

The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson

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This comprehensive and authoritative collection of all 1,775 poems by Emily Dickinson is an essential volume for all lovers of American literature.

Only eleven of Emily Dickinson's poems were published prior to her death in 1886; the startling originality of her work doomed it to obscurity in her lifetime. Early posthumous published collections -- some of them featuring liberally "edited" versions of the poems -- did not fully and accurately represent Dickinson's bold experiments in prosody, her tragic vision, and the range of her intellectual and emotional explorations. Not until the 1955 publication of *The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson*, a three-volume critical edition compiled by Thomas H. Johnson, were readers able for the first time to assess, understand, and appreciate the whole of Dickinson's extraordinary poetic genius.

This book, a distillation of the three-volume *Complete Poems*, brings together the original texts of all 1,775 poems that Emily Dickinson wrote.

"With its chronological arrangement of the poems, this volume becomes more than just a collection; it is at the same time a poetic biography of the thoughts and feelings of a woman whose beauty was deep and lasting." --San Francisco Chronicle

Emily Dickinson proved that brevity can be beautiful. Only now is her complete oeuvre--all 1,775 poems--available in its original form, uncorrupted by editorial revision, in one volume. Thomas H. Johnson, a longtime Dickinson scholar, arranged the poems in chronological order as far as could be ascertained (the dates for more than 100 are unknown). This organization allows a wide-angle view of Dickinson's poetic development, from the sometimes-clunky rhyme schemes of her juvenilia, including valentines she wrote in the early 1850s, to the gloomy, hell-obsessed writings from her last years. Quite a difference from requisite Dickinson entries in literary anthologies: "There's a certain Slant of light," "Wild Nights--Wild Nights!" and "I taste a liquor never brewed."

The book was compiled from Thomas H. Johnson's hard-to-find variorum from 1955. While some explanatory notes would have been helpful, it's a prodigious collection, showcasing Dickinson's intractable obsession with nature, including death. Poem 1732, which alludes to the deaths of her father and a onetime suitor, illustrates her talent:

My life closed twice before its close;
It yet remains to see
If Immortality unveil
A third event to me,

So huge, so hopeless to conceive
As these that twice befell.
Parting is all we know of heaven,
And all we need of hell.

The musicality of her punctuation and the outright elegance of her style--akin to Christina Rossetti's hymns, although not nearly so religious--rescue the poems from their occasional abstruseness. *The Complete Poems* is especially refreshing because Dickinson didn't write for publication; only 11 of her verses appeared in magazines during her lifetime, and she had long-resigned herself to anonymity, or a "Barefoot-Rank," as she phrased it. This is the perfect volume for readers wishing to explore the works of one of America's first poets.

Emily Dickinson

Other Books

Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson, Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson is an encyclopedic guide to the life and works of Emily Dickinson, one of the most famous and widely studied American poets of the 19th century.

🔍 🔍 🔍 🔍 🔍 . The Poems of Emily Dickinson : Reading Edition . Edited by R. W. Franklin. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999. Currently the standard scholarly edition of Dickinson's poems ."