

TWO SONNET ANAGRAM PUZZLES

MIKE KEITH
Salem, Oregon

The poem below is stanza XXVI from the poem "Picthorn Manor" by American poet and critic Amy Lowell (1874-1925). Below it is a sonnet (in the usual form, with fourteen lines of iambic pentameter and ABAB CDCD EFEF GG rhyme scheme) made from the letters in Ms. Lowell's poem. Aside from being an anagram, the sonnet has another unusual feature. Can you spot it?

From "Picthorn Manor" by Amy Lowell:

Then he would bring her books, and read to her
The poems of Dr. Donne, and the blue river
Would murmur through the reading, and a stir
Of birds and bees make the white petals shiver,
And one or two would flutter prone and lie
Spotting the smooth-clipped grass. The days went by
Threaded with talk and verses. Green leaves pushed
Through blossoms stubbornly.
Gervase, unconscious of dishonesty,
Fell into strong and watchful loving, free
He thought, since always would his lips be hushed.

Anagram:

A hundred forty syllables it has,
This proverb that abuses, disregards
Unspoken vows. (She slowly shuffled, as
Her giggles ended, broken into shards.)

O do not ever, under Eden hid,
Go up to chew the cud of Hades' cow,
But rather hum a song. Amen! Forbid
Ideas dull, thus shun the evil now.

Repel her temper, so go duly nigh
To such an overt, sad eternal end;
O, help me now! Renew it, men! Set high!
Bad skin cast forth, this ritual amend.

O bugger it! Throw in the towel – stop,
And stubbornly the final vowel drop.

Next is an epistle taken in its entirety from *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*. This is followed by an imaginary response from father to son in the form of a sonnet, again composed by rearranging the letters in the first text. What unusual property, closely related to the one above, does *this* sonnet possess?

R. L. Stevenson to his father, 1866

Letter,
SULYARDE TERRACE, TORQUAY
THURSDAY, APRIL.

RESPECTED PATERNAL RELATIVE,

I write to make a request of the most moderate nature. Every year I have cost you an enormous – nay, elephantine – sum of money for drugs and physician’s fees, and the most expensive time of the twelve months was March. But this year the biting Oriental blasts, the howling tempests, and the general ailments of the human race have been successfully braved by yours truly.

Does not this deserve remuneration?

I appeal to your charity, I appeal to your generosity, I appeal to your justice, I appeal to your accounts, I appeal, in fine, to your purse.

My sense of generosity forbids the receipt of more – my sense of justice forbids the receipt of less – than half-a-crown. Greeting from, Sir,

YOUR MOST AFFECTIONATE AND NEEDY SON.

Anagram:

You yearn, miffed scamp, uncautiously carefree:
You mourn, droop, plunge, obtain, and strangely strive;
Your “fool-proof”, staunch, contentious prayers I see;
Sure - faint, strapped, plaintive playboys yearn to thrive!

Tongues twitched, yearned with outrageous, fractious themes;
Breathed prayers, therefore, gripped schoolmates’ threadbare frames.
Blithe youths preened, brusque, by coastline vineyard streams,
As lifestyles fierce conjoined svelte colleagues’ shames.

Faint flame, arise! Postpone time’s twelve-monthed year;
Flaunt fine, smooth style, thence viewpoints strange yet trite.
Maintain, maintain: taut, smooth, part-transformed sneer;
Learn blame, therefore; come, note the prayer-flame white.

O hackneyed, anxious, youth, I see your ploy;
Straight I perceive: your cash equates to joy.