

# Neutral Tones By Thomas Hardy

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;  
– They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles of years ago;  
And some words played between us to and fro  
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing  
Alive enough to have strength to die;  
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
Like an ominous bird a-wing...

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me  
Your face, and the God curst sun, and a tree,  
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.