

## **Suggested secular readings for weddings**

*Please note – these are only suggestions so please do not think you have to restrict your choice to them – there are plenty of other readings out there for you to find – have fun looking!*

### **Union by Robert Fulgham**

You have known each other from the first glance of acquaintance to this point of commitment. At some point, you decided to marry. From that moment of yes, to this moment of yes, indeed, you have been making commitments in an informal way. All of those conversations that were held in a car, or over a meal, or during long walks – all those conversations that began with, “When we’re married”, and continued with “I will” and “you will” and “we will” – all those late night talks that included “someday” and “somehow” and “maybe” – and all those promises that are unspoken matters of the heart. All these common things, and more, are the real process of a wedding.

The symbolic vows that you are about to make are a way of saying to one another, “You know all those things that we’ve promised, and hoped, and dreamed – well, I meant it all, every word.”

Look at one another and remember this moment in time. Before this moment you have been many things to one another – acquaintance, friend, companion, lover, dancing partner, even teacher, for you have learned much from one another these past few years. Shortly you shall say a few words that will take you across a threshold of life, and things between you will never quite be the same.

For after today you shall say to the world –  
This is my husband. This is my wife.

### **The Art Of A Good Marriage Wilferd Arlan Peterson**

Happiness in marriage is not something that just happens.  
A good marriage must be created.  
In marriage the little things are the big things.  
It is never being too old to hold hands.  
It is remembering to say "I love you" at least once a day.  
It is never going to sleep angry.  
It is at no time taking the other for granted; the courtship should not end with the honeymoon, it should continue through all the years.  
It is having a mutual sense of values and common objectives.  
It is standing together facing the world.  
It is forming a circle of love that gathers in the whole family.  
It is doing things for each other, not in the attitude of duty or sacrifice, but in the spirit of joy.  
It is speaking words of appreciation and demonstrating gratitude in thoughtful ways.  
It is not looking for perfection in each other.  
It is cultivating flexibility, patience, understanding and a sense of humour.  
It is having the capacity to forgive and forget.  
It is giving each other an atmosphere in which each can grow.  
It is a common search for the good and the beautiful.  
It is establishing a relationship in which the independence is equal, dependence is mutual and the obligation is reciprocal.  
It is not only marrying the right partner, it is being the right partner.

## **Marriage Advice** **Jane Wells (1886)**

Let your love be stronger than your hate or anger.  
Learn the wisdom of compromise, for it is better to bend a little than to break.  
Believe the best rather than the worst.  
People have a way of living up or down to your opinion of them.  
Remember that true friendship is the basis for any lasting relationship.  
The person you choose to marry is deserving of the courtesies  
and kindnesses you bestow on your friends.  
Please hand this down to your children and your children's children.

## **The Prophet on Marriage** **by Khalil Gibran**

Then Almitra spoke again and said...  
"And what of Marriage, master?"  
And he answered saying:

You were born together,  
and together you shall be forevermore.

You shall be together when the white wings  
of death scatter your days.

Aye, you shall be together even in the  
silent memory of God.

But let there be spaces in your togetherness,  
And let the winds of the heavens dance between you.

Love one another, but make not a bond of love.  
Let it rather be a moving sea between  
the shores of your souls.

Fill each other's cup but drink not from one cup.  
Give one another of your bread but eat not from the same loaf.

Sing and dance together and be joyous,  
but let each of you be alone,

Even as the strings of a lute are alone  
though they quiver with the same music.

Give your hearts, but not into each other's keeping.  
For only the hand of Life can contain your hearts.

And stand together, yet not too near together.  
For the pillars of the temple stand apart,

And the oak tree and the cypress  
grow not in each other's shadow.

## **The Most Wonderful Of All Things In Life** **Sir Hugh Walpole (1884-1941)**

The most wonderful of all things in life is the discovery of another human being with whom one's relationship has a growing depth, beauty and joy as the years increase. This inner progressiveness of love between two human beings is a most marvellous thing; it cannot be found by looking for it or by passionately wishing for it. It is a sort of divine accident, and the most wonderful of all things in life.

