

A Choice of Shakespeare's Verse

Ted Hughes

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Shakespeare's best as chosen by the great English poet

"According to most anthologies, [Shakespeare] wrote only sonnets and songs for his plays. The reason for this [is the] reluctance of anthologists to break into the sacred precincts of his drama and start looting portable chunks . . . Yet when he great speeches of his plays are taken out of context they are no more difficult to understand and appropriate than those by other great poets."

This clear, compact, inviting selection of Shakespeare's verse opens the door to new readers of our greatest writer and deepens lifelong readers' understanding of his work. Ted Hughes spent his life considering Shakespeare's works and drawing on them for his own poetry; his book-length account of Shakespeare's development, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, was one of the most distinctive works of literary criticism of recent years.

For this selection, Hughes deliberately took strong, relatively self-contained passages of Shakespeare's verse out of the plays and arranged them in a pattern, like beads on a string, including the best-known songs and sonnets. The result is at once a revealing sequence of Shakespeare's verse and an anthology of his greatest bits?"read in less than a minute, learned in less than five," Hughes remarks in the introduction, and always "capable of striking up a life of their own in the general experience of the reader."



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