

Literature

Reading Fiction, Poetry,
Drama, and the Essay

Second Edition



Robert DiYanni

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Reading Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and the Essay



SECOND EDITION

Robert DiYanni

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Preface



Literature presents an approach to literary works that emphasizes reading as an active enterprise involving thought and feeling. It encourages students to value their emotional reactions and their previous experience with life and with language. Students are introduced to interpretation through illustrated discussions of the elements of literature. They are also invited to consider why they respond as they do and how their responses change during subsequent readings of a work; they are asked, in short, to relate their experience in reading literature to their experience in living. They are encouraged to see literature as a significant reflection of life and an imaginative extension of its possibilities.

From first page to last, *Literature* is designed to involve students in the twin acts of reading and analysis. Each of the four genres is introduced by a three-part explanatory overview of the reading process. The introductions are organized around the approach to texts outlined in Robert Scholes's *Textual Power* (Yale University Press, 1985), modified and adapted to my own approach to teaching literature. Scholes identifies three aspects of literary response: reading, interpretation, and criticism. The three-part structure of the introductions breaks down as follows:

- the experience of literature
- the interpretation of literature
- the evaluation of literature

Our *experience* of literature concerns our impressions of a work, especially our subjective impressions and emotional responses. Interpretation involves more intellectual and analytical thinking. And the *evaluation* of literature involves an assessment of aesthetic distinction along with a consideration of a work's social, moral, and cultural values.

Paralleling this schema for the introductory genre discussions is a similarly organized introduction to writing about literature. This chapter, which concludes the book, describes how to apply and adapt the approaches presented in the genre introductions. The writing chapter includes examples of student writing, sample topics, documentation procedures, and a general review of the writing process. Additional writing topics (more than a hundred of them) appear in the four chapters devoted to approaching literary works, subtitled "Guides for Reading and Suggestions for Writing."

For each of the genre introductions, I have also provided a separate illustration of "the act of reading." The fiction section includes an interpolated reading of Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour." The poetry section offers a set of annotations for Theodore Roethke's "My Papa's Waltz." The drama section provides a set of questions in response to the opening scene of Lady Gregory's *The Rising of the Moon*. And the essay section presents an imaginary dialogue with Gretel Ehrlich, the author of "About Men." Taken together, the four demonstrations suggest specific strategies for the critical reading of literary works.

In addition to emphasizing the subjective, analytical, and evaluative aspects of reading literature, *Literature* introduces the traditional elements through discussions tied to works in each of the four genres: fiction, poetry, drama, and essay. Throughout these discussions, students are asked to return to certain works and reconsider them from different perspectives. In Chapter 8, Elements of Poetry, for example, students are encouraged to reread particular poems as they study a different element or technique. The repetition reinforces the recursive aspect of reading described in the opening chapters on each genre and demonstrates the need to reread literary works for the fullest possible intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic enjoyment.

The poetry section of *Literature* attempts to broaden the study of the genre with two special features: a substantial number of poems in translation and a special selection of poetic transformations. In addition to more than three hundred English and American poems, this edition of *Literature* includes more than thirty-five poems translated from eight languages. Goethe and Rilke, Borges and Lorca, Mandelstam and Akhmatova are among the poets represented. Included in Chapter 10, Transformations, are alternative translations of poems by Rilke, Jiminez, and Apollinaire. Also included in this chapter are ways in which poets have modified their own and other artists' work by means of revision, parody, and adaptation. Of particular interest are the transformations from one genre to another: poems recast as songs and poems inspired by paintings.

Finally, a word about the choice of works. The classic and contemporary selections presented reflect a wide range of styles, voices, subjects, and points of view. Complex and challenging works appear alongside more readily approach-

able and accessible ones. *Literature*, moreover, contains both types of works in sufficient variety for instructors to assign the more accessible ones for students to read and write about on their own, while reserving the more ambitious selections for class discussion.

Changes in This Edition

This second edition of *Literature* features three significant changes: (1) the refined and expanded process-of-reading chapters for each genre; (2) an expanded and reworked chapter on writing about literature; (3) fresh selections of works for the four genre anthologies.

