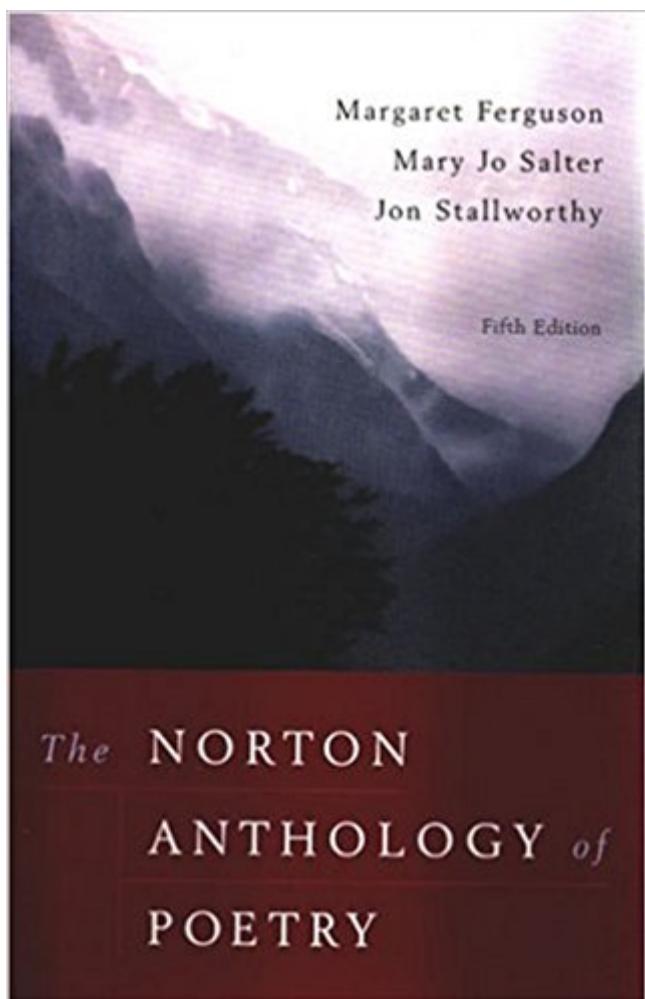


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The Norton Anthology Of Poetry



Synopsis

Offering over one thousand years of verse from the medieval period to the present, The Norton Anthology of Poetry is the classroom standard for the study of poetry in English. The Fifth Edition retains the flexibility and breadth of selection that has defined this classic anthology, while improved and expanded editorial apparatus make it an even more useful teaching tool.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading the new (5th edition) Norton Anthology of Poetry is like embarking on a voyage around the world: there is much that is familiar and much that is new and exotic. This is a mammoth book, one that a person can dive into and swim around in for ages and never come up. It is a vault of the best of humankind's poetic writings waiting to be unlocked and appreciated. This text is improved over the fourth edition with the addition of an excellent essay on poetic syntax in addition to the essay on versification. The short biographies of each poet are welcome also. It is the sheer volume of glorious poetry that sets this book apart, however. There is something for everyone and every poetical taste. From Milton to Marianne Moore and even more contemporary authors, this book is a compendium like no other. It is not just a grouping of the "best" or "prettiest" poems, but rather a voluminous selection of what is most worthy of praise in our English literary heritage. I cannot recommend this book enough.

I got this anthology as a gift a few years ago, just after its release, I believe, and it has been with me ever since. This book is one of the few items that I must have with me no matter what my location,

whether at college or at home. Norton anthologies are great. As is the case with the ones I used in college, this book includes both footnotes and glossing in the margins, both of which help immensely when the reader is inexperienced or new to a certain period of literature (Norton is particularly helpful to students new to Spenser). The huge number of poets represented here makes the book indispensable to lovers of poetry.

Given the fact that the anthology is nearly 2000 pages long, it is quite difficult to quibble over substance in this wonderful anthology. Almost every poet of any significance and their seminal work is represented in the anthology. There are two quarrels I do have over style. Though the anthology has biographical sketches of the authors, those do not appear with the authors' work but rather at the end. The other thing I would change would be the index. The index is one combined index rather than a separate index of first lines and authors. All in all, a great find and great buy.

I have many books of poetry. If I were to only be allowed one (the desert island scenario) this would be the one to have. It is simply the best overall collection of poetry in the English language that is available. I do wish that it contained some Ferlinghetti and Charles Bukowski though... But then I have heard from a reliable source Ferlinghetti often declined when asked to be included in anthologies of poetry, so this may not be Norton's fault. An absolutely wonderful collection of the best poetry ever written in our language.

Once upon a time, I ran into an Tenured Professor of English who taught me how to read poetry, for the first time, in my entire life. Will point out that one morning, the professor was so insistent that I "get" Keat's "Ode to a Grecian Urn," that I missed my Amtrak for work. But I did not mind, as that was the exact instant in my entire life that I did finally "get" how to read poetry. But you know, that education was exactly what I needed to fully join the western literature tradition. Afterward..... Then found this book, which has been a total feast of beautiful poetry. Not just full of poems, from throughout history, but also an excellent explanation, of what I have come to call the "architecture" of poetry. I take it on every business trip and just dig into it every night, for reading one poem, then it is light's out..... I Love it, it's the best. And you know, every day I read a poem out of this book, I quietly thank that English Professor, who is not part of my life anymore, for connecting me with an important and necessary part of life. Get the book, and learn to read poetry. It will improve your life in ways that you do not expect.

Clearly the best anthology of English poetry going, not least because it covers all poetry written in English, without the national restrictions of many others. And it's still within the limits of handy size and weight, so the extra depth and comprehensiveness of the new edition is welcome - even though it IS a bit too sloppy as a paperback, and without hard covers will quickly turn into a football. Including short poet biographies at the back of the book is a brilliant idea, and so is the essay on versification (which attractively incorporates specimens of verse from the anthology, rather than lines newly made up for the purpose). It's just a pity that this wasn't allocated an extra ten pages (maximum), since it could then have been rounded out into a complete stand-alone reference - a few areas are missing or too briefly discussed. There are many separate guides to versification available - all excellent, but recent ones are more personal and informal (and less typographically clear) than the presentation here. As for the selection itself, everyone will have favorites that are missing, or will prefer a slightly different emphasis to the selection. I would certainly cut some of the contemporary poems to make room for more from all other periods. (The last fifty years takes up a quarter of the book!). A number of poems, and even whole poets, show up on comparison with earlier editions and other anthologies. But, however regrettable some of these omissions are, in almost every area the selection at least manages to be (broadly) representative, and that's the main thing. There is one area, though, where (trying to look at it objectively) I would INSIST that there is a clear failure in the selection, and that is in THE BALLADS. It seems way out of proportion in such a large book to include only twelve, especially when that means giving both 'The Twa Corbies' and 'The Three Ravens' (a beautiful and illuminating pairing though they are), but not also AT LEAST 'Thomas the Rhymer' - the greatest of all ballads - AND 'Chevy Chase'. Both feature story types and motifs otherwise unrepresented, and without which the world of the ballads cannot be fully understood: 'Thomas the Rhymer' has so much to say about POETRY itself that it could serve as the whole anthology's prologue or epilogue.

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