

# Gretchen Rubin

## WEDDING READINGS FROM *HAPPIER* PODCAST LISTENERS

Hello listeners!

In episode 76 of the *Happier with Gretchen Rubin* podcast, our listener Sarah asked for suggestions for wedding readings. Listeners sent in so many terrific recommendations that we couldn't read them all on the air, and we can't even include them all here! Please enjoy this selection from the many wonderful passages we received. (Want to know what readings I used in my wedding ceremony? They're marked with an asterisk.)

Onward and upward!

Gretchen

### **From *Adam Bede* by George Eliot:**

What greater thing is there for two human souls than to feel that they are joined together for life—to strengthen each other in all labour, to rest on each other in all sorrow, to minister to each other in all pain, to be one with each other in the silent unspeakable memories at the moment of the last parting?

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**“Ithaka” by C. P. Cavafy:**

As you set out for Ithaka  
hope your road is a long one,  
full of adventure, full of discovery.  
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
angry Poseidon—don’t be afraid of them:  
you’ll never find things like that on your way  
as long as you keep your thoughts raised high,  
as long as a rare excitement  
stirs your spirit and your body.  
Laistrygonians, Cyclops,  
wild Poseidon—you won’t encounter them  
unless you bring them along inside your soul,  
unless your soul sets them up in front of you.

Hope your road is a long one.  
May there be many summer mornings when,  
with what pleasure, what joy,  
you enter harbors you’re seeing for the first time;  
may you stop at Phoenician trading stations  
to buy fine things,  
mother of pearl and coral, amber and ebony,  
sensual perfume of every kind—  
as many sensual perfumes as you can;  
and may you visit many Egyptian cities  
to learn and go on learning from their scholars.

Keep Ithaka always in your mind.  
Arriving there is what you’re destined for.  
But don’t hurry the journey at all.  
Better if it lasts for years,

so you’re old by the time you reach the island,  
wealthy with all you’ve gained on the way,  
not expecting Ithaka to make you rich.

Ithaka gave you the marvelous journey.  
Without her you wouldn’t have set out.  
She has nothing left to give you now.

And if you find her poor, Ithaka won’t have fooled you.  
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,  
you’ll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean.

**“When We Are Old and These Rejoicing Veins”**

**by Edna St. Vincent Millay:**

“When we are old and these rejoicing veins  
Are frosty channels to a muted stream,  
And out of all our burning their remains  
No feeblest spark to fire us, even in dream,  
This be our solace: that it was not said  
When we were young and warm and in our prime,  
Upon our couch we lay as lie the dead,  
Sleeping away the unreturning time.  
O sweet, O heavy-lidded, O my love,  
When morning strikes her spear upon the land,  
And we must rise and arm us and reprove  
The insolent daylight with a steady hand,  
Be not discountenanced if the knowing know  
We rose from rapture but an hour ago.”

**“Scaffolding” by Seamus Heaney:**

Masons, when they start upon a building,  
Are careful to test out the scaffolding;

Make sure that planks won't slip at busy points,  
Secure all ladders, tighten bolted joints.

And yet all this comes down when the job's done  
Showing off walls of sure and solid stone.

So if, my dear, there sometimes seem to be  
Old bridges breaking between you and me

Never fear. We can let the scaffolds fall  
Confident that we have built our wall.

**“The Confirmation” by Edwin Muir:**

Yes, yours, my love, is the right human face.  
I in my mind had waited for this long,  
Seeing the false and searching for the true,  
Then found you as a traveller finds a place  
Of welcome suddenly amid the wrong  
Valleys and rocks and twisting roads. But you,  
What shall I call you? A fountain in a waste,  
A well of water in a country dry,  
Or anything that's honest and good, an eye  
That makes the whole world seem bright. Your open heart,  
Simple with giving, gives the primal deed,  
The first good world, the blossom, the blowing seed,  
The hearth, the steadfast land, the wandering sea.  
Not beautiful or rare in every part.  
But like yourself, as they were meant to be.

**“Touched by an Angel” by Maya Angelou:**

We, unaccustomed to courage  
exiles from delight  
live coiled in shells of loneliness  
until love leaves its high holy temple  
and comes into our sight  
to liberate us into life.

Love arrives  
and in its train come ecstasies  
old memories of pleasure  
ancient histories of pain.  
Yet if we are bold,  
love strikes away the chains of fear  
from our souls.

We are weaned from our timidity  
In the flush of love's light  
we dare be brave  
And suddenly we see  
that love costs all we are  
and will ever be.  
Yet it is only love  
which sets us free.

