39

Make sure the non-printing formatting marks are turned on. You’ll see each poem starts with the codes that keep text off the top and bottom lines of the braille page. Each poem also sets the right margin with [[\*rm4:4\*]] as there is other material on the page preceding the poem. This allows the regular text to use the full braille line, where the poem’s right margin is saved for line numbers. Each poem ends by resuming text on the first and last lines, and resets the right margin to the full braille line with [[\*rm0:0\*]].

The first poem, William Blake’s “The Chimney Sweeper,” is the oldest of the set. it appeared in Blake’s 1789 books *Songs of Innocence,* each poem of which was accompanied by an engraving done by Blake (1757-1827). The other three poems are by contemporary authors.

[[\*top\*]]

# William Blake The Chimney Sweeper

[[\*svrhp3\*]][[\*tls\*]] [[\*tle\*]][[\*svrfp3\*]][[\*rfs\*]] [[\*rfe\*]][[\*rm4:4\*]]

1. When my mother died I was very young,
2. And my father sold me while yet my tongue
3. Could scarcely cry “’weep! ’weep! ’weep! ’weep!”
4. So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.
5. 5 There’s little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
6. That curled like a lamb’s back, was shaved: so I said
7. “Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head’s bare
8. You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.”
9. And so he was quiet, and that very night,
10. 10 As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!
11. That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
12. Were all of them locked up in coffins of black.
13. And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
14. And he opened the coffins and set them all free;
15. 15 Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run,
16. And wash in the river, and shine in the sun.

40

1. Then naked and white, all their bags left behind,
2. They rise upon clouds and sport in the wind;
3. And the Angel told Tom, if he’d be a good boy,
4. 20 He’d have God for his father, and never want joy.
5. And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
6. And got with our bags and our brushes to work.
7. Though the morning was cold, Tom was happy and warm;
8. So if all do their duty they need not fear harm.

[[\*tld\*]][[\*rfd\*]][[\*rm0:0\*]]

[[\*top\*]]

41

Next is “Singapore” by Mary Oliver (b. 1935), a Pulitzer Prize-winning American poet. The poem appeared in her 1992 book *House of Light* and was subsequently included in her 1993 collection *New and Selected Poems.*

# Mary Oliver

Singapore

[[\*svrhp3\*]][[\*tls\*]] [[\*tle\*]][[\*svrfp3\*]][[\*rfs\*]] [[\*rfe\*]][[\*rm4:4\*]]

1. In Singapore, in the airport,
2. a darkness was ripped from my eyes.
3. In the women’s restroom, one compartment stood open.
4. A woman knelt there, washing something
   1. 5 in the white bowl.
5. Disgust argued in my stomach
6. and I felt, in my pocket, for my ticket.
7. A poem should always have birds in it.
8. Kingfishers, say, with their bold eyes and gaudy wings.
9. 10 Rivers are pleasant, and of course trees.
10. A waterfall, or if that’s not possible, a fountain
    1. rising and falling.
11. A person wants to stand in a happy place, in a poem.
12. When the woman turned I could not answer her face.
13. 15 Her beauty and her embarrassment struggled together, and
    1. neither could win.
14. She smiled and I smiled. What kind of nonsense is this?
15. Everybody needs a job.
16. Yes, a person wants to stand in a happy place, in a poem.
17. 20 But first we must watch her as she stares down at her labor,
    1. which is dull enough.
18. She is washing the tops of the airport ashtrays, as big as
    1. hubcaps, with a blue rag.
19. Her small hands turn the metal, scrubbing and rinsing.
20. 25 She does not work slowly, nor quickly, but like a river.
21. Her dark hair is like the wing of a bird.
22. I don’t doubt for a moment that she loves her life.
23. And I want her to rise up from the crust and the slop
    1. and fly down to the river.
24. 30 This probably won’t happen.
25. But maybe it will.
26. If the world were only pain and logic, who would want it?
27. Of course, it isn’t.
28. Neither do I mean anything miraculous, but only
29. 35 the light that can shine out of a life. I mean
30. the way she unfolded and refolded the blue cloth,
31. the way her smile was only for my sake; I mean
32. the way this poem is filled with trees, and birds.

[[\*tld\*]][[\*rfd\*]][[\*rm0:0\*]]

The [[\*rm0:0\*]] code was placed at the end of the poem, so any text on the rest of the braille page will now go to the right margin.