

**Introduction: Food poetry**

Download the LearnEnglish stories and poems podcast. You'll find more information on this page:  
<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learnenglish-podcasts-stories-poems.htm>

This support pack contains the following materials:

- The poems that you can listen to in the podcast
- An optional comprehension activity based on the poems

**Read the poems.****Untitled***Unknown*

I surely never hope to view  
A steak as luscious as a stew.  
The latter is the tasty goal  
Of elements in perfect whole,  
A mad assemblage of legumes  
Exuding warm ambrosial fumes,  
Each seasoning of proper length,  
Proving in Union there's strength.  
A steak is grander, it is true,  
Yet needs no special skill to brew.  
It is an art a stew to make,  
But anyone can broil a steak.

**A Drinking Song***William Butler Yeats*

Wine comes in at the mouth  
And love comes in at the eye;  
That's all we shall know for truth  
Before we grow old and die.  
I lift the glass to my mouth,  
I look at, and I sigh.

**On A Slope Of Orchard***Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

There on a slope of orchard, Francis laid  
A damask napkin wrought with horse and  
hound,  
brought out a dusky loaf that smelt of home,  
And cut down, a pasty costly made,  
Where quail and pigeon, lark and leveret, lay  
Like fossils of the rock, with golden yolks  
Imbedded and in jellied.

**Rice Pudding***A.A. Milne*

What is the matter with Mary Jane?  
She's perfectly well and she hasn't a pain,  
And it's lovely rice pudding for dinner again,  
What is the matter with Mary Jane.

**A Recipe for a Salad***Sydney Smith*

To make this condiment, your poet begs  
The pounded yellow of two hard-boiled eggs;  
Two boiled potatoes, passed through kitchen  
sieve,  
Smoothness and softness to the salad give.

Let onion atoms lurk within the bowl,  
And, half suspected, animate the whole.  
Of mordant mustard add a single spoon,  
Distrust the condiment that bites so soon;  
But deem it not, thou man of herbs, a fault,  
To add a double quantity of salt.

Four times the spoon with oil from Lucca brown,  
And twice with vinegar procured from town;  
And, lastly, o'er the flavored compound toss  
A magic soupçon of anchovy sauce.

O, green and glorious! O herbaceous treat!  
'T would tempt the dying anchorite to eat:  
Back to the world he'd turn his fleeting soul,  
And plunge his fingers in the salad bowl!  
Serenely full, the epicure would say,  
"Fate cannot harm me, I have dined to-day."

**The Song Of Right And Wrong***G.K. Chesterton*

Feast on wine or fast on water,  
And your honor shall stand sure  
If an angel out of heaven  
Brings you something else to drink,  
Thank him for his kind attentions,  
Go and pour it down the sink.

**From a translation of Martial's "Xenia 18"***Jonathan Swift*

This is every cook's opinion -  
No savory dish without an onion,  
But lest your kissing should be spoiled  
Your onions must be fully boiled.

## On China Blue

*Sir Stephen Gaselee*

On china blue my lobster red  
 Precedes my cutlet brown,  
 With which my salad green is sped  
 By yellow Chablis down.  
 Lord, if good living be no sin,  
 But innocent delight,  
 O polarize these hues within  
 To one eupeptic white.

## Roast Beef of old England

*Henry Fielding*

When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's  
 food  
 It ennobled our hearts and enriched our blood--  
 Our soldiers were brave and our courtiers were  
 good.  
 Oh! the roast beef of England.  
 And Old England's roast beef.

## from Don Juan

*Lord Byron*

But man is a carnivorous production  
 And must have meals - at least once a day;  
 He cannot live, like woodcocks, upon suction,  
 But, like the shark and tiger, must have prey.

## After reading

### Exercise 1

In the box are the names of the 10 poets (including "unknown"). Below are questions about the poems. Can you match the questions and the poets?

Sir Stephen Gaselee Alfred, Lord Tennyson	William Butler Yeats G.K. Chesterton	Sydney Smith Henry Fielding	A.A. Milne Unknown	Lord Byron Jonathan Swift
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- Which poet compares people to predators?
- Which poet makes the food he describes sound like it's stuffed with something precious?
- Which poet talks about a food or drink that could ruin your love life?
- Which poet recommends you drink one particular thing or nothing at all?
- Which poet says that there are only two things we can know for sure?
- Which poet says that a type of food or drink used to make some people courageous?
- Which poet describes someone who doesn't seem to like the food that s/he has to eat?
- Which poet asks for help from God?
- Which poet claims that a certain food is almost good enough to bring someone back from the dead?
- Which poet claims that it's much more difficult to make one type of food than another?

### Answers

1. Lord Byron; 2. Alfred, Lord Tennyson; 3. Jonathan Swift; 4. G.K. Chesterton; 5. William Butler Yeats; 6. Henry Fielding; 7. A.A. Milne; 8. Sir Stephen Gaselee; 9. Sydney Smith; 10. Unknown