Stories Worth Telling Again and Again

Third Grade Unit 1

**Poetry**

**Poems (Read Aloud)**

**Your World**

Your world is as big as you make it.
I know, for I used to abide
In the narrowest nest in a corner,
My wings pressing close to my side.

But I sighted the distant horizon
Where the skyline encircled the sea
And I throbbed with a burning desire
To travel this immensity.

I battered the cordons around me
And cradled my wings on the breeze,
Then soared to the uttermost reaches
With rapture, with power, with ease!

* Georgia Douglas Johnson

**The Telephone**

'When I was just as far as I could walk
From here to-day,
There was an hour
All still
When leaning with my head against a flower
I heard you talk.
Don't say I didn't, for I heard you say--
You spoke from that flower on the window sill-
Do you remember what it was you said?'

'First tell me what it was you thought you heard.'

'Having found the flower and driven a bee away,
I leaned my head
And holding by the stalk,
I listened and I thought I caught the word--
What was it? Did you call me by my name?
Or did you say--
*Someone* said "Come" -- I heard it as I bowed.'

'I may have thought as much, but not aloud.'

"Well, so I came.'

* Robert Frost

**Nani**

Sitting at her table, she serves
the sopa de arroz to me
instinctively, and I watch her,
the absolute mama, and eat words
I might have had to say more
out of embarrassment. To speak,
now-foreign words I used to speak,
too, dribble down her mouth as she serves
me albondigas. No more
than a third are easy to me.
By the stove she does something with words
and looks at me only with her
back. I am full. I tell her
I taste the mint, and watch her speak
smiles at the stove. All my words
make her smile. Nani never serves
herself, she only watches me
with her skin, her hair. I ask for more.

I watch the mama warming more
tortillas for me. I watch her
fingers in the flame for me.
Near her mouth, I see a wrinkle speak
of a man whose body serves
the ants like she serves me, then more words
from more wrinkles about children, words
about this and that, flowing more
easily from these other mouths. Each serves
as a tremendous string around her,
holding her together. They speak
nani was this and that to me
and I wonder just how much of me
will die with her, what were the words
I could have been, was. Her insides speak
through a hundred wrinkles, now, more
than she can bear, steel around her,
shouting, then, What is this thing she serves?

She asks me if I want more.
I own no words to stop her.
Even before I speak, she serves.

* Alberto Rios

**You Are Old, Father William**

"You are old, father William," the young man said,
    "And your hair has become very white;
  And yet you incessantly stand on your head —
    Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

  "In my youth," father William replied to his son,
    "I feared it would injure the brain;
  But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
    Why, I do it again and again."

  "You are old," said the youth, "as I mentioned before,
    And have grown most uncommonly fat;
  Yet you turned a back-somersault in at the door —
    Pray, what is the reason of that?"

  "In my youth," said the sage, as he shook his grey locks,
    "I kept all my limbs very supple
  By the use of this ointment — one shilling the box —
    Allow me to sell you a couple."

  "You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
    For anything tougher than suet;
  Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak —
    Pray, how did you manage to do it?"

  "In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
    And argued each case with my wife;
  And the muscular strength, which it gave to my jaw,
    Has lasted the rest of my life."

  "You are old," said the youth; one would hardly suppose
    That your eye was as steady as ever;
  Yet you balanced an eel on the end of your nose —
    What made you so awfully clever?"

  "I have answered three questions, and that is enough,"
    Said his father; "don't give yourself airs!
  Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
    Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!"

"That is not said right," said the Caterpillar.
"Not quite right, I'm afraid," said Alice timidly;
"some of the words have got altered."
"It is wrong from beginning to end,"
said the Caterpillar decidedly, and
there was silence for some minutes.

* Lewis Carroll

**For Want of a Nail**

For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the message was lost.
For want of a message the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

* Traditional

**Poems**

**Grandpa’s Stories**

The pictures on the television

Do not make me dream as well

As the stories without pictures

Grandpa knows how to tell

Even if he does not know

What makes a Spaceman go,

Grandpa says back in his time

Hamburgers only cost a time,

Ice cream cones a nickle,

And a penny for a pickle.

* Langston Hughes

**Aunt Sue’s Stories**

Aunt Sue has a head full of stories.

Aunt Sue has a whole heart full of stories.

Summer nights on the front porch

Auth Sue cuddles a brown-faced child in her bosom

And tells him stories.

Black slaves

Working in the hot sun,

And black slaves

Walking in the dewy night,

And black slaves

Singing sorrow songs on the banks of a mighty river

Mingle themselves softly

In the flow of Aunt Sue’s voice,

Mingle themselves softly

In the dark shadows that cross and recross

Aunt Sue’s stories.

And the dark-faced child, listening,

Knows that Aunt Sue’s stories are real stories.

He knows that Aunt Sue never got her stories

Out of any book at all,

But they came

Right out of her own life.

The dark-faced child is quiet

Of a summer night

Listening to Aunt Sue’s stories

* Langston Hughes

**Mother to Son**

Well, son, I'll tell you:
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up,
And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare.
But all the time
I'se been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's,
And turnin' corners,
And sometimes goin' in the dark
Where there ain't been no light.
So, boy, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps.
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now—
For I'se still goin', honey,
I'se still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

* Langston Hughes

**By Myself**

When I’m by myself

And I close my eyes

I’m a twin

I’m a dimple in a chin

I’m a room full of toys

I’m a squeaky noise

I’m a gospel song

I’m a gong

I’m a leaf turning red

I’m a loaf of brown bread

I’m a whatever I want to be

An anything I care to be

And when I open my eyes

What I care to be

Is me.

* Eloise Greenfield