The new selections include a dozen stories, among them works by Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Bobbie Ann Mason, Yukio Mishima, Stephen Crane, Franz Kafka, and Philip Roth. Two novellas are included this time rather than one. Complementing Tolstoy's "The Death of Ivan Ilych" is Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." The poetry anthology has been expanded to include a number of longer classic narrative poems, such as Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* (in modern translation), Marie de France's *The Nightingale*, Poe's *The Raven*, and Keats's *The Eve of St. Agnes*, along with the fresh contemporary voices of Eavan Boland, Lucille Clifton, Mary Oliver, Kathleen Iddings, Cathy Appel, and Kraft Rompf. New selections in the Poems and Paintings section are complemented by reproductions of works by Sandro Botticelli and Giotto di Bondone. A new poetry unit has been added as well: Responses: Point-Counterpoint. Grouped here are poems that respond to and comment on earlier works. Additional changes in the poetry anthology account for approximately seventy-five poems new to this edition.

The drama anthology includes four new twentieth-century plays: Glaspell's *Trifles*, Yeats's *Purgatory*, Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun*, and Luce's *Slam the Door Softly*. Two twentieth-century plays have been retained from the first edition: Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and Robert Bolt's *A Man for All Seasons*. Plays from earlier eras, from Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* to Ionesco's *The Lesson*, have been retained, along with their historical introductions. Two selections have been added to the Essay anthology: Montaigne's "Of Repentance" and Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman."

Literature represents the cooperative efforts of many people. Steve Pensinger—publisher, editor, and friend—encouraged me to develop the book and supported my work generously and graciously. His associates at Random House and McGraw-Hill brought enthusiasm and intelligence to their work on the project. Thanks in particular to Ed Maluf, Elisa Turner, Cynthia Ward, Suzanne Thibodeau, Lorraine Hohman, Stacey Alexander, Sheila Anderson, David Morris, and Jeannine Ciliotta, project editor for the second edition. And thanks especially to Carolyn Viola-John, who shepherded the first edition through the intricacies of production and who, as copyeditor for both editions, improved every page she touched, strengthening the book immeasurably.

From readers of various drafts of the manuscript I received thoughtful criticism along with helpful suggestions for improvement. Thanks to the following readers: Stephen Behrendt, Barbara Belson, Jon Burton, Cornelius Cronin, Charles Crow, Lois Cuddy, Robert Dell, Alan Ehmann, Ruth Eisenberg, Peter Evarts, Chris Farris, Paula Feldman, Elizabeth Flynn, Robert Fraser, Susan Gannon, Frank Garratt, Harold Gleason, John Hanes, Jacqueline Hartwich, J. G. Janssen, Michael Johnson, Leonard Leff, Barry Maid, William McIntosh, George Miller, Hugh Ruppensburg, Robert Sayre, Thomas Watson, A. K. Weatherhead, Joseph Zavadil, and Karl Zender.

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Thanks are due Judith Stanford of Rivier College for providing an exceptionally useful instructor's manual to accompany the book. Professor Stanford has also assisted me in enlarging Chapter 27, *Writing About Literature*. Her collaboration on that chapter has been especially helpful, particularly for the discussion of responding to literary works.

I have had the additional pleasure of working with Richard D. Hathaway, who has prepared a two-disk computer program called TEXT to accompany *Literature*, second edition. The Dialogue disk focuses on analyzing poetry and fiction; the Discourse disk contains questions on all four genres. Discourse also includes a complete word processor, Plain Vanilla.

I would also like to thank the colleagues and friends who have taught me much about reading and teaching literature. Thanks to Ann E. Berthoff, Bob Boynton, Nancy Comley, Rosemary Deen, Robert M. Dell, Douglas Doty, Ruth Eisenberg, Susan Gannon, Pat Hoy, Richard Marotta, Edmund Miller, Marie Ponsot, Robert Scholes, Sandra Schor, and Peter Stillman.

And finally I would like to thank my wife Mary, whose prompting encouraged me to undertake this project in the first place and whose loving assistance has enabled me to complete it once again.

