**A Study Of Reading Habits**

When getting my nose in a book
Cured most things short of school,
It was worth ruining my eyes
To know I could still keep cool,
And deal out the old right hook
To dirty dogs twice my size.

Later, with inch-thick specs,
Evil was just my lark:
Me and my coat and fangs
Had ripping times in the dark.
The women I clubbed with sex!
I broke them up like meringues.

Don't read much now: the dude
Who lets the girl down before
The hero arrives, the chap
Who's yellow and keeps the store
Seem far too familiar. Get stewed:
Books are a load of crap.

Philip Larkin

**The Whipping (by Robert Hayden)**

The old woman across the way
     is whipping the boy again
and shouting to the neighborhood
     her goodness and his wrongs.

Wildly he crashes through elephant ears,
     pleads in dusty zinnias,
while she in spite of crippling fat
     pursues and corners him.

She strikes and strikes the shrilly circling
     boy till the stick breaks
in her hand. His tears are rainy weather
     to woundlike memories:

My head gripped in bony vise
     of knees, the writhing struggle
to wrench free, the blows, the fear
     worse than blows that hateful

Words could bring, the face that I
     no longer knew or loved . . .
Well, it is over now, it is over,
     and the boy sobs in his room,

And the woman leans muttering against
     a tree, exhausted, purged--
avenged in part for lifelong hidings
     she has had to bear.

## "Loving in truth..." (by Sir Philip Sidney)

Loving in truth, and fain in verse my love to show,

That the dear she might take some pleasure of my pain,

Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know,

Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain,

I sought fit words to paint the blackest face of woe:

Studying inventions fine, her wits to entertain,

Oft turning others' leaves, to see if thence would flow

Some fresh and fruitful showers upon my sunburned brain.

But words came halting forth, wanting Invention's stay;

Invention, Nature's child, fled stepdame Study's blows;

And others' feet still seemed but strangers in my way.

Thus, great with child to speak, and helpless in my throes,

Biting my truant pen, beating myself for spite:

"Fool," said my Muse to me, "look in thy heart, and write."