**“i carry your heart with me” by e.e. cummings:**

i carry your heart with me (i carry it in  
my heart) i am never without it (anywhere  
i go you go, my dear; and whatever is done  
by only me is your doing, my darling)  
i fear  
no fate (for you are my fate, my sweet) i want  
no world (for beautiful you are my world, my true)  
and it's you are whatever a moon has always meant  
and whatever a sun will always sing is you  
here is the deepest secret nobody knows  
(here is the root of the root and the bud of the bud  
and the sky of the sky of a tree called life; which grows  
higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)  
and this is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart

i carry your heart (i carry it in my heart)

**“since feeling is first” by e.e. cummings:**

Since feeling is first  
who pays any attention  
to the syntax of things  
will never wholly kiss you;

wholly to be a fool  
while Spring is in the world

my blood approves,  
and kisses are a better fate  
than wisdom  
lady i swear by all flowers. Don't cry  
–the best gesture of my brain is less than  
your eyelids' flutter which says

we are for each other: then  
laugh, leaning back in my arms  
for life's not a paragraph

And death i think is no parenthesis



**\*“Hummingbird” by Raymond Carver:**

Suppose I say summer,  
write the word “hummingbird,”  
put it in an envelope,  
take it down the hill  
to the box. When you open  
my letter you will recall  
those days and how much,  
just how much, I love you.

**“Desiderata” by Max Ehrmann:**

Go placidly amid the noise and haste,  
and remember what peace there may be in silence.

As far as possible without surrender  
be on good terms with all persons.  
Speak your truth quietly and clearly;  
and listen to others,  
even the dull and the ignorant;  
they too have their story.

Avoid loud and aggressive persons,  
they are vexations to the spirit.  
If you compare yourself with others,  
you may become vain and bitter;  
for always there will be greater and lesser  
persons than yourself.  
Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans.

Keep interested in your own career,  
however humble;  
it is a real possession in the changing  
fortunes of time.  
Exercise caution in your business affairs;  
for the world is full of trickery.  
But let this not blind you to what virtue there is;  
many persons strive for high ideals;  
and everywhere life is full of heroism.

Be yourself.  
Especially, do not feign affection.  
Neither be cynical about love;

for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment  
it is as perennial as the grass.

Take kindly the counsel of the years,  
gracefully surrendering the things of youth.  
Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden  
misfortune.  
But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings.  
Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.  
Beyond a wholesome discipline,  
be gentle with yourself.

You are a child of the universe,  
no less than the trees and the stars;  
you have a right to be here.  
And whether or not it is clear to you,  
no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should.

Therefore be at peace with God,  
whatever you conceive Him to be,  
and whatever your labors and aspirations,  
in the noisy confusion of life keep peace with your  
soul.

With all its sham, drudgery, and broken dreams,  
it is still a beautiful world.  
Be cheerful.  
Strive to be happy.

**Sections from “The Country of Marriage” by  
Wendell Berry:**

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Sometimes our life reminds me  
of a forest in which there is a graceful clearing  
and in that opening a house,  
an orchard and garden,  
comfortable shades, and flowers  
red and yellow in the sun, a pattern  
made in the light for the light to return to.  
The forest is mostly dark, its ways  
to be made anew day after day, the dark  
richer than the light and more blessed,  
provided we stay brave  
enough to keep on going in

5

Our bond is no little economy based on the exchange  
of my love and work for yours, so much for so much  
of an expendable fund. We don't know what its limits  
are– that puts us in the dark. We are more together  
than we know, how else could we keep on discovering  
we are more together than we thought?  
You are the known way leading  
always to the unknown, and you are the known place  
to which the unknown is always  
leading me back. More blessed in you than I know,  
I possess nothing worthy to give you, nothing  
not belittled by my saying that I possess it.

Even an hour of love is a moral predicament,  
a blessing, a man may be hard up to be worthy of.  
He can only accept it, as a plant accepts  
from all the bounty of the light  
enough to live, and then accepts the dark,  
passing unencumbered back to the earth,  
as I have fallen time and again from the  
great strength of my desire, helpless,  
into your arms.

**“The Mad Farmer’s Love Song” by Wendell Berry:**

O when the world’s at peace

And every man is free

Then I will go down unto my love.

O and I may go down

Several times before that.

**“A Birthday” by Christina Rossetti:**

My heart is like a singing bird

Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;

My heart is like an apple-tree

Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;

My heart is like a rainbow shell

That paddles in a halcyon sea;

My heart is gladder than all these

Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;

Hang it with vair and purple dyes;

Carve it in doves and pomegranates,

And peacocks with a hundred eyes;

Work it in gold and silver grapes,

In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;

Because the birthday of my life

Is come, my love is come to me.

**“The Art of Marriage” by Wilferd A. Peterson:**

A good marriage must be created.

In the art of marriage the little things  
are the big things...

