1844–89, English poet, educated at Oxford. Entering the Roman Catholic Church in 1866 and the Jesuit novitiate in 1868, he was ordained in 1877. Upon becoming a Jesuit he burned much of his early verse and abandoned the writing of poetry. However, the sinking in 1875 of a German ship carrying five Franciscan nuns, exiles from Germany, inspired him to write one of his most impressive poems “The Wreck of the Deutschland.” Thereafter he produced his best poetry, including “God's Grandeur,” “The Windhover,” “The Leaden Echo,” and “The Golden Echo.” Since Hopkins never gave permission for the publication of his verse, his Poems, edited by his friend Robert Bridges, did not appear in print until 1918. His life was continually troubled by inner conflict, which arose, not from religious skepticism, but from an inability to give himself completely to his God. Both his poems and his letters often reflect an intense dissatisfaction with himself as a poet and as a servant of God. Though he produced a small body of work, he ranks high among English poets, and his work profoundly influenced 20th-century poetry. His verse is noted for its piercing intensity of language and its experiments in prosody. Of these experiments the most famous is “sprung rhythm,” a meter in which Hopkins tried to approximate the rhythm of everyday speech.

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