



# READINGS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

BY

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READINGS IN LITERATURE—in two volumes

*Volume One*—Drama, Epic Poetry

*Volume Two*—Essay, Lyric Poetry

MANUAL TO ACCOMPANY READINGS IN LITERATURE

READINGS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE—in one volume

Fiction—Essay—Poetry—Drama

MANUAL TO ACCOMPANY READINGS IN CONTEMPORARY  
LITERATURE

## PREFACE

Now that teachers of English seem well agreed that great literature did not cease to be produced with the passing of the last century, there is a constant demand for selections from contemporary writers which are suitable for use in high schools. To meet this demand many books have been offered recently. These consist of collections of contemporary poetry, texts of contemporary essays, volumes devoted to contemporary drama, and annual anthologies of the best short stories. Many of these are excellent collections and of great value in high school libraries and classrooms. Most teachers, however, feel the need of a book which will include specimens of contemporary literature of all types within one volume, a book which may serve as a text or as a nucleus of the reading for a course in contemporary literature. The compilers of *Readings in Contemporary Literature* have constructed the present volume to meet their own need in this respect and offer it to the teaching public in the hope that it may answer the requirement of other teachers in similar situations.

The content of *Readings in Contemporary Literature*, like that of the *Readings in Literature* compiled lately by the same editors, is the result of classroom practice. The selections incorporated are those which the editors have found useful in introducing high school pupils to the contemporary literary field. They have been introduced to the classroom by pupils or have received frequent fa-

vorable comment in the pupils' reports.

The organization—the order—of this material is likewise determined by classroom practice that has been acknowledged successful. It is the outgrowth of the general principles which actuate all of the teaching of literature in the school where the editors are at present engaged.

In the laboratory schools of the University of Chicago, literature is offered to children as a means of recreation, and of enrichment of experience and hence of personality through recognition of the literary product as an artist's interpretive presentation of life. An attempt is made to lead the children to find the joy of reading and of reliving literature and to help them grow into adult experiences offered by the printed page. From these two kinds of contact with good literature, whether classic or too recent to have been proved, the pupils formulate their individual tastes and discover the principles underlying them.

Fuller exposition of the principles and methods already successfully employed in teaching the content of this volume to high school seniors will be found in the *Manual to Readings in Contemporary Literature* published simultaneously with it. Therein is a descriptive outline of procedures in which *Readings in Contemporary Literature* becomes the core of a course in contemporary literature sufficient to fill a school year. As an examination of the *Manual to Read-*

*ings in Contemporary Literature* will reveal, the content adapts itself most readily to presentation by units. Of these there are five; to wit, Fiction, Poetry, Essay, Drama, and Magazine. In connection with discussions of each of these in this volume, will be found stimulating study helps and lists of books with which to enrich the classroom tables. There is included for the study of the magazine a list of good periodicals for study and an outline to be employed in their analysis. The teacher is referred to the *Manual* for fuller suggestions as to method. With compression, dividing the time allotted to any unit by two, the book and the course it presupposes could be taught within the time limit of a semester.

The volume is used by its editors with senior students. Following two or three years of guided reading experience, the children receive more intensive interpretative instruction in four types of classic literature. After this course, which furnishes examples of literature of tested quality and out of which criteria of judgment may be initiated, the pupils explore the literature of their own time and cultivate to greater surety their standards of critical judgment.

Some teachers, however, prefer to lead children to an appreciation of classics through the more familiar field of contemporary writing. For that purpose this volume will serve

equally well. There is much to be said on both sides of the question of order. The editors of this volume prefer to leave most contemporary literature for presentation late in the curriculum, because of its frequently frank analysis of problems of highly sophisticated life. To the consideration of this content pupils need to bring the stability of increasing maturity and the wisdom of the classics.

*Readings in Contemporary Literature* is, therefore, offered by its editors to others in high school teaching, in the hope and the belief that it may make easier and happier their task in guiding children through the store of current literary art and enrich the return by heightened literary appreciation on the part of their pupils.

The editors acknowledge with gratitude the continued inspiration and vision they have drawn from Professor Henry Clinton Morrison, Superintendent of the Laboratory Schools. They appreciate deeply the kindly encouragement of their colleagues, Professor Rollo La Verne Lyman and Mr. William Claude Reavis, of the College of Education of the University. To Miss Hannah Logasa of the University High School they remain indebted for invaluable assistance in the preparation of book-lists and bibliographies.

ERNEST HANES  
MARTHA JANE MCCOY



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**FICTION**





## READINGS IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

### THE SIRE DE MALÉTROIT'S DOOR

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Denis de Beaulieu was not yet two-and-twenty, but he counted himself a grown man, and a very accomplished cavalier into the bargain. Lads were early formed in that rough, warfaring epoch; and when one has been in a pitched battle and a dozen raids, has killed one's man in an honorable fashion, and knows a thing or two of strategy and mankind, a certain swagger in the gait is surely to be pardoned. He had put up his horse with due care, and supped with due deliberation; and then, in a very agreeable frame of mind, went out to pay a visit in the gray of the evening. It was not a very wise proceeding on the young man's part. He would have done better to remain beside the fire or go decently to bed. For the town was full of the troops of Burgundy and England under a mixed command; and though Denis was there on safe-conduct, his safe-conduct was like to serve him little on a chance encounter.

It was September, 1429; the weather had fallen sharp; a flighty piping wind, laden with showers, beat about the township; and the dead leaves ran riot along the streets. Here and there a window was already lighted up; and the noise of men-at-arms making merry over supper within, came forth in fits and was swallowed up and carried away by the wind.

The night fell swiftly; the flag of England, fluttering on the spire-top, grew ever fainter and fainter against the flying clouds—a black speck like a swallow in the tumultuous, leaden chaos of the sky. As the night fell the wind rose, and began to hoot under archways and roar amid the tree-tops in the valley below the town.

Denis de Beaulieu walked fast and was soon knocking at his friend's door; but though he promised himself to stay only a little while and make an early return, his welcome was so pleasant, and he found so much to delay him, that it was already long past midnight before he said good-bye upon the threshold. The wind had fallen again in the meanwhile; the night was as black as the grave; not a star, nor a glimmer of moonshine, slipped through the canopy of cloud. Denis was ill-acquainted with the intricate lanes of Chateau Landon; even by daylight he had found some trouble in picking his way; and in this absolute darkness he soon lost it altogether. He was certain of one thing only—to keep mounting the hill; for his friend's house lay at the lower end, or tail, of Chateau Landon, while the inn was up at the head, under the great church spire. With this clue to go upon he stumbled and groped