

Arithmetic

Carl Sandburg

Arithmetic is where numbers fly like pigeons in and out of your head.
Arithmetic tells you how many you lose or win if you know how many you had
before you lost or won.

Arithmetic is seven eleven all good children go to heaven --
or five six bundle of sticks.

Arithmetic is numbers you squeeze from your head to your hand
to your pencil to your paper till you get the answer.

Arithmetic is where the answer is right and everything is nice
and you can look out of the window and see the blue sky --
or the answer is wrong and you have to start all over and
try again and see how it comes out this time.

If you take a number and double it and double it again and then
double it a few more times,

the number gets bigger and bigger
and goes higher and higher and only arithmetic can tell you
what the number is when you decide to quit doubling.

Arithmetic is where you have to multiply -- and you carry
the multiplication table in your head and hope you won't lose it.

If you have two animal crackers, one good and one bad, and you eat one
and a striped zebra with streaks all over him eats the other,
how many animal crackers will you have if somebody offers you
five six seven and you say No no no and you say Nay nay nay
and you say Nix nix nix?

If you ask your mother for one fried egg for breakfast and she gives you
two fried eggs and you eat both of them, who is better in arithmetic,
you or your mother?