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**STUDY GUIDE:
FAMOUS POETS AND THEIR WORKS**

William Blake

This predecessor of the Romantic Movement began as a painter, but later began to write poetry, which he illustrated himself. He wrote Songs of Experience and Songs of Innocence, in which he is best remembered for his poems, "The Tyger" and "The Lamb." He lived from 1757-1827.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, born in 1806, was an invalid with a spinal cord injury and a lung disease. She lived with her domineering father until she met and married Robert Browning, a prominent poet. Her best-known book of poetry is Sonnets From the Portuguese. The following poem from that book is one of her more famous poems.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,--I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!--and, if God chooses,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Her poem "Aurora Leigh" was adapted by feminists since it defends women's rights to intellectual independence. She died in 1861.

Lewis Carroll

Lewis Carroll was the pseudonym adopted by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, an English writer born in 1832. His parents had strong ties to the Anglican Church and the

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Army. He was educated at Rugby College and Christ Church in Oxford. He is best-known for his book Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and its sequel, Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There. Two of his notorious poems, "The Walrus and the Carpenter" and "Jabberwocky" are found in it. He has had other poetry published in volumes including "Phantasmagoria and Other Poems," "The Hunting of the Snark," and "Rhyme? And Reason?" He died in 1898.

"The Walrus and the Carpenter" and a few lines of "Jabberwocky" are included below.

The Walrus and the Carpenter

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might;
He did his very best to make
The billows smooth and bright—
And this was odd, because it was
The middle of the night.
The moon was shining sulkily,
Because she thought the sun
Had got no business to be there
After the day was done—
"It's very rude of him," she said,
"To come and spoil the fun!"
The sea was wet as wet could be,
The sands were dry as dry.
You could not see a cloud because
No cloud was in the sky:
No birds were flying overhead—
There were no birds to fly.
The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
"If this were only cleared away,"
They said, "It would be grand!"
"If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
"That they could get it clear?"
"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.
"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"
The Walrus did beseech.
"A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,
Along the briny beach:
We cannot do with more than four,
To give a hand to each."
The eldest Oyster looked at him,
But never a word he said:
The eldest Oyster winked his eye,

All eager for the treat:
Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,
Their shoes were clean and neat—
And this was odd, because, you know,
They hadn't any feet.
Four other Oysters followed them,
And yet another four,
And thick and fast they came at last,
And more, and more, and more—
All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.
The Walrus and the Carpenter
Walked on a mile or so,
And then they rested on a rock
Conveniently low:
And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.
"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax
Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings."
"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,
"Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out of breath,
And all of us are fat!"
"No Hurry!" said the Carpenter
They thanked him much for that.
"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,
"Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed—
Now if you're ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed."
"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
"After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!"

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And shook his heavy head—
Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed.
But four young Oysters hurried up,

The Carpenter said nothing, but
“Cut us another slice:
I wish you were not quite so deaf—
I’ve had to ask you twice!”
“It seems a shame,” the Walrus said,
“To play them such a trick
After we’ve brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!”
The Carpenter said nothing but
“The butter’s spread too thick!”
“I weep for you,” the Walrus said:
“I deeply sympathize.”
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size
Holding his pocket-handkerchief

“The night is fine,” the Walrus said
“Do you admire the view?”
“It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!”

Before his streaming eyes
“O Oysters,” said the Carpenter
“You’ve had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?”
But answer came there none—
And this was scarcely odd, because
They’d eaten every one.

Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.
"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Coleridge was born in England in 1772. He attended Cambridge, but he never graduated. A lyrical poet and member of the Romantic Movement, he was a contemporary and close friend of Wordsworth. Together they published Lyrical Ballads, in which his best-known poem, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” was included. Other popular poems of his include “Kubla Khan” and “The Nightingale.”

e.e. Cummings

Educated at Harvard, this World War I veteran was known for his experimental break with traditional styles of poetry. He was the first poet to disregard capitalization rules in his poems and to opt for slang and colloquial word usage.

Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson was nicknamed “The Belle of Amherst” by one Broadway playwright. She was born in Amherst, Massachusetts in 1830 to a good family in New England. She had a sister and a brother. Her father was treasurer of Amherst College and a prominent lawyer in the town. He also became a Massachusetts congressman. Emily attended Amherst Academy for her formative schooling and went away to Mount Holyoke Seminary until she returned home in 1948. She never married and rarely left her parents’ house. She died of Bright’s Disease in 1886. Over her lifetime, she wrote 1,775 poems, many of them nature riddles and some of them that focused on themes of love, war, religion, death, and immortality. Her best-known poems include, “A Bird Came Down the Walk,” “Safe in Their Alabaster Chambers,” “Dying,” and “My Life Closed Twice Before its Close.”

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T.S. Eliot

T.S. Eliot was born in St. Louis in 1888. He attended Harvard and then the prestigious Sorbonne in Paris. He later settled in London and ultimately opted to become a British citizen. In London, he met and was influenced by Ezra Pound. He wrote plays, including Murder In the Cathedral, prose, and poetry, including “Ash Wednesday” and “The Sacred Wood.” His compilation of poems based on cats, Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats, is a classic upon which the Broadway musical "Cats!" was based. In 1948, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and he died in 1965.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson was born in 1803 in Boston. He was the son of a minister, and after graduating from Harvard, he also became a minister, but he resigned during a crisis of faith. He became a vital part of the Transcendentalist Movement and is best known as a lecturer and essayist, particularly on abolition. He wrote “The Conduct of Life” as well as the poems “Give All to Love” and “Concord Hymn” before he died in 1882.

Eugene Field

Eugene Field was born in St. Louis. He established himself as a writer with his long-running column in the *Chicago Morning News*. His best-known children's poems include the nursery rhymes “Little Boy Blue” and “Wynken, Blynken, and Nod.” Another popular poem of Field's is “The Duel” about the gingham dog and the calico cat, which starts:

“The gingham dog and the calico cat
Side by side on the mantle sat;
'Twas half-past twelve and (what do you think!)
Nor one nor t'other had slept a wink!
The old Dutch clock and the Chinese plate
Appeared to know as sure as fate
There was going to be a terrible spat.
(I wasn't there; I simply state
What was told to me by the Chinese plate!)”

Robert Frost

Robert Frost was born in San Francisco in 1874. His father died when he was 11, and the family moved to Massachusetts, where he dabbled at both Dartmouth and Harvard, but never obtained a degree from either institution. In 1912, he moved to England with his wife to establish his writing career. There he met Ezra Pound who became an encouraging influence and a good friend. After he attained success, he moved back to New England, where he died in 1963. He won four Pulitzer Prizes for poetry and published multiple poetry books including New Hampshire and In the Clearing. He wrote in a traditional style of poetry and refused to use the form of free verse. His best-loved poems include “Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening,” “The Death of the Hired Hand,” and “The Road Not Taken.”

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The Road Not Taken

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;
Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

Holmes was born in Boston and educated at Harvard. He became a physician and dabbled in light verse for the *Atlantic Monthly*. His best-known poem is "Old Ironsides."

John Keats

Keats was born in London in 1795. Both his parents died during his childhood. He ultimately forsook his apprenticeship to a surgeon in favor of his literary aspirations. Before he died of consumption in 1821, he became a major poet of the Romantic Movement. His most popular poems include "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," "To Autumn," "Hyperion," "Ode to a Nightingale," "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer." He left a significant legacy to the realm of poetry.

Joyce Kilmer

Joyce Kilmer was born in 1886 in New Jersey. He attended Rutgers and Columbia Colleges, and then he worked briefly as an editor for the *Standard Dictionary* and for the *New York Times*. He adopted the Catholic faith, which figured prominently in his creative work along with his love of nature. He went into the National Guard with the intent of writing a book about war, but he was killed in the military in 1918. His most familiar poem is "Trees."

Trees

I think that I shall never see
A poem lovely as a tree.
A tree whose hungry mouth is prest
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;
A tree that looks at God all day,
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;
A tree that may in Summer wear
A nest of robins in her hair;
Upon whose bosom snow has lain;
Who intimately lives with rain.
Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.

Rudyard Kipling

This British Imperialist author was born in India in 1865 and educated in England. He won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. He is best known for his books The Jungle Book, Just So Stories For Little Children, and Captains Courageous. He also wrote poems such as "Gunga Din" and "Mandalay."

