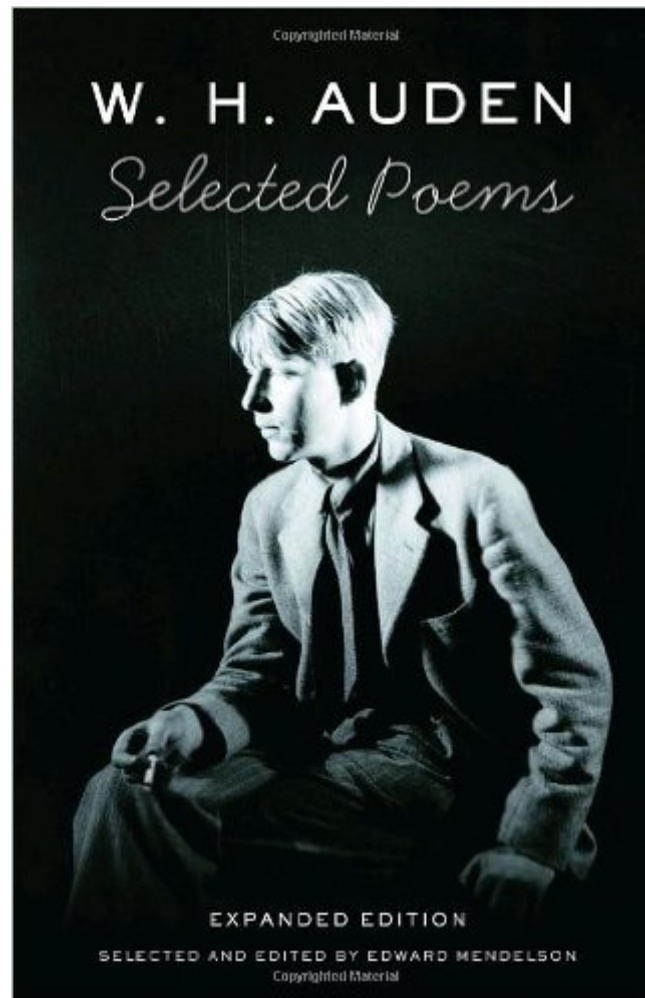


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# Selected Poems



## Synopsis

This significantly expanded edition of W. H. Auden's Selected Poems adds twenty poems to the hundred in the original edition, broadening its focus to better reflect the enormous wealth of form, rhetoric, tone, and content in Auden's work. Newly included are such favorites as 'Funeral Blues' and other works that represent Auden's lighter, comic side, giving a fuller picture of the range of his genius. Also new are brief notes explaining references that may have become obscure to younger generations of readers and a revised introduction that draws on recent additions to knowledge about Auden. As in the original edition, the new Selected Poems makes available the preferred original versions of some thirty poems that Auden revised later in life, making it the best source for enjoying the many facets of Auden's art in one volume.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

W. H. Auden has always been one of my favourite modern poets, and the 'Selected Poems' one of my favourite volumes of his work. While he gained popular vogue for a time following Ben Elton's film 'Four Weddings and a Funeral' (still one of the funniest films ever made), the full extent of Auden's ability is attested to in this volume, which includes some of his best loved and well recognised poems (and does not include 'Funeral Blues', the poem from 'Four Weddings' - if you're looking for that poem, try the short volume 'Tell Me the Truth About Love'). This selection by Edward Mendelson includes the original versions of poems edited by Auden later in his life, also giving a unique perspective on the early development of Auden's work. Poetry is, of course, a very personal taste, and one man's favourite poem is another's jumble of ill-chosen words. That being said, it is

difficult, to my mind, to find poems written in this century which surpass 'Oxford', 'Musée des Beaux Arts', 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats', 'Et in Arcadia Ego'...the list is practically as long as the table of contents. No matter the subject (even to something as curious as 'In Praise of Limestone'), Auden has words for us, words which are as powerful, as moving now as they were the day they were put to paper. In short, if you are at all tempted by poetry, this volume is certainly worth your time.

Auden is one of the great poets of the past century and one of the greatest ever in English. This is a particularly good collection of his work. The editor, Edward Mendelson, is a leading Auden scholar and Auden's literary executor. This volume contains all of Auden's major poetry including the great short lyrics, the major longer works, and my favorite, the great China sonnet sequence. In his later years, Auden altered the text of some famous earlier poems to change wordings he felt were false. In this edition, Mendelson uses the earlier versions of these subsequently altered verses. Many prefer the early versions though I find comparisons with the amended versions published in the equally wonderful *Collected Poems*, also edited by Mendelson, to be very interesting. I am not sure that the amended versions are worse, just different. It contains also a particularly insightful preface by Mendelson that does a very nice job of putting Auden into the context of 20th century English poetry. This is a wonderful book for those who love Auden's work. It can be read over and over again. It is also an excellent introduction for those encountering Auden for the first time.

Over four Christmases, this title sat on my wish list, ignored by my wife. This year, I bought it myself and let her wrap it for me. How lucky that, while my wish for this book sat ungranted, Edward Mendelson added explanatory notes and twenty poems to his original selection. The additional poems in this "Expanded Edition" include the lovely "Funeral Blues," whose recitation in "Four Weddings and a Funeral" provided most of that movie's emotional heft and social import. The poems that Mendelson, Auden's literary executor, selected for this volume are printed here in their first book-published versions. Mendelson also edited Auden's "Collected Poems," from which Auden himself excluded some poems and for which he revised others. Mendelson discusses the choice between "Selected Poems" and "Collected Poems" in the Introduction to this book: "The present selection ... [reprints] the texts of Auden's early editions and [includes] poems that he later rejected. A historical edition of this kind, one that reflects the author's work as it first appeared in public rather than his final version of it, is not intended as an argument that Auden's revisions or rejections were arbitrary or misguided; he had strong literary and ethical motives for choosing them, and in almost

every instance they produced versions of his poems that were more coherent and complex than the originals. Probably the best way to experience Auden's work is to read the early versions first for their greater immediate impact, and the revised versions afterward for their greater subtlety and depth. For most readers this book will be a First Auden, and the edition of his 'Collected Poems' that was published posthumously according to his final intentions may be recommended as a Second."

W.H. Auden was a twentieth century English poet. He emphasized the individual, past and present, in their frail condition. Auden's writing varied as to subject, style, and type as he aged. Love poems, politics, culture, morals, individuals; what a wealth of poetry the public has from Auden because of the number of years he lived and wrote. Twenty poems have been added to this expanded edition including some of Auden's lighter poems. This aids the reader, student, or lover of Auden to see a more complex, complete, fuller and well-rounded poet. A nice touch within the volume was the inclusion of brief notes explaining references that might be unclear. Other positive features consisted of chronological arrangement of material, and an index of titles and first lines. Armchair Interviews says: A must for all Auden students, whether a casual reader or lover of his poetry.

I can do little more than echo the other reviewers here. This is all a 'selected poems' should be: introductory and selective. Yes, "Funeral Blues" is missing. But no one can complain about what is here, which includes "In Time of War", the great sonnet sequence; "The Quest", another long sequence; and the entirety of THE SEA AND THE MIRROR, which is based on Shakespeare's THE TEMPEST. If you are, however, only interested in his love poems, I'd have to steer you toward TELL ME THE TRUTH ABOUT LOVE, a nice little chapbook containing only those. My own personal experience with this book may be relevant. It has served to introduce me to one of the finest poets of the last century and sparked a desire to read THE COLLECTED POEMS, also edited by Mendelson, to see how Auden re-wrote thirty of the brilliant poems here included. I'm continuing on my voyage; hope you are starting on yours.

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