**Crime Poems Key Quotations**

Peter Grimes: sections of poem referencing CRIME

Letter XXII *The Poor Of The Borough* From [The Borough](http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/crabbeg/borough/cover.htm) by [George Crabbe](http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/crabbeg/about.htm) [1804-1809, 1810]

Yes! then he wept, and to his mind there came  
Much of his conduct, and **he felt the shame**:  
How he had oft the good old man reviled,  
And never paid the duty of a child;  
**How, when the father in his Bible read,  
He in contempt and anger left the**[**shed**](http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/crabbeg/borough/notes/002.htm)**;**"It is the word of life," the parent cried;  
"This is the life itself," the boy replied

Nay, once had dealt the sacrilegious blow  
On his bare head, and laid his parent low:

Thy mother left me in a happy time,  
Thou kill'dst not her — Heaven spares the double crime."

With greedy eye he looked on all he saw,  
He knew not justice, and he laughed at law;  
On all he marked he stretched his ready hand;  
He fished by water, and he filched by land.  
Oft in the night has Peter dropped his oar,  
Fled from his boat and sought for prey on shore;  
Oft up the hedgerow glided, on his back  
Bearing the orchard's produce in a sack,  
Or farmyard load, tugged fiercely from the stack;  
And as these wrongs to greater numbers rose,  
The more he looked on all men as his foes.

But no success could please his cruel soul,  
He wished for one to trouble and control;  
He wanted some obedient boy to stand  
And bear the blow of his outrageous hand;  
And hoped to find in some propitious hour  
A feeling creature subject to his power.

Exploitation – AO3 resonance for modern and contemporary readers

[They](http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/crabbeg/borough/notes/004.htm) in their want a [trifling sum](http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/crabbeg/borough/notes/041.htm) would take,

But none inquired how Peter used the rope,  
Or what the bruise, that made the stripling stoop;  
None could the ridges on his back behold,  
None sought him shivering in the winter's cold;  
None put the question, "Peter, dost thou give  
The boy his food? — What, man! the lad must live.  
Consider, Peter, let the child have bread,  
He'll serve thee better if he's stroked and fed."   
None reasoned thus — and some, on hearing cries,  
Said calmly, "Grimes is at his exercise."

Links to Baby P scandal

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Baby_P>

AO2, L, F , S

[Pined](http://www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/crabbeg/borough/notes/005.htm), beaten, cold, pinched, threatened, and abused —   
His efforts punished and his food refused —   
Awake tormented — soon aroused from sleep —   
Struck if he wept, and yet compelled to weep,  
The trembling boy dropped down and strove to pray,  
Received a blow, and trembling turned away,  
Or sobbed and hid his piteous face; while he,  
The savage master, grinned in horrid glee.  
He'd now the power he ever loved to show,  
A feeling being subject to his blow.

Thus lived the lad, in hunger, peril, pain,

Yet murmurs were there, and some questions asked —   
How he was fed, how punished, and how tasked?  
Much they suspected, but they little proved,  
And Peter passed untroubled and unmoved.

And what his fate? One night it chanced he fell  
From the boat's mast and perished in her well,  
Where fish were living kept, and where the boy  
(So reasoned men) could not himself destroy: —

"What said the jury?" They were long in doubt,  
But sturdy Peter faced the matter out.  
So they dismissed him, saying at the time,  
"Keep fast your hatchway when you've boys who climb." 

Strange that a frame so weak could bear so long  
The grossest insult and the foulest wrong;

The boat grew leaky and the wind was strong,  
Rough was the passage and the time was long;  
His liquor failed, and Peter's wrath arose —   
No more is known — the rest we must suppose,  
Or learn of Peter — Peter says, he "spied  
The stripling's danger and for harbor tried;  
Meantime the fish, and then th' apprentice died."

The pitying women raised a clamor round,  
And weeping said "Thou hast this Prentice drowned."

Now the stern man was summoned to the hall,  
To tell his tale before the burghers all:  
He gave th' account; professed the lad he loved,  
And kept his brazen features all unmoved.

The mayor himself with tone severe replied,  
"Thenceforth with thee shall never boy abide;  
Hire thee a freeman, whom thou durst not beat,  
But who, in thy despite, will sleep and eat;  
Free thou art now! — again shouldst thou appear,  
Thou'lt find thy sentence, like thy soul, severe."

