

 Prestwick House

Literature

Teaching Unit

Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



100 Best-Loved Poems

(Ed.) Philip Smith

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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100 Best-Loved Poems

Background Notes

- Poetry has evolved from its oral-based birth through its periods of strict forms and conventions, into a sprawling expanse of words, images, and ideas. The poems collected in this anthology cover a range of nations, of forms and styles, of themes and objectives, and of times. What makes them the “best-loved,” is up for discussion, but their lasting appeal has long been established as truth.
- The poems in this anthology can be taught in a number of ways. If one treats the poems in order of presentation, an adequate study can be made of the chronological progression of poetry through its major movements and time-periods. Such an approach will allow students to trace the influences of poets past, as well as to examine the slight variations of style that occur within set boundaries.
- The poems can also be treated by their subject matter. Units can easily be developed based on the ideas and feelings of love, loss, death, prayer, anger, hope, and resilience. Treated as such, the poems in the book will allow students to grasp the continuity of the poems’ form. The themes and messages presented can be seen as transcending time. Additionally, close readings of poems in units may allow for lively discussions on the treatment of a variety of topics.
- To adapt the Unit, teachers should simply scan the study and test questions and cross out any undesired ones before reproducing the pages for students.
- Please also note that, in order to complete the essay portion of the provided test, students will need access to either their books or photocopies of the poems to be discussed.
- However one may study the poems of this anthology, the outcome remains consistent—poetry can captivate and move, it can express and enlighten. The study of poetry is a study of human nature. The 100 poems presented allow for comparison, discussion, and reaction to the basic tenets of what makes us human as writers, as poets, and as readers.

All references come from the 1995 Dover Thrift Edition of 100 Best-Loved Poems, edited by Phillip Smith.

100 Best-Loved Poems

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. understand and explain the relationship of a poem's form to its content.
2. compare and contrast two or more poems through an examination of both form and content.
3. compare and contrast two or more poets' treatments of the same subject or theme.
4. distinguish between iambic pentameter, tetrameter, and trimeter, and point out examples of each in the text.
5. comment on the themes, concerns, and trends in poetry from its inception to the second World War.
6. define all of the vocabulary words listed in the study guide.
7. identify the following figures of sound and point out examples of each: alliteration, assonance, consonance, internal rhyme, and half rhyme.
8. identify the following forms and elemental units of poetry and point out examples of each: sonnet, foot, stanza, strophe, quatrain, catalog verse, couplet, tercet, narrative poem, lyric poem, prose poem, and free verse.
9. identify the following figures of speech and point out examples of each in the text: metaphor, simile, irony, synecdoche, allusion, imagery, personification, narrator, anaphora, parallelism, dialect, elision, theme, and tone.
10. understand the value of poetry as a form of protest.
11. understand the value of poetry as a form of self-expression.
12. infer details not explicitly stated in the text.
13. understand the difference between the poet and the narrator of the poem.
14. understand the effects of repetition, diction, and syntax in a poem.

100 Best-Loved Poems

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Discuss the two traditional ballads that appear at the beginning of the anthology, “Lord Randal” and “Sir Patrick Spens.” Consider the ways the two title characters are similar and different.
2. Compare and Contrast William Blake’s poems “The Lamb” and “The Tyger” in terms of their tones and views of the world.
3. Consider Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale” and “Ode on a Grecian Urn” in terms of their development of a common theme.
4. Discuss the ways both A.E. Housman and Wilfred Owen mourn the loss of youth in their poems.
5. Discuss the ways both Longfellow’s “The Village Blacksmith” and Kipling’s “Gunga Din” attempt to define the “honorable man.”
6. Discuss both Bryant’s and Longfellow’s use of the poem as an inspirational device. Is poetry an effective form of inspirational writing in today’s society?
7. Imagine that you are the servant being addressed in Browning’s “My Last Duchess.” What response and advice would you bring to your master concerning the Duke?
8. Discuss the ways in which alliteration and internal rhyme saturate Poe’s “The Raven” and the effect they have on the poem’s tone.
9. Discuss the way that Marianne Moore and William Carlos Williams bring a rigorous attention to form to their “free” verse.
10. Compare the ways Gray’s “Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Gold Fishes” and Burns’ “To A Mouse,” treat the subject of animal behavior.
11. Discuss the punctuation of Donne’s “Holy Sonnet X” in terms of its symbolic use of caesurae.
12. Discuss the use of natural imagery by Shakespeare in his sonnets.
13. Compare the ways Coleridge and Shelley discuss man’s fatality in “Kubla Khan” and “Ozymandias.”
14. Discuss the speaker’s emotional response to his choice in Frost’s “The Road Not Taken.”

100 Best Loved Poems

“Lord Randal” by Anonymous

Vocabulary

hae – have
weary – tired
fain – happily
wald – would
gat – ate
gat ye – you eat
bloodhounds – dogs

1. How did we come to have ballads as part of our literary history?

2. Who is the speaker of the poem?

3. What key events of Lord Randal's life are recalled in each stanza of the poem?

4. This ballad repeats several phrases in each stanza, including “...mother make my bed soon,/For I am weary wi' hunting, and fain wald lie down.” By repeating these lines, as well as other phrases, what literary device is being used?

**“Sir Patrick Spens”
by Anonymous**

Vocabulary

skipper – captain
faem – same
hame – home
fetch – return
alack – an exclamation denoting sorrow
league – a distance of about 3.0 miles
lang – long

1. In what point of view is the poem written? Who is the narrator?

2. In the fifth stanza, Sir Patrick Spens is moved to tears as he reads a letter requesting his help. What causes this display of emotion?

3. What modern-day saying does the line “Be it wind, be it weat, be it hail, be it sleet, Our ship must sail the faem” sound like?

4. What happens to the ship in section II?

**“The Passionate Shepherd To His Love”
by Christopher Marlowe**

Vocabulary

dales – valleys
melodious – musical
madrigals – a short, musical poem about love
posies – flowers
embroider'd – sewn
swains – young boys from the country

1. What, metaphorically, does the speaker want to prove in the first stanza?

2. What is the purpose of the Shepherd's poem?

3. What is the literary term for the phrase “coral clasps”?

4. Why has Marlowe capitalized “Love” in the first and last lines of the poem?

5. This poem is written in stanzas of four lines each. What is the term for this type of stanza?

**“A Red, Red Rose”
by Robert Burns**

1. The poem's first line is an example of what?

2. Identify a hyperbole in the second stanza.

3. Why has the speaker written this poem?
