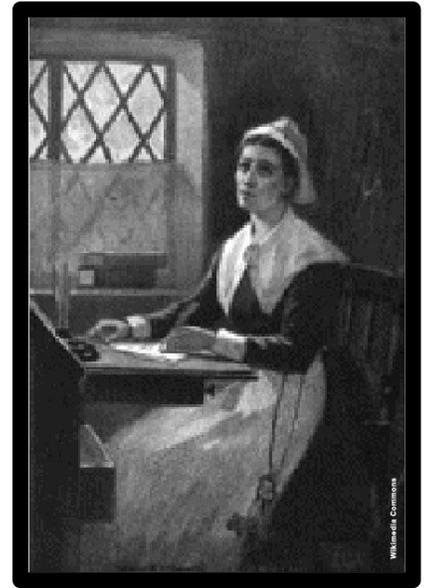


## ANNE BRADSTREET (1612—1672)

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It might come as a surprise that the writer to begin the history of American poetry was none other than a woman—an immigrant, teenage bride, in fact, named Anne Bradstreet. Shakespeare was still living when Anne Bradstreet was born in England. She was born into a Puritan family that taught her the same dedication to God that they had learned. When she was sixteen-years-old, she married a well-educated Puritan by the name of Simon Bradstreet. Two years later, in 1630 when Anne was just eighteen, they emigrated to the New World—to the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Her father accompanied the young couple as well. Both Anne Bradstreet’s husband and father rose to prominence in New England—each serving as governor of the colony at different times. They were both also instrumental in the founding of Harvard College. Meanwhile, Anne managed her household, raised four boys and four girls, and somehow found time to write poetry.



Anne Bradstreet’s lifestyle allowed her a level of education uncommon in her time, and she wrote with great wit and eloquence; however, in her time it was still frowned upon for women to be writers of poetry. Her poems probably would never have been published if her brother-in-law had not published her poetry without consent while in England, and she became colonial America’s first published poet. In spite of its author’s gender, Bradstreet’s poetry was a success, and she became colonial America’s first published poet. Her most famous poems are simple and personal—demonstrating her devotion to her family and to God.

### “To My Dear and Loving Husband” by Anne Bradstreet

If ever two were one, then surely we.  
If ever man were lov’d by wife, then thee;  
If ever wife was happy in a man,  
Compare with me ye women if you can.

I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,  
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.  
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,  
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.

Thy love is such I can no way repay,  
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.  
Then while we live, in love let’s so persevere,  
That when we live no more, we may live ever

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What are some examples of figurative language that Bradstreet uses in her poem?
2. **Puritan marriage:** The Puritans believed that marriage should be based on true love, and marriages were not typically arranged by parents. Men and women were allowed and encouraged to choose their own spouses. In God’s sight the married couple became “one flesh.” This bond “let not man put asunder” or undo. What elements of the Puritan conception of marriage still exist today? Are any of these ideas reflected in the poem?

**"VERSES UPON THE BURNING OF OUR HOUSE, JULY 10TH, 1666" BY ANNE BRADSTREET**

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In silent night when rest I took,  
For sorrow near I did not look,  
I wakened was with thund'ring noise  
And piteous shrieks of dreadful voice.

That fearful sound of "fire" and "fire,"  
Let no man know is my Desire.  
I, starting up, the light did spy,  
And to my God my heart did cry

To straighten me in my Distress  
And not to leave me succourless.  
Then, coming out, behold a space  
The flame consume my dwelling place.

And when I could no longer look,  
I blest His name that gave and took,  
That laid my goods now in the dust.  
Yea, so it was, and so 'twas just.

It was his own, it was not mine,  
Far be it that I should repine;  
He might of all justly bereft  
But yet sufficient for us left.

When by the ruins oft I past  
My sorrowing eyes aside did cast  
And here and there the places spy  
Where oft I sat and long did lie.

Here stood that trunk, and there that chest,  
There lay that store I counted best.  
My pleasant things in ashes lie  
And them behold no more shall I.

Under thy roof no guest shall sit,  
Nor at thy Table eat a bit.  
No pleasant talk shall 'ere be told  
Nor things recounted done of old.

No Candle e'er shall shine in Thee,  
Nor bridegroom's voice e'er heard shall be.  
In silence ever shalt thou lie,  
Adieu, Adieu, all's vanity.

Then straight I 'gin my heart to chide,  
And did thy wealth on earth abide?  
Didst fix thy hope on mould'ring dust?  
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?

Raise up thy thoughts above the sky  
That dunghill mists away may fly.  
Thou hast a house on high erect  
Framed by that mighty Architect,

With glory richly furnished,  
Stands permanent though this be fled.  
It's purchased and paid for too  
By Him who hath enough to do.

A price so vast as is unknown,  
Yet by His gift is made thine own;  
There's wealth enough, I need no more,  
Farewell, my pelf, farewell, my store.

The world no longer let me love,  
My hope and treasure lies above.

**Respond: Write 2-3 sentences in response to each question.**

1. What events are described in the poem?
2. What are five hard-to-define words in the poem? Use a dictionary or a device to find their definitions.
3. What is the theme of the poem? What is the poem trying to say?
4. Have you ever lost some place or possession that was *emotionally* valuable to you? How does your experience compare to Bradstreet's?
5. Can you tell that Bradstreet has a deep, Puritan religious faith based on this poem? Explain.