

# AMERICAN POETRY AND PROSE

FIFTH EDITION  
COMPLETE



# POETRY AND PROSE

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Fifth Edition / Complete

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## Publisher's Foreword

LIKE ITS DISTINGUISHED PREDECESSORS, this fifth edition of *American Poetry and Prose* is designed to serve both the historical and the critical approaches to our literature. And since the years have narrowed the gap between these two, this edition has been able to incorporate important elements of a third approach, which may be called comparative and developmental, focusing attention on certain recurring themes that have grown out of the unique American experience, and on the various ways American writers of different periods have dealt with them. Within the cultural framework provided by this approach, the student is encouraged to look simultaneously in two directions, from the past to the adumbrated future, and from the present to the seminal past, and thereby to gain a deeper insight into the vitality and continuity of American literature. At the same time, the consistent focus on literary concerns, in the structure of the book, the nature of the selections, and the editorial commentary, has made it possible to avoid the pitfall of the purely documentary or sociological; while the ample treatment of major writers within a setting of lesser but significant figures averts the temptation to include obscure writers out of the main stream, or to introduce the merely novel or the fashionable and evanescent.

This edition differs from even its immediate predecessor in other significant ways. The mere passage of time has shifted the center of gravity toward the contemporary, and has thereby altered the book's proportions. Relatively less space is devoted to colonial and early federal writing, though a few new figures are introduced into the earlier periods, such as Thomas Hooker, exponent of the "plain style" that was to become so important a strain in American writing. The great figures of the nineteenth century receive much the same emphasis as before, though Whitman concludes the section on the romantics in Part One instead of beginning Part Two in the two-volume set. The fifth and contemporary division now begins not at 1900 but at 1914, a genuine break point which gives deeper unity to the sections both before and after, and allows increased space to the ever-growing contemporary. It is interesting to recall that the first edition concluded with Carl Sandburg whereas the fifth ends with John Barth.

In subtler ways also this edition has taken the measure of the day and reflects the many and profound changes of the last decade. The editorial materials—the five period introductions, the author introductions, and the selection headnotes—have been revised or rewritten to sharpen the focus on literary trends and developments. This has been done partly by the omission of matter mainly social and historical, and by increased emphasis on interrelations and influences, intellectual and literary. Throughout, every effort has been made to avoid spoonfeeding, on the one hand, and factual cramming on the other, and instead to present background and explanatory material calculated to help the student grasp, interpret, and interrelate for himself the literary works he reads. To this end, also, the texts are footnoted more extensively than before, but not to the point where information assumes a gratuitous and distracting importance for its own sake.

The problem of representing important writers who are primarily novelists is a perennial one in a survey anthology of American literature. Some of them, such as Hawthorne and Melville, James and Faulkner and Bellow, can be satisfactorily presented through their shorter fiction. Others, such as Cooper and Howells, are less well served through their short or nonfictional pieces, yet are too significant in the literary mainstream to be omitted. In such instances, the editors have chosen in this fifth edition to reach boldly into the novels for thematic chapters that will adequately represent the author's best and most characteristic achievement.

The texts of the selections have been carefully chosen for both their authority and their readability, and are identified throughout. Priority has been given to first editions or first appearance in book form, to standard editions, and to modern critical editions. In the colonial materials, when the verbal sequence of first or early editions is followed, the texts have been generally modernized with respect to italics, abbreviations, capitalization, and spelling. To maintain the rhythms of early American writing, however, the punctuation of the source texts has been generally retained; unusual spellings have been kept when they may be presumed to distinguish colonial pronunciation from modern American English, and special care has been taken not to impair the pronunciation of the poetry. Textual omissions for which the editors of this anthology are responsible are shown by asterisks; titles supplied by the editors are bracketed. The selections from each author are, with few exceptions, in chronological order; dates are given in the headnotes or at the end of a selection (date of publication at the right margin; of composition, if equally or more significant, at the left margin).

