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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle  
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis  
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain  
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato  
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte  
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**Poems on various subjects,  
religious and moral**

Phillis Wheatley

# Imprint

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POEMS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

RELIGIOUS AND MORAL.

BY PHILLIS WHEATLEY,

NEGRO SERVANT TO MR. JOHN WHEATLEY,  
OF BOSTON, IN NEW-ENGLAND.

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE COUNTESS OF HUN-  
TINGDON, THE FOLLOWING P O E M S ARE MOST RESPECT-  
FULLY INSCRIBED. BY HER MUCH OBLIGED, VERY HUMBLE  
AND DEVOTED SERVANT. PHILLIS WHEATLEY.

**BOSTON, JUNE 12, 1773.**

## P R E F A C E.

THE following POEMS were written originally for the Amusement of the Author, as they were the Products of her leisure Moments. She had no Intention ever to have published them; nor would they now have made their Appearance, but at the Importunity of many of her best, and most generous Friends; to whom she considers herself, as under the greatest Obligations.

As her Attempts in Poetry are now sent into the World, it is hoped the Critic will not severely censure their Defects; and we presume they have too much Merit to be cast aside with Contempt, as worthless and trifling Effusions.

As to the Disadvantages she has laboured under, with Regard to Learning, nothing needs to be offered, as her Master's Letter in the following Page will sufficiently show the Difficulties in this Respect she had to encounter.

With all their Imperfections, the Poems are now humbly submitted to the  
Perusal of the Public.

The following is a Copy of a LETTER sent by the Author's Master to the  
Publisher.

PHILLIS was brought from Africa to America, in the Year 1761, between seven and eight Years of Age. Without any Assistance from School Education, and by only what she was taught in the Family, she, in sixteen Months Time from her Arrival, attained the English language, to which she was an utter Stranger before, to such a degree, as to read any, the most difficult Parts of the Sacred Writings, to the great Astonishment of all who heard her.



As to her WRITING, her own Curiosity led her to it; and this she learnt in so short a Time, that in the Year 1765, she wrote a Letter to the Rev. Mr. OCCOM, the Indian Minister, while in England.

She has a great Inclination to learn the Latin Tongue, and has made some Progress in it. This Relation is given by her Master who bought her, and with whom she now lives.

### JOHN WHEATLEY.

Boston, Nov. 14, 1772.

To the PUBLIC.

AS it has been repeatedly suggested to the Publisher, by Persons, who have seen the Manuscript, that Numbers would be ready to suspect they were not really the Writings of PHILLIS, he has procured the following Attestation, from the most respectable Characters in Boston, that none might have the least Ground for disputing their Original.

WE whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the POEMS specified in the following Page,\* were (as we verily believe) written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from Africa, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

His Excellency THOMAS HUTCHINSON, Governor.

The Hon. ANDREW OLIVER, Lieutenant-Governor.

The Hon. Thomas Hubbard, | The Rev. Charles Chauncey, D. D.

The Hon. John Erving, | The Rev. Mather Byles, D. D.

The Hon. James Pitts, | The Rev. Ed. Pemberton, D. D.

The Hon. Harrison Gray, | The Rev. Andrew Elliot, D. D.

The Hon. James Bowdoin, | The Rev. Samuel Cooper, D. D.

John Hancock, Esq; | The Rev. Mr. Saumel Mather,

Joseph Green, Esq; | The Rev. Mr. John Moorhead,

Richard Carey, Esq; | Mr. John Wheat ey, her Master.

N. B. The original Attestation, signed by the above Gentlemen,  
may be seen by applying to Archibald Bell, Bookseller,  
No. 8, Aldgate-Street.

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\*The Words "following Page," allude to the Con-  
tents of the Manuscript Copy, with are wrote at the  
Back of the above Attestation.

# POEMS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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To MAECENAS.

MAECENAS, you, beneath the myrtle shade,  
Read o'er what poets sung, and shepherds play'd.  
What felt those poets but you feel the same?  
Does not your soul possess the sacred flame?  
Their noble strains your equal genius shares  
In softer language, and diviner airs.

While Homer paints, lo! circumfus'd in air,  
Celestial Gods in mortal forms appear;  
Swift as they move hear each recess rebound,  
Heav'n quakes, earth trembles, and the shores resound.  
Great Sire of verse, before my mortal eyes,  
The lightnings blaze across the vaulted skies,  
And, as the thunder shakes the heav'nly plains,  
A deep felt horror thrills through all my veins.  
When gentler strains demand thy graceful song,  
The length'ning line moves languishing along.  
When great Patroclus courts Achilles' aid,  
The grateful tribute of my tears is paid;  
Prone on the shore he feels the pangs of love,  
And stern Pelides tend'rest passions move.

