



Ovid – *Metamorphoses* (Penguin Classics). Verse Translation by David Raeburn

**“No work from classical antiquity, either Greek or Roman, has exerted such a continuing and decisive influence on European literature as Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*.” Ian Johnston**

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*The Metamorphoses* is a narrative poem comprising of 15 books and spanning hundreds of myths and segments of history from the creation of the universe, the destruction and recreation of humanity, to the founding of Rome and the legacy of Julius Caesar.

Using themes of conflict, ignorance toward artistry, love and its reciprocation, Ovid uses the central theme of transformation to form ties between these great tapestries of myths.

Its scenes inspired several of Shakespeare’s plays such as *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*, alongside Geoffrey Chaucer’s magnum opus *The Canterbury Tales*.



Virgil – *The Aeneid* (Penguin Classics). Prose Translation by David West

***I sing of arms and of the man, fated to be an exile...***

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Virgil's *Aeneid* is a masterclass of Latin literature that skillfully takes inspiration from both of Homer's epics: *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Its hero, Aeneas, is a veteran of Troy, whose destiny is to give rise to the Roman world.

Over the span of 12 books, we see the spite of the immortals, romantic tragedy, and a new homecoming. Its core themes revolve around fate, warfare, and piety.

The *Aeneid* can be read both before or after Homer's works and it brings forth a greater appreciation of both poets. It holds influence over works such as Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.



Horace – *The Complete Odes and Epodes* (Oxford World Classics), Verse Translation by David West

**"He can be lofty sometimes, yet he is also full of charm and grace, versatile in his figures, and felicitously daring in his choice of words" Quintilian**

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After befriending the regime of Rome's first emperor, Augustus, Horace (who served as a Roman officer for the wrong side of history) has been described as both "a master of the graceful sidestep" and "a well-mannered court slave".

- Horace's 17 Epodes cover a wide variety of themes in life including politics, love, and food.
- His odes come in four books, greatly imitating the lyricism of Pindar and the 'Tenth Muse' - Sappho (fragments of her great works can be found in Penguin Classics' collection *Stung With Love*). Horace's portrayal of his characters, however, is unique and his ability to flesh out personalities is unrivalled.



## John Keats – Selected Poems (Penguin Classics)

**Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, –  
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue.**

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John Keats was part of the 'Second Generation' of Romantic poets, who thrived in the early 19th Century. His life was tragically cut short at the age of 25, where he died from tuberculosis that he contracted from his brother, who he cared after until they had died.

- Notable is the vibrant language of his ballad *La belle dame sans merci*, which is one of the earliest and most effective uses of the *femme fatale* trope in literature.
- His swansong, *To Autumn* (quoted above), is considered by many to be one of the greatest poems in the English language. It deals with the approach of winter and the culling of crops as a metaphorical harbinger of death that the personified Autumn inevitably brings forth.



## William Wordsworth– Selected Poems (Millennium Library)

**There's not a breathing of the common wind  
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;  
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
And love, and Man's unconquerable mind.**

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- William Wordsworth  
*To Toussaint L'Ouverture*

William Wordsworth, alongside Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was one of the earliest poets of the Romantic Age. His lengthy career spanned both through the first and second generation of Romantic Poets.

His love of nature and places are illustrated with great emotion, with great indulgence in very specific moments of time, Wordsworth's work is a *tour de force* of spirituality and sentimentality.

- A frequently overlooked poem – *To Toussaint L'Ouverture* is a rallying cry against the treatment of the titular hero that led the first successful anti-slave rebellion in Haiti, before being captured and imprisoned by Napoleon. Wordsworth portrays him as a tragic hero and laments his capture yet portrays hope in the last few lines (quoted above).