

# The Faerie Queene Book One Edmund Spenser

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*Edmund Spenser*

the faerie queene was the first epic in english and one of the most influential poems in the language for later poets from milton to tennyson dedicating his work to elizabeth i spenser brilliantly united medieval romance and renaissance epic to expound the glory of the virgin queen the poem recounts the quests of knights including sir guyon knight of constance who resists temptation and artegall knight of justice whose story alludes to the execution of mary queen of scots composed as an overt moral and political allegory the faerie queene with its dramatic episodes of chivalry pageantry and courtly love is also a supreme work of atmosphere colour and sensuous description

the faerie queene from hackett publishing company spenser s great work in five volumes each includes its own introduction annotation notes on the text bibliography glossary and index of characters spenser s letter to raleigh and a short life of edmund spenser appear in every volume

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reproduction of the original spenser s the faerie queene by george armstrong wauchope

from its opening scenes in which the hero refrains from fighting a duel then discovers that his horse has been stolen book two of the faerie queene redefines the nature of heroism and of chivalry its hero is sir guyon the knight of temperance whose challenges frequently take the form of temptations accompanied by a holy palmer in place of a squire guyon struggles to subdue himself as well as his enemies his adventures lead up to a climactic encounter with the arch temptress acrasia in her bower of bliss which provides the occasion for some of spenser s most sensuous verse with its mixture of chivalric romance history and moral allegory book two succeeds in presenting an exuberant exploration of the virtue of self restraint

framed in spenser s distinctive opulent stanza and in some of the trappings of epic book one of spenser s the faerie queene consists of a chivalric romance that has been made to a typical recipe fierce warres and faithfull loves but that has been christianized in both overt and subtle ways the physical and moral wanderings of the redcrosse knight dramatize his effort to find the proper proportion of human to divine contributions to salvation a key issue between protestants and catholics fantastic elements like alien humans humanoids and monsters and their respective dwelling places are vividly described

book six and the incomplete book seven of the faerie queene are the last sections of the unfinished poem to have been published they show spenser inflecting his narrative with an ever more personal note and becoming an ever more desperate and anxious author worried that things were falling apart as queen elizabeth failed in health and the irish crisis became ever more terrifying the moral confusion and uncertainty that calidore the knight of courtesy has to confront are symptomatic of the lack of control that spenser saw everywhere around him yet within such a troubling and disturbing work there are moments of great beauty and harmony such as the famous dance of the graces that colin clout the rustic alter ego of the poet himself conjures up with his pipe book seven the two cantos of mutabilitie is among the finest of

spenser s poetic works in which he explains the mythical origins of his world as the gods debate on the hill opposite his irish house whether order or chaos triumphs in the end has been the subject of most subsequent critical debate

edmund spenser was an english renaissance poet acclaimed as one of the greatest writers in the language and the faerie queene an allegorical epic poem is his magnum opus it is also one of the longest poems ever written in english

these paired arthurian legends suggest that erotic desire and the desire for companionship undergird national politics the maiden britomart queen elizabeth s fictional ancestor dons armor to search for a man whom she has seen in a crystal ball while on this quest she seeks to understand how one can be chaste while pursuing a sexual goal in love with a man while passionately attached to a woman a warrior princess yet a wife as spenser s most sensitively developed character britomart is capable of heroic deeds but also of teenage self pity her experience is anatomized in the stories of other characters where versions of love and friendship include physical gratification torture mutual aid competition spiritual ecstasy self sacrifice genial teasing jealousy abduction wise government sedition and the valiant defense of a pig shed

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