Great Maro's strain in heav'nly numbers flows,  
The Nine inspire, and all the bosom glows.  
O could I rival thine and Virgil's page,  
Or claim the Muses with the Mantuan Sage;  
Soon the same beauties should my mind adorn,

And the same ardors in my soul should burn:  
Then should my song in bolder notes arise,  
And all my numbers pleasingly surprise;  
But here I sit, and mourn a grov'ling mind,  
That fain would mount, and ride upon the wind.

Not you, my friend, these plaintive strains become,  
Not you, whose bosom is the Muses home;  
When they from tow'ring Helicon retire,  
They fan in you the bright immortal fire,  
But I less happy, cannot raise the song,  
The fault'ring music dies upon my tongue.

The happier Terence\* all the choir inspir'd,  
His soul replenish'd, and his bosom fir'd;  
But say, ye Muses, why this partial grace,  
To one alone of Afric's sable race;  
From age to age transmitting thus his name  
With the finest glory in the rolls of fame?

Thy virtues, great Maecenas! shall be sung  
In praise of him, from whom those virtues sprung:  
While blooming wreaths around thy temples spread,  
I'll snatch a laurel from thine honour'd head,  
While you indulgent smile upon the deed.

\*He was an African by birth.

As long as Thames in streams majestic flows,  
Or Naiads in their oozy beds repose  
While Phoebus reigns above the starry train  
While bright Aurora purples o'er the main,  
So long, great Sir, the muse thy praise shall sing,  
So long thy praise shall make Parnassus ring:  
Then grant, Maecenas, thy paternal rays,  
Hear me propitious, and defend my lays.

## ON VIRTUE.

O Thou bright jewel in my aim I strive  
To comprehend thee. Thine own words declare  
Wisdom is higher than a fool can reach.  
I cease to wonder, and no more attempt  
Thine height t' explore, or fathom thy profound.  
But, O my soul, sink not into despair,  
Virtue is near thee, and with gentle hand  
Would now embrace thee, hovers o'er thine head.  
Fain would the heav'n-born soul with her converse,  
Then seek, then court her for her promis'd bliss.  
Auspicious queen, thine heav'nly pinions spread,  
And lead celestial Chastity along;  
Lo! now her sacred retinue descends,  
Array'd in glory from the orbs above.  
Attend me, Virtue, thro' my youthful years!  
O leave me not to the false joys of time!  
But guide my steps to endless life and bliss.  
Greatness, or Goodness, say what I shall call thee,  
To give me an higher appellation still,  
Teach me a better strain, a nobler lay,  
O thou, enthron'd with Cherubs in the realms of day.

## TO THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, IN NEW-ENGLAND.

WHILE an intrinsic ardor prompts to write,  
The muses promise to assist my pen;  
'Twas not long since I left my native shore  
The land of errors, and Egyptain gloom:  
Father of mercy, 'twas thy gracious hand  
Brought me in safety from those dark abodes.  
Students, to you 'tis giv'n to scan the heights  
Above, to traverse the ethereal space,  
And mark the systems of revolving worlds.

Still more, ye sons of science ye receive  
The blissful news by messengers from heav'n,  
How Jesus' blood for your redemption flows.  
See him with hands out-stretcht upon the cross;  
Immense compassion in his bosom glows;  
He hears revilers, nor resents their scorn:  
What matchless mercy in the Son of God!  
When the whole human race by sin had fall'n,  
He deign'd to die that they might rise again,  
And share with him in the sublimest skies,  
Life without death, and glory without end.

Improve your privileges while they stay,  
Ye pupils, and each hour redeem, that bears  
Or good or bad report of you to heav'n.  
Let sin, that baneful evil to the soul,  
By you be shun'd, nor once remit your guard;  
Suppress the deadly serpent in its egg.  
Ye blooming plants of human race divine,  
An Ethiop tells you 'tis your greatest foe;  
Its transient sweetness turns to endless pain,  
And in immense perdition sinks the soul.

## TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY. 1768.

YOUR subjects hope, dread Sire—  
The crown upon your brows may flourish long,  
And that your arm may in your God be strong!  
O may your sceptre num'rous nations sway,  
And all with love and readiness obey!  
But how shall we the British king reward!  
Rule thou in peace, our father, and our lord!  
Midst the remembrance of thy favours past,  
The meanest peasants most admire the last\*  
May George, beloved by all the nations round,  
Live with heav'ns choicest constant blessings crown'd!  
Great God, direct, and guard him from on high,

And from his head let ev'ry evil fly!  
And may each clime with equal gladness see  
A monarch's smile can set his subjects free!