Active in the planning and policy-making stages, Professor Foerster was instrumental in soliciting the collaboration of the four distinguished scholars who carried out the actual work of the revision: Norman S. Grabo for the colonial period; Russel B. Nye for the neoclassic and early romantic; E. Fred Carlisle for the romantic; and Robert Falk for the realistic, the recent, and the contemporary. Editors and publisher alike are indebted to the following board of consultants for their advice on the table of contents and the nature of the revision of the editorial materials: Louis J. Budd, Duke University; Hennig Cohen, University of Pennsylvania; Neal F. Doubleday, Millikin University; Richard H. Fogle, University of North Carolina; Ernest E. Sandeen, University of Notre Dame; James Woodress, University of California (Davis); Hyatt H. Waggoner, Brown University. These gentlemen contributed substantially to the final shape of the revision. Others whose contributions to the fifth edition are gratefully acknowledged are Frank Lentricchia, of the University of California (Irvine), for his work on the contemporary poets; Margaret Linville, of Santa Monica City College, for assistance with the contemporary novelists; and Frank Shuffelton, of the University of Rochester, for assistance with the selection and checking of texts.

*American Poetry and Prose* has helped to shape and inform the changing canon of our literature since publication of the first edition in 1925. It is our belief that it will continue to do so for the critical generation of students coming of age in the 1970's.



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## The Colonial Period

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Introduction	3	God's Determinations	42
<i>An Elizabethan Adventurer</i>		<i>The Preface</i>	42
JOHN SMITH	12	<i>The Glory of and Grace in the Church</i>	42
The General History of Virginia	12	<i>The Joy of Church Fellowship</i>	43
<i>The Captivity</i>	12	THOMAS HOOKER	43
<i>The Puritan Way</i>		The Application of Redemption	44
WILLIAM BRADFORD	16	<i>A Plain and Powerful Ministry</i>	44
Of Plymouth Plantation	17	COTTON MATHER	50
<i>Arrival</i>	17	The Wonders of the Invisible World	51
<i>The Mayflower Compact</i>	18	<i>The Trial of Bridget Bishop</i>	51
<i>Survival</i>	18	Manuductio ad Ministerium	53
<i>Morton of Merry Mount</i>	19	<i>Of Style</i>	53
<i>War with the Pequots</i>	22	JONATHAN EDWARDS	55
JOHN WINTHROP	23	Character of a Truly Virtuous Person	55
Letters to (and from) his Wife	24	Personal Narrative	56
Journal	25	Notes on the Mind	62
<i>A Trial for Adultery</i>	25	<i>Excellency</i>	62
<i>A Little Speech on Liberty</i>	26	Passages from Sermons	65
ROGER WILLIAMS	27	<i>A Divine and Supernatural Light</i>	65
The Bloody Tenent of Persecution	28	<i>Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God</i>	68
<i>The Civil and Spiritual Estates</i>	28	from A Letter to Benjamin Coleman	69
ANNE BRADSTREET	30	Freedom of the Will	72
The Author to Her Book	31	<i>On the Notion of a Self-Determining</i>	
The Flesh and the Spirit	31	<i>Power in the Will</i>	73
Contemplations	33	<i>The Quaker Temper</i>	
To My Dear and Loving Husband	36	JOHN WOOLMAN	74
Meditations	36	Journal	75
EDWARD TAYLOR	37	<i>Youth</i>	75
Upon a Spider Catching a Fly	37	<i>Business and Conscience</i>	77
The Ebb and Flow	38	<i>A Testimony Against Slavery</i>	78
Huswifery	38	<i>A Visit to Indian Country</i>	79
Upon Wedlock and Death of Children	39	Considerations on Keeping Negroes	81
Preparatory Meditations	40	<i>Final Appeal</i>	81
<i>What Love Is This</i>	40	<i>A Virginia Gentleman</i>	
<i>The Reflexion</i>	40	WILLIAM BYRD	82
<i>The Experience</i>	41	Secret Diary	83
<i>I Kenning Through Astronomy</i>	41	<i>The Life of a Virginia Gentleman</i>	83