It is never being too old to hold hands.

It is remembering to say “I love you” at  
least once a day.

It is never going to sleep angry.

It is at no time taking the other for granted;  
the courtship should not end with the honeymoon,  
it should continue through all the years.

It is having a mutual sense of values and  
common objectives.

It is standing together facing the world.

It is forming a circle of love that gathers in  
the whole family.

It is doing things for each other, not  
in the attitude of duty or sacrifice,  
but in the spirit of joy.

It is speaking words of appreciation  
and demonstrating gratitude  
in thoughtful ways.

It is not looking for perfection in each other.

It is cultivating flexibility, patience,  
understanding and a sense of humor.

It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.

It is giving each other an atmosphere in  
which each can grow.

It is finding room for the things of the spirit.

It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.

It is establishing a relationship in which the  
independence is equal, dependence is mutual and  
the obligation is reciprocal.

It is not only marrying the right partner,  
it is being the right partner.

It is discovering what marriage can be, at its best.

**“Tin Wedding Whistle” by Ogden Nash:**

Though you know it anyhow  
Listen to me, darling, now,

Proving what I need not prove  
How I know I love you, love.

Near and far, near and far,  
I am happy where you are;

Likewise I have never larnt  
How to be it where you aren't.

Far and wide, far and wide,  
I can walk with you beside;  
Furthermore, I tell you what,  
I sit and sulk where you are not.

Visitors remark my frown  
Where you're upstairs and I am down,

Yes, and I'm afraid I pout  
When I'm indoors and you are out;

But how contentedly I view  
Any room containing you.

In fact I care not where you be,  
Just as long as it's with me.

In all your absences I glimpse  
Fire and flood and trolls and imps.

Is your train a minute slothful?  
I goad the stationmaster wrothful.

When with friends to bridge you drive  
I never know if you're alive,

And when you linger late in shops  
I long to telephone the cops.

Yet how worth the waiting for,  
To see you coming through the door.

Somehow, I can be complacent  
Never but with you adjacent.

Near and far, near and far,  
I am happy where you are;

Likewise I have never larnt  
How to be it where you aren't.

Then grudge me not my fond endeavor,  
To hold you in my sight forever;

Let none, not even you, disparage  
Such a valid reason for a marriage.

**“Variations on the Word Love” by Margaret Atwood:**

This is a word we use to plug  
holes with. It's the right size for those warm  
blanks in speech, for those red heartshaped  
vacancies on the page that look nothing  
like real hearts. Add lace  
and you can sell  
it. We insert it also in the one empty  
space on the printed form  
that comes with no instructions.  
There are whole magazines  
with not much in them  
but the word love, you can  
rub it all over your body and you  
can cook with it too. How do we know  
it isn't what goes on at the cool  
debaucheries of slugs under damp  
pieces of cardboard? As for the  
weedseedlings nosing their tough snouts up  
among the lettuces, they shout it.  
Love! Love! sing the soldiers, raising  
their glittering knives in salute.  
Then there's the two  
of us. This word  
is far too short for us, it has only  
four letters, too sparse  
to fill those deep bare  
vacuums between the stars  
that press on us with their deafness.  
It's not love we don't wish  
to fall into, but that fear.

this word is not enough but it will  
have to do. It's a single  
vowel in this metallic  
silence, a mouth that says  
O again and again in wonder  
and pain, a breath, a finger  
grip on a cliffside. You can  
hold on or let go



**“Variation on the Word Sleep” by Margaret Atwood:**

I would like to watch you, sleeping,  
which may not happen.

I would like to watch you,  
sleeping. I would like to sleep  
with you, to enter  
your sleep as its smooth dark wave  
slides over my head

and walk with you through that lucent  
wavering forest of bluegreen leaves  
with its watery sun & three moons  
towards the cave where you must descend,  
towards your worst fear

I would like to give you the silver  
branch, the small white flower, the one  
word that will protect you  
from the grief at the center  
of your dream, from the grief  
at the center. I would like to follow  
you up the long stairway  
again & become  
the boat that would row you back  
carefully, a flame  
in two cupped hands  
to where your body lies  
beside me, and you enter  
it as easily as breathing in

I would like to be the air  
that inhabits you for a moment  
only. I would like to be that unnoticed  
& that necessary.

**“Invitation to Love” by Paul Laurence**

**Dunbar:**

Come when the nights are bright with stars  
Or when the moon is mellow;  
Come when the sun his golden bars  
Drops on the hayfield yellow.  
Come in the twilight soft and gray,  
Come in the night or come in the day,  
Come, O love, when'er you may,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

You are sweet, O Love, dear Love  
You are soft as the nesting dove.  
Come to my heart and bring it to rest  
As the bird flies home to its welcome nest.

