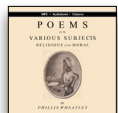


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## Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral

*Phillis Wheatley (1753 - 1784)*

Read by: Elizabeth Klett  
Language: English  
Genre (s): Poetry, Black History

Length: 1 hours and 52 minutes  
Style: Solo

Format	Package	SKU	EAN/UPC	MSLP
MP3 CD	DVD Case	DB-7013	0682550992556	\$9.99
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**Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral (1773)** by Phillis Wheatley is a collection of poems that explores themes of religion, morality, freedom, and human equality. It was the first book of poetry published by an African American woman and one of the earliest by an African American author overall.

The poems are heavily influenced by Christian beliefs and classical literary traditions. Wheatley frequently reflects on God, salvation, divine grace, and the afterlife, often expressing gratitude for spiritual redemption and emphasizing moral virtue. Many poems praise religious figures, ministers, and prominent public leaders of her time, blending personal devotion with public tribute.

At the same time, the collection subtly addresses the injustice of slavery and the shared humanity of all people. In poems such as "On Being Brought from Africa to America," Wheatley suggests that spiritual equality transcends racial differences, quietly challenging the prejudices of 18th-century society while still working within its accepted religious language.

Stylistically, the poems use formal structure, rhyme, and references to Greek and Roman mythology, showing Wheatley's classical education and literary skill. Overall, the book presents a blend of piety, intellectual sophistication, and understated social commentary, making it both a religious work and an important early voice in American and African American literature.

**Phillis Wheatley** (c. 1753–1784) was the first African American woman to publish a book of poetry and one of the earliest voices of African descent in American literature. Born in West Africa, likely in present-day Senegal or Gambia, she was captured and enslaved as a child and brought to Boston, Massachusetts, in 1761 aboard the slave ship *Phillis*, from which she took her name. Purchased by the Wheatley family, she was taught to read and write by her enslavers—an unusual circumstance at the time—and quickly demonstrated remarkable literary talent.

By her early teens, Wheatley was reading classical works by authors such as Homer, Virgil, and Milton, as well as the Bible. Her poetry drew heavily on neoclassical themes and often expressed Christian faith, moral reflection, and commentary on freedom and human dignity. In 1773, at around age twenty, she published *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* in London, becoming the first published African American poet.

Wheatley's work garnered international attention and served as a powerful example of both intellectual and spiritual equality. Notably, she corresponded with prominent figures such as George Washington, who praised her verse. Despite her literary success, Wheatley faced financial hardships after gaining her freedom following her master's death. She married John Peters, a free Black man, but endured poverty until her early death in 1784 at around age thirty-one.

Phillis Wheatley's legacy endures as a symbol of Black intelligence, creativity, and resilience in the face of oppression.