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This anthology is a thorough introduction to classic literature for those who have not yet experienced these literary masterworks. For those who have known and loved these works in the past, this is an invitation to reunite with old friends in a fresh new format. From Shakespeare's finesse to Oscar Wilde's wit, this unique collection brings together works as diverse and influential as *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Othello*. As an anthology that invites readers to immerse themselves in the masterpieces of the literary giants, it is must-have addition to any library.

The Poems of William Blake Details

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xx Sarah xx (former Nefarious Breeder of Murderous Crustaceans) says

This was my first time reading poems by William Blake and I can't say I was terribly impressed. Admittedly, I don't read much poetry but I do enjoy it once in a while.

The main problem I had with these poems is that they made me feel like I was a 10-year-old schoolgirl again. They were simplistic, dreadfully unoriginal and quite boring. To me Blake's poetry lacks rhythm and his verses lack fluidity. Definitely not the kind of poetry I enjoy reading.

Kerdel Ellick says

Perfection! I can read it again and again, and still feel the same way.

Danielle Routh says

"And I made a rural pen,
And I stain'd the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear."

Alice Lippart says

This felt like visiting an old friend, as I've read quite a bit of Blakes poetry before. Still love it.

Rob Dudek says

*Cruelty has a human heart,
And jealousy a human face;
Terror the human form divine,
And Secresy the human dress.*

I'm sensing that William Blake was a rather peculiar individual. Most of his poems aren't exactly what you would call quotable, but I think that it might be because that wasn't his intention in the first place. The poems themselves are quite brilliant actually (as far as my mind can conceive) however, in this particular volume Blake had a bit of a theme going on with a child-like perception of the world and unfortunately that is not my cup of tea - at least not in the way Blake had presented it. As a result, the book receives 3 stars from me. However, I also assume that due to the certain gaps in my vocabulary, I was not able to fully perceive the

true beauty of the book/poems. Having said that, I think many people would agree that Blake had a unique style of writing and his work will not speak to everyone (in spite of one's abilities). For me, this is a sort of 'either love or hate' kind of work with a few of bits and pieces of clear ingenious thrown here and there. Though, I firmly believe it's well worth reading.

Hannah says

AWESSOME
particularly for the study of tents- just peel your eyes

Elspeth says

Blake focuses on religion a bit to much for my taste. I do like The Tyger, but that might be from reciting it in grade school, and it being the only poem that was familiar.

Roy Lotz says

*The Angel that presided o'er my birth
Said, 'Little creature, form'd of Joy & Mirth,
Go love, without the help of any Thing on Earth.'*

As I've said before, I feel a bit uncomfortable reviewing poetry. I don't have the proper tools; I lack the vocabulary. Critiquing poetry, to me, is like critiquing a human body. I don't know why one face pleases me, and another pleases me not; I simply couldn't say why I find one shape shapely, and another shape misshapen. When I see a pleasing face or an attractive form, I respond automatically; and the same might be said for my reactions to poetry.

William Blake makes this job even more difficult, as he was, in the truest sense of the word, an individual. How does one evaluate a totally idiosyncratic artist? It seems impossible; all evaluations, either explicitly or implicitly, involve comparison. But when somebody is so aloof and peculiar as was Blake, comparisons seem somehow inappropriate. Well, I'll stop caviling, and on with it.

There is a childlike innocence to many of Blake's poems. Some of them have the gentle sing-song rhythm of a lullaby; the words seem to rock you back and forth, lulling you into a dreamy peace. Blake's early poems, in particular, are totally free of cynicism and disenchantment; rather, they are direct, honest, wide-eyed.

To see the World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand

And Eternity in an hour.

Married to this total innocence, however, is an intense spirituality. Blake is a textbook mystic. Perhaps the closest poet to Blake that I've read is Whitman. Like Whitman, Blake is scornful of organized, traditional, Puritanical religion. Rather, he sees God in every blade of grass, and considers the body a source of delight, rather than of sin.

All Bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following Errors.

1. That Man has two real existing principles, Viz: a Body & a Soul.
2. That Energy, call'd Evil, is alone from the Body, & that Reason, call'd Good, is alone from the Soul.
3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his energies.

In terms of pure poetic skill, Blake is no match for a Milton, a Donne, or a Whitman. Indeed, that sort of thing seems not to interest him. He has not a great talent for aphorism; he is not eminently quotable. The poems are not meant to be unraveled or chewed; you will not be left puzzled or bewildered. Verbal ingenuity is not, in short, Blake's strength; and if Blake is read with that purpose in mind, you are sure to be disappointed. His aim is instead to disarm you, to make you let down your guard; his poetry is, in fact, almost conversational. Blake knew he was something of an oddball; but he was too wise to think himself any the worse for it. His poetry, then, is a kind of invitation into his personal world.

My mother groan'd! my father wept,
Into the dangerous world I leapt,
Helpless, naked, piping loud,
Like a fiend hid in a cloud.

And indeed, this world gets more odd and fanciful the longer you stay with him. Blake's later poetry is considerably more obscure than his earlier work. He seems, in fact, to have invented his own mythology; and the poems from this period are little more than tales and visions of his personal gods and heroes and demons. It is certainly odd; but it is oddly alluring.

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.

