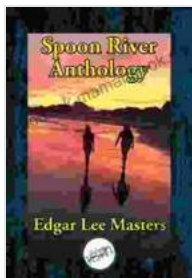


Spoon River Anthology: Edgar Lee Masters' Epic of American Lives

The *Spoon River Anthology* (1915) is a collection of free verse poems by Edgar Lee Masters which fictionalizes the lives and epitaphs of the inhabitants of the fictional town of Spoon River, Illinois.

The poems are written in the voices of the deceased residents of Spoon River, and they tell stories of love, loss, ambition, and regret. Masters's use of free verse and colloquial language gives the poems a sense of immediacy and realism.



Spoon River Anthology by Edgar Lee Masters

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2907 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 80 pages
Screen Reader : Supported



The *Spoon River Anthology* was a critical and commercial success, and it is considered one of the most important works of American literature.

Background

Edgar Lee Masters was born in Garnett, Kansas, in 1868. He moved to Chicago in 1889 to study law, but he soon turned to writing. His first novel,

A Book of Verses, was published in 1898.

Masters began working on the *Spoon River Anthology* in 1914. He was inspired by the epitaphs he had seen on tombstones in small-town cemeteries. He wanted to write a poem that would tell the stories of the people who lived and died in these towns.

The Poems

The *Spoon River Anthology* consists of 244 free verse poems. The poems are written in the voices of the deceased residents of Spoon River, and they tell stories of love, loss, ambition, and regret.

Masters's use of free verse and colloquial language gives the poems a sense of immediacy and realism. He does not shy away from difficult subjects, such as death, poverty, and violence.

Some of the most famous poems in the *Spoon River Anthology* include "Lucinda Matlock," "Fiddler Jones," and "The Hill."

Lucinda Matlock

Lucinda Matlock is a simple woman who has lived a long and difficult life. She has buried her husband and all of her children, and she is now alone in the world.

In her epitaph, Lucinda reflects on her life. She says that she has lived a good life, and that she is not afraid to die.



“I have been a good woman: I have always kept the faith;

I have always been true to my husband,

And I have always loved my children.

I am not afraid to die.”

Fiddler Jones

Fiddler Jones is a musician who has spent his life playing for dances and parties. He is a beloved figure in Spoon River, but he is also a lonely man.

In his epitaph, Fiddler Jones reflects on his life. He says that he has lived a happy life, and that he is not afraid to die.



“I have played my fiddle for the people of Spoon River,

And they have danced and sung to my music.

I have lived a happy life,

And I am not afraid to die.”

The Hill

The Hill is a poem about the people who are buried in the Spoon River cemetery. The poem is a meditation on death and the meaning of life.

In the poem, the speaker walks through the cemetery and reads the epitaphs on the tombstones. He reflects on the lives of the people who are

buried there, and he wonders what they would say to him if they could speak.



“Here they lie close together Under a thin sod; fools, wise men, good And bad, men of strength, men of weakness, old men And young, women with painted lips and carefree

Girls.”

Legacy

The *Spoon River Anthology* was a critical and commercial success. It was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1916, and it has been translated into more than 20 languages.

The *Spoon River Anthology* is considered one of the most important works of American literature. It is a powerful and moving collection of poems that tells the stories of the people who live and die in small-town America.

Further Reading

- [The Poetry Foundation: Edgar Lee Masters](#)
- [The Library of Congress: Spoon River Anthology](#)
- [Encyclopædia Britannica: Spoon River Anthology](#)

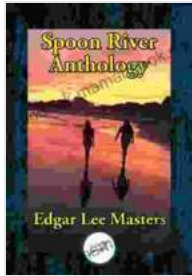
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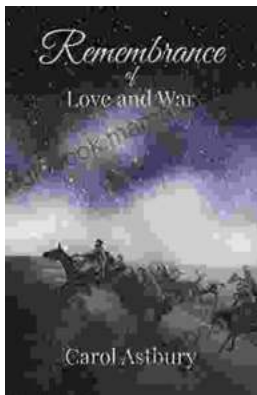
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