The priest attending, found he spoke at times  
As one alluding to his fears and crimes:   
"It was the fall," he muttered, "I can show  
The manner how — I never struck a blow."   
And then aloud — "Unhand me, free my chain;  
On oath, he fell — it struck him to the brain —   
Why ask my father? — that old man will swear  
Against my life; besides, he wasn't there —   
What, all agreed? — Am I to die today? —   
My Lord, in mercy, give me time to pray."

My Last Duchess

*Duke Ferrara*

Nonchalant, blasé, arrogant, Bond villain-esque?

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive.

Power, control

Fra Pandolf’s hands / Worked busily a day

Will’t please you sit and look at her?

My, I, = egocentric

…none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I

Motive:

jealousy

’twas not / Her husband’s presence only, called that **spot** / Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek;



The painting is a focaliser

Fra Pandolf chanced to say, “Her mantle laps

Over my lady’s wrist too much,”

…the faint / Half-flush that dies along her throat

that spot of joy.

Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er

She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.

The bough of cherries some officious fool

Broke in the orchard for her

She thanked men… as if she ranked / My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name / With anybody’s gift.

Who’d stoop to blame / This sort of trifling?

Class systems

I choose / Never to stoop.

Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt, …but who passed without / Much the same smile?

**This grew; I gave commands;**

**Then all smiles stopped together.**

**There she stands / As if alive. Will’t please you rise?**

**The Count your master’s known munificence / Is ample warrant that no just pretense / Of mine for dowry will be disallowed; Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed / At starting, is my object.**

 **Nay, we’ll go / Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,**

**Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,**

**Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!**

Warped mind: he’s a god, she’s a mere animal

**Porphyria's Lover**

By Robert Browning

Focaliser: Rain / storm = madness, inequality (AO3: class), bad love, Pathetic fallacy

**The rain** set early in to-night,

straight

She shut the cold out and **the storm**,

And **kneeled** and made the cheerless grate

 **Blaze** up, and all the cottage warm;

her **soiled gloves**

Status symbol, crime motif, honour codes, tainted goods

And, stooping, made my cheek lie there,

And spread, o'er all, her **yellow hair**,

…she / Too weak, for all her heart's endeavour / To **set its struggling passion free / From pride**, and vainer ties **dissever** / And give herself to me for ever.

Central delusion, patriarchal, psychopathic self-confidence

But **passion** sometimes would prevail,

For love of her, **and all in vain:**



**Fair / Yellow hair** = beauty, gold (object), jaundice, sickness, the murder weapon, catalyst, perfection. Irony of homophone: “fair”

at last I knew

Porphyria worshipped me; surprise

Made my heart swell, and still it grew

While I debated what to do.

That moment **she was mine, mine, fair,**

**Perfectly pure and good:**

I **found**

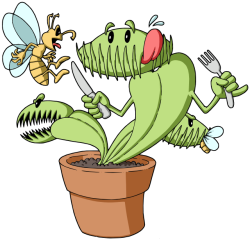
Thing = abstract noun, an object, a euphemism (murder), reframing of the crime

A **thing** to **do**, and all her hair

In one long **yellow string** I wound

Three times her **little** throat around,

And strangled her.

No pain felt she;

I am quite sure she felt no pain.

Natural image

instinctive

**As a shut bud that holds a bee**,

I warily oped her lids:

I **propped** her head

Her head, which droops upon it [my shoulder] still:

**The smiling rosy little head**,

all it scorned at once is fled,

And I, its love, am gained instead!

Circular narrative = inaction, action, inaction.

No punishment? AO3 religion VS secularism

And thus we sit together now,

And all night long we have not stirred,

**And yet** God has not said a word**!**

**The Laboratory** BY ROBERT BROWNING

AO3 Possibly set in seventeenth century France

It was inspired by the life of Marie Madeleine Marguerite D'Aubray, marquise de Brinvilliers (1630-1676)

dramatic monologue

Now that I, tying thy glass mask tightly,

May gaze thro’ these faint smokes curling whitely,

As thou pliest thy trade in this devil’s-smithy—

**Which is the poison to poison her, prithee?**

He is with her, and they know that I know

Where they are, what they do: they believe my tears flow

While they laugh, laugh at me, at me fled to the drear

Empty church, to pray God in, for them!—I am here.