Part of the reason books are so fascinating is because people are so fascinating. Right before reading this collection, I read a collection of Donne's poetry. The juxtaposition is telling. Both men are mystics, both men are sensualists, both men are aloof individuals. Yet Donne is intellectual, anguished, and strained; Blake is direct, joyful, effortless. At least, this is my impression. It is odd trying to get to know somebody purely through their poetry; it is rather like trying to get to know somebody by rummaging through their trash. We are forced to guess at what's locked inside by shifting through what's shed.

Richard says

learned first draft was written ; "Did he laugh His work to see?" makes me chuckle.

Paul says

This Kindle edition contains Songs of Innocence, and Songs of Experience, with The Book of Thel thrown in as a neat/weird little bonus. I feel like this is a pretty good introduction to William Blake, but the problem is that that's kind of it. It's an introduction. Not much more.

Don't get me wrong though, these poems are solid. More or less. Innocence is fairly solidly constructed even if it's all very disarmingly simple to me, and Experience doesn't progress very much further than that, but it's still pretty interesting in the way it seems to take the concepts of Innocence and turn them on its head, and examine them, with plenty of simmering bitterness and distaste aimed all around and at The Way Things Are. But none of it is really what I was expecting. There's no satanic mills. No Urizen. No Jerusalem, or feet in ancient time that do things that I'm not aware of because that's the only line of that poem that I know. All I can really say or think right now is that this must surely be a prelude of what's to come, that this is just Blake warming up and being relatively normal before he breaks out the original mythology and becomes the passionate weirdo genius philosopher kind of guy that I had the sense that he was. OK, to be fair The Book of Thel is probably more along the lines of what I've associated Blake with, but – ironically – that was just so strange that I kind of bewildered and skimmed my way over it, so I only really absorbed a fraction of what I could have absorbed if I was paying attention, which probably still might not have been much.

It strikes me now that part of the problem is probably just how I bought it. I got a free Kindle edition, you see, and although I've got no reason to attack people who (dis)like ebooks as long as you're not particularly vilifying them or extolling them (I mean, I like physical books and ebooks too, you know, they're perfectly capable of living in harmony in my eyes [more on which later]), for something like William Blake it just feels like I got myself a dodgy pamphlet printed off by some fella in a backend alley for a few pieces of old-timey money that has some poems of William Blake on it. The bad quarto, if you will. Or actually won't, because the Kindle edition I got is perfectly competent, all the spelling and layout seems fine. So I guess call it the "perfectly-decent-but-still-not-all-that-great quarto" then. ;) And there's more to Blake than that. I know there is. I mean, this edition didn't even have any illustrations! I really feel like Blake is the kind of author poet I'd need to explore in the flesh, or at least in the paper, with a big chunky book over some sort of lamplight as I strive to uncover the mystery and gaze at awe at the prodigy of the imagination.

Also I read the poems fairly fast so that didn't help much either.

I mean, I had a fairly good time, but I'm not really closer yet to figuring out why Phil Sandifer likes him so much (then again, neither did his post on "The Three Doctors" really, although I only skimmed that and I've never seen "The Three Doctors", so maybe I should read it again someday when I get my copy of TARDIS Eruditorum Volume 3), and it still doesn't leave me feeling much more than "hmmmm, ok, sure" about "In the Forest of the Night" :P (Which to be honest I really don't think is *that* bad of an episode, even if it's kind of lacking in bits and pieces, I should really watch that again. And for what it's worth, "The Tyger" is a genuinely good and striking poem, maybe the best in that entire collection, so that was great to finally figure out too. If only for a little while.)

Jake says

A fascinating collection of powerful poems that not only give you things to think about but also presents an amazing look into Blake's mind. With poems covering nearly every topic it's hard to not enjoy his collected works.

Logan Dalton says

William Blake was a mystic poet who was not afraid to challenge the religious and political views of his day. Like the other Romantic poets, he creates beautiful images of nature especially in "Songs of Innocence"; but he is not naive and understands the natural and moral evil that haunts the universe and provides haunting imagery of evil and demonic power. Blake also brings up some interesting philosophical questions in his longer poems *The Everlasting Gospel* and *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* where he ponders if there is really a dichotomy between reason and desire. Blake's prophetic poems are slightly denser than his other works and derivative of other sources like the Bible and *Paradise Lost*, but they are a valiant attempt at world-building.

Lauren says

2.5*

Jenny Clark says

Some of the poems were a tad confusing at first, but after a second look became clearer. They all have very deliberate word choices and are quite well written. An enjoyable collection of his poems.

Steven Godin says

A small collection of poems from 18th century Englishman William Blake. Largely unrecognised during his lifetime, and viewed in some quarters as a madman, it wasn't until later his work was regarded as grand. Along with his paintings, he would be part of the 'Romantic Movement', and was also strongly influenced by the Church, politics and historical revolutions. Made up of the 'Songs of Innocence & Experience', arguably his most famous work, they are charming poems, with the early ones that had me thinking of the British countryside on a summers day, sitting under a tree and looking yonder at the picturesque landscape.

Sometimes it's the small and simple things that lead to much beauty, and like other easy on the eye poets, most are a joy to read, and so full of wonder. My favorites were 'Holy Thursday', 'Divine Image' and 'The Garden of Love'.

A little Taste,

'The Lily'

"The modest Rose puts forth a thorn,
The humble sheep a threat'ning horn:
While the lily white shall in love delight,
Nor a thorn nor a threat stain her beauty bright"
