



Anna Laetitia Barbauld

Avery Simpson

“The dead of midnight is the noon of
thought” (Barbauld, “A Summer Evening’s
Meditation”)

By Richard Samuel, “Portraits in the
Characters of the Muses in the Temple of
Apollo” (1778)

Early Life

Born on June 20, 1743 in Leicestershire, United Kingdom to Jane and John Aikin.

Her mother served as her teacher in her early years, and her father John was a Presbyterian minister and leader of a dissenting academy.

Because of her father's job, Anna had the opportunity to learn many subjects deemed "unnecessary" for women to know, such as Latin, Greek, French, and Italian.

At age 15, her father accepted a position at Warrington Academy, which proved influential in her life and writing career.

While at Warrington, Anna established lifelong friendships such as philosopher Joseph Priestley, and French revolutionary Jean-Paul Marat.

Most of Barbauld's early poems and writings were written during her time at Warrington Academy.

Adult Life and The Palgrave Academy

In 1773, Barbauld published her first collection of poems titled *Poems*.

Married May 26th, 1774 to Rochemont Barbauld.

Shortly after their marriage, the two opened the Palgrave Academy.

Adopted her brother's 2nd son, Charles.

She became a well-known author in children's literature, after writing her four volume work *Lessons for Children*.

The Palgrave Academy was a great success and drew boys from as far away as New York.

The Barbauld's left the academy in 1785.



"Anna Letitia Barbauld" by
John Chapman (1798)

Later Life

Anna became a well-known essayist writing about topics such as the French Revolution, the British government, and religion.

Contributed to a number of periodicals throughout the early 19th century such as the *Annual Review*, the *Monthly Review*.

Her husband suffered from manic-depressive disorder, becoming violent, which led to their separation in 1808. He later died by suicide in 1808, causing her to fall into melancholy.

Her brother's death in 1822, greatly affected her.

She died on March 9th, 1825 after developing asthma and dying from complications of it.



“Anna Laetitia Barbauld” by Sir Emery Walker, after Henry Meyer (1907)

“On the Death of Mrs. Jennings”

“Est tamen quieté, & puré, & eleganter actæ ætatis, placida ac lenis senectus.” Cicero de Senectute

For heaven prolong'd her life to spread its praise,
And bless'd her with a patriarch's length of days.
The truest praise was hers, a cheerful heart,
Prone to enjoy, and ready to impart.
An Israelite indeed, and free from guile,
She show'd that piety and age could smile.
Religion had her heart, her cares, her voice;
'Twas her last refuge, as her earliest choice.
To holy Anna's spirit not more dear
The church of Israel, and the house of prayer.

(Barbauld 108, lines 6-15)

Her hopes all bright, her prospects all serene,
Each part of life sustain'd with equal worth,
And not a wish left unfulfill'd on earth,
Like a tir'd traveller with sleep oppress,
Within her childrens' arms she dropt to rest.
Farewel! thy cherish'd image, ever dear,
Shall many a heart with pious love revere:
Long, long shall mine her honour'd memory bless,
Who gave the dearest blessing I possess.

(Barbauld 109, lines 19-27)

Works Cited

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Anna Lætitia Aikin Barbauld (1743-1825), University of Pennsylvania, <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/barbauld/biography.html>.