter down, John,
 And hand in hand we'll go,
And sleep the gither at the foot,
 John Anderson my jo.

ROBERT BURNS

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Love Poems on the Underground

A celebration of
Love on the Underground,
from Sappho and Shakespeare
to the 21st century.



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