### **A Walled Garden**

'Your marriage' he said 'should have within it, a secret and protected place, open to you alone. Imagine it to be a walled garden, entered by a door to which only you hold the key. Within this garden, you will cease to be a mother, father, employee, homemaker or any other of the roles which you fulfill in everyday life. Here you are yourselves, two people who love each other. Here you can concentrate on one another's needs.'  
So take my hand and let us go back to our garden.  
The time we spend together is not wasted but invested.  
Invested in our future and the nurture of our love.

**Anon**

### **A Lovely Love Story by Edward Monkton**

The fierce Dinosaur was trapped inside his cage of ice. Although it was cold he was happy in there. It was, after all, his cage.

Then along came the Lovely Other Dinosaur. The Lovely Other Dinosaur melted the Dinosaur's cage with kind words and loving thoughts.

I like this Dinosaur, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. Although he is fierce he is also tender and he is funny. He is also quite clever although I will not tell him this for now.

I like this Lovely Other Dinosaur, thought the Dinosaur. She is beautiful and she is different and she smells so nice. She is also a free spirit which is a quality I much admire in a Dinosaur.

But he can be so distant and so peculiar at times, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. He is also overly fond of things. Are all Dinosaurs so overly fond of things?

But her mind skips from here to there so quickly, thought the Dinosaur. She is also uncommonly keen on shopping. Are all Lovely Other Dinosaurs so uncommonly keen on shopping?

I will forgive his peculiarity and his concern for things, thought the Lovely Other Dinosaur. For they are part of what make him a richly charactered individual.

I will forgive her skipping mind and her fondness for shopping, thought the Dinosaur. For she fills our life with beautiful thought and wonderful surprises. Besides, I am not unkeen on shopping either.

Now the Dinosaur and Lovely Other Dinosaur are old. Look at them. Together they stand on the hill telling each other stories and feeling the warmth of the sun on their backs.

And that, my friends, is how it is with love. Let us all be Dinosaurs and Lovely Other Dinosaurs together. For the sun is warm. And the world is a beautiful place.

### **Captain Corelli's Mandolin by Louis de Bernieres**

Love is a temporary madness,  
it erupts like volcanoes and then subsides.

And when it subsides you have to make a decision.

You have to work out whether your roots have so entwined together  
that it is inconceivable that you should ever part.

Because this is what love is.

Love is not breathlessness,  
it is not excitement,  
it is not the promulgation of eternal passion.

That is just being "in love" which any fool can do.

Love itself is what is left over when being in love has burned away,  
and this is both an art and a fortunate accident.

Those that truly love, have roots that grow towards each other underground,  
and when all the pretty blossom have fallen from their branches,  
they find that they are one tree and not two.

### **Extract from Les Miserables - Victor Hugo**

You can give without loving, but you can never love without giving

The great acts of love are done by those  
Who are habitually performing small acts of kindness  
We pardon to the extent that we love  
Love is knowing that even when you are alone,  
You will never be lonely again  
And great happiness of life is the conviction that we are loved  
Loved for ourselves  
And loved in spite of ourselves

### **"Falling in love is like owning a dog," by Taylor Mali**

First of all, it's a big responsibility,  
especially in a city like New York.  
So think long and hard before deciding on love.  
On the other hand, love gives you a sense of security:  
when you're walking down the street late at night  
and you have a leash on love  
ain't no one going to mess with you.  
Because crooks and muggers think love is unpredictable.  
Who knows what love could do in its own defense?

On cold winter nights, love is warm.  
It lies between you and lives and breathes  
and makes funny noises.  
Love wakes you up all hours of the night with its needs.  
It needs to be fed so it will grow and stay healthy.

