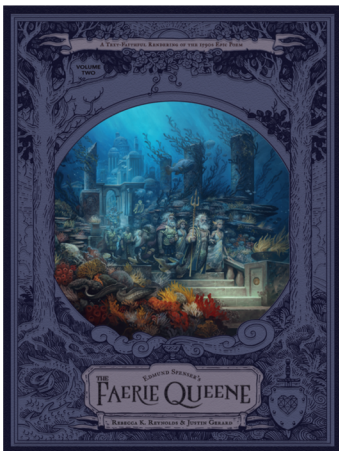*Edmund Spenser's* **The Faerie Queene**

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

PRESS, LIBRARIAN, EDUCATOR, & INFLUENCER

RESOURCE PACK

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Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM
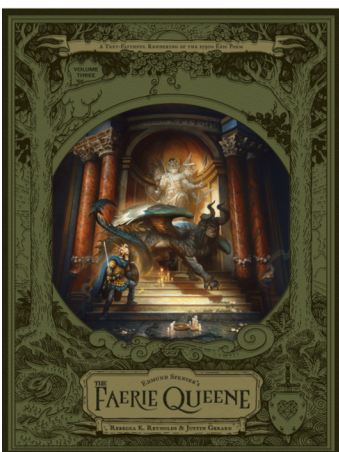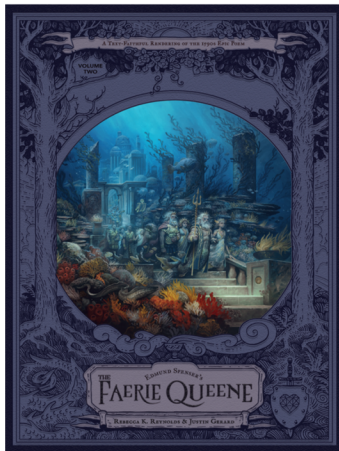
A forgotten world that inspired *generations* of fantasy authors

- **First Complete Prose Rendering in Four Centuries**
- **Over Eighty Original Illustrations**
- **Line-By-Line Text-Faithful Prose**
- **Gradually Introduces Spenser's Original Language**
- **Overseen by Renaissance Scholars**
- **Three Hardcover Volumes in a Four-Color Slipcase**

Many have attempted to read Edmund Spenser's 1590s epic *The Faerie Queene,* only to be discouraged by language even more difficult than Shakespeare's. Now, educator Rebecca K. Reynolds presents a text-faithful prose rendering that gradually introduces Spenser's distinctive vocabulary, preparing readers to engage confidently with the original text. Richly illustrated by fantasy artist Justin Gerard, this three-volume set shares the adventures of knights who confront monsters, wizards, enchantresses, and their own weaknesses. Prince Arthur also seeks his love, Gloriana, the elusive Faerie Queene. Welcome Spenser's grand adventure, a tale that inspired generations of fantasy writers, now accessible to all.

"The Faerie Queene never loses a reader it has once gained". . . "Once you have become an inhabitant of its world, being tired of it is like being tired of London, or of life."

C.S. LEWIS

REBECCA REYNOLDS became interested in creating a text-faithful rendering of *The Faerie Queene* after her ninth grade students struggled with Spenser's archaic language. Her efforts to create a readable, accurate classroom version of the poem inspired her to help others begin learning Spenser's world. Rebecca is now the Associate Publisher for Oasis Family Media and the Publisher of Sky Turtle Press. Her past creative work includes writing lyrics for Ron Block of Alison Krauss and Union Station, conference speaking, and audiobook narration. She's currently writing The Ultra Academy, a middle grade series featuring the iconic Japanese hero Ultraman.

JUSTIN GERARD's artwork has served such clients as Disney, Dreamworks, Warner Brothers, Harper Collins, Penguin Books, Random House, Sony, Riot, Blizzard, Hasbro, Wizards of the Coast, Kabaam, Cryptozoic, and Riotminds. While working on *The Faerie Queene*, Gerard spent many hours studying the details and events of each episode, taking great care to master the nuances of each book while creating images to thrill and delight readers.

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Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

100-Word Description

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200-Word Description

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Spenser's six books explore profound themes through unforgettable quests, journeys exploring redemption, temptation, love, friendship, justice, and courtesy. Knights traverse diverse fantastical landscapes, navigating enchanted forests, underwater lairs, subterranean kingdoms while confronting both external terrors and their own weaknesses. For four hundred years, Spenser's realm has captivated powerful creative minds, igniting literary movements and inspiring countless works. So, take a few first steps with us through the mist-shrouded edges of Faerie Land. As C.S. Lewis wisely observed: "*The Faerie Queene* never loses a reader it has once gained... Once you have become an inhabitant of its world, being tired of it is like being tired of London, or of life."

