

ARITHMETIC

Carl Sandburg

- 1 Arithmetic is where numbers fly like pigeons in and out of your head.
- 2 Arithmetic tells you how many you lose or win if you know how many you
had before you lost or won.
- 3 Arithmetic is seven eleven all good children go to heaven—or five six
bundle of sticks.
- 4 Arithmetic is numbers you squeeze from your head to your hand to your
pencil to your paper till you get the answer.
- 5 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.
- 6 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.
- 7 Arithmetic is where you have to multiply—and you carry the multiplication
table in your head and hope you won't lose it.
- 8 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?
- 9 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?

For a biography of Carl Sandburg, see Meet the Writers on page 442.