



Selected Poems

William Blake, David V. Erdman (Editor), Thomas Crofts (Editor), Virginia Erdman (Editor), David Erdman (Selected by)

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Features 104 of Blake's poems: "A Song of Liberty," "The Argument," "Proverbs of Hell," "The Mental Traveller," "The Land of Dreams," "To the Evening Star" and many more.

Selected Poems Details

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From Reader Review Selected Poems for online ebook

Lachlan says

Moments of brilliance amongst confusion. Definitely recommended.

John says

Proof that William Blake was not born during the Renaissance.

Holly Williams says

This Selected Works was a great compilation, I'd read Songs of Innocence & Experience before as it's one of my favourites so this part was kind of redundant. For a Blake first-timer it makes sense. Second half of the collection was excellent, really enjoyed 'from America' a prophesy & the parts taken from his notebooks. Blake was a fascinating person & the sheer scale of change that he lived through is reflected in his already eccentric perspective of his times. Humanitarian & democratic nature of his poems makes them timeless.

ZaRi says

Earth rais'd up her head,
From the darkness dread & drear.
Her light fled:
Stony dread!
And her locks cover'd with grey despair.

Prison'd on watry shore
Starry Jealousy does keep my den
Cold and hoar
Weeping o'er
I hear the Father of the ancient men

Selfish father of men
Cruel, jealous, selfish fear
Can delight
Chain'd in night
The virgins of youth and morning bear.

Does spring hide its joy
When buds and blossoms grow?
Does the sower?

Sow by night?
Or the plowman in darkness plow?

Break this heavy chain,
That does freeze my bones around
Selfish! vain!
Eternal bane!
That free Love with bondage bound.

BAM The Bibliomaniac says

I enjoyed Songs of Innocence and Experience as well as a few pieces at the beginning. One poem in particular "Little Lamb" would be perfect framed in a baby's room. But the last set of poems were just too religious for my taste. I have a feeling Blake may have debated with CS Lewis. That would have been interesting to witness.

Nora says

Absolutely beautiful.

Douglas Wilson says

Okay, so I read this, and am afraid that it brought me to the conclusion that Blake is overrated. But glad to have read him, and there were some striking lines. Okay, so it was worth it.

Cameron H says

"The Divine Image"

To Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
All pray in their distress;
And to these virtues of delight
Return their thankfulness.

For Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is God, our father dear,
And Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love
Is Man, his child and care.

For Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,

And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divine,
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace.

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, Turk, or Jew;
Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell
There God is dwelling too.

Alan Tomkins-Raney says

Reading Blake's poetry is a major trip...without any of the side effects or physical drawbacks of actual drugs. The commentary that introduces each section is invaluable for fully understanding and appreciating Blake's amazing talent. The man was a genius and a prophet. Edify yourself; read some Blake.

Mike Benoit says

I understand why Blake was important from a historical perspective, but oh my god, this stuff is NOT for me.

Krystal says

I've never been big on poetry - I like action, and poetry requires way to much thinking. I do, however, appreciate the magic of language, so I can appreciate a cleverly written poem here and there.

This was a real mixed bag. I loved the crazy stuff; the ones where there was (action) a story, and clear characters. I enjoyed the ones where I understood what was happening. There were some moments that caught me off guard because of a sudden grisly reveal or unexpected statement. I also really liked the animal ones, because I'm a big fan of animals in symbolism. And let's face it: poetry is all about symbolism; nothing is straight up in this genre.

I didn't even hate the ones I found boring. They just washed over me without really making an impact. I think poetry is the kind of thing you have to read repeatedly, searching for meaning with each read. Blake's writing is, overall, quite clever. And while some of it is not to my taste at all (I skipped the last one entirely after two stanzas) I can appreciate that the man was clearly brilliant.

Not what I'd typically expect from a book of poems, so this was surprisingly entertaining. Pretty glad it wasn't any longer, though.

Adam says

Clever. Brilliant. Thought provoking.

Vishal says

He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the Ratio sees himself only.

Therefore God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is

William Blake - aside from being a genius - is perhaps one of the most quoted poets in the world (just read Auguries of Innocence), and he can also claim to have given inspiration to Jim Morrison (via Aldous Huxley) when he was looking for the name of his band:

If the doors of perception were cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern

Despite some abstruse bits in his more religious pieces, I particularly enjoyed the beautiful simplicity in the collection from Songs of Innocence and Experience – themes such as detachment from the material world in ‘Eternity’:

*He who binds himself to joy
Does the winged life destroy;
But he who kissed the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sun rise*

Or the two extremes of love in ‘The Clod and the Pebble’:

*Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another give its ease
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair*

Or how we should seize the day before the inevitable loss of the proverbial ‘summer’ of our lives:

*How shall the summer arise in joy,
Or the summer fruits appear?
Or how shall we gather what griefs destroy,
Or bless the mellowing year
When the blasts of winter appear?*

If you were to read him quietly to yourself, after a while it sounds and feels like a prayer-an ode to joy, peace and pastoral beauty. And for a long time after, the words vibrate in your soul, a reminder of the gentle,

restorative power of Nature - Nature as the perfect state of Man - that the modern world has forgotten.

Alusha says

I absolutely love William Blake, he is a genius!

Janelle says

Blake for me is a good poet with some thought provoking words. Some poetry of his is a bit too religious for me, but this is a good selection overall.