ROBERT DIYANNI

Contents



PREFACE xxv

PART ONE FICTION I

CHAPTER	<i>Reading Stories</i>	3
ONE	The Experience of Fiction	4
	Luke <i>The Prodigal Son</i>	4
	The Interpretation of Fiction	5
	The Evaluation of Fiction	7
	John Updike <i>A&P</i>	9
	The Act of Reading Fiction	14
	Kate Chopin <i>The Story of an Hour</i>	14
CHAPTER	<i>Types of Short Fiction</i>	19
TWO	Early Forms: Parable, Fable, and Tale	19
	Aesop <i>The Wolf and the Mastiff</i>	20
	Petronius <i>The Widow of Ephesus</i>	21
	The Short Story	23
	The Nonrealistic Story	24
	The Short Novel	24

CHAPTER	<i>Elements of Fiction</i>	26
THREE	Plot and Structure	26
	Alice Munro <i>Wild Swans</i>	29
	Character	35
	Kay Boyle <i>Astronomer's Wife</i>	38
	Setting	42
	Bobbie Ann Mason <i>Shiloh</i>	44
	Point of View	53
	William Faulkner <i>A Rose for Emily</i>	56
	Language and Style	62
	James Joyce <i>Araby</i>	65
	Theme	69
	Guy de Maupassant <i>Moonlight</i>	70
	Irony and Symbol	73
	Edgar Allan Poe <i>The Black Cat</i>	77
CHAPTER	<i>Approaching a Story: Guides for</i>	
FOUR	<i>Reading and Writing</i>	84
	Guidelines for Reading	84
	Luigi Pirandello <i>War</i>	85
	Suggestions for Writing	90
CHAPTER	<i>A Collection of Short Fiction</i>	93
FIVE	Nathaniel Hawthorne <i>Young Goodman Brown</i>	93
	Leo Nikolaievich Tolstoy <i>The Death of Iván Ilych</i>	
	TRANSLATED BY LOUISE AND AYLMER MAUDE	102
	Kate Chopin <i>The Storm</i>	138
	Anton Chekhov <i>The Lady with the Dog</i>	142
	TRANSLATED BY CONSTANCE GARNETT	
	Charlotte Perkins Gilman <i>The Yellow Wallpaper</i>	153
	Rudyard Kipling <i>The Gardener</i>	164
	Stephen Crane <i>The Open Boat</i>	170
	James Joyce <i>The Boarding House</i>	186
	Franz Kafka <i>The Metamorphosis</i>	
	TRANSLATED BY EDWIN AND WILLA MUIR	191
	D. H. Lawrence <i>The Blind Man</i>	221
	Katherine Mansfield <i>Bliss</i>	234
	Katherine Anne Porter <i>María Concepción</i>	242
	Jean Toomer <i>Theater</i>	255
	Ernest Hemingway <i>The Short Happy Life of Francis</i>	
	<i>Macomber</i>	258
	Jorge Luis Borges <i>The Garden of Forking Paths</i>	
	TRANSLATED BY DONALD YATES	278

Frank O'Connor	<i>Guests of the Nation</i>	285
Isaac Bashevis Singer	<i>Gimpel the Fool</i>	
TRANSLATED BY SAUL BELLOW		293
Eudora Welty	<i>A Worn Path</i>	302
Tillie Olsen	<i>I Stand Here Ironing</i>	308
Ralph Ellison	<i>Battle Royal</i>	313
Philip Roth	<i>The Conversion of the Jews</i>	323
Jean Stafford	<i>Bad Characters</i>	333
Yukio Mishima	<i>Swaddling Clothes</i>	
TRANSLATED BY IVAN MORRIS		345
Flannery O'Connor	<i>Good Country People</i>	349
Gabriel Garcia Marquez	<i>A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings</i>	
TRANSLATED BY GREGORY RABASSA		362
Donald Barthelme	<i>The Balloon</i>	366
Woody Allen	<i>The Kugelmass Episode</i>	370
Margaret Atwood	<i>Rape Fantasies</i>	377
Raymond Carver	<i>Cathedral</i>	383
Alice Walker	<i>Everyday Use</i>	393
Leslie Silko	<i>Yellow Woman</i>	399

