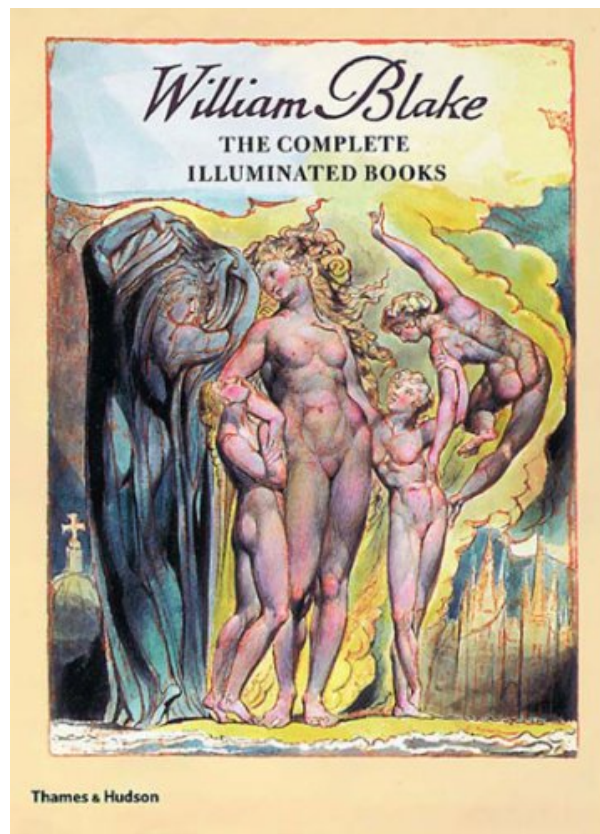
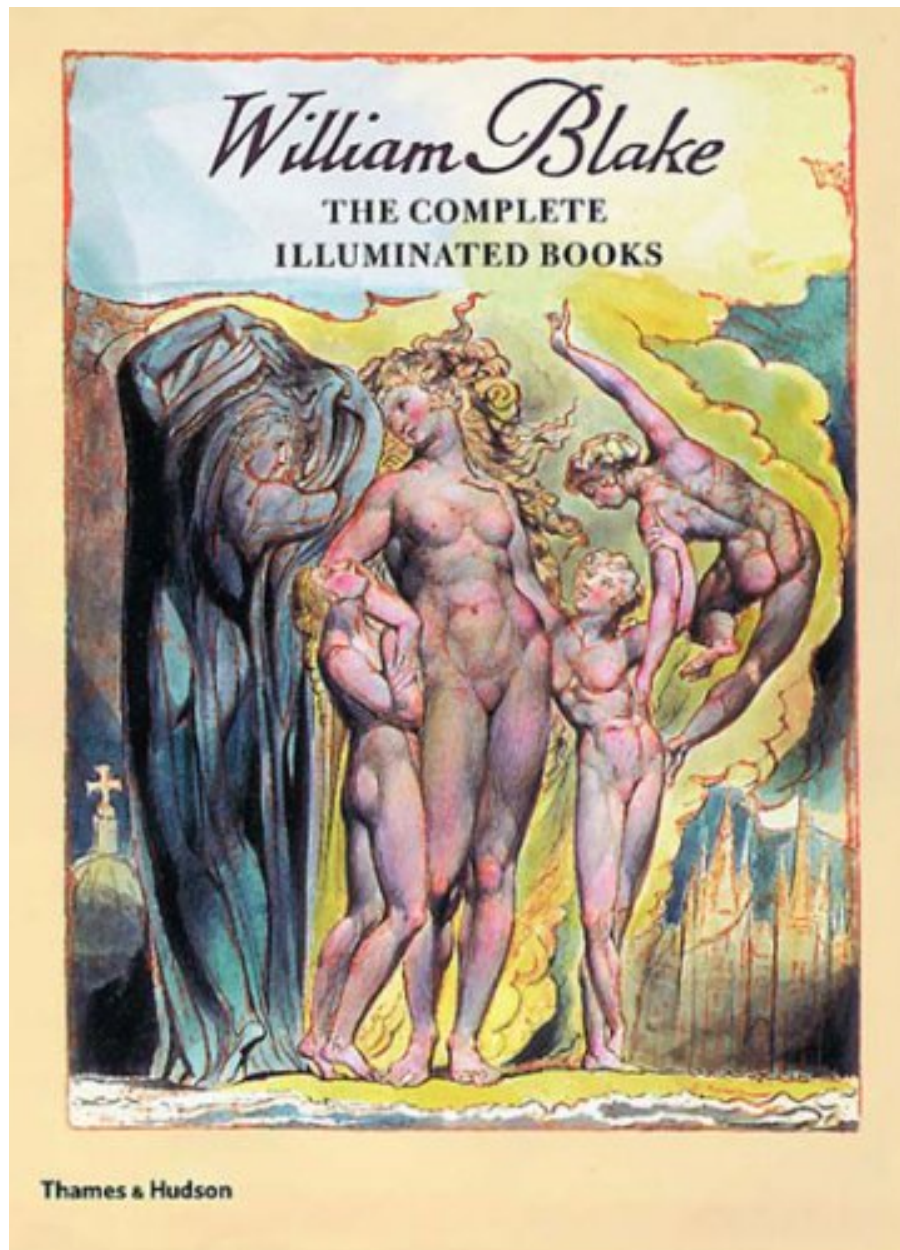