Grind away, moisten and mash up thy paste,

Pound at thy powder,—I am not in haste!

Better sit thus and observe thy strange things,

Than go where men wait me and dance at the King’s.

That in the mortar—you call it a gum?

Ah, the brave tree whence such gold oozings come!

And yonder soft phial, the exquisite blue,

Sure to taste sweetly,—is that poison too?

AO4 Iago, Hannibal Lecter

Had I but all of them, thee and thy treasures,

**What a wild crowd of invisible pleasures!**

To carry pure death in an earring, a casket,

A signet, a fan-mount, a filigree basket!

**Soon, at the King’s**, a mere lozenge to give

Motive: envy?

And Pauline should have just thirty minutes to live!

But to light a pastile, and Elise, with her head

**And her breast and her arms and her hands, should drop dead!**

Quick—is it finished? The colour’s too grim!

Deception

Fantasizing, malevolent

Why not soft like the phial’s, enticing and dim?

Let it brighten her drink, let her turn it and stir,

And try it and taste, ere she fix and prefer!

What a drop! She’s not little, no minion like me—

Motive: class

Motive : passion

That’s why she ensnared him: this never will free

The soul from those masculine eyes,—say, “no!”

To that pulse’s magnificent come-and-go.

For only last night, as they whispered, I brought

My own eyes to bear on her so, that I thought

Could I keep them one half minute fixed, she would fall,

Shrivelled; she fell not; yet this does it all!

Not that I bid you spare her the pain!

Let death be felt and the proof remain;

Brand, burn up, bite into its grace—

He is sure to remember her dying face!

Is it done? Take my mask off! Nay, be not morose;

It kills her, and this prevents seeing it close:

The delicate droplet, my whole fortune’s fee—

If it hurts her, beside, can it ever hurt me?

Now, take all my jewels, gorge gold to your fill,

You may kiss me, old man, on my mouth if you will!

But brush this dust off me, lest horror it brings

Ere I know it—next moment I dance at the King’s!

Title: The **Ballad** of Reading Gaol

In Memoriam

C.T.W. [**Charles Thomas Wooldridge**]

Sometime Trooper of the Royal Horse Guards.

Obiit H.M. Prison, Reading, Berkshire,

July 7th, 1896

Author: Oscar Wilde

I.

 He did not wear his scarlet coat,

Blood = immediate focaliser

For blood and wine are red,

And blood and wine were on his hands

When they found him with the dead,

The poor dead woman whom he loved,

And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men

In a suit of shabby grey;

A cricket cap was on his head,

And his step **seemed** light and gay;

But I never saw a man who looked

So **wistfully** at the day.

Sky = freedom?

Upon that little tent of blue

Which prisoners call the sky,

When a voice behind me whispered low,

"That fellow's got to swing."

Dear Christ! the very prison walls

Suddenly seemed to reel,

mankind’s essential illness?

Inevitability – we are all guilty

Yet **each man kills the thing he loves**

By each let this be heard,

Some do it with a bitter look,

Some with a flattering word,

The coward does it with a kiss,

The brave man with a sword!

Some love too little, some too long,

Some sell, and others buy;

He does not die a death of shame

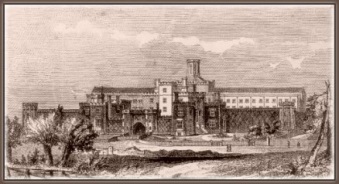
On a day of dark disgrace,

Nor have a noose about his neck,

Nor a cloth upon his face,

Nor drop feet foremost through the floor

Into an empty place

 He does not sit with silent men

…

Who watch him lest himself **should rob**

**The prison of its prey.**

The man-made setting is a villain

He does not …

He does not stare …

He does not pray with lips of clay

For his agony to pass;

II.

 Six weeks our guardsman walked the yard,

And I and all the souls in pain,

Who **tramped the other ring**,

Forgot if we ourselves had done

A great or little thing,

And watched with gaze of dull amaze

The man who had to swing.

