



The First Poems in English (Penguin Classics)

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A collection of the finest and earliest poems composed in English, from tales of battle to love songs

This selection of the earliest poems in English comprises works from an age in which verse was not written down, but recited aloud and remembered. Heroic poems celebrate courage, loyalty and strength, in excerpts from *Beowulf* and in *The Battle of Brunanburgh*, depicting King Athelstan's defeat of his northern enemies in 937 AD, while *The Wanderer* and *The Seafarer* reflect on exile, loss and destiny. *The Gnostic Verses* are proverbs on the natural order of life, and the *Exeter Riddles* are witty linguistic puzzles. Love elegies include emotional speeches from an abandoned wife and separated lovers, and devotional poems include a vision of Christ's cross in *The Dream of the Rood*, and Caedmon's *Hymn*, perhaps the oldest poem in English, speaking in praise of God.

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