Come when my heart is full of grief  
Or when my heart is merry;  
Come with the falling of the leaf  
Or with the redd'ning cherry.  
Come when the year's first blossom blows,  
Come when the summer gleams and glows,  
Come with the winter's drifting snows,  
And you are welcome, welcome.

**“Wedding” by Alice Oswald:**

From time to time our love is like a sail  
and when the sail begins to alternate  
from tack to tack, it's like a swallowtail  
and when the swallow flies it's like a coat;  
and if the coat is yours, it has a tear  
like a wide mouth and when the mouth begins  
to draw the wind, it's like a trumpeter  
and when the trumpet blows, it blows like millions..  
and this, my love, when millions come and go  
beyond the need of us, is like a trick;  
and when the trick begins, it's like a toe  
tip-toeing on a rope, which is like luck;  
and when the luck begins, it's like a wedding,  
which is like love, which is like everything.

**“Blessing for a Marriage” by James Dillet Freeman:**

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.

May you always need one another – not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it.

So let it be with you and you.

May you need one another, but not out of weakness.

May you want one another, but not out of lack.

May you entice one another, but not compel one another.

May you embrace one another, but not out encircle one another.

May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces.

May you look for things to praise, often say, “I love you!” and take no notice of small faults.

If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another’s presence – no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities.

May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.

May you have love, and may you find it loving one another.

**“Pathways” by Rainer Maria Rilke:**

Understand, I'll slip quietly  
away from the noisy crowd  
when I see the pale  
stars rising, blooming, over the oaks.

I'll pursue solitary pathways  
through the pale twilit meadows,  
with only this one dream:  
You come too.

**“Love Sonnet XVII” by Pablo Neruda:**

I don't love you as if you were a rose of salt, topaz,  
or arrow of carnations that propagate fire:

I love you as one loves certain obscure things,  
secretly, between the shadow and the soul.

I love you as the plant that doesn't bloom but carries  
the light of those flowers, hidden, within itself,  
and thanks to your love the tight aroma that arose  
from the earth lives dimly in my body.

I love you without knowing how, or when, or from where,  
I love you directly without problems or pride:  
I love you like this because I don't know any other way to love,  
except in this form in which I am not nor are you,  
so close that your hand upon my chest is mine,  
so close that your eyes close with my dreams.

**“Marriage” by Mary Weston Fordham:**

The die is cast, come weal, come woe,  
Two lives are joined together,  
For better or for worse, the link  
Which naught but death can sever.  
The die is cast, come grief, come joy  
Come richer, or come poorer,  
If love but binds the mystic tie,  
Blest is the bridal hour.

**“Glaucoma” by Rives:**

When you and I  
are old and grey...

I'll have a belly,  
a hound dog named Shakespeare  
and a pickup truck.

You will have  
a pretty cotton dress  
and glaucoma,  
which will steal your sight.  
And you'll stand on our porch in the morning  
with your face to the sky,  
and I'll come outside  
with the birdseed or something, going:  
*“Whoa, whoa, baby--don't stare  
right into the sun like that!”*

And you'll say:  
*“Oh, you old poop!  
I may be blind, but I'm not a dope...  
I'm a heliotrope.  
That's a fancy word for sunflower,  
if you don't remember!”*

And I'll go:  
*“Awwwww--I know heliotrope, hell...  
I invented it!”*  
And then I'll whisper: *“Hey,  
The yonder is just as wild and blue*

*as people say it is today.  
And you can't see, but...  
I haven't done yard work for weeks.  
The crabgrass is practically piggyback  
on the buttercups, Buttercup,  
but I love you. I love you.  
And I'm gonna keep you mine  
like a crow loved to hold  
an old telephone line, remember those?”*

And you'll say:  
*“What, crows?”*

And I'll go:  
*“Nahhh--telephone lines.  
Remember? Back in the days  
when the bedding was yours  
but the bed was mine.  
You remember that, Sunshine?”*

And then I'll shuffle back indoors,  
bent but still feisty,  
and I'll do what I always do.  
I'll lie on the floor  
with a scrap, and a pen,  
I'll write a poem,  
describe the rest of the day for you  
you blind, old...



**“Wedding Hymn” by Sidney Lanier:**

Thou God, whose high, eternal Love  
Is the only blue sky of our life,  
Clear all the Heaven that bends above  
The life-road of this man and wife.  
May these two lives be but one note  
In the world’s strange-sounding harmony,  
Whose sacred music e’er shall float  
Through every discord up to Thee.  
As when from separate stars two beams  
Unite to form one tender ray:  
As when two sweet but shadowy dreams  
Explain each other in the day:  
So may these two dear hearts one light  
Emit, and each interpret each.  
Let an angel come and dwell tonight  
In this dear double-heart, and teach.

