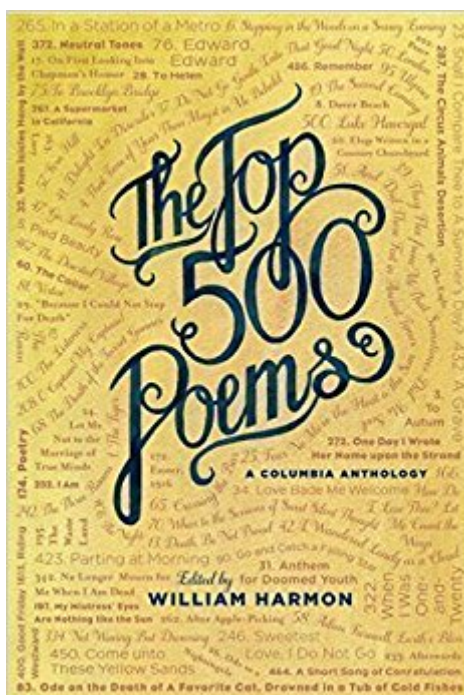


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The Top 500 Poems



Synopsis

The Top 500 Poems offers a vivid portrait of poetry in English, assembling a host of popular and enduring poems as chosen by critics, editors, poets, and general readers. These works speak across centuries, beginning with Chaucer's resourceful inventions and moving through Shakespeare's masterpieces, John Donne's complex originality, and Alexander Pope's mordant satires. The anthology also features perennial favorites such as William Blake, William Wordsworth, and John Keats; Emily Dickinson's prisms of profundity; the ironies of Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot; and the passion of Sylvia Plath and Allen Ginsberg. These 500 poems are verses that readers either know already or will want to know, encapsulating the visceral power of truly great literature. William Harmon provides illuminating commentary to each work and a rich introduction that ties the entire collection together.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

YA-- A chronological compilation that tells "the story of poetry in English." Harmon enhances each entry with pertinent information about the work and the poet; his insight adds much to the enjoyment of the collection. The selections are taken from the ninth edition of The Columbia Granger's Index to Poetry, chosen because 400 contemporary editors, critics, and poets included them most often in their own anthologies. "The Poems in Order of Popularity" concludes the book. Easy-to-read print with a look of fine calligraphy on high-quality paper add to the appeal.- Arlene Hoebel, W. T.

If your library can buy only one volume of poetry, let this be it. (Booklist) The Top 500 Poems is intriguing in concept and management, and most of us will want to own it. And for this we are grateful. (Gwendolyn Brooks, poet) A revealing snapshot of one aspect of Western civilization, even including a list of the poems in order of popularity. (Globe and Mail) The merriest poetry anthology of the past decade.... It's everything from 'Sumer is icumen in' to Sylvia Plath's 'Daddy' with terse, plain, and rather wonderful commentary by Harmon. (Buffalo News) It is rare indeed to come across a book in which wisdom and love come together as powerfully as they do for William Harmon. (John Frederick Nims, coauthor of *Western Wind: An Introduction to Poetry*)

There are two ways of reading "The Top 500 Poems." You can either read fast skipping over unfamiliar poems to find your favorites or read each poem and spend a great deal of time discovering new poems. I found that while reading I was unfamiliar with about 99% of the poems. I thought that in a book of famous poems I'd know many more than I did. Some of my favorites include: Fog by Carl Sandburg, The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd by Sir Walter Raleigh, Death Be Not Proud by John Donne, Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes by Ben Jonson, I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud by William Wordsworth, Jenny Kissed Me by Leigh Hunt, She Walks in Beauty by Lord Byron, Ozymondias by Percy Bysshe Shelley, Ode to a Grecian Urn by John Keats, Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost. Some of the poets are better represented than others. Like there are quite a few poems by Emily Dickinson. I did find however that even if you like a poem by a favorite poet that doesn't guarantee you will like all the other poems they have written as well. In fact some poems stand out so boldly they are like a magical poem compared to the others written. Like it is rare to find poems with such a lovely rhythm as "The Owl and the Pussy-Cat" by Edward Lear. So depending on how much poetry you've read in your life this book may be charming or overwhelming. I'd suggest reading it selectively the first time so you can enjoy all the familiar poems and then maybe reading it again to introduce yourself to classics you may not have read yet. ~The Rebecca Review

I bought this book in hardback after enjoying the paperback version for years at my grandparents' house. There is a great variety of poets, styles, and works. I like the commentary at the bottom of every page giving insight into the poet or poem, and the short biographical paragraph introducing the poets so that I have a frame of reference for them. Poets range from the 13th to the 20th

centuries, and over 120 poets are included. The arrangement of poems is chronologically by poet's birthday. Harmon includes lots of well-known authors, (like Shakespeare, Donne, Blake, Keats, Dickinson, Poe, Housman and Frost,) lesser-known favorites of mine (H. Vaughn, Edward Gray, Francis Thompson and Gelett Burgess,) and many poets I'd never heard of. I still find new friends and revisit old favorites. I'm a grad student now, and hope to keep this book on my shelf to read to my grandkids one day.

If you want one volume of poetry to enjoy, this should be it. A grand selection, great annotations of the poems, what more could you want? I have the volume and wouldn't trade it for any other of its kind. Harmon is a witty, intelligent, alert, and wonderful guide to the best poems out there. You will be an educated person, finally, after reading the volume. Onward!

A good source of poetry to pick up and read a few and go back later. Most of what we have read in school and universities.

Purchased as a gift. Recipient was very pleased.

This thing is so full of wonderful material it's lovely. Also the introductions to each author and the notes for each poem are very insightful and sometimes funny. Multiple indexes make everything easy to find.

i have had several poetry anthologies before this one, this one is my favorite, the way it is organized, the ample space on each page for notes and definitions (i might scribble in), and the inclusion so far (i am reading it from beginning, around page 107). It's done right, which makes it more readable and a great book.

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