PART TWO POETRY 407

CHAPTER	<i>Reading Poems</i>	409
SIX	<i>The Experience of Poetry</i>	410
	Robert Hayden <i>Those Winter Sundays</i>	410
	<i>The Interpretation of Poetry</i>	412
	Robert Frost <i>Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening</i>	414
	<i>The Evaluation of Poetry</i>	416
	Adrienne Rich <i>Aunt Jennifer's Tigers</i>	419
	<i>The Act of Reading Poetry</i>	420
	Theodore Roethke <i>My Papa's Waltz</i>	421
CHAPTER	<i>Types of Poetry</i>	423
SEVEN	<i>Narrative Poetry</i>	423
	<i>Lyric Poetry</i>	425
CHAPTER	<i>Elements of Poetry</i>	427
EIGHT	<i>Voice: Speaker and Tone</i>	427
	Stephen Crane <i>War Is Kind</i>	428
	Robert Browning <i>My Last Duchess</i>	430
	Muriel Stuart <i>In the Orchard</i>	432
	Gerard Manley Hopkins <i>Thou art indeed just, Lord</i>	433

- Anonymous *Western Wind* 434
 Henry Reed *Naming of Parts* 434
 Jacques Prévert *Family Portrait* 436

Diction 436

- William Wordsworth *I wandered lonely as a cloud* 438
 Edwin Arlington Robinson *Miniver Cheevy* 441
 William Wordsworth *It is a beauteous evening* 442
 Robert Herrick *Delight in Disorder* 443
 Adrienne Rich *Rape* 443

Imagery 444

- Elizabeth Bishop *First Death in Nova Scotia* 445
 William Butler Yeats *The Lake Isle of Innisfree* 448
 Robert Browning *Meeting at Night* 449
 H. D. (Hilda Doolittle) *Heat* 449
 Thomas Hardy *Neutral Tones* 450

Figures of Speech: Simile and Metaphor 451

- William Shakespeare *That time of year thou may'st in me behold* 452
 John Donne *Hymn to God the Father* 454
 Robert Wallace *The Double-Play* 455
 Louis Simpson *The Battle* 456
 Judith Wright *Woman to Child* 457

Symbolism and Allegory 457

- Peter Meinke *Advice to My Son* 458
 Christina Rossetti *Up-Hill* 460
 William Blake *A Poison Tree* 461
 Robert Frost *The Road Not Taken* 462
 George Herbert *Virtue* 463
 Emily Dickinson *Because I could not stop for Death* 464

Syntax 465

- John Donne *The Sun Rising* 466
 Thomas Hardy *The Man He Killed* 468
 William Butler Yeats *An Irish Airman Foresees His Death* 469
 Robert Frost *The Silken Tent* 470
 E. E. Cummings *"Me up at does"* 471
 Stevie Smith *Mother, Among the Dustbins* 471

Sound: Rhyme, Alliteration, Assonance 472

- Gerard Manley Hopkins *In the Valley of the Elwy* 475
 Thomas Hardy *During Wind and Rain* 476
 Alexander Pope *Sound and Sense* 478
 May Swenson *The Universe* 479
 Helen Chasin *The Word Plum* 480

