

# The study of poetry by matthew arnold

[Science](#)



The liberal humanist Matthew Arnold often maintains that he respects scientists and the sciences. What he rejects was the promise that science alone will ameliorate the human condition; the suggestion that the sciences deserve a place of greater prominence than the arts. According to him, science is incomplete without poetry (art and literature). In his essay "The Study of Poetry" (1880) he contends that: "More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us- without poetry our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science"; and what is a countenance without its expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"; appear incomplete; and most of what now passes for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry. Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science;" and what is a countenance without its expression? Again Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge". (p 604) To put it in other words, Arnold considers poetry to be superior to science, philosophy and religion. He proposed that philosophy and religion would be replaced by poetry in modern society.