History of the Dividing Line	87	A Progress to the Mines	91
<i>Life in North Carolina</i>	87	<i>A Visit to a Neighbor's</i>	91
<i>A Visit to the Indians</i>	89	Two Letters to "Lucretia"	94

## The Neoclassic Age

Introduction	97	<i>To Thomas Law, Esq.</i>	183
<i>The American in the Age of Reason</i>		<i>To Monsieur Du Pont de Nemours</i>	184
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN	108	<i>To John Brazier</i>	186
<i>from Autobiography</i>	109	<i>To Dr. Benjamin Waterhouse</i>	187
The Way to Wealth	126	ALEXANDER HAMILTON, JAMES MADISON,	
Rules for Reducing a Great Empire	129	AND JOHN JAY	188
The Ephemera	132	The Federalist	189
Advice to a Young Tradesman	133	<i>No. III (Jay)</i>	189
Letters	134	<i>No. X (Madison)</i>	191
<i>To Peter Collinson</i>	134	<i>No. XXIII (Hamilton)</i>	194
<i>To Mrs. Jane Mecom</i>	135	<i>The Neoclassic Mode in Poetry</i>	
<i>To Joseph Priestley</i>	136	JOHN TRUMBULL	197
<i>To Samuel Mather</i>	136	Prospect of the Future Glory of America	197
<i>To Ezra Stiles</i>	137	The Progress of Dulness	198
THOMAS PAINE	138	<i>Preface</i>	199
Common Sense	139	<i>Tom Brainless as Student and Preacher</i>	199
<i>III. Thoughts on the Present State of</i>		<i>Dick Hairbrain Learns the Social Graces</i>	200
<i>American Affairs</i>	139	<i>Harriet Simper Has Her Day</i>	201
The American Crisis	145	<i>An Amorous Temper</i>	203
<i>I. The Times That Try Men's Souls</i>	146	<i>from M'Fingal</i>	203
The Rights of Man	149	JOEL BARLOW	205
<i>Civil and Natural Rights</i>	149	The Hasty Pudding	206
The Age of Reason	151	A Song	210
<i>The Author's Profession of Faith</i>	152	On the Discoveries of Captain Lewis	211
<i>Concerning Missions and Revelations</i>	152	<i>from The Columbiad</i>	211
<i>Defining the True Revelation</i>	153	Advice to a Raven in Russia	212
<i>Concerning God and the Bible</i>	154	PHILLIS WHEATLEY	214
<i>Building a New Society</i>		To the University of Cambridge, in	
ST. JEAN DE CRÈVECOEUR	157	New-England	215
Letters from an American Farmer	158	To the Earl of Dartmouth	215
<i>III. What Is an American?</i>	158	On Imagination	216
THOMAS JEFFERSON	168	<i>from An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley,</i>	
The Declaration of Independence	169	<i>by Jupiter Hammon</i>	216
<i>Jefferson's "Original Rough Draught"</i>	169	<i>From Classic to Romantic</i>	
<i>As Adopted by Congress</i>	171	PHILIP FRENEAU	218
<i>from Notes on Virginia</i>	172	The Power of Fancy	219
Letters	176	<i>from The Beauties of Santa Cruz</i>	220
<i>To Charles Thompson</i>	176	<i>from The British Prison Ship</i>	222
<i>To Peter Carr</i>	177	The Vanity of Existence	225
<i>To John Adams</i>	179		
<i>To Dr. Walter Jones</i>	181		

To the Memory of the Brave Americans	225	Ormond	229
The Wild Honey Suckle	225	Chapter XII 229	
To an Author	226	Chapter XIII 232	
The Indian Burying Ground	226	Chapter XXVIII 237	
To a Republican	227		
On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature	227		
On the Religion of Nature	228	WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING	243
CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN	228	from Remarks on National Literature	244
Edgar Huntly	229	from Christianity a Rational Religion	248
Preface 229		The Character and Writings of Fenelon	252
		Religion and Literature 252	