Rhythm and Meter 480Robert Frost *The Span of Life* 482George Gordon, Lord Byron *The Destruction of
Sennacherib* 487Anne Sexton *Her Kind* 488Richard Wilbur *Junk* 489William Carlos Williams *The Red Wheelbarrow* 491James Shirley *The Glories of Our Blood and State* 491**Structure: Closed Form and Open Form** 492John Keats *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer* 494Walt Whitman *When I heard the learn'd astronomer* 495E. E. Cummings *l(a* 496E. E. Cummings [*Buffalo Bill's*] 497William Carlos Williams *The Dance* 499Denise Levertov *O Taste and See* 499Theodore Roethke *The Waking* 500A. R. Ammons *Poetics* 501C. P. Cavafy *The City* 502**Theme** 503Emily Dickinson *Crumbling is not an instant's Act* 504CHAPTER **Approaching a Poem: Guides for Reading and**
NINE **Writing** 506**Guidelines for Reading** 506Gerard Manley Hopkins: *Spring and Fall: To a Young
Child* 507**Suggestions for Writing** 510CHAPTER **Transformations** 513TEN **Revisions** 513William Blake *London* 514William Butler Yeats *A Dream of Death* 517Emily Dickinson *The Wind begun to knead the Grass* 518D. H. Lawrence *The Piano* 520**Parodies** 521William Carlos Williams *This Is Just to Say* 521Kenneth Koch *Variations on a Theme by William Carlos
Williams* 522Anthony Brode *Breakfast with Gerard Manley Hopkins* 523William Shakespeare *Shall I compare thee to a summer's
day* 523Howard Moss *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's
Day?* 524

Translations 524

Rainer Maria Rilke *Der Panther [The Panther]*

TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN MITCHELL AND C. F.

MACÍNTYRE 525

Guillaume Apollinaire *Le Pont Mirabeau (Mirabeau Bridge)*

TRANSLATED BY RICHARD WILBUR AND W. S.

MERWIN 526

Juan Ramón Jiménez *Nocturno Soñado [Dream*

Nocturne] 529

TRANSLATED BY ELEANOR L. TURNBULL AND THOMAS

MCGREEVY 529

Poems and Paintings 530

Vincent Van Gogh *Starry Night* 533

Robert Fagles *The Starry Night* 533

Anne Sexton *The Starry Night* 534

Francesco Goya y Lucientes *The Third of May* 534

Lawrence Ferlinghetti *In Goya's greatest scenes we seem to*
see 535

Francesco Goya y Lucientes *Two scenes from The Disasters*
of War 536, 537

Andrey Voznesensky *I Am Goya* 536

TRANSLATED BY STANLEY KUNITZ

William Carlos Williams *Landscape with the Fall of*
Icarus 537

Pieter Breughel the Elder *Landscape with the Fall of*
Icarus 538

W. H. Auden *Musée des Beaux Arts* 538

Joseph Langland *Hunters in the Snow: Breughel* 539

Pieter Breughel the Elder *Hunters in the Snow* 540

John Berryman *Winter Landscape* 541

William Blake *The Sick Rose (watercolor)* 542

William Blake *The Sick Rose (poem)* 542

Sandro Botticelli *Adoration of the Magi* 543

T. S. Eliot *Journey of the Magi* 543

Giotto di Bondone *Adoration of the Magi* 544

William Butler Yeats *The Magi* 544

Adaptations 545

Ecclesiastes *There is a Time* 545

Pete Seeger *Turn! Turn! Turn!* 545

Edwin Arlington Robinson *Richard Cory* 547

Paul Simon *Richard Cory* 547

Langston Hughes *Dream Deferred* 548

Langston Hughes *Same in Blues* 549

Responses (Point-Counterpoint) 550

Christopher Marlowe *The Passionate Shepherd to His Love* 551

Sir Walter Raleigh *The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd* 552

William Shakespeare *Not marble, nor the gilded monuments* 553

Archibald MacLeish "Not Marble Nor the Gilded Monuments" 553

Matthew Arnold *Dover Beach* 554

Anthony Hecht *The Dover Bitch: A Criticism of Life* 556

CHAPTER A Collection of Poems 557**ELEVEN**

Sappho *To me he seems like a god* 557

Anonymous *Barbara Allan* 558

Anonymous *The Twa Corbies* 559

Anonymous *Edward, Edward* 560

Marie de France *The Nightingale*

TRANSLATED BY PATRICIA TERRY 562

François Villon *Ballade*

TRANSLATED BY GALWAY KINNELL 565

Geoffrey Chaucer *Truth* 566

Geoffrey Chaucer *The Pardoner's Tale*

TRANSLATED BY NEVILLE COGHILL 567

John Skelton *To Mistress Margaret Hussey* 582

Thomas Wyatt *The long love that in my thought doth harbor* 583

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey *Love, that doth reign and live within my thought* 584

