



Poems and Songs

Robert Burns , Stanley Appelbaum (Editor)

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Robert Burns (1759 – 1796) called himself "an Aeolian harp strung to every wind of heaven." His first volume of poems, entitled *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*, was published in 1786. An immediate success, it established Burns's poetic reputation, which has grown over two centuries to the point where he is not only the Scottish national poet but the object of a cult unique in British poetry.

The present volume contains 43 of his finest poems and songs, reprinted unabridged from an authoritative tenth-century edition. Included are "The Twa Dogs," a deft satire of the Scottish upper classes; "To a Mouse," one of the poet's best known, most charming works; "Address to the Unco Guid," an attack on Puritan hypocrisy; "Holy Willie's Prayer," one of the great verse-satires of all times; as well as such favorites as "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "To a Mountain Daisy," "The Holy Fair," "Address to the Deil," "The Death and Dying Words of Poor Mailie," and many more.

In addition to his poetic undertakings, Burns almost single-handedly preserved and revived the traditional Scottish song, and this volume includes a rich selection of these works: "A Red, Red Rose," "Auld Lang Syne," "Comin' thro' the Rye," "My Heart's in the Highlands," "My Love, She's But a Lassie Yet," and a host of others.

Poems and Songs Details

Date : Published June 1st 1991 by Dover Publications (first published 1906)

ISBN : 9780486268637

Author : Robert Burns , Stanley Appelbaum (Editor)

Format : Paperback 92 pages

Genre : Poetry, Classics, Cultural, Scotland

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Lea says

This was my favorite of the Harvard Classics so far (I started with Vol. 04). Burns's poetry has a lovely cadence to it, and reading all of it in order, with occasional sojourns to biographical web sources, made me see how the changes in subject matter reflected the evolution of his life's priorities. Among the highlights for me was "A Poet's Welcome to his Love-Begotten Daughter: the First Instance that Entitled Him to the Venerable Appellation of Father," written upon the birth of his first child, whom he tells he hopes the best for even though she was illegitimate.

Burns's longest-term love and only wife was Jean Armour, and she's the subject of many but not all of his love poems. He's well known for having been frisky with the ladies, and I found myself brimming with happy love tears each time he returned to her with another wave of Jean verses.

I read these all out loud, and I must say, my fake Scottish accent probably sounds terrible, but Burns's dialect-inflected writing certainly made it much more fun to use.

Amy Shannon says

Favorite poet

Yes Burns is my favorite poet. My all time favorite poem is "A Red Red Rose". The best part of the poems is that they are written in old English and it brings the feelings to life. In some ways, the past reminds us of a simpler time but tell feelings and emotions are the same. Love. Romance. Lust. Betrayal. Enjoyment of life.

kari says

I've always wanted to read some of Robert Burns poetry. He was one of the pioneers of the Romantic movement in poetry, writing verse in the vernacular of the people and that makes his stuff a wee bit tricky to read.

This little collection, thankfully, has a glossary of his words in the back and I'd advise familiarizing yourself with those words before attempting to read his work. Although he is a Scottish speaking/writing poet and we think of Scots as speaking the same as we do, it's almost like reading a different language until experience and get the flow of how it's written.

Great poetry, some funny, some sad, some lovely.

Colin says

This is the complete poems and songs and as such is more for the hardcore fan of Burns. There is a glossary at the back but you won't find any complete translations and if you are unfamiliar with the Scots tongue you

might find yourself flicking back and forth to make sense of it.

Of course you can just read your favourite poems but this book comes into itself as a reference to the complete works of one of the most important poets in the history of civilisation.

Everett Darling says

This is an inexpensive edition, and like a good mixed-tape, filled with a variety of well-loved songs and verse. It also includes a much needed Scots-English dictionary in the appendix, and though not necessary for all of the work herein, a total must for most.

I wrote a facebook comment to a friend in Scots the other day, as it's easy to pick up on and well, beyond charming, I even memorized a few lines to be repeated at the bars, because I'm sure that nearly everyone loves Burns, and who wouldn't love Scots? It's all guid-willie.

Amit says

This book has been lying in the bookshelf of my uncles home for a long time. I've picked it up many times before but was always put off by the Scottish slang. This time though I was determined to go through it and I was glad I did. The few poems that I had read of Burns were great but I unearthed some real gems among the lesser known (atleast outside Scotland) poems. If you can look past the slightly difficult language then it's quite a good read and a great piece of work from a great poet!

Landon says

Very small book. With a collection of Burns work. The book is colorful, filled with most memorable of Robert Burns. It was an easy read.

Lucy says

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer,
A-chasing the wild deer and following the roe--
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go!

Farewell to the Highlands, farewell to the North,
The birthplace of valour, the country of worth!
Wherever I wander, wherever I rove,
The hills of the Highlands for ever I love.

Farewell to the mountains high cover'd with snow,
Farewell to the straths and green valleys below,

Farewell to the forests and wild-hanging woods,
Farewell to the torrents and loud-pouring floods!

My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer,
A-chasing the wild deer and following the roe--
My heart's in the Highlands, wherever I go!

Michael Arnold says

<3 Robert Burns!

Arlo Powell says

Wonderful book! Some of Burns' poems would be perfect for a poetry unit or lesson in the intermediate grades. These poems are a good way to gain insights into Scottish culture. I wouldn't just leave this book lying around the classroom though, some of the poems are more suited for high school aged students.

Drew says

I like digging books out of the canon to see if a work has lasting power ("Goblin Market") or survives primarily in an echo of former greatness ("Paradise Lost"). I'd picked up Robert Burns' "Poems and Songs" some time ago but kept putting off reading it because its dialectic prose looked like Olde English of the driest sort. Boy was I wrong. Burns is hilarious. The opening poem "The Two Dogs" cracked me up and by the book's end, I was reading poems/songs aloud on the subway in a fake Scottish brogue for pleasure.

Paul says

"What a pity that the mere emotions of gratitude are so impotent in this world."

"But kindness, sweet kindness, in the fond-sparkling e'e,
Has lustre outshining the diamond to me;"

"It ne'er was wealth, it ne'er was wealth,
That coft contentment, peace, or pleasure;
The bands and bliss o' mutual love,
O that's the chiefest warld's treasure."

"The deities that I adore
Are social Peace and Plenty;"

"But twenty times I rather would be

An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colours hid be
Just for a screen."

Annie says

Perfect Burns Night Poetry Read

"Fare-the-weel, thou first and fairest! Fare-the-weel, thou best and dearest! Thine be ilka joy and treasure, Peace, Enjoyment, Love and Pleasure! Ae fond kiss, and then we sever! Ae farewell, alas, for ever! Deep in heart-wrung tears I 'll pledge thee, Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee."

Anne Waters says

A great collection of Robert Burns most well known and least well known works. It's been great to revisit the poems of my youth with my own children. I particularly love his sonnets.

Steven Pascali says

"The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry."