## The Romantic Movement

Introduction	255	A Winter Piece	336
Earlier Romantics		To Cole, the Painter, Departing for Europe	337
WASHINGTON IRVING	270	The Prairies	337
Salmagundi	271	Lectures on Poetry	338
No. I 271		I. On the Nature of Poetry 338	
No. XIV 272		from American Society as a Field for Fiction	342
A History of New-York	275	Romantic Artist	
Book III, Chap. I. Wouter Van Twiller 276		EDGAR ALLAN POE	346
The Sketch Book	278	Dreams	347
The Author's Account of Himself 279		The Happiest Day, The Happiest Hour	348
Rip Van Winkle 280		A Dream Within a Dream	348
The Legend of Sleepy Hollow 287		Song from <i>Al Aaraaf</i>	348
A Sunday in London 300		Romance	349
The Alhambra	301	Sonnet—To Science	350
The Legend of the Moor's Legacy 301		To Helen	350
A Tour on the Prairies	308	Israfel	350
Chapter VII 309		The Sleeper	351
JAMES FENIMORE COOPER	311	The City in the Sea	351
Notions of the Americans	312	Lenore	352
Problems of a Native Literature 312		The Valley of Unrest	352
The American Democrat	313	The Coliseum	353
Equality 314		To One in Paradise	353
Aristocrat and Democrat 314		Dream-Land	354
Liberty 316		The Raven	354
Preface to The Leatherstocking Tales	318	Ulalume	356
The Deerslayer	319	For Annie	357
Chapter VII 320		Annabel Lee	358
Satanstoe	326	Eldorado	359
Chapter III 327		The Poetic Principle	359
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT	333	The Philosophy of Composition	364
Thanatopsis	334	Hawthorne's <i>Twice-Told Tales</i>	369
Inscription for the Entrance to a Wood	335	Ligeia	372
To a Waterfowl	335	The Fall of the House of Usher	379

The Masque of the Red Death	386	Walden	494
The Purloined Letter	389	<i>Economy</i>	494
The Cask of Amontillado	397	<i>Where I Lived, and What I Lived For</i>	503
		<i>Sounds</i>	509
		<i>Higher Laws</i>	515
		<i>Brute Neighbors</i>	519
		<i>Conclusion</i>	524
Romanticism on Puritan Soil		Life Without Principle	529
RALPH WALDO EMERSON	400	NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE	537
Journals (selections)	402	Notebooks	539
Thought	407	<i>Brook Farm</i>	539
Grace	407	<i>Concord Friends</i>	539
The Rhodora	407	<i>Herman Melville</i>	540
Each and All	408	<i>Hints for Stories</i>	540
Concord Hymn	409	My Kinsman, Major Molineux	541
The Problem	409	Roger Malvin's Burial	549
Woodnotes, I	410	The May-pole of Merry Mount	557
The Sphinx	411	The Ambitious Guest	561
The Snow-Storm	413	Young Goodman Brown	565
Ode Inscribed to W. H. Channing	413	The Minister's Black Veil	571
Merlin	414	The Celestial Railroad	576
Bacchus	415	The Artist of the Beautiful	583
Compensation	416	Rappaccini's Daughter	593
Give All to Love	416	Ethan Brand	605
Ode to Beauty	417	HERMAN MELVILLE	613
Hamatreya	418	<i>from Hawthorne and His Mosses</i>	614
The Apology	419	Bartleby	615
Fable	419	Benito Cereno	631
Days	419	The Portent	664
Two Rivers	419	A Utilitarian View of the Monitor's Fight	665
Brahma	420	Malvern Hill	665
Water	420	The Aeolian Harp	665
Nahant	420	The Maldive Shark	666
Terminus	420	The Berg	666
Nature	421	Healed of my hurt	667
<i>Introduction</i>	421	Art	667
<i>Chapter 1</i>	422	Clarel	667
The American Scholar	423	<i>Prelusive</i>	667
Divinity School Address	431	<i>Sodom</i>	668
Self-Reliance	438	JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER	669
The Poet	448	First-Day Thoughts	670
Experience	457	Laus Deo!	670
Thoreau	467	Snow-Bound	671
HENRY DAVID THOREAU	475	Abraham Davenport	679
Letters to Emerson	475	HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW	680
Sic Vita	478	The Skeleton in Armor	681
Winter Memories	479	Nuremberg	682
The Inward Morning	479	The Arsenal at Springfield	684
Mist	480	The Fire of Drift-Wood	684
Smoke	480	The Jewish Cemetery at Newport	685
Inspiration	480		
Journal (selections)	481		
Civil Disobedience	484		