The **ring** is a motif throughout the poem – mirroring the circular narrative, the endless cycles of misery…

And strange it was to think that he

Had such **a debt to pay.**



But grim to see is **the gallows-tree**,

With its adder-bitten root,

And, green or dry, a man must die

Before it bears its fruit!

And I knew that he was standing up

In the black dock's dreadful pen,

And that **never would I see his face**

**In God's sweet world again.**

**Like two doomed ships that pass in storm**

We had crossed each other's way:

And the iron gin that waits for Sin

Had caught us in its snare.

In Debtors' Yard the stones are hard,

And the dripping wall is high,

Who watched him lest himself should rob

Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon

The Regulations Act:

The Doctor said that Death was but

A scientific fact:

And twice a day the Chaplain called

And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,

And drank his quart of beer:

With slouch and swing around the ring

We trod the Fool's Parade!

We did not care: we knew we were

The Devil's Own Brigade:

And shaven head and feet of lead

Make a merry masquerade.

We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,

And sweated on the mill:

But in the heart of every man

Terror was lying still.

Till once, as we tramped in from work,

We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth **the yellow hole**

Gaped for a living thing;

**The very mud cried out for blood**

To the thirsty asphalte **ring:**

The hangman, with his little bag,

Went shuffling through the gloom

And each man trembled as he crept

Into his numbered tomb.

The watcher watched him as he slept,

And could not understand

How one could sleep so sweet a sleep

With a hangman close at hand?

Alas! it is a fearful thing

To feel another's guilt!

For, right within, the sword of Sin

Pierced to its poisoned hilt,

Characterised as furtive, clandestine... criminal

The Warders with their shoes of felt

Crept by each padlocked door,

And **peeped** and saw, with eyes of awe,

Grey figures on the floor,

The cock crew, the red cock crew,

They glided past, they glided fast,

With mop and mow, we saw them go,

Slim shadows hand in hand:

About, about, in ghostly rout

They trod a saraband:

But he does not win who plays with Sin

In the secret House of Shame."

Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,

Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;

Some wheeled in smirking pairs:

With the mincing step of demirep

Through its giant loom the web of gloom

Crept till each thread was spun:

And, as we prayed, we grew afraid

Of the **Justice of the Sun.**

God's dreadful dawn was red.

For the Lord of Death with icy breath

Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,

Nor ride a moon-white steed.

Something was dead in each of us,

And what was dead was Hope.

For **Man's grim Justice** goes its way,

And will not swerve aside:

But each man's heart beat thick and quick

Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock the prison-clock

Smote on the shivering air,

And from all the gaol rose up a wail

Of impotent despair,

And heard the prayer the hangman's snare

Strangled into a scream.

For he who live more lives than one

More deaths than one must die.

IV.

And I never saw sad men who looked

So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked

With such a wistful eye

Upon that little tent of blue

We prisoners called the sky,

AO4: "I see thee still, and on thy blade and dudgeon **gouts of blood**, which was not so before." **Macbeth** – the dagger scene

For he who sins a second time

Wakes a dead soul to pain,

And draws it from its spotted shroud,

And makes it bleed again,

**And makes it bleed great gouts of blood**

And makes it bleed in vain!

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb

With crooked arrows starred,

Silently we went round and round

The slippery asphalte yard;

AO3: As the name suggests, quicklime will rapidly oxidise any organic material with which it comes into contact. It's common practice to spray buildings flattened by earthquakes with quicklime - otherwise the rotting bodies trapped within soon become a galloping health hazard. With quicklime, the bacterial processes of decay are sidestepped entirely, and flesh is reduced to chemical sludge. The Guardian published a picture of a "limed" corpse, soon after the Turkish earthquake of August 1999.

An Horror stalked before each man,

And terror crept behind.

The Warders strutted up and down,

And kept their herd of brutes,

Their uniforms were spick and span,

And they wore their Sunday suits,

But we knew the work they had been at

By the **quicklime on their boots**.

For where a grave had opened wide,

There was no grave at all:

For he has a pall, this wretched man,

Such as few men can claim:

Deep down below a prison-yard,

Naked for greater shame,

He lies, with fetters on each foot,

Wrapt in a sheet of flame!

And all the while the burning lime

Eats flesh and bone away,

It eats the brittle bone by night,

And the soft flesh by the day,

For three long years they will not sow

Or root or seedling there:

They think a murderer's heart would taint

Each simple seed they sow.