Edmund Spenser *One day I wrote her name upon the strand* 584

Sir Walter Raleigh *The Lie* 585

Sir Philip Sidney *from Astrophel and Stella* 587

Sir Philip Sidney *Thou blind man's mark* 587

Chidiok Tichborne *Tichborne's Elegy* 588

Michael Drayton *Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part* 589

William Shakespeare *When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes* 589

William Shakespeare *Let me not to the marriage of true minds* 590

William Shakespeare *Th' expense of spirit in a waste of shame* 590

- William Shakespeare *My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun* 590
- Thomas Nashe *A Litany in Time of Plague* 591
- John Donne *Song* 592
- John Donne *The Canonization* 593
- John Donne *A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning* 594
- John Donne *The Flea* 595
- John Donne *Death, be not proud* 596
- John Donne *Batter my heart, three-personed God* 596
- Ben Jonson *On My First Daughter* 597
- Ben Jonson *On My First Son* 597
- Ben Jonson *Still to be neat, still to be dressed* 597
- Ben Jonson *Song: To Celia* 598
- Robert Herrick *Upon Julia's Clothes* 598
- Robert Herrick *To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time* 599
- George Herbert *The Altar* 599
- George Herbert *The Pulley* 600
- George Herbert *The Collar* 600
- George Herbert *Easter Wings* 601
- John Milton *When I consider how my light is spent* 602
- John Milton *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont* 602
- Anne Bradstreet *Before the Birth of One of Her Children* 603
- Anne Bradstreet *To My Dear and Loving Husband* 603
- Andrew Marvell *To His Coy Mistress* 604
- Andrew Marvell *A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body* 605
- John Dryden *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day* 606
- Jonathan Swift *A Description of the Morning* 608
- Alexander Pope *Epigram Engraved on the Collar of a Dog Which I Gave to His Royal Highness* 609
- Alexander Pope *from An Essay on Man* 609
- Thomas Gray *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* 610
- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe *Nature and Art*
TRANSLATED BY JOHN FREDERICK NIMS 613
- William Blake *The Clod & the Pebble* 614
- William Blake *The Lamb* 614
- William Blake *The Tyger* 615
- William Blake *The Garden of Love* 616
- William Blake *Mock on, Mock on, Voltaire, Rousseau* 616
- Robert Burns *A Red, Red Rose* 617
- William Wordsworth *The world is too much with us* 617
- William Wordsworth *The Solitary Reaper* 618

William Wordsworth <i>Composed upon Westminster Bridge,</i> <i>September 3, 1802</i>	619
William Wordsworth <i>Lines Composed a Few Miles Above</i> <i>Tintern Abbey</i>	619
Samuel Taylor Coleridge <i>Kubla Khan</i>	623
George Gordon, Lord Byron <i>She walks in beauty</i>	624
Percy Bysshe Shelley <i>Ozymandias</i>	625
Percy Bysshe Shelley <i>Ode to the West Wind</i>	626
John Keats <i>When I have fears that I may cease to be</i>	628
John Keats <i>La Belle Dame sans Merci</i>	628
John Keats <i>Ode to a Nightingale</i>	630
John Keats <i>Ode on a Grecian Urn</i>	632
John Keats <i>The Eve of St. Agnes</i>	634
Ralph Waldo Emerson <i>Concord Hymn</i>	644
Edgar Allan Poe <i>To Helen</i>	645
Edgar Allan Poe <i>The Raven</i>	646
Alfred, Lord Tennyson <i>Ulysses</i>	649
Alfred, Lord Tennyson <i>Tithonus</i>	650
Alfred, Lord Tennyson <i>The Eagle</i>	652
Alfred, Lord Tennyson <i>from In Memoriam A.H.H.</i>	652
Robert Browning <i>Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister</i>	653
Emily Brontë <i>Remembrance</i>	656
Walt Whitman <i>A noiseless patient spider</i>	657
Walt Whitman <i>Crossing Brooklyn Ferry</i>	657
Emily Dickinson <i>I like a look of Agony</i>	661
Emily Dickinson <i>Some keep the Sabbath going to</i> <i>Church</i>	662
Emily Dickinson <i>Wild Nights—Wild Nights</i>	662
Emily Dickinson <i>After great pain, a formal feeling</i> <i>comes</i>	662
Emily Dickinson <i>This World is not Conclusion</i>	663
Emily Dickinson <i>Much Madness is divinest Sense</i>	663
Emily Dickinson <i>I died for Beauty—but was scarce</i>	664
Emily Dickinson <i>I heard a Fly buzz—when I died</i>	664
Emily Dickinson <i>The Bustle in a House</i>	664
Emily Dickinson <i>Tell all the Truth but tell it slant</i>	665
Emily Dickinson <i>Pain—has an Element of Blank</i>	665
Emily Dickinson <i>A narrow Fellow in the Grass</i>	665
Emily Dickinson <i>Volcanoes be in Sicily</i>	666
Emily Dickinson <i>I taste a liquor never brewed</i>	666
Emily Dickinson <i>I dreaded that first Robin, so</i>	667
Emily Dickinson <i>I like to see it lap the Miles</i>	668
Emily Dickinson <i>Further in Summer than the Birds</i>	668
Emily Dickinson <i>A Route of Evanescence</i>	669