Emma Lazarus

Emma Lazarus was born in 1849 in New York City to a rich Jewish family. She showed many of her early poems to Ralph Waldo Emerson, with whom she developed a life-long correspondence. Her books of poetry include Admetus and Other Poems, The Spagnoletto, and Songs of a Semite. In 1881, she began working to advance the cause of Jewish immigrants to the U.S. One of her poems, "The New Colossus," was chosen for the base of the Statue of Liberty. She died in 1887.

The New Colossus

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

Edward Lear

Edward Lear was born in London in 1812. He traveled frequently and was known for his travel books as well as his ornithological drawings for The London Zoological Society. However, he found his primary fame as a master of limericks and verse, particularly for children and he is best known as the author of several nonsense poems including "The Owl and the Pussycat," and "the Jumblies." His poems have been compiled in books including A Book of Nonsense, Nonsense Songs, and Laughable Lyrics. The first verse of "The Owl and the Pussycat" begins with the familiar words:

The Owl and the Pussy-cat went to sea
In a beautiful pea-green boat,
They took some honey, and plenty of money,
Wrapped up in a five-pound note.
The Owl looked up to the stars above,
And sang to a small guitar,
"O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,
What a beautiful Pussy you are,
You are,
You are!
What a beautiful Pussy you are!"

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Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Longfellow was born in Maine and educated at Bowdoin College where he later taught. He also worked as a professor at Harvard, but he retired to devote himself to his poetry. His lengthy recognizable poems include "Paul Revere's Ride," "The Song of Hiawatha," "The Courtship of Miles Standish," and "The Children's Hour."

"Paul Revere's Ride" begins:

"Listen my children and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere.
On the 18th of April in '75
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year.
He said to his friends,
"If the British come by land or sea from the town tonight
Hang a lantern aloft in the belfry arch
Of the Old North Church as a signal light.
One if by land and two if by sea
And I on the opposite shore shall be
Ready to ride and spread the alarm
Through every Middlesex village and farm
For the country folk to be up and to arm."

Clement C. Moore

Clement C. Moore was born in 1779 and was educated at Columbia College where his father was president. He became a professor of Oriental and Greek languages at the Episcopal General Theological Seminary in New York City. Supposedly he wrote the traditional Christmas Poem, "A Visit From St. Nicholas" for his own children, and many scholastic bowl questions have been written about this literary work.

A Visit from St. Nicholas

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse,
The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there.
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugarplums danced in their heads,
And mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's nap...
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the luster of mid-day to objects below,
When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled, and shouted, and called them by name:

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"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now Prancer and Vixen!
On, Comet! on Cupid! on, Donner and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch! To the top of the wall!
Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys, and St. Nicholas too.
And then, in a twinkling, I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound.
He was dressed all in fur, from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and soot.
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a peddler just opening his pack.
His eyes -- how they twinkled -- his dimples how merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow.
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang to his sleigh, to his teams gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle.
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

Edgar Allen Poe

Edgar Allen Poe was born in Boston to a pair of actors. When he was orphaned, he was adopted by the Allan family who sent him to private schools in England and in the United States. Poe's irresponsible personal habits caused a falling out with his foster father and ended with a brief stint in the Army. Later he got married and worked as an editor. His first love was poetry. He published several books of poetry such as Tamerlane and Other Poems, Al Aaraaf, and Poems, but he achieved the most fame (and profit) from his macabre short stories such as "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Fall of the House of Usher," and "The Tell-Tale Heart." "Annabel Lee," "The Bells," "Lenore," and "The Raven" are four of his easily recognized poems.

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The Raven begins:

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visiter," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door —
Only this, and nothing more."

Carl Sandburg

Carl Sandburg was born in 1868 in Galesburg, Illinois. He worked for the *Chicago Daily News* writing editorials. He soon became noted as a writer, gaining a Pulitzer Prize for his biographies of Abraham Lincoln in 1940 and another in 1951 for his Complete Poems. He was known for his unrhymed free verse and colloquial truth. His most famous poem is "Chicago." He died in 1967. Below is just an excerpt from "Chicago."