Long Form Description

Welcome to Edmund Spenser's 1590s epic poem, *The Faerie Queene*. This richly illustrated, text-faithful, line-by-line prose rendering transports modern readers into a vast narrative tapestry. Knights traverse diverse fantastical landscapes including the shadowy depths of an enchanted forest, a treacherous underwater lair, a mysterious subterranean kingdom, and the deadly Bower of Bliss. Through these realms stride Spenser's unforgettable knights—brave yet fallible, powerful yet vulnerable—as they confront ferocious monsters, cunning wizards, beguiling enchantresses, and even encounter young Prince Arthur, who wanders Faerie Land consumed by his passion for Gloriana, the elusive Faerie Queene.

Many have attempted to read Spenser's original masterpiece only to retreat, daunted by language that was deliberately archaic even in Elizabethan times. Classical educator Rebecca K. Reynolds bridges this gap, crafting a prose adaptation that gradually introduces more of Spenser's distinctive vocabulary and diction. By the final volume, readers will find themselves prepared to engage directly with Spenser's original text with confidence and delight.

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Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Classical Educator Makes Edmund Spenser's 1590s Masterpiece Accessible to Modern Readers
Rebecca K. Reynolds's Prose Adaptation of The Faerie Queene

[Chicago, Illinois] – For four centuries, Edmund Spenser's 1590s epic poem *The Faerie Queene* has inspired great literary minds. Yet Spenser's deliberately archaic language has made this foundational work of the modern fantasy genre impenetrable to all but the most academic readers. Now, with oversight from Renaissance scholars, classical educator Rebecca K. Reynolds has created a text-faithful prose adaptation that welcomes readers into the wonders of Spenser's Faerie Land. This beautiful three-volume set contains over eighty new illustrations by renowned fantasy artist Justin Gerard.

A Literary Landmark Reimagined
Reynolds' adaptation transforms Spenser's dense verse into flowing prose while preserving the epic's profound themes and distinctive voice. Her carefully crafted pedagogical approach gradually introduces readers to Spenser's vocabulary and style—early passages use contemporary prose, while later volumes incorporate increasing archaic elements, preparing readers to engage confidently with the original text. "Many have attempted to read Spenser's original masterpiece only to retreat, daunted by language that was deliberately archaic even in Elizabethan times," explains Reynolds. "This adaptation bridges that gap, honoring both the literary achievement and the modern reader's need for accessibility."

The Foundation of Modern Fantasy
The Faerie Queene stands as one of the most influential works in English literature, establishing conventions that define fantasy fiction today. The epic follows knights through enchanted forests, underwater lairs, and mysterious kingdoms as they confront monsters, wizards, and their own moral failings. Prince Arthur wanders through Faerie Land seeking his beloved Gloriana, the elusive Faerie Queene.

Spenser's six completed books explore timeless themes: spiritual redemption, the battle against temptation, the complexities of love and friendship, the nature of justice, and the meaning of true courtesy. Each tale combines spectacular magical events with intimate human emotions.

Unprecedented Reader Response
The project gained significant momentum through a successful crowdfunding campaign, with strong support from a diverse fanbase ranging from fantasy literature communities to scholars of classical literature. Academics have expressed interest in using Reynolds' work in the classroom, as it remains faithful to Spenser's original while being accessible to undergraduate students.

Significance for Modern Readers
This adaptation arrives at a time of renewed interest in the roots of fantasy literature. As readers seek deeper understanding of the genre's foundations, Reynolds' work provides unprecedented access to the epic that helped define fantasy storytelling. The project serves both as a gateway for general readers and as a valuable tool for educators.

"Once you have become an inhabitant of its world, being tired of it is like being tired of London, or of life," observed C.S. Lewis. Reynolds' adaptation ensures that modern readers can finally discover why The Faerie Queene has held such power over literary imaginations for four centuries.

Publication Details
The Faerie Queene prose adaptation by Rebecca K. Reynolds, illustrated by Justin Gerard, is available in three volumes. The series represents the first complete prose rendering of Spenser's epic since the 1590s.
Contact Information
Rebecca Reynolds rkreynolds@skyturtlepress.com faeriequeene.com
High-resolution images, review copies, and interview opportunities with Rebecca K. Reynolds are available upon request.

Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

Volume Descriptions

VOLUME ONE:
BOOK ONE: The Red Cross Knight embarks on what first seems a straightforward quest to slay a dragon, rescue a maiden, and save a kingdom. Yet beneath this familiar chivalric framework, Spenser weaves a profound spiritual allegory. As our noble but naive hero confronts not only external terrors but also the labyrinth of his own flawed heart, he discovers a humbling truth: a hero must be rescued before he can save anyone.

BOOK TWO: Sir Guyon navigates a world designed to test every facet of self-restraint. Refusing to present temperance as mere moderation, Spenser plunges his knight into the psychological complexities of human desire. As Guyon journeys toward Acrasia's Bower of Bliss, he confronts increasingly seductive temptations, ultimately destroying the beautiful but corrupting bower. Through Guyon's trials, Spenser explores the vigilance required to maintain virtue in the face of enticement.

VOLUME TWO:
BOOK THREE: A king's daughter turns errant knight as Britomart dons armor to search Faerie Land for Artegall, a man she's seen only in a vision. Spenser's tale of chastity is neither safe nor demure. Instead, it follows the treacherous journeys of four women. Britomart actively wields her enchanted spear in pursuit of marital union, Amoret patiently endures trials of true love, Belphoebe maintains her sovereign independence while inspiring devoted admiration, and Florimell relentlessly flees violation. Spenser uses each character's narrative to frame a purity that extends beyond passive innocence into active virtue.

BOOK FOUR: Book Four orchestrates a symphonic exploration of friendship and love in their myriad forms. Characters from previous books converge as bonds are forged and shattered, jealousies flare, reconciliations bloom, and love proves both poisonous and healing. With masterful poetic dexterity, Spenser interweaves spectacular magical events with intimate everyday emotions to reveal the complexities of human relationships.

VOLUME THREE:
BOOK FIVE: Sir Artegall, champion of justice, and his merciless iron companion Talus embark on a mission that has troubled readers for centuries. Here Spenser's allegory becomes most explicitly political, presenting a problematic defense of English policies that has challenged even his most devoted admirers. Yet within this controversial framework lie profound meditations on the nature of justice itself—questions about mercy versus rigid law, order versus freedom, and the corrupting nature of power. Book Five's tensions and ambiguities are capable of both warning and guiding all who seek to wield power in a strange new world.

BOOK SIX: Spenser's pastoral roots burst forth in this tale of Sir Calidore, the knight of courtesy. Within Book Six, the most civilized knight of Faerie Land finds himself lured away from his solemn quest to capture The Blatant Beast, a monster representing slander and malicious gossip. In this last complete tale of The Faerie Queene, our weary poet seems to shed the constraints of courtly flattery, turning instead to celebrate the authentic beauties of rural life. Amidst shepherds and rustic dances, Spenser reveals some of his most profound insights, suggesting that true courtesy might flourish most naturally far from the calculated manners of court.

This set also contains a rendering of Spenser's alternate ending to Book Three as well as a rendering of the *Cantos of Mutabilitie,* a fragment contained after Spenser's death.

Author and Illustrator Bios

REBECCA K. REYNOLDS first became interested in creating a text-faithful rendering of *The Faerie Queene* while reading Book One, Canto One to a classroom full of ninth graders. Her students were initially discouraged by Spenser's archaic text, but after she stayed up all night creating a more accessible but accurate rendering, their interest piqued. This inspired her to create a tool others could use to start learning Spenser's world.

After seven years of teaching, Reynolds was asked to become the Associate Publisher for Oasis Family Media and the Publisher of Sky Turtle Press. Outside of teaching and publishing, her creative work includes writing lyrics for Ron Block of Alison Krauss, Union Station and speaking at conferences in America and abroad. She is also a professional audiobook reader. Currently, Reynolds is working on a middle grade series called *The Ultra Academy*, featuring the Japanese superhero Ultraman.

Rebecca resides in the State of Well-Meaning Chaos while wandering from cheese to chocolate to steaming cups of sencha tea. She is a sucker for hopeless causes, used bookshops, sturdy leather boots, most dogs, certain cats, the wisdom of children, and passing conversations with strange old souls who are most likely wizards.

JUSTIN GERARD's artwork has served such clients as Disney, Dreamworks, Warner Brothers, Harper Collins, Penguin Books, Random House, Sony, Riot, Blizzard, Hasbro, Wizards of the Coast, Kabaam, Cryptozoic, and Riotminds. While working on *The Faerie Queene*, Gerard spent many hours studying the details and events of each episode, taking great care to master the nuances of each book while creating images to thrill and delight readers.

