

Carters

The ice-cream man was bugle-bright,
We clambered on his cart;
One day, his piebald horse took fright
—He split his skull apart.

Martha sold fish, her wicker cart
Was hand-pushed—no danger there;
Her eyes, recessed by cataracts,
Were dead as a fish's stare.

We followed her down narrow rows
Of red-brick terraced dwellings;
“Fresh fish” she'd call; “Last week's” we'd bawl;
But she ignored our yelling.

The rag-and-bone man's gay balloons
Billowed his crippled back;
But offered no advantages
In our pin-prick attack.

The coal-blocks man was popular;
We followed him in flocks.
To: “What do you feed your mother on?”
He'd cry: “Coal-blocks; Coal-blocks!”

Only the pig-man's smelly cart
Brought to a churlish stop
Our crass, marauding merriment:
We drew the line at slop.