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From Publishers Weekly

Editions of Blake's poetry which as an artist and printer he frequently engraved and published himself most often fail to reproduce his integral illustrations, or do so in poor enough quality as to negate the effort. This Complete edition from the Blake Trust, published last year in a Thames and Hudson hardback edition that is now out of print, should replace the b&w-only Dover edition (but not David V. Erdman's commentary therein, or his reading text *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*) for any reader. The 366 crisp color and 30 b&w reproductions here, culled from the scholarly Princeton University Press six-volume annotated set, are little short of a revelation, giving us *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*, *America*, *Milton*, *Jerusalem* and the rest of the Blake canon in a form acceptably close, as Binder's introduction makes clear, to the way Blake wanted us to see them. Many of these works are currently hanging in a special Blake exhibition the largest ever at the Met in New York, for which the Abrams book serves as an informative and revealing catalogue. Hamlyn, a senior curator at London's Tate (where the exhibition originated), and the University of York's Phillips present prints, drawings, paintings, selections from Blake's own illuminated books and other relevant materials, such as snapshots from Blake's marvelous editions of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* and Thomas Gray's *Poems*. Introductory essays from novelist and biographer Peter Ackroyd (*Blake*; T.S. Eliot) and Marilyn Butler, rector of Oxford's Exeter College, synopsise Blake's life and times, while extensive "label copy" situates each work as presented. While the visual overview is useful and some of the detail shots of larger works are compelling, poetry readers who have to choose will take the Complete.

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This book makes a strong case that if you know Blake's poems you're getting only half—or rather none of—the picture. -- The New York Times, Christopher Benfey, 3 December 2000

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"If you know Blake's poems you're getting only half?or rather none of?the picture."?The New York Times

In his Illuminated Books, William Blake combined text and imagery on a single page in a way that had not been done since the Middle Ages. For Blake, religion and politics, intellect and emotion, mind and body were both unified and in conflict with each other: his work is expressive of his personal mythology, and his methods of conveying it were integral to its meaning. There is no comparison with reading books such as *Jerusalem*, *America*, and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in Blake's own medium, infused with his sublime and exhilarating colors. Tiny figures and forms dance among the lines of the text, flames appear to burn up the page, and dense passages of Biblical-sounding text are brought to a jarring halt by startling images of death, destruction, and liberation. Blake's hope that his books would obtain wide circulation was unfulfilled: some exist only in unique copies and none was printed in more than very small numbers. Now, for the first time, the plates from the William Blake Trust's Collected Edition have been brought together in a single volume, with transcripts of the texts and an introduction by the noted scholar David Bindman.

Includes: *Jerusalem*; *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*; *All Religions are One*; *There is No Natural Religion*; *The Book of Thel*; *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*; *America a Prophecy*; *Europe a Prophecy*; *The Song of Los Milton a Poem*; *The Ghost of Abel*; *On Homers Poetry [and] On Virgil*; *Laocoon*; *The First Book of Urizen*; *The Book of Ahania*; *The Book of Los*. 400 color illustrations

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From Publishers Weekly

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About the Author

David Bindman is a noted William Blake scholar.

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Both the words & vision of a prophetic soul on fire

By William Timothy Lukeman

While many people are familiar with William Blake's poetry, if only through the handful of commonly anthologized short poems from grade school & high school English classes, this is how his work was meant to be experienced: the poetry in union with the art, creating a vision far greater & more deeply moving than the sum of its already impressive parts. The words literally flow, twine, blossom in vivid & startling color, woven into the intricate, symbolic artwork. There aren't enough superlatives for this edition, which enables everyone to finally see & feel the Universe as Blake did: ablaze with power, wonder, beauty, horrors, and the godlike beings of the human psyche, titanic aspects transcending any neat, pre-packaged psychological or symbolic labels. For anyone wanting insight into the soul of Western civilization over the past few centuries, the soul in which we all struggle to find meaning & purpose now, this volume is absolutely essential. Most highly recommended!

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Beautiful and powerful

By Matt

This book brings the words and images of Blake to brilliant life. The volume is gorgeous, and the colors extremely rich. Having read Blake's poetry in un-illuminated format before, I now am even more appreciative of the value of seeing the work as Blake originally intended. Blake is a marvelous poet and artist, and this collection of his illuminated work is a marvelous book.

37 of 39 people found the following review helpful.

To Create a Little Flower is the Labour of Ages

By Laurie

Valuable things are not easy; easy things are not valuable. I don't know if that's a quotation from the Tao-Te Ching, but it ought to be. William Blake's longer poems, the so-called Prophetic Books, are legendary in their difficulty. Each of the two great epics, "Milton" and "Jerusalem", is a world in itself, taking years or decades to explore. Everyone who has made the effort considers it time well spent.

Blake wasn't shy about the importance of his own work. In a letter he described "Milton" as "the Grandest

Poem this World Contains". But these immense, unique hand-engraved, hand-coloured cosmic-spiritual epics found no buyers in Blake's own lifetime. Only one coloured copy of "Jerusalem" is known to exist.

The Illuminated Books have been reproduced in colour before, but this is the first time all the plates have been printed full-size in a single book. Blake is fascinating even in black-and-white, but to read these books in the form intended means entering a new world. By depicting spiritual principles as People, Blake shows us the meaning of all ancient gods.

After the lyrics of the "Songs of Innocence and "Songs of Experience", the best place to start is the "Book of Thel", then the "Visions of the Daughters of Albion". When reading the long books, a plain text copy of the "Complete Poems" will come in handy: difficulty in reading Blake's graceful orange script for "Jerusalem" may be one difficulty too many. The remaining shorter books, with their anguished mythical narratives, rely more than the others on their illustrations, printed as if with fire, rust and soot: images of an age of Revolution.

Blake's aim was nothing less than "to open the immortal Eyes/ Of Man into the Worlds of Thought, into Eternity/ Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination". Astonishingly this is not exaggeration nor plain craziness: he can actually do this.

If a book I admire gets five stars, this one deserves fifteen. It's a marvel, a rectangular treasure, one of the most precious books ever printed.

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