\* The Repeal of the Stamp Act.

On being brought from Africa to America.

'Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:  
Once I redemption neither fought nor knew,  
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,  
"Their colour is a diabolic die."  
Remember, Christians, Negroes, black as Cain,  
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

On the Death of the Rev. Dr. SEWELL, 1769.

ERE yet the morn its lovely blushes spread,  
See Sewell number'd with the happy dead.  
Hail, holy man, arriv'd th' immortal shore,  
Though we shall hear thy warning voice no more.  
Come, let us all behold with wishful eyes  
The saint ascending to his native skies;  
From hence the prophet wing'd his rapt'rous way  
To the blest mansions in eternal day.  
Then begging for the Spirit of our God,  
And panting eager for the same abode,  
Come, let us all with the same vigour rise,  
And take a prospect of the blissful skies;  
While on our minds Christ's image is imprest,  
And the dear Saviour glows in ev'ry breast.  
Thrice happy faint! to find thy heav'n at last,  
What compensation for the evils past!

Great God, incomprehensible, unknown  
 By sense, we bow at thine exalted throne.  
 O, while we beg thine excellence to feel,  
 Thy sacred Spirit to our hearts reveal,  
 And give us of that mercy to partake,  
 Which thou hast promis'd for the Saviour's sake!  
 "Sewell is dead." Swift-pinion'd Fame thus cry'd.  
 "Is Sewell dead," my trembling tongue reply'd,  
 O what a blessing in his flight deny'd!  
 How oft for us the holy prophet pray'd!  
 How oft to us the Word of Life convey'd!  
 By duty urg'd my mournful verse to close,  
 I for his tomb this epitaph compose.  
 "Lo, here a man, redeem'd by Jesus's blood,  
 "A sinner once, but now a saint with God;  
 "Behold ye rich, ye poor, ye fools, ye wise,  
 "Not let his monument your heart surprise;  
 "Twill tell you what this holy man has done,  
 "Which gives him brighter lustre than the sun.  
 "Listen, ye happy, from your seats above.  
 "I speak sincerely, while I speak and love,  
 "He fought the paths of piety and truth,  
 "By these made happy from his early youth;  
 "In blooming years that grace divine he felt,  
 "Which rescues sinners from the chains of guilt.  
 "Mourn him, ye indigent, whom he has fed,  
 "And henceforth seek, like him, for living bread;  
 "Ev'n Christ, the bread descending from above,  
 "And ask an int'rest in his saving love.  
 "Mourn him, ye youth, to whom he oft has told  
 "God's gracious wonders from the times of old.  
 "I too have cause this mighty loss to mourn,  
 "For he my monitor will not return.  
 "O when shall we to his blest state arrive?  
 "When the same graces in our bosoms thrive."



On the Death of the Rev. Mr. GEORGE WHITEFIELD. 1770.

HAIL, happy saint, on thine immortal throne,  
Possess of glory, life, and bliss unknown;  
We hear no more the music of thy tongue,  
Thy wonted auditories cease to throng.  
Thy sermons in unequal'd accents flow'd,  
And ev'ry bosom with devotion glow'd;  
Thou didst in strains of eloquence refin'd  
Inflame the heart, and captivate the mind.  
Unhappy we the setting sun deplore,  
So glorious once, but ah! it shines no more.

Behold the prophet in his tow'ring flight!  
He leaves the earth for heav'n's unmeasur'd height,  
And worlds unknown receive him from our sight.  
There Whitefield wings with rapid course his way,  
And sails to Zion through vast seas of day.  
Thy pray'rs, great saint, and thine incessant cries  
Have pierc'd the bosom of thy native skies.  
Thou moon hast seen, and all the stars of light,  
How he has wrestled with his God by night.  
He pray'd that grace in ev'ry heart might dwell,  
He long'd to see America excell;  
He charg'd its youth that ev'ry grace divine  
Should with full lustre in their conduct shine;  
That Saviour, which his soul did first receive,  
The greatest gift that ev'n a God can give,  
He freely offer'd to the num'rous throng,  
That on his lips with list'ning pleasure hung.

"Take him, ye wretched, for your only good,

"Take him ye starving sinners, for your food;

"Ye thirsty, come to this life-giving stream,

"Ye preachers, take him for your joyful theme;

"Take him my dear Americans, he said,

"Be your complaints on his kind bosom laid:

"Take him, ye Africans, he longs for you,

"Impartial Saviour is his title due:

"Wash'd in the fountain of redeeming blood,

"You shall be sons, and kings, and priests to God."

Great Countess,\* we Americans revere  
Thy name, and mingle in thy grief sincere;  
New England deeply feels, the Orphans mourn,  
Their more than father will no more return.

But, though arrested by the hand of death,  
Whitefield no more exerts his lab'ring breath,  
Yet let us view him in th' eternal skies,  
Let ev'ry heart to this bright vision rise;  
While the tomb safe retains its sacred trust,  
Till life divine re-animates his dust.

\*The Countess of Huntingdon, to whom Mr. Whitefield was  
Chaplain.

On the Death of a young Lady of Five Years of Age.

FROM dark abodes to fair ethereal light  
Th' enraptur'd innocent has wing'd her flight;  
On the kind bosom of eternal love  
She finds unknown beatitude above.  
This known, ye parents, nor her loss deplore,  
She feels the iron hand of pain no more;  
The dispensations of unerring grace,  
Should turn your sorrows into grateful praise;  
Let then no tears for her henceforward flow,  
No more distress'd in our dark vale below,  
Her morning sun, which rose divinely bright,  
Was quickly mantled with the gloom of night;  
But hear in heav'n's blest bow'rs your Nancy fair,  
And learn to imitate her language there.  
"Thou, Lord, whom I behold with glory crown'd,  
"By what sweet name, and in what tuneful sound  
"Wilt thou be prais'd? Seraphic pow'rs are faint  
"Infinite love and majesty to paint.  
"To thee let all their graceful voices raise,  
"And saints and angels join their songs of praise."  
Perfect in bliss she from her heav'nly home

Looks down, and smiling beckons you to come;  
Why then, fond parents, why these fruitless groans?  
Restrain your tears, and cease your plaintive moans.  
Freed from a world of sin, and snares, and pain,  
Why would you wish your daughter back again?  
No — bow resign'd. Let hope your grief control,  
And check the rising tumult of the soul.  
Calm in the prosperous, and adverse day,  
Adore the God who gives and takes away;  
Eye him in all, his holy name revere,  
Upright your actions, and your hearts sincere,  
Till having sail'd through life's tempestuous sea,  
And from its rocks, and boist'rous billows free,  
Yourselves, safe landed on the blissful shore,  
Shall join your happy babe to part no more.

On the Death of a young Gentleman.

WHO taught thee conflict with the pow'rs of night,  
To vanquish satan in the fields of light?  
Who strung thy feeble arms with might unknown,  
How great thy conquest, and how bright thy crown!  
War with each principedom, throne, and pow'r is o'er,  
The scene is ended to return no more.  
O could my muse thy seat on high behold,  
How deckt with laurel, how enrich'd with gold!  
O could she hear what praise thine harp employs,  
How sweet thine anthems, how divine thy joys!  
What heav'nly grandeur should exalt her strain!  
What holy raptures in her numbers reign!  
To sooth the troubles of the mind to peace,  
To still the tumult of life's tossing seas,  
To ease the anguish of the parents heart,  
What shall my sympathizing verse impart?  
Where is the balm to heal so deep a wound?  
Where shall a sov'reign remedy be found?

Look, gracious Spirit, from thine heav'nly bow'r,  
And thy full joys into their bosoms pour;  
The raging tempest of their grief control,  
And spread the dawn of glory through the soul,  
To eye the path the saint departed trod,  
And trace him to the bosom of his God.

To a Lady on the Death of her Husband.

GRIM monarch! see, depriv'd of vital breath,  
A young physician in the dust of death:  
Dost thou go on incessant to destroy,  
Our griefs to double, and lay waste our joy?  
Enough thou never yet wast known to say,  
Though millions die, the vassals of thy sway:  
Nor youth, nor science, not the ties of love,  
Nor ought on earth thy flinty heart can move.  
The friend, the spouse from his dire dart to save,  
In vain we ask the sovereign of the grave.  
Fair mourner, there see thy lov'd Leonard laid,  
And o'er him spread the deep impervious shade.  
Clos'd are his eyes, and heavy fetters keep  
His senses bound in never-waking sleep,  
Till time shall cease, till many a starry world  
Shall fall from heav'n, in dire confusion hurl'd  
Till nature in her final wreck shall lie,  
And her last groan shall rend the azure sky:  
Not, not till then his active soul shall claim  
His body, a divine immortal frame.

But see the softly-stealing tears apace  
Pursue each other down the mourner's face;  
But cease thy tears, bid ev'ry sigh depart,  
And cast the load of anguish from thine heart:  
From the cold shell of his great soul arise,  
And look beyond, thou native of the skies;  
There fix thy view, where fleeter than the wind