**“On Marriage” from The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran:**

You were born together, and together you shall be forevermore.  
You shall be together when the white wings of death scatter your days.  
Aye, you shall be together even in the silent memory of God.  
But let there be spaces in your togetherness.  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love:  
Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls.  
Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.  
Sing and dance together and be joyous, but let each one of you be alone,  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.  
And stand together yet not too near together:  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,  
And the oak tree and the cypress grow not in each other's shadow.

**\*“I Was Trying to Describe You to Someone”  
by Richard Brautigan, from the short story  
collection *The Revenge of the Lawn*:**

I was trying to describe you to someone a few days ago. You don't look like any girl I've ever seen before.

I couldn't say “Well she looks just like Jane Fonda, except that she's got red hair, and her mouth is different and of course, she's not a movie star...”

I couldn't say that because you don't look like Jane Fonda at all. I finally ended up describing you as a movie I saw when I was a child in Tacoma Washington. I guess I saw it in 1941 or 42, somewhere in there. I think I was seven, or eight, or six.

It was a movie about rural electrification, a perfect 1930's New Deal morality kind of movie to show kids. The movie was about farmers living in the country without electricity. They had to use lanterns to see by at night, for sewing and reading, and they didn't have any appliances like toasters or washing machines, and they couldn't listen to the radio. They built a dam with big electric generators and they put

poles across the countryside and strung wire over fields and pastures. There was an incredible heroic dimension that came from the simple putting up of poles for the wires to travel along. They looked ancient and modern at the same time.

Then the movie showed electricity like a young Greek god, coming to the farmer to take away forever the dark ways of his life. Suddenly, religiously, with the throwing of a switch, the farmer had electric lights to see by when he milked his cows in the early black winter mornings. The farmer's family got to listen to the radio and have a toaster and lots of bright lights to sew dresses and read the newspaper by.

It was really a fantastic movie and excited me like listening to the Star Spangled Banner, or seeing photographs of President Roosevelt, or hearing him on the radio “... the President of the United States...” I wanted electricity to go everywhere in the world. I wanted all the farmers in the world to be able to listen to President Roosevelt on the radio.... And that's how you look to me.

**From “Some Reflections on Marriage in Answer to  
Objections, by a Married Man” by Soren Kierkegaard in  
Kierkegaard’s Writings I: Stages on Life’s Way**

If you do not have the time and opportunity to take a dozen years of your life to travel around the world to see everything a world traveler is acquainted with, if you do not have the capability and qualifications from years of practice in a foreign language to penetrate to the differences in national characteristics as these become apparent to the research scholar, if you are not bent upon discovering a new astronomical system that will displace both the Copernican and the Ptolemaic—then marry; and if you have the time for the first, the capability for the second, the idea for the last, then marry also. Even if you do not manage to see the whole globe or to speak in many tongues or to know all about the heavens, you will not regret it, for marriage is and remains the most important voyage of discovery a human being undertakes...It is true, of course, that no poet will be able to say of you what the poet says of the wily Ulysses—that he saw many cities of men and learned to know their mentality, but the question is whether he could not have learned just as much and things just as gratifying if he had stayed at home with Penelope...

Therefore, praised be marriage, praised be everyone who speaks in its honor.

**From “Hiawatha’s Wooing” by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:**

And the ancient Arrow-maker  
Turned again unto his labor,  
Sat down by his sunny doorway,  
Murmuring to himself, and saying:  
“Thus it is our daughters leave us,  
Those we love, and those who love us!  
Just when they have learned to help us,  
When we are old and lean upon them,  
Comes a youth with flaunting feathers,  
With his flute of reeds, a stranger  
Wanders piping through the village,  
Beckons to the fairest maiden,  
And she follows where he leads her,  
Leaving all things for the stranger!”

**From “Give All to Love” by Ralph Waldo Emerson:**

Give all to love;  
Obey thy heart;  
Friends, kindred, days,  
Estate, good-fame,  
Plans, credit and the Muse;--  
Nothing refuse.

'Tis a brave master;  
Let it have scope:  
Follow it utterly,  
Hope beyond hope:  
High and more high  
It dives into noon,  
With wing unspent,  
Untold intent:

But it is a god,  
Knows its own path  
And the outlets of the sky.  
It was never for the mean;  
It requireth courage stout.  
Souls above doubt,  
Valor unbending,  
It will reward,--  
They shall return  
More than they were,  
And ever ascending.

**From “Song of the Open Road” by Walt Whitman:**

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but I offer rough new prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve...

However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this dwelling  
we cannot remain here  
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters we must  
not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are permitted  
to receive it but a little while.