In the Churchyard at Cambridge	686	As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life	770
My Lost Youth	686	Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City	772
Tales of a Wayside Inn	687	When I Heard at the Close of the Day	773
<i>Emma and Eginhard</i> 688		A Glimpse	773
<i>The Monk of Casal-Maggiore</i> 690		A Noiseless Patient Spider	773
Sonnets	693	When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer	773
<i>Divina Commedia</i> 693		Cavalry Crossing a Ford	774
Milton 694		A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest	774
Venice 694		A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray	
The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls	694	and Dim	774
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL	695	The Wound-Dresser	775
A Fable for Critics	696	When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd	776
Emerson 696		On the Beach at Night	782
Whittier 696		Passage to India	782
Hawthorne 697		Song of the Redwood-Tree	788
Poe and Longfellow 697		Prayer of Columbus	791
Lowell 698		To a Locomotive in Winter	792
The Biglow Papers	698	To the Man-of-War-Bird	793
A Letter 698		The Dalliance of the Eagles	793
What Mr. Robinson Thinks 700		The Dismantled Ship	794
The Courtin' 701		Democratic Vistas	794
Fitz Adam's Story	702	<i>American Democracy, Actual and Ideal</i> 794	
Emerson the Lecturer	709	<i>What Is an American?</i> 796	
OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES	713	<i>An American Literature</i> 800	
My Aunt	714		
The Last Leaf	714	<i>A House Divided</i>	
The Chambered Nautilus	715	HENRY TIMROD	802
Contentment	715	Ethnogenesis	803
The Deacon's Masterpiece	716	The Cotton Boll	804
		Charleston	805
<i>Romantic and Realist</i>		FREDERICK DOUGLASS	806
WALT WHITMAN	718	from Narrative of the Life of Frederick	
from Preface to 1855 Edition of		Douglass	807
<i>Leaves of Grass</i>	719	from Fourth of July Oration, 1852	816
Song of Myself	723	ABRAHAM LINCOLN	819
There Was a Child Went Forth	757	Reply to Horace Greeley	819
The Sleepers	758	Gettysburg Address	820
Crossing Brooklyn Ferry	763	Letter to Mrs. Bixby	820
Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking	766	Second Inaugural Address	820

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## Realism and Naturalism

---

Introduction	823	A Tramp Abroad	835
<i>Masters of Fiction</i>		<i>Baker's Blue-jay Yarn</i> 835	
SAMUEL L. CLEMENS (MARK TWAIN)	832	Life on the Mississippi	837
Roughing It	833	<i>The Boys' Ambition</i> 838	
<i>The Cayote</i> 833		<i>I Want to Be a Cub-Pilot</i> 839	
		<i>A Cub-Pilot's Experience</i> 841	