Emily Dickinson	<i>Apparently with no surprise</i>	669
Lewis Carroll	<i>Jabberwocky</i>	669
Thomas Hardy	<i>The Ruined Maid</i>	670
Thomas Hardy	<i>The Oxen</i>	671
Thomas Hardy	<i>The Voice</i>	671
Thomas Hardy	<i>Transformations</i>	672
Thomas Hardy	<i>Channel Firing</i>	672
Thomas Hardy	<i>Ah, are you digging on my grave</i>	674
Gerard Manley Hopkins	<i>God's Grandeur</i>	675
Gerard Manley Hopkins	<i>The Windhover</i>	675
Gerard Manley Hopkins	<i>Pied Beauty</i>	676
Gerard Manley Hopkins	<i>Binsey Poplars</i>	676
A. E. Housman	<i>When I was one-and-twenty</i>	677
A. E. Housman	<i>To an Athlete Dying Young</i>	677
A. E. Housman	<i>With rue my heart is laden</i>	678
A. E. Housman	<i>Is my team plowing</i>	678
William Butler Yeats	<i>Adam's Curse</i>	679
William Butler Yeats	<i>The Scholars</i>	680
William Butler Yeats	<i>Easter 1916</i>	681
William Butler Yeats	<i>The Second Coming</i>	683
William Butler Yeats	<i>The Wild Swans at Coole</i>	683
William Butler Yeats	<i>Leda and the Swan</i>	684
William Butler Yeats	<i>Sailing to Byzantium</i>	685
William Butler Yeats	<i>A Prayer for my Daughter</i>	686
William Butler Yeats	<i>Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop</i>	688
Edwin Arlington Robinson	<i>Mr. Flood's Party</i>	688
Edwin Arlington Robinson	<i>Eros Turannos</i>	690
Paul Laurence Dunbar	<i>We wear the mask</i>	691
Amy Lowell	<i>Patterns</i>	692
Robert Frost	<i>Mending Wall</i>	694
Robert Frost	<i>Fire and Ice</i>	695
Robert Frost	<i>Birches</i>	696
Robert Frost	<i>Dust of Snow</i>	697
Robert Frost	<i>Design</i>	697
Robert Frost	<i>Desert Places</i>	698
Robert Frost	<i>Tree at my window</i>	698
Robert Frost	<i>Acquainted with the Night</i>	699
Robert Frost	<i>Putting in the Seed</i>	699
Robert Frost	<i>To Earthward</i>	700
Rainer Maria Rilke	<i>Going Blind</i>	
TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN MITCHELL		701
Rainer Maria Rilke	<i>Portrait of My Father as a Young Man</i>	
TRANSLATED BY STEPHEN MITCHELL		701