It is not true! God's kindly earth

Is kindlier than men know,

And the red rose would but blow more red,

The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!

Out of his heart a white!

For who can say by what strange way,

Christ brings his will to light,

Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore

Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

For flowers have been known to heal

A common man's despair.

 So **never will wine-red rose or white,**

This execution is paralleled with Christ’s crucifixion, triggering ideas about compassion, sacrifice, Judgment Day,

forgiveness

**Petal by petal, fall**

On that stretch of mud and sand that lies

By the hideous prison-wall,

To tell the men who tramp the yard

**That God's Son died for all**.

He is at peace—this wretched man—

At peace, or will be soon:

There is no thing to make him mad,

Nor does Terror walk at noon,

For **the lampless Earth** in which he lies

Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged:

They did not even toll

A requiem that might have brought

Rest to his startled soul,

**But hurriedly they took him out,**

**And hid him in a hole.**

They mocked the **swollen purple throat**

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray

By his dishonoured grave:

Nor mark it with that blessed Cross

That Christ for sinners gave,

Because the man was one of those

Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; **he has but passed**

**To Life's appointed bourne:**

**And alien tears will fill for him**

Pity's long-broken urn,

For his mourner will be outcast men,

And outcasts always mourn.

V.

I know not whether Laws be right,

But this I know, that every Law

That men have made for Man,

… **straws the wheat and saves the chaff**

**With a most evil fan.**

This too I know—and wise it were

If each could know the same—

That **every prison that men build**

**Is built with bricks of shame,**

And bound with bars lest Christ should see

How men their brothers maim.

AO3 = Abu Ghraib torture and prisoner abuse in Iraq (2003)

And they do well to hide their Hell,

For **in it things are done**

That Son of God nor son of Man

Ever should look upon!

**The vilest deeds like poison weeds**

**Bloom well in prison-air**:

It is only what is good in Man

That wastes and withers there:

Wilde witnessed child prisoners during his stay in Reading Gaol, which he accounts the horrid details of in his two letters he wrote to The Daily Chronicle about prison reform–most of which centered around children.

**Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate**,

And **the Warder is Despair**

For **they starve the little frightened child**

Till it weeps both night and day:

And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,

And gibe the old and grey,

And some grow mad, and all grow bad,

And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell

Is **a foul and dark latrine**,

And all, but Lust, is turned to dust

In **Humanity's machine**.

**The brackish water that we drink**

**Creeps with a loathsome slime**,

For what chills and kills outright

Is that every stone one lifts by day

Becomes one's heart by night.

And the eye that watches through the door Synecdoche

Is pitiless and hard:

And by all forgot, **we rot and rot**,

With soul and body marred.

And thus **we rust Life's iron chain**

Degraded and alone:

But God's eternal Laws are kind

And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,

In prison-cell or yard,

This is a reference to Mark 14:3, wherein expensive spikenard was poured over Simon the leper’s head

Is as that broken box that gave

Its treasure to the Lord,

And filled the unclean leper's house

With the scent of costliest nard.

How else may man make straight his plan

Similar to Coleridge’s The *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* in the way that God / redemption /can find you in your darkest moments…

And cleanse his soul from Sin?

How else but through a broken heart

May Lord Christ enter in?

And he of the **swollen purple throat**.

And the stark and staring eyes,

Waits for the holy hands that took

The Thief to Paradise;

And a broken and a contrite heart

The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law

 Gave him three weeks of life,

Three little weeks in which to heal

focaliser

His soul of his soul's strife,

And cleanse from every **blot of blood**

**The hand that held the knife.**

For only blood can wipe out blood,

And only tears can heal:

VI.

**In Reading gaol by Reading town**

**There is a pit of shame,**

And in it lies a wretched man

Eaten by teeth of flame,

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,

In silence let him lie:

No need to waste the foolish tear,

Or heave the windy sigh:

**The man had killed the thing he loved,**

**And so he had to die.**

And all men kill the thing they love,

By all let this be heard,

Is this a subtle reference to Bosie or himself? Lord Alfred Bruce Douglas - the friend and lover of Oscar Wilde.

Some do it with a bitter look,

Some with a flattering word,

**The coward does it with a kiss**,

The brave man with a sword!