<i>A Daring Deed</i>	844	(J.61) Papa above!	1012
<i>Perplexing Lessons</i>	846	(160) Just lost, when I was saved!	1012
<i>Continued Perplexities</i>	848	(185) "Faith" is a fine invention	1012
Frescoes from the Past	851	(187) How many times these low feet	
Cooper's Prose Style	856	staggered	1012
To the Person Sitting in Darkness	860	(210) The thought beneath so slight a film	1012
<i>from</i> The Chronicle of Young Satan	866	(214) I taste a liquor never brewed	1012
WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS	873	(216) Safe in their Alabaster Chambers	1013
A Traveler from Altruria	874	(249) Wild Nights	1013
<i>Chapter I</i>	874	(254) "Hope" is the thing with feathers	1013
<i>Chapter II</i>	879	(258) There's a certain Slant of light	1013
Criticism and Fiction	883	(280) I felt a funeral, in my Brain	1014
<i>II</i>	883	(287) A Clock stopped	1014
<i>XVIII</i>	885	(288) I'm Nobody! Who are you?	1014
<i>XXIV</i>	888	(303) The Soul selects her own Society	1014
Mark Twain: An Inquiry	890	(318) I'll tell you how the Sun rose	1014
HENRY JAMES	897	(328) A Bird came down the Walk	1015
Four Meetings	899	(338) I know that He exists	1015
The Real Thing	912	(341) After great pain, a formal feeling	
Greville Fane	922	comes	1015
Maud-Evelyn	930	(348) I dreaded that first Robin, so	1015
The Jolly Corner	941	(401) What Soft—Cherubic Creatures	1016
<i>from</i> Notebooks	956	(435) Much Madness is divinest Sense	1016
Hawthorne	958	(441) This is my letter to the World	1016
<i>The Scarlet Letter</i>	958	(448) This was a Poet	1016
		(461) A Wife—at Daybreak I shall be	1016
		(465) I heard a Fly buzz	1016
		(500) Within my Garden, rides a Bird	1017
		(511) If you were coming in the Fall	1017
BRET HARTE	963	(520) I started Early	1017
The Luck of Roaring Camp	964	(536) The Heart asks Pleasure	1017
GEORGE WASHINGTON CABLE	969	(547) I've seen a Dying Eye	1018
Belles Demoiselles Plantation	969	(581) I found the words to every thought	1018
SARAH ORNE JEWETT	977	(640) I cannot live with You	1018
The Dulham Ladies	978	(664) Of all the Souls that stand create	1018
HAMLIN GARLAND	983	(675) Essential Oils—are wrung	1019
Under the Lion's Paw	984	(701) A Thought went up my mind today	1019
CHARLES WADDELL CHESNUTT	990	(709) Publication—is the Auction	1019
The Goophered Grapevine	991	(712) Because I could not stop for Death	1019
		(729) Alter! When the Hills do	1019
		(754) My Life had stood—a Loaded Gun	1019
		(915) Faith—is the Pierless Bridge	1020
		(986) A narrow Fellow in the Grass	1020
		(997) Crumbling is not an instant's Act	1020
SIDNEY LANIER	996	(1068) Further in Summer than the Birds	1020
The Symphony	996	(1129) Tell all the Truth but tell it slant	1021
The Stirrup-Cup	1000	(1206) The Show is not the Show	1021
The Marshes of Glynn	1000	(1207) He preached upon "Breadth"	1021
EMILY DICKINSON	1002	(1624) Apparently with no surprise	1021
Emily Dickinson,		(1670) In Winter in my Room	1021
<i>by</i> Thomas Wentworth Higginson	1003	(1732) My life closed twice before its close	1021



<i>The Fiction of Naturalism</i>		THEODORE DREISER	1056
STEPHEN CRANE	1022	Sister Carrie	1057
An Experiment in Misery	1024	Chapter I 1057	
The Upturned Face	1028	Chapter II 1061	
The Open Boat	1030	<i>A Literary Spokesman of Ideas</i>	
The Black Riders	1040		
Should the wide world roll away 1040		HENRY ADAMS	1064
I saw a man pursuing the horizon 1040		History of the United States	1065
God lay dead in heaven 1041		Vol. I, Chap. 6. <i>American Ideals (1800)</i>	1065
War Is Kind	1041	The Education of Henry Adams	1074
Do not weep, maiden 1041		Editor's Preface 1074	
The wayfarer 1041		Quincy 1075	
A man said to the universe 1041		The Dynamo and the Virgin 1082	
A newspaper 1041		A Dynamic Theory of History 1087	
FRANK NORRIS	1042		
McTeague	1043		
Chapter 1 1043			
Chapter 9 1047			