Love doesn't like being left alone for long.  
But come home and love is always happy to see you.  
It may break a few things accidentally in its passion for life,  
but you can never be mad at love for long.

Is love good all the time? No! No!  
Love can be bad. Bad, love, bad! Very bad love.

Love makes messes.  
Love leaves you little surprises here and there.  
Love needs lots of cleaning up after.  
Sometimes you just want to get love fixed.  
Sometimes you want to roll up a piece of newspaper  
and swat love on the nose,  
not so much to cause pain,  
just to let love know Don't you ever do that again!

Sometimes love just wants to go for a nice long walk.  
Because love loves exercise.  
It runs you around the block and leaves you panting.  
It pulls you in several different directions at once,  
or winds around and around you  
until you're all wound up and can't move.

But love makes you meet people wherever you go.  
People who have nothing in common but love  
stop and talk to each other on the street.

Throw things away and love will bring them back,  
again, and again, and again.  
But most of all, love needs love, lots of it.  
And in return, love loves you and never stops

### **"Yes, I'll Marry You," by Pam Ayres**

Yes, I'll marry you, my dear,  
And here's the reason why;  
So I can push you out of bed  
When the baby starts to cry,  
And if we hear a knocking  
And it's creepy and it's late,  
I hand you the torch you see,  
And you investigate.

Yes I'll marry you, my dear,  
You may not apprehend it,  
But when the tumble-drier goes  
It's you that has to mend it,  
You have to face the neighbour  
Should our labrador attack him,  
And if a drunkard fondles me  
It's you that has to whack him.

Yes, I'll marry you,  
You're virile and you're lean,  
My house is like a pigsty

You can help to keep it clean.  
That sexy little dinner  
Which you served by candlelight,  
As I do chipolatas,  
You can cook it every night!

It's you who has to work the drill  
and put up curtain track,  
And when I've got PMT it's you who gets the flak,  
I do see great advantages,  
But none of them for you,  
And so before you see the light,  
I do, I do, I do!

### **Yvaines Monologue from the film Stardust**

You know when I said I knew little about love? That wasn't true. I know a lot about love. I've seen it, centuries and centuries of it, and it was the only thing that made watching your world bearable. All those wars. Pain, lies, hate... It made me want to turn away and never look down again. But when I see the way that mankind loves... You could search to the furthest reaches of the universe and never find anything more beautiful. So yes, I know that love is unconditional. But I also know that it can be unpredictable, unexpected, uncontrollable, unbearable and strangely easy to mistake for loathing, and... What I'm trying to say, Tristan is... I think I love you. Is this love? I never imagined I'd know it for myself. My heart... It feels like my chest can barely contain it. Like it's trying to escape because it doesn't belong to me any more. It belongs to you. And if you wanted it, I'd wish for nothing in exchange - no fits. No goods. No demonstrations of devotion. Nothing but knowing you loved me too. Just your heart, in exchange for mine.

### **Blessing for a Marriage - James Dillet Freeman**

May your marriage bring you all the exquisite excitements a marriage should bring, and may life grant you also patience, tolerance, and understanding.

May you always need one another - not so much to fill your emptiness as to help you to know your fullness. A mountain needs a valley to be complete; the valley does not make the mountain less, but more; and the valley is more a valley because it has a mountain towering over it. So let it be with you and you.

May you need one another, but not out of weakness.  
May you want one another, but not out of lack.  
May you entice one another, but not compel one another.  
May you embrace one another, but not out encircle one another.  
May you succeed in all important ways with one another, and not fail in the little graces.  
May you look for things to praise, often say, "I love you!" and take no notice of small faults.

If you have quarrels that push you apart, may both of you hope to have good sense enough to take the first step back.

May you enter into the mystery which is the awareness of one another's presence - no more physical than spiritual, warm and near when you are side by side, and warm and near when you are in separate rooms or even distant cities.  
May you have happiness, and may you find it making one another happy.  
May you have love, and may you find it loving one another!