Author Q and A (page one)

What made you decide to tackle a 400-year-old "impossible" text that has defeated so many readers?
I was teaching Book One, Canto One of *The Faerie Queene* to ninth graders and was frustrated not only to be awake with adult responsibilities at 8:00 AM, but also to realize that bright students who could easily unlock Shakespeare or Marlowe struggled to crack Spenser's diction. This struggle was understandable, of course; Spenser often chose language that was even more archaic than that of his contemporaries.

We plodded through the poem line-by-line, two bookish girls thrilled with the labors of etymology, five wriggly boys strategizing a mutiny, and the rest of the class zoned out entirely, glistening lines of sleep-drool trickling down their chins. So, I stayed up that night, carefully rendering each phrase of Canto One in language my students could understand. When I showed up the next morning, I took a deep breath and read aloud the exact same story they had encountered the day before. The students were transfixed. "What is this?" "What comes next?" "How do we get more of it?"

At this point, I realized that this poem wasn't just hard, it was truly inaccessible to most teenagers. Meanwhile it contained stories students wanted and needed. Bridging that gap would be difficult, but doing the hard work could change lives.

How did you balance staying faithful to Spenser's original while making it accessible to modern readers?
First off, let's state the obvious. It's impossible to thoroughly render poetry in prose. If this were possible, poetry wouldn't exist. Good poetry relies on musicality and density. That said, if poetry is inaccessible, readers cannot benefit from its strengths. This means that a bridge can serve a purpose. (Few of us have read *Beowulf* in the original Old English Anglo-Saxon, by the way: *"Hwæt. Wē Gar-Dena in gēardagum, þēodcyninga þrym gefrūnon, hū ðā æþelingas ellen fremedon!"*)

As for the *how* . . . because I love Spenser's poetic quirks, I first attempted to render his text in verse. However, I regularly found myself at an impasse, choosing between faithfulness to Spenser's layers of meaning and modern terms that would fit within my established rhyme and meter. Not only did sixteenth-century polysemy prove tough to translate in a few syllables, but also, a single term referring to old battle gear or clothing might be obvious to an Elizabethan reader while requiring more explanation for a twenty-first-century reader.21 In the end, prose was more capable of flexing to capture this complexity, though it was a gain that came with inevitable losses. That's why this rendering serves as an introduction to Spenser... not a replacement of Spenser.

Author Q and A (page two)

What surprised you most about Spenser's world as you worked through the adaptation?
How psychologically modern it feels! Spenser's knights struggle with doubt, make terrible decisions, and have to live with consequences. The Red Cross Knight has what we'd recognize as a crisis of faith. Britomart grapples with love and duty. These aren't perfect heroes, they're flawed people trying to become better, which feels incredibly contemporary. Also, Spenser's political commentary is sharper and more complex than I expected. Book V is genuinely uncomfortable to read, which makes it fascinating.

Before reading *The Faerie Queene,* I was told it was a moral epic exploring the Christian virtues. Consequently, I expected it to be terrible. Surely stories about holiness, temperance, and chastity would be heavy-handed and boring. Because I was familiar with The Divine Comedy and Pilgrim's Progress, I anticipated seriousness and sternness from Spenser; instead, I was delighted to discover *The Faerie Queene* running on a much longer leash. Not only does Spenser offer comedic characters within his plot, he also pushes serious literary conventions to an exaggerated level—taking risks in moments where such behavior is perfectly audacious.

Fantasy readers supported your Kickstarter enthusiastically—what do you think they'll discover about the roots of their favorite genre?
They're going to have so many *aha!* moments. Of course, they will find literary "ancestors" of characters they already know and love. But beyond this influence-mapping, they'll discover that the DNA of the fantasy genre includes incredible psychological depth. Spenser wasn't just creating escapist entertainment, he was exploring how people become who they're meant to be. At its best, modern fantasy does the same thing.

You've said this prepares readers to tackle Spenser's original text. What's your ultimate goal, to replace the original or to lead people back to it?
Well, I taught in a classical school. I have a weakness for primary sources. However, a good teacher learns to whet the literary appetite of her students, not just drive them through impossible rigors to prove a point. Spenserian English is sort of a language in itself, so teaching students the language is a key aspect of helping them tackle the original text. By the time readers finish these three volumes, they've (hopefully) unconsciously learned Spenser's vocabulary, his rhythm, his way of thinking. They're ready for the original in a way that would have been impossible starting cold. My dream is that English departments will start using this rendering as a bridge text, and that fantasy readers will discover that they can actually read one of their