Chicago

HOG Butcher for the World,
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat, Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;
Stormy, husky, brawling,
City of the Big Shoulders:

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Shelley was born in 1792 in Sussex, England. He studied at Eton and Oxford. He is considered one of the Romantic Poets. "Ozymandus" is one of his major sonnets. He drowned in 1822.

Shel Silverstein

Born in Chicago in 1930, Shel Silverstein began his career making cartoons for a military publication, and he was also a musician. However, he gained fame as a writer and illustrator of children's books and poetry. He began writing short fiction in 1963, including Lafcadio, the Lion Who Shot Back, The Giving Tree, The Missing Piece, and the Missing Piece Meets the Big O. Later he gained even greater fame with his poetry publications Falling Up, A Giraffe and a Half, A Light in the Attic, and Where the Sidewalk Ends. Some of his most familiar poems are "Sick" and "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout." "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout" is a poem about a girl who would not take the garbage out. The garbage covered the floor and piled up to the ceilings.

The last part of "Sarah Cynthia Sylvia Stout" reads:

"At last the garbage reached so high
That finally it touched the sky.
And all the neighbors moved away,
And none of her friends would come to play.
And finally Sarah Cynthia Stout said,
'OK, I'll take the garbage out!'
But then, of course, it was too late...
The garbage reached across the state,

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From New York to the Golden Gate.
And there, in the garbage she did hate,
Poor Sarah met an awful fate,
That I cannot right now relate
Because the hour is much too late.
But children, remember Sarah Stout.
And always take the garbage out!"

Gertrude Stein

Born in 1874 to an upper-middle class family in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, Gertrude Stein lived in Paris, California, and Baltimore when she was growing up and attended Radcliffe College where she was taught by William James. She went on to Johns Hopkins Medical School, and then she lived for the rest of her life in Paris with Alice B. Toklas, another eminent American author of the time. Their home became a creative salon hosting literary and artistic artists such as Hemingway, Matisse, Picasso, and Thornton Wilder. Her first novel was entitled Things as They Are. She entitled her own autobiography The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas, and published other works including Three Lives and Tender Buttons, a collection of verse that emphasizes sound over syntax. She was the first to label the Post-World War I generation of disillusioned artists as "The Lost Generation."

Alfred Tennyson

Born in 1809, Tennyson was heavily influenced by Lord Byron, and succeeded in making a name for himself, and even becoming poet laureate of Great Britain. His notorious contribution to literature includes the poems, "The Lady of Shallot," "Oenone," and "Morte d'Arthur."

Ernest L. Thayer

Thayer began his "literary" career working for the Harvard Lampoon. Later he worked for William Randolph Hearst's *Examiner*. His poem, "Casey at the Bat," first appeared in this venue, but it wasn't popularized until it was read orally by the popular comedian De Wolf Hooper.

This poem tells the story of a baseball player from Mudville named Casey, who finds himself at the plate with two outs and Mudville trailing four to two. The crowd cheers on the proud, arrogant player as he takes two strikes. The pitcher winds up for the next pitch and Casey swings. The last verse of the poem says:

Oh, somewhere in this favored land the sun is shining bright,
The band is playing somewhere, and somewhere hearts are light,
And somewhere men are laughing, and little children shout;
But there is no joy in Mudville -- mighty Casey has struck out."

Walt Whitman

Walt Whitman was born in rural New York in 1819. His family moved to Brooklyn. He later taught in Long Island, and then he returned to the city as a printer and a journalist. He wrote a revolutionary volume of poetry, Leaves of Grass, which he

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revised many times in his lifetime. It was largely written in free verse and contained many of his best-known poems, "O Captain! My Captain!", (an ode to Abraham Lincoln after his assassination), "I Sing the Body Electric," "Song of Myself," "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer," and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." He later cared for wounded soldiers during the Civil War and died in 1892.

William Wordsworth

Wordsworth was born in 1770 and was educated at Cambridge. He was a key poet of the Romantic Movement, and he co-authored lyrical ballads with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. One of his contributions to that volume was his well-known poem "Tintern Abbey." He wrote volumes of sonnets and free verse, many that focused on themes of God and nature. Wordsworth died in 1850.