



train the memory, it also fosters an appreciation of the beauty and rhythm of language, and enriches students with a wealth of immortal words which resonate for a lifetime.

It has done that for me, and I am truly grateful that the experience of poetry was an essential part of my early education. *The Oxford Book of English Verse* was one of our essential textbooks, which I leafed through pleasurable for hours in own free time for the intimations it offered me of love, death, mortality, patriotism, philosophy, nature, fantasy, history, spirituality, and so much more. To this day I still retain my Lycée copy, and often refer back to some of the poems I relished then.

Had I not thoroughly internalized the message of ‘Invictus’ at the receptive age of twelve, would I have known so surely in later life how greatly the power of my own mind could arm me against adversity? If I had not read and loved O’Shaughnessy’s ‘Ode,’ would I have understood so well the need for dreams? Although Kipling wrote his famous ‘If’ for young boys, were not some of the principles he advocated equally valid for everyone? And although I already loved flowers, it would enhance my enjoyment forever afterwards to remember, and mentally recite, Wordsworth’s poem whenever I came across “a crowd, a host of lovely daffodils.”

It can be argued, I suppose, that like music and art, poetry is not an ‘essential’ in our time. But, like music and art, it adds untold depth and meaning and joy to our lives.

Without the beauty and nobility of those many immortal words learned at a young age and imprinted permanently on my mind where I could and can summon them up at will, I feel absolutely certain that my imaginative life throughout the years would have been infinitely the poorer.