Afoot and lighthearted, take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before you,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.  
Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

**From *The History of Love* by Nicole Krauss:**

Once upon a time, there was a boy. He lived in a village that no longer exists, in a house that no longer exists, on the edge of a field that no longer exists, where everything was discovered, and everything was possible. A stick could be a sword, a pebble could be a diamond, a tree, a castle. Once upon a time, there was a boy who lived in a house across the field, from a girl who no longer exists. They made up a thousand games. She was queen and he was king. In the autumn light her hair shone like a crown. They collected the world in small handfuls, and when the sky grew dark, and they parted with leaves in their hair.

Once upon a time there was a boy who loved a girl, and her laughter was a question he wanted to spend his whole life answering.



**From *The Gift* by Hafiz:**

“Even

After

All this time

The Sun never says to the Earth,

‘You owe me.’

Look

What happens

With a love like that,

It lights the whole sky.”

**From *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer:**

They made for themselves a sanctuary from Trachimbrod, a habitat completely unlike the rest of the world. No hateful words were ever spoken, and no hands raised. More than that, no angry words were ever spoken, and nothing was denied. But more than that, no unloving words were ever spoken, and everything was held up as another small piece of proof that it can be this way, it doesn't have to be that way; if there is no love in the world, we will make a new world, and we will give it heavy walls, and we will furnish it with soft red interiors, from the inside out, and give it a knocker that resonates like a diamond falling to a jeweler's felt so that we should never hear it. Love me, because love doesn't exist, and I have tried everything that does.

**From *A Gift From the Sea* by Anne Morrow Lindbergh:**

A good relationship has a pattern like a dance and is built on some of the same rules. The partners do not need to hold on tightly, because they move confidently in the same pattern, intricate but gay and swift and free, like a country dance of Mozart's. To touch heavily would be to arrest the pattern and freeze the movement, to check the endlessly changing beauty of its unfolding. There is no place here for the possessive clutch, the clinging arm, the heavy hand; only the barest touch in passing. Now arm in arm, now face to face, now back to back — it does not matter which. Because they know they are partners moving to the same rhythm, creating a pattern together, and being invisibly nourished by it.

**From *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë:**

“He’s more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same... my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and he remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger.”

**From *Peace is Every Step* by Thich Nhat Hanh:**

We really have to understand the person we want to love. If our love is only a will to possess, it is not love. If we only think of ourselves, if we know only our own needs and ignore the needs of the other person, we cannot love. We must look deeply in order to see and understand the needs, aspirations, and suffering of the person we love. This is the ground of real love. You cannot resist loving another person when you really understand him or her.

From time to time, sit close to the one you love, hold his or her hand, and ask, “Darling, do I understand you enough? Or am I making you suffer? Please tell me so that I can learn to love you properly. I don’t want to make you suffer, and if I do so because of my ignorance, please tell me so that I can love you better, so that you can be happy.”

We need courage to ask these questions, but if we don’t ask, the more we love, the more we may destroy the people we are trying to love. True love needs understanding. With understanding, the one we love will certainly flower.

**From *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho:**

It was the pure Language of the World. It required no explanation, just as the universe needs none as it travels through endless time. What the boy felt at that moment was that he was in the presence of the only woman in his life, and that, with no need for words, she recognized the same thing. He was more certain of it than of anything in the world. He had been told by his parents and grandparents that he must fall in love and really know a person before becoming committed. But maybe people who felt that way had never learned the universal language. Because, when you know that language, it's easy to understand that someone in the world awaits you, whether it's in the middle of the desert or in some great city. And when two such people encounter each other, and their eyes meet, the past and the future become unimportant. There is only that moment, and the incredible certainty that everything under the sun has been written by one hand only. It is the hand that evokes love, and creates a twin soul for every person in the world. Without such love, one's dreams would have no meaning.

**From *Eat, Pray, Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert:**

“People think a soul mate is your perfect fit, and that’s what everyone wants. But a true soul mate is a mirror, the person who shows you everything that is holding you back, the person who brings you to your own attention so you can change your life.

A true soul mate is probably the most important person you’ll ever meet, because they tear down your walls and smack you awake. But to live with a soul mate forever? Nah. Too painful. Soul mates, they come into your life just to reveal another layer of yourself to you, and then leave.

A soul mate’s purpose is to shake you up, tear apart your ego a little bit, show you your obstacles and addictions, break your heart open so new light can get in, make you so desperate and out of control that you have to transform your life, then introduce you to your spiritual master...”

**From *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* by Louis de Bernières:**

Love is a temporary madness, it erupts like volcanoes and then subsides. And when it subsides you have to make a decision. You have to work out whether your root was so entwined together that it is inconceivable that you should ever part. Because this is what love is.

Love is not breathlessness, it is not excitement, it is not the promulgation of promises of eternal passion. that is just being in love, which any fool can do. Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away, and this is both an art and a fortunate accident.

Those that truly love have roots that grow towards each other underground, and when all the pretty blossoms have fallen from their branches, they find that they are one tree and not two.



**From *Still Life with Woodpecker* by Tom Robbins:**

Love is the ultimate outlaw. It just won't adhere to any rules. The most any of us can do is to sign on as its accomplice. Instead of vowing to honor and obey, maybe we should swear to aid and abet. That would mean that security is out of the question. The words "make" and "stay" become inappropriate. My love for you has no strings attached. I love you for free.

**From *On Love and Happiness* by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin:**

Love is an adventure and a conquest. It survives and develops like the universe itself only by perpetual discovery. The only right love is that between couples whose passion leads them both, one through the other, to a higher possession of their being.

Put your faith in the spirit which dwells between the two of you. You have each offered yourself to the other as a boundless field of understanding, of enrichment, of mutually increased sensibility. You will meet above all by entering into and constantly sharing one another's thoughts, affections, dreams, and prayer. There alone, as you know, in spirit which is arrived at through flesh, you will find no surfeit, no disappointments, no limits. There alone the skies are ever open for your love; there alone lies the great road ahead.

**From *Inner Life* by Thomas à Kempis:**

Love is a mighty power, a great and complete good. Love alone lightens every burden, and makes rough places smooth. It bears every hardship as though it were nothing, and renders all bitterness sweet and acceptable.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven or earth; for love is born of God.

Love flies, runs and leaps for joy. It is free and unrestrained. Love knows no limits, but ardently transcends all bounds. Love feels no burden, takes no account of toil, attempts things beyond its strength.

Love sees nothing as impossible, for it feels able to achieve all things. It is strange and effective, while those who lack love faint and fail.

Love is not fickle and sentimental, nor is it intent on vanities. Like a living flame and a burning torch, it surges upward and surely surmounts every obstacle.

**From *I Like You* by Sandol Stoddard Warburg:**

I like you and I know why.

I like you because you are a good person to like.

I like you because when I tell you something special, you know it's special

And you remember it a long, long time.

You say, "Remember when you told me something special?"

And both of us remember

When I think something is important

you think it's important too

We have good ideas

When I say something funny, you laugh

I think I'm funny and you think I'm funny too

Hah-hah!

I like you because if you find two four-leaf clovers, you give me one

If I find four, I give you two

If we only find three, we keep on looking

Sometimes we have good luck, and sometimes we don't

And I like you because when I am feeling sad

You don't always cheer me up right away

Sometimes it is better to be sad

I like you because I don't know why but

Everything that happens is nicer with you

I can't remember when I didn't like you

It must have been lonesome then

I like you because because because

I forget why I like you but I do."

**From *The Little Prince* by Antoine De Saint-Exupery:**

“What does tamed mean?”

“It’s something that’s been too often neglected. It means, ‘to create ties’...”

“To create ties?”

“That’s right,” the fox said. “For me you’re only a little boy just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you have no need of me either. For you I’m only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, we’ll need each other. You’ll be the only boy in the world for me. I’ll be the only fox in the world for you...”

“My life is monotonous,” he said. “But if you tame me, my life will be filled with sunshine. I’ll know the sound of footsteps that will be different from all the rest. Other footsteps send me back underground. Yours will call me out of my burrow like music...”

“Here is my secret. It’s quite simple: One sees clearly only with the heart. Anything essential is invisible to the eyes. People have forgotten this truth,” the fox said. “But you mustn’t forget it. You become responsible forever for what you’ve tamed.”

**From *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten***

**by Robert Fulgham:**

All of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in Kindergarten... These are the things I learned:

Share everything

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.

Don't take things that aren't yours.

Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.

Wash your hands before you eat.

Flush.

Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Give them to someone who feels sad.

Live a balanced life – learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some

Take a nap every afternoon.

When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together.

Wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that...

**From *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams:**

“What is REAL?” asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room.

“Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?”

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. When someone loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become Real.”

“Does it hurt?” asked the Rabbit.

“Sometimes,” said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. “When you are Real you don’t mind being hurt.”

“Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,” he asked, “or bit by bit?”

“It doesn’t happen all at once,” said the Skin Horse. “You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in your joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”

“I suppose you are Real?” said the Rabbit. And then he wished he had not said it, for he thought the Skin Horse only smiled.

“Someone made me Real,” he said. “That was a great many years ago; but once you are Real you can’t become unreal again. It lasts for always.”