## The Twentieth Century (1914–1970)

Introduction	1095	Neither Out Far Nor In Deep	1128
		Desert Places	1128
<i>The Revival of Poetry</i>		Provide, Provide	1128
EDWIN ARLINGTON ROBINSON	1110	The Silken Tent	1129
Luke Havergal	1111	Come In	1129
Cliff Klingenhagen	1112	The Gift Outright	1129
Richard Cory	1112	Directive	1129
Credo	1112	The Figure a Poem Makes	1130
Miniver Cheevy	1112	VACHEL LINDSAY	1132
Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from		from <i>Adventures While Preaching the</i>	
Stratford	1113	Gospel of Beauty	1133
The Man Against the Sky	1117	General William Booth Enters into	
Flammonde	1120	Heaven	1134
Mr. Flood's Party	1121	Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight	1135
Karma	1121	CARL SANDBURG	1136
ROBERT FROST	1122	Chicago	1137
The Death of the Hired Man	1123	Fog	1138
Mending Wall	1125	Lost	1138
After Apple-Picking	1126	I am the People, the Mob	1138
Birches	1126	Cool Tombs	1138
The Road Not Taken	1127	Broken-face Gargoyles	1139
The Oven Bird	1127	CLAUDE MCKAY	1140
Fire and Ice	1127	The White House	1141
Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening	1127	Harlem Shadows	1141
Nothing Gold Can Stay	1128	North and South	1142
Spring Pools	1128	If We Must Die	1142

LANGSTON HUGHES	1142	Pastoral	1192
American Heartbreak	1143	Queen-Ann's-Lace	1192
As I Grew Older	1143	The Botticellian Trees	1193
Song for a Dark Girl	1144	The Yachts	1193
Dream Boogie	1144	The Dance	1194
Harlem	1144	Raleigh Was Right	1194
EZRA POUND	1145	To Ford Madox Ford in Heaven	1194
The Return	1146	Autobiography	1195
The River Merchant's Wife	1147	<i>Chap. 58: The Poem Paterson</i>	1195
In a Station at the Metro	1147	HART CRANE	1197
The Rest	1147	The Bridge	1198
A Pact	1148	<i>Poem: To Brooklyn Bridge</i>	1198
from Hugh Selwyn Mauberley	1148	<i>Van Winkle</i>	1199
Canto I	1152	<i>The River</i>	1199
Canto II	1153	Voyages: I	1201
T. S. ELIOT	1155	Voyages: II	1201
The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock	1157	The Broken Tower	1201
Sweeney Among the Nightingales	1159	ARCHIBALD MACLEISH	1202
Gerontion	1159	Ars Poetica	1203
The Waste Land	1161	Memorial Rain	1204
The Metaphysical Poets	1169	American Letter	1204
ROBINSON JEFFERS	1173	Frescoes for Mr. Rockefeller's City	1206
To the Stone-Cutters	1174	<i>Landscape as a Nude</i>	1206
Granite and Cypress	1174	Hypocrite Auteur	1206
Apology for Bad Dreams	1175	MARIANNE MOORE	1207
Hurt Hawks	1177	The Fish	1208
Self-Criticism in February	1177	Poetry	1209
E. E. CUMMINGS	1178	Critics and Connoisseurs	1210
in Just-	1179	Four Quartz Crystal Clocks	1211
Buffalo Bill's	1180	<i>Fiction of the Twenties and Thirties</i>	
the Cambridge ladies	1180	EDITH WHARTON	1213
Spring is like a perhaps hand	1180	Autres Temps . . .	1214
next to of course god america i	1181	WILLA CATHER	1227
my sweet old etcetera	1181	My Ántonia	1228
r-p-o-p-h-e-s-s-a-g-r	1182	<i>Book I, Chap. 17</i>	1228
this little bride & groom are	1182	<i>Book III, Chap. 2</i>	1230
plato told	1183	GERTRUDE STEIN	1232
pity this busy monster, manunkind	1183	Picasso	1233
WALLACE STEVENS	1184	The Life and Death of Juan Gris	1235
Domination of Black	1185	from Four Saints in Three Acts	1235
The Emperor of Ice-Cream	1185	The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas	1240
Sunday Morning	1186	<i>Ernest Hemingway</i>	1240
Anecdote of the Jar	1187	SHERWOOD ANDERSON	1243
Peter Quince at the Clavier	1188	Hands	1245
Sea Surface Full of Clouds	1189	Death in the Woods	1247
So-and-So Reclining on Her Couch	1190	JEAN TOOMER	1253
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS	1191	Esther	1254
Portrait of a Lady	1192		

