

# **THE POEMS**

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The Poems by Thomas Gray

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**THOMAS GRAY**

**THE POEMS**



THE POEMS  
OF  
THOMAS GRAY



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## MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

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**T**HOMAS GRAY was born in Cornhill, London, on the day after Christmas-day, in the year 1716. His father, Philip Gray, was a money scrivener, and, according to most accounts, a hard-hearted man. His mother, whose maiden name was Dorothy Antrobus, appears to have been one of the most excellent and amiable of beings. Thomas was the only one of her twelve children who lived beyond infancy, and on this account she treated him with the greatest tenderness, which he always endeavored to repay by the most attentive care. After her death, he seldom mentioned her name without a sigh.

Through the instrumentality of his uncle, Mr. Antrobus, who was one of the college tutors, Thomas Gray was educated at Eton, where he became the friend of Horace Walpole, and of Richard West, the son of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland. In the year 1736, Gray entered at Peter House, Cambridge; and at the same time Horace Walpole went to King's College. Neither appears to have spent much time at his college studies, and in 1738 Gray left Peter House without a degree. In the spring of 1739 he set out with Walpole on a tour through France and Italy. They were absent about two years and a half, when the friends disagreed, and Gray returned to England, just in time to witness his father's death. Soon after, his mother went to live at Stoke, near Windsor, and he returned to Cambridge, where he continued to reside, except during a few intervals, all the rest of his life.



In the year 1742, Gray wrote his "Ode to Spring;" this was followed by the "Ode on the Distant Prospect of Eton College" and the "Hymn to Adversity." Little notice was taken of these productions, and it was not till the "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard" was published, in the year 1749, that his works obtained any great share of popularity. This well-known "Elegy" has perhaps been reprinted more frequently than any other poem in the English language, and we learn that it is at the present day, above all, the greatest favorite in America. In 1753 Gray lost his mother, upon whose grave he placed this inscription:

BESIDE HER FRIEND AND SISTER,  
 HERE SLEEP THE REMAINS OF  
 DOROTHY GRAY,  
 WIDOW; THE CAREFUL TENDER MOTHER  
 OF MANY CHILDREN; ONE OF WHOM ALONE  
 HAD THE MISFORTUNE TO SURVIVE HER.

During the following three years Gray wrote the "Ode on the Progress of

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Poetry," and "The Bard." In the year 1756, he left Peter House, and "migrated" to Pembroke Hall, where he spent all his later years.

In 1768 the Professorship of Modern History at Cambridge became vacant, and Gray received the appointment from the Duke of Grafton; who in the very next year was elected Chancellor of the University, when Gray wrote the Installation Ode, entitled "For Music," which was received with great applause.

In the autumn of 1770, in order to recover his health, he made a tour in Wales; but the symptoms of his illness increased, and in July in the next year he was seized with an attack of gout in the stomach, from which he died on the 30th of the same month.

Gray's Letters written to his friends West and Horace Walpole, and afterward to Mr. Mason, to whom he left

all his books and papers, are among the most charming that have ever been printed. His Latin poems are also justly extolled for their elegance and grace. He was considered the most learned man of his day, and it is much to be regretted that he did not devote more of his time to authorship. His "Letters and Poems," with "Memoirs of his Life and Writings," were published by his friend Mason, four years after his death.