**Your *Personal Penguin* by Sandra Boynton:**

I like you a lot. You're funny and kind. So let me explain what I have in mind...

I want to be your personal penguin. I want to walk right by your side.

I want to be your personal penguin.

I want to travel with you far and wide.

Wherever you go, I'll go there, too.

Here and there and everywhere and always with you.

I want to be your personal penguin from now on.

Now, lots of other penguins seem to do fine in a universe of nothing but ice.

But if I could be yours and you could be mine, our cozy little world would be twice as nice.

I want to be your personal penguin. I want to talk to you night and day.

I want to be your personal penguin. I want to listen to whatever you say.

Look at these wings, so perfect to hold you. I'd like to say again what I have already told you.

Let me be your personal penguin.

Imagine me, your personal penguin.

I want to be your personal penguin from now on. (Please?)



**“How Falling in Love is Like Owning a Dog”**

**by Taylor Mali:**

First of all, it's a big responsibility,  
especially in a city like New York.  
So think long and hard before deciding on love.  
On the other hand, love gives you a  
sense of security: when you're walking down  
the street late at night  
and you have a leash on love  
ain't no one going to mess with you.  
Because crooks and muggers think  
love is unpredictable.  
Who knows what love could do  
in its own defense?  
On cold winter nights, love is warm.  
It lies between you and lives and breathes  
and makes funny noises.  
Love wakes you up all hours of  
the night with its needs.  
It needs to be fed so it  
will grow and stay healthy.  
Love doesn't like being left alone for long.  
But come home and love is  
always happy to see you.  
It may break a few things accidentally  
in its passion for life,  
but you can never be mad at love for long.  
Is love good all the time? No! No!  
Love can be bad. Bad, love, bad! Very bad love.  
Love makes messes.  
Love leaves you little surprises here and there.

Love needs lots of cleaning up after.  
Sometimes you just want to get love fixed.  
Sometimes you want to roll up a  
piece of newspaper  
and swat love on the nose,  
not so much to cause pain,  
just to let love know  
Don't you ever do that again!  
Sometimes love just wants to go  
out for a nice long walk.  
Because love loves exercise.  
It will run you around the block  
and leave you panting, breathless.  
Pull you in different directions  
at once, or wind itself around and around you  
until you're all wound up and you cannot move.  
But love makes you meet people wherever you go.  
People who have nothing in common but love  
stop and talk to each other on the street.  
Throw things away and love will bring them back,  
again, and again, and again.  
But most of all, love needs love, lots of it.  
And in return, love loves you and never stops.

**From the movie, “Shall We Dance” (spoken by Susan Sarandon):**

“We need a witness to our lives. There’s a billion people on the planet... I mean, what does any one life really mean? But in a marriage, you’re promising to care about everything. The good things, the bad things, the terrible things, the mundane things... all of it, all of the time, every day. You’re saying ‘Your life will not go unnoticed because I will notice it. Your life will not go un-witnessed because I will be your witness.’”

**From the television comedy *Brooklyn 99*, season 2.17:**

“Marriage is a contract. But it’s so much more than that. Marriage is Love. It’s commitment. It’s joy; it’s understanding; it’s patience; it’s anger. It’s reconciliation; it’s everything. It’s like oatmeal, it sustains you.”

**Song lyrics from “Just Be” by Paloma Faith:**

Let's get old together  
Let's be unhappy forever  
'Cause there's no one in this world  
That I'd rather be unhappy with  
Let's be exposed and unprotected  
Let's see one another when we're weak  
Let's go our separate ways in the night  
Like two moths  
But know that you're flying home to me.  
I was born thinking  
It would all be dreamy  
But I know that I wouldn't be happy  
That way  
You wear me out with frustration and  
Heartache and anger  
But we wait for the wave to wash it away  
Don't say nothing  
Just sit next to me  
Don't say nothing, shh  
Just be, just be, just be.  
Let's let go together  
Let us unfold one another  
And watch all the little things that  
Once drew me to you  
Eventually get on my nerves  
I wear you out with frustration  
And heartache and anger  
But we wait for the wave just to wash it away  
Don't say nothing  
Just sit next to me

Don't say nothing, shh  
Just be, just be, just be.  
When you're sick of the every day  
When you're tired of my voice  
When you tell me  
You'll walk out that door  
That's when I know that you'll stay.  
Don't say nothing  
Just sit next to me  
Don't say nothing  
Just be, just be  
Just don't say nothing  
Just sit next to me,  
Say nothing  
Just be, just be, just be.  
Don't say nothing, shh.

**Ruth 1:16:**

“Do not ask me to leave you or to return from following you.  
For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge.  
Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.  
Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried.”

**\*1 Corinthians 13:**

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”