ERNEST HEMINGWAY	1257	Man and Wife	1459
The Undefeated	1259	Skunk Hour	1459
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD	1271	For the Union Dead	1460
The Rich Boy	1272	THEODORE ROETHKE	1461
THOMAS WOLFE	1288	Root Cellar	1462
You Can't Go Home Again	1289	Weed Puller	1463
<i>What Is Man?</i> 1289		Big Wind	1463
<i>Enter Mr. Lloyd McHarg</i> 1292		Dolor	1463
WILLIAM FAULKNER	1296	Elegy for Jane	1463
The Bear	1297	The Waking	1464
JOHN STEINBECK	1343	I Knew a Woman	1464
Flight	1344	What Can I Tell My Bones?	1464
NATHANAEL WEST	1352	RICHARD WILBUR	1466
A Cool Million	1353	Still, Citizen Sparrow	1467
<i>Chapter 13</i> 1354		Love Calls Us to the Things of	
<i>Chapter 31</i> 1356		This World	1467
RICHARD WRIGHT	1358	A Voice from under the Table	1467
Fire and Cloud	1359	Beasts	1468
<i>The Changing Theater</i>		A Baroque Wall-Fountain in the	
EUGENE O'NEILL	1380	Villa Sciarra	1468
The Hairy Ape	1381	Advice to a Prophet	1469
EDWARD ALBEE	1399	She	1470
The Zoo Story	1400	ALLEN GINSBERG	1470
<i>An Age of Criticism</i>		Howl	1471
EDMUND WILSON	1411	A Supermarket in California	1476
Symbolism	1412	Sunflower Sutra	1477
LIONEL TRILLING	1419	In back of the real	1478
Reality in America	1420	DENISE LEVERTOV	1479
CLEANTH BROOKS	1427	Merritt Parkway	1480
The Waste Land: An Analysis	1427	Illustrious Ancestors	1480
PHILIP RAHV	1441	With Eyes at the Back of Our Heads	1481
Notes on the Decline of Naturalism	1441	To the Snake	1481
RALPH ELLISON	1447	The Jacob's Ladder	1481
Twentieth-Century Fiction and the		Matins	1481
Black Mask of Humanity	1448	To the Reader	1483
<i>Poets at Mid-Century</i>		Six Variations	1483
ROBERT LOWELL	1456	ROBERT HAYDEN	1484
The Exile's Return	1457	The Diver	1484
New Year's Day	1457	The Ballad of Sue Ellen Westerfield	1485
The Drunken Fisherman	1457	Sub Specie Aeternitatis	1486
After the Surprising Conversions	1458	"Incense of the Lucky Virgin"	1486
Memories of West Street and Lepke	1458	LEROI JONES	1487
		An Agony. As Now	1488
		The Liar	1488
		<i>Fiction of the Fifties and Sixties</i>	
		BERNARD MALAMUD	1489
		The Magic Barrel	1490