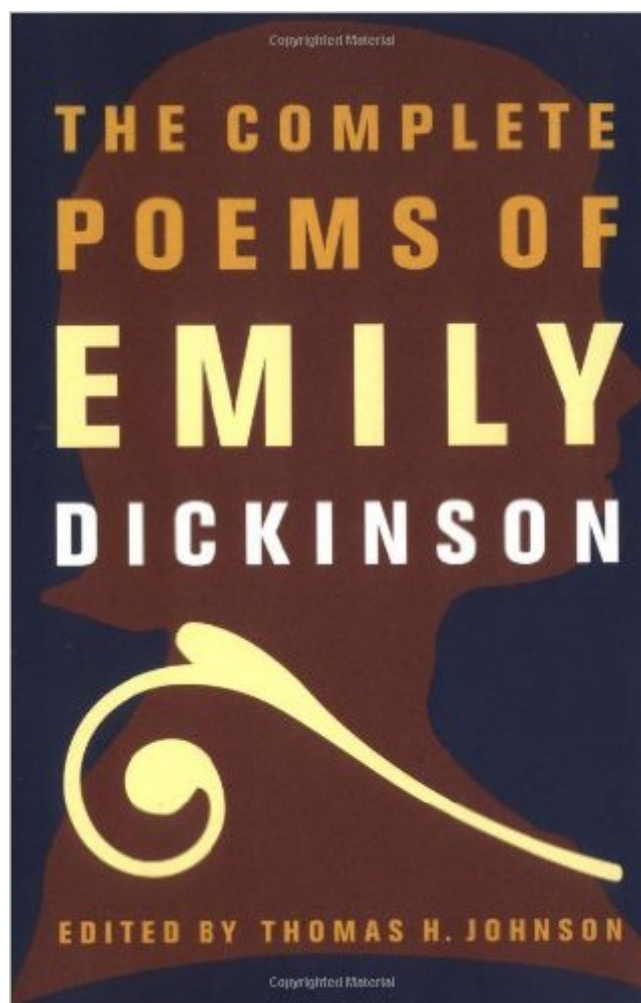


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The Complete Poems Of Emily Dickinson



Synopsis

Though generally overlooked during her lifetime, Emily Dickinson's poetry has achieved acclaim due to her experiments in prosody, her tragic vision and the range of her emotional and intellectual explorations.

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 work "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Nearly everyone who's had a brush with American lit knows the story of Emily Dickinson - her poetry unpublished in her lifetime, and then even after her death, her verses seeing the light of day only after having been "improved" on by an editor who found her rhymes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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