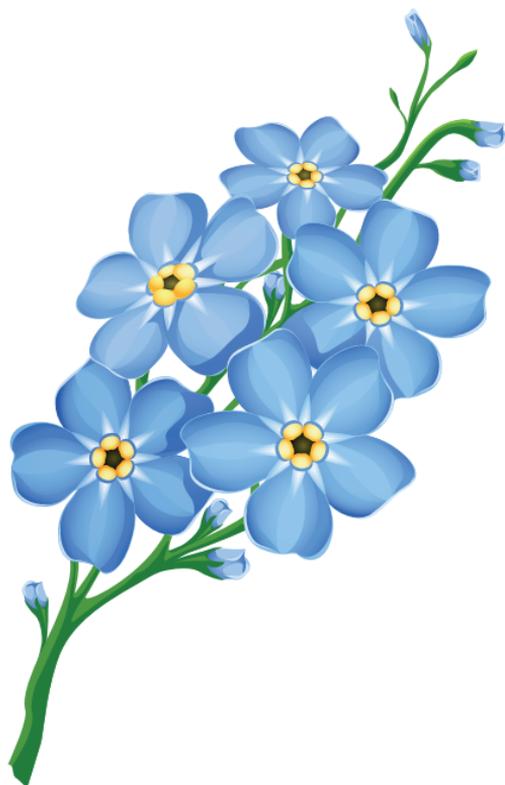


# Love

## 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

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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

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## 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





## NAIMA

---

*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



## SONNET 116

---

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



## HOUR

---

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

---





## INDIA

---

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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