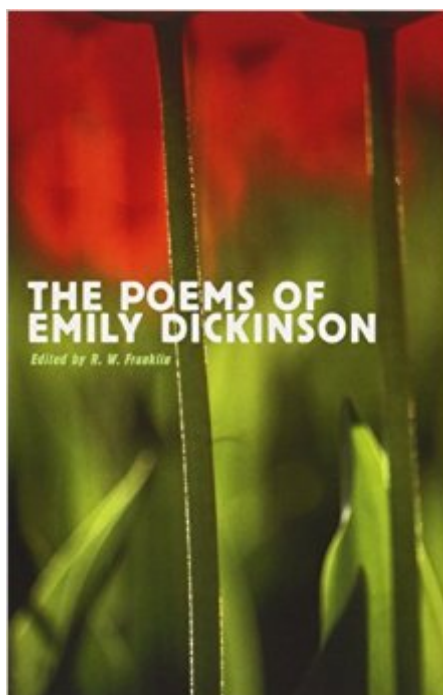


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The Poems Of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition



Synopsis

Emily Dickinson, poet of the interior life, imagined words/swords, hurling barbed syllables/piercing. Nothing about her adult appearance or habitation revealed such a militant soul. Only poems, written quietly in a room of her own, often hand-stitched in small volumes, then hidden in a drawer, revealed her true self. She did not live in time but in universals--an acute, sensitive nature reaching out boldly from self-referral to a wider, imagined world. Dickinson died without fame; only a few poems were published in her lifetime. Her legacy was later rescued from her desk--an astonishing body of work, much of which has since appeared in piecemeal editions, sometimes with words altered by editors or publishers according to the fashion of the day. Now Ralph Franklin, the foremost scholar of Dickinson's manuscripts, has prepared an authoritative one-volume edition of all extant poems by Emily Dickinson--1,789 poems in all, the largest number ever assembled. This reading edition derives from his three-volume work, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Variorum Edition* (1998), which contains approximately 2,500 sources for the poems. In this one-volume edition, Franklin offers a single reading of each poem--usually the latest version of the entire poem--rendered with Dickinson's spelling, punctuation, and capitalization intact. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson: Reading Edition* is a milestone in American literary scholarship and an indispensable addition to the personal library of poetry lovers everywhere.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

So, here's the deal, boys and girls. There are two versions of the reading edition of Emily

Dickinson's poems that are usable. And by usable, I mean that the texts (note the word "texts") are what Emily Dickinson wanted the texts to be. The first version is, as I read the description of the volume in question, is the Thomas H. Johnson text. Now, friends, (excuse me if I seem patronizing, but as a Dickinson scholar, long of tooth, and weary of stupidity, I have my prejudices), Johnson's text has been a fully acceptable and competent version since it was published as the authoritative Dickinson in 1955 (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press issued the variorum, three volume version of all the authoritative poems in the same year.) This is cool. The newest version of Emily Dickinson poems was edited by R.W. Franklin, and the readers' edition was published in 1999. There is also a new variorum edition published by Belknap Press of Harvard and edited by Franklin. So. I am boring you with all of this detail to tell you that the Johnson texts are good texts. If you are serious about Dickinson--meaning if you actually care about what she wrote on the page--the Johnson and the Franklin will give accurate texts. F.W. Franklin has been working on details where Johnson lacked insight since the '60's. He knows whereof he speaks, and he has done his utmost to reassemble Ms. Dickinson's original manuscripts in their proper order. Previous versions of the poems--those before Johnson and Franklin--regularized rhyme and otherwise abrogated the accuracy of the poems. They were cleaned up according to late 19th century standards, and the texts--despite editorial comments to the contrary--are corrupt. That means that they are inaccurate.

Nearly everyone who's had a brush with American lit knows the story of Emily Dickinson - her poetry unpublished in her lifetime, and then even after her death, her verses seeing the light of day only after having been "improved" on by an editor who found her rhymes imperfect and her meter "spasmodic." He even went so far as to make her metaphors "sensible." The fact is, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, to whom Dickinson had sent her poems, was a representative of the poetic establishment, and as with all artistic establishments then and now, was too rigid in his thinking and too impoverished in his imagination to comprehend a new voice of genius. As Editor Thomas H. Johnson writes in his terse but very instructive Introduction, "He was trying to measure a cube by the rules of plane geometry." Of course other women of literature suffered something similar during the nineteenth century. What I wonder is, who is being misread, ignored or denied today? Anyway, suffice it to say that this IS the definitive one-volume collection of the poetry of Emily Dickinson. It includes all the 1,775 poems that she wrote in her lifetime, and they are presented here just as she wrote them with only some minor corrections of obvious misspellings or misplaced apostrophes. Johnson has retained the sometimes "capricious" capitalization, and preserved the famous dashes. There is a subject index, which I found useful, and an index of first lines, which is

invaluable. Dickinson can be playful...I'm Nobody! Who are you? Are you - Nobody - too? Then there's a pair of us! Don't tell! they'd advertise - you know!...she can be sarcastic...

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