**Early American Poetry**

**Slave’s Dream (Excerpt)**

Beside the ungathered rice he lay,  
   His sickle in his hand;  
His breast was bare, his matted hair  
   Was buried in the sand.  
Again, in the mist and shadow of sleep,  
   He saw his Native Land.  
  
Wide through the landscape of his dreams  
   The lordly Niger flowed;  
Beneath the palm trees on the plain  
   Once more a king he strode;  
And heard the tinkling caravans  
   Descend the mountain road.  
  
He saw once more his dark-eyed queen  
   Among her children stand;  
They clasped his neck, they kissed his cheeks,  
   They held him by the hand!—  
A tear burst from the sleeper’s lids  
   And fell into the sand.  
  
At night he heard the lion roar,  
   And the hyena scream,  
And the river-horse, as he crushed the reeds  
   Beside some hidden stream;  
And it passed, like a glorious roll of drums,  
   Through the triumph of his dream.  
  
The forests, with their myriad tongues,  
   Shouted of liberty;  
And the Blast of the Desert cried aloud,  
   With a voice so wild and free,  
That he started in his sleep and smiled  
   At their tempestuous glee.  
  
He did not feel the driver’s whip,  
   Nor the burning heat of day;  
For Death had illumined the Land of Sleep,  
   And his lifeless body lay  
A worn-out fetter, that the soul  
   Had broken and thrown away!

-Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

**The Yellow Violet (Excerpt)**

Of all her train, the hands of Spring

  First plant thee in the watery mould,

And I have seen thee blossoming

  Beside the snow-bank’s edges cold.

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Thy parent sun, who bade thee view

  Pale skies, and chilling moisture sip,

Has bathed thee in his own bright hue,

  And streaked with jet thy glowing lip.

Yet slight thy form, and low thy seat,

  And earthward bent thy gentle eye,

Unapt the passing view to meet

  When loftier flowers are flaunting nigh.

Oft, in the sunless April day,

  Thy early smile has stayed my walk;

But midst the gorgeous blooms of May,

  I passed thee on thy humble stalk.

So they, who climb to wealth, forget

  The friends in darker fortunes tried.

I copied them—but I regret

  That I should ape the ways of pride.

And when again the genial hour

  Awakes the painted tribes of light,

I’ll not o’erlook the modest flower

  That made the woods of April bright.

-William Cullen Bryant

**Poem 597**

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air -

Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -

And Breaths were gathering firm

For that last Onset - when the King

Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable - and then it was

There interposed a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -

Between the light - and me -

And then the Windows failed - and then

I could not see to see –

-Emily Dickinson