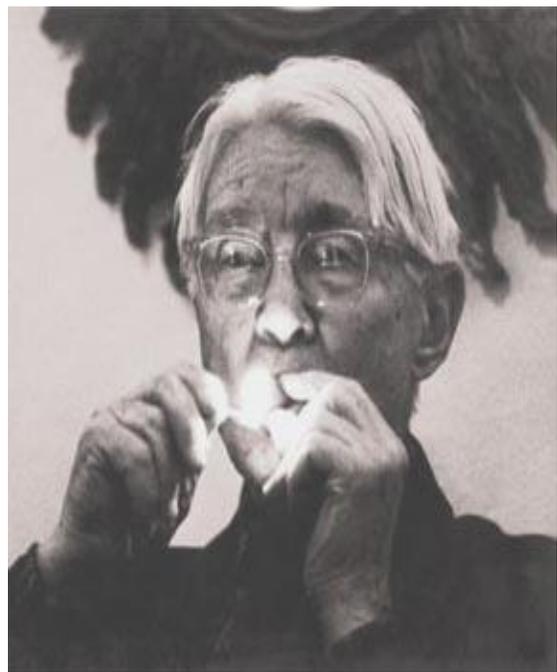
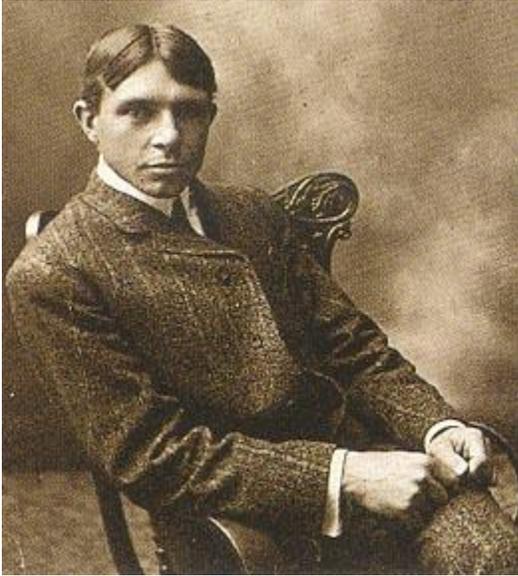


Selected Chicago Poems
by
Carl Sandburg



Lit 215
Masterpieces of American Literature
PROF. GLENN TURNER
ELGIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

CARL SANDBURG



CHICAGO



**HOG Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,
Player with Railroads and the Nation's
Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:
They tell me you are wicked and I believe
them, for I
have seen your painted women under the
gas lamps
luring the farm boys.
And they tell me you are crooked and I
answer: Yes, it
is true I have seen the gunman kill and go
free to**

**kill again.
And they tell me you are brutal and my reply is: On the
faces of women and children I have seen the marks
of wanton hunger.
And having answered so I turn once more to those who
sneer at this my city, and I give them back the sneer
and say to them:
Come and show me another city with lifted head singing
so proud to be alive and coarse and strong and cunning.
Flinging magnetic curses amid the toil of piling job on
job, here is a tall bold slugger set vivid against the
little soft cities;
Fierce as a dog with tongue lapping for action, cunning
as a savage pitted against the wilderness,
Bareheaded,
Shoveling,
Wrecking,
Planning,
Building, breaking, rebuilding,
Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with
white teeth,
Under the terrible burden of destiny laughing as a young
man laughs,
Laughing even as an ignorant fighter laughs who has
never lost a battle,
Bragging and laughing that under his wrist is the pulse.
and under his ribs the heart of the people,
Laughing!
Laughing the stormy, husky, brawling laughter of
Youth, half-naked, sweating, proud to be Hog
Butcher, Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with
Railroads and Freight Handler to the Nation.**

THE HARBOR

PASSING through huddled and ugly walls
By doorways where women
Looked from their hunger-deep eyes,
Haunted with shadows of hunger-hands,
Out from the huddled and ugly walls,
I came sudden, at the city's edge,
On a blue burst of lake,
Long lake waves breaking under the sun
On a spray-flung curve of shore;
And a fluttering storm of gulls,
Masses of great gray wings
And flying white bellies
Veering and wheeling free in the open



SUBWAY

DOWN between the walls of shadow
Where the iron laws insist,
The hunger voices mock.
The worn wayfaring men
With the hunched and humble shoulders,
Throw their laughter into toil.



LOST



DESOLATE and lone
All night long on the lake
Where fog trails and mist creeps,
The whistle of a boat
Calls and cries unendingly,
Like some lost child
In tears and trouble
Hunting the harbor's breast
And the harbor's eyes.

FOG

**THE fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.**

BLACKLISTED

**WHY shall I keep the old name?
What is a name anywhere anyway?
A name is a cheap thing all fathers and mothers leave
each child:
A job is a job and I want to live, so
Why does God Almighty or anybody else care whether
I take a new name to go by?**

ICE HANDLER

**I KNOW an ice handler who wears a flannel shirt with
pearl buttons the size of a dollar,
And he lugs a hundred-pound hunk into a saloon ice-
box, helps himself to cold ham and rye bread,
Tells the bartender it's hotter than yesterday and will be
hotter yet to-morrow, by Jesus,
And is on his way with his head in the air and a hard
pair of fists.
He spends a dollar or so every Saturday night on a two
hundred pound woman who washes dishes in the
Hotel Morrison.
He remembers when the union was organized he broke
the noses of two scabs and loosened the nuts so the
wheels came off six different wagons one morning,
and he came around and watched the ice melt in the
street.
All he was sorry for was one of the scabs bit him on the
knuckles of the right hand so they bled when he
came around to the saloon to tell the boys about it.**

MAMIE

MAMIE beat her head against the bars of a little Indiana town and dreamed of romance and big things off somewhere the way the railroad trains all ran.

She could see the smoke of the engines get lost down where the streaks of steel flashed in the sun and when the newspapers came in on the morning mail she knew there was a big Chicago far off, where all the trains ran.

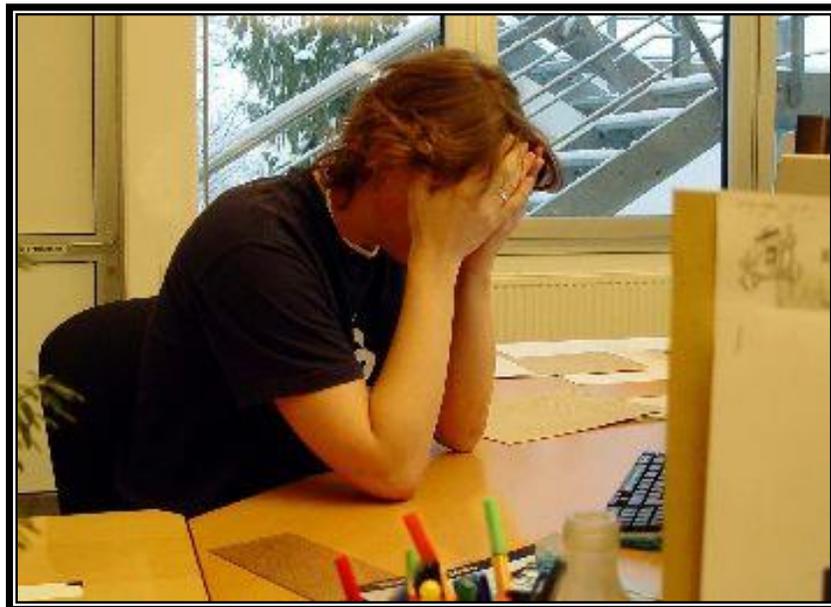
She got tired of the barber shop boys and the post office chatter and the church gossip and the old pieces the band played on the Fourth of July and Decoration Day And sobbed at her fate and beat her head against the bars and was going to kill herself

When the thought came to her that if she was going to die she might as well die struggling for a clutch of romance among the streets of Chicago.

She has a job now at six dollars a week in the basement of the Boston Store

And even now she beats her head against the bars in the same old way and wonders if there is a bigger place the railroads run to from Chicago where maybe there is

**romance
and big things
and real dream
that never go smash.**



SKYSCRAPER

BY day the skyscraper looms in the smoke and sun and has a soul.

Prairie and valley, streets of the city, pour people into it and they mingle among its twenty floors and are poured out again back to the streets, prairies and valleys.

It is the men and women, boys and girls so poured in and out all day that give the building a soul of dreams and thoughts and memories.

(Dumped in the sea or fixed in a desert, who would care for the building or speak its name or ask a policeman the way to it?)

Elevators slide on their cables and tubes catch letters and parcels and iron pipes carry gas and water in and sewage out.

Wires climb with secrets, carry light and carry words, and tell terrors and profits and loves--curses of men grappling plans of business and questions of women in plots of love.

Hour by hour the caissons reach down to the rock of the earth and hold the building to a turning planet.

Hour by hour the girders play as ribs and reach out and hold together the stone walls and floors.

Hour by hour the hand of the mason and the stuff of the mortar clinch the pieces and parts to the shape an architect voted.

Hour by hour the sun and the rain, the air and the rust, and the press of time running into centuries, play on the building inside and out and use it.

Men who sunk the pilings and mixed the mortar are laid in graves where the wind whistles a wild song without words

And so are men who strung the wires and fixed the pipes and tubes and those who saw it rise floor by floor.

Souls of them all are here, even the hod carrier begging at back doors hundreds of miles away and the brick-layer who went to state's prison for shooting another man while drunk.

(One man fell from a girder and broke his neck at the end of a straight plunge--he is here--his soul has gone into the stones of the building.)



**On the office doors from tier to tier--hundreds of names
and each name standing for a face written across
with a dead child, a passionate lover, a driving
ambition for a million dollar business or a lobster's
ease of life.**

**Behind the signs on the doors they work and the walls
tell nothing from room to room.**

**Ten-dollar-a-week stenographers take letters from
corporation officers, lawyers, efficiency engineers,
and tons of letters go bundled from the building to all
ends of the earth.**

**Smiles and tears of each office girl go into the soul of
the building just the same as the master-men who
rule the building.**

**Hands of clocks turn to noon hours and each floor
empties its men and women who go away and eat
and come back to work.**

**Toward the end of the afternoon all work slackens and
all jobs go slower as the people feel day closing on
them.**

**One by one the floors are emptied. . . The uniformed
elevator men are gone. Pails clang. . . Scrubbers
work, talking in foreign tongues. Broom and water
and mop clean from the floors human dust and spit,
and machine grime of the day.**

**Spelled in electric fire on the roof are words telling
miles of houses and people where to buy a thing for
money. The sign speaks till midnight.**

**Darkness on the hallways. Voices echo. Silence
holds. . . Watchmen walk slow from floor to floor
and try the doors. Revolvers bulge from their hip
pockets. . . Steel safes stand in corners. Money
is stacked in them.**

**A young watchman leans at a window and sees the lights
of barges butting their way across a harbor, nets of
red and white lanterns in a railroad yard, and a span
of glooms splashed with lines of white and blurs of
crosses and clusters over the sleeping city.**

By night the skyscraper looms in the smoke and the stars and has a soul.