

Alfred Edward  
Housman



A. E. Housman (Alfred Edward Housman) was born on March 26th 1859 in Fockbury, Worcester-shire. He was basically a classical scholar and an English origin poet. He was famous for his poem A Shropshire Lad. These short and poetic poems were written before the 19th century. The thoughtful suggestion of fated youth in England, their auxiliary, language and characteristic description was appealing to the Georgian and Edwardian composer prior and following the WW1.

Housman was reckoned among the leading classic writers of his time. He had created a name for himself after printing as a private scholar and because of which he was selected as a Latin Professor at the College London University and then later at the prestigious Cambridge. His famous editions of Lucan, Juvenal and Manilius are said to be very well respected. With these settings of poetry, the generation was strongly linked and were also much connected with the Shropshire poems as well. Alfred Edward Housman was the son of a country solicitor and the eldest of his seven siblings. His sister Clemence Housman and Laurance Housman also became writers.

A. E. Housman went to school at King Edward and then later to Bromsgrove school where he had a strong academic foundation and won numerous prizes for his poetry. He got a scholarship at St John's College, Oxford in 1877 where he got education in classics.

He was amazing in analyzing texts. He became so much involved into texts that he did not retake philosophy and ancient history and even did not take a passing degree. He did not make much friends with his only friends being his roommates A. W. Pollard and Moses Jackson. Alfred Housman had a hard and usually reserved feelings for his friend Moses Jackson which were refused by

Jackson as he was heterosexual. This refusal by Moses led to Alfred's unexpected failure in his exams in 1881.

Jackson got a clerk job in the Patent office in London and also got Housman a job there. They started sharing an apartment with Adalbert who was the elder brother of Jackson. They stayed there till 1885 after which Housman moved into his own apartment on his own. In 1887 Moses married and moved to Karachi (then in India) and later in 1882 Adalbert Jackson died. Alfred still continued to write classical studies on his own and also published some quality articles on numerous authors like Sophocles, Ovid, Aeschylus, Propertius, Horace and Euripides.

In this period, Alfred managed to study Roman and Greek classics very thoroughly. He became a Latin Professor at Cambridge Trinity College in 1911 and till his death he had held the position. Alfred Housman managed to gain fame with his classic editions of the famous poets of Rome mainly Manilius, Juvenal and Lucan and also for his thorough and clever comments and his contempt for the unscholarly.

#### Poems of Alfred Edward Housman

During his life Alfred Housman had managed to publish only two poetry volumes: One being published in 1896 by the name of *Shropshire Lad* and the other in 1922 which was *Last Poems*.

*A Shropshire Lad* is a collection of his 63 poems with the majority written after his close friend Adalbert Jackson's death in 1882. The main themes of the poems were based upon unreturned love, green beauty, brief youth, sorrow, demise and the common soldier's patriotism. After his scripts were refused by

many of the publishers, he decided to print them on his own expenditure which was a shock for his students and his colleagues.

The Shropshire Lad was a rather slow in momentum to gain popularity, the arrival of war, at first in the Boer war and then later in WW1, gave this book a widespread popularity because of its regretful portrayal of the English troops. Numerous composers of music managed to make different settings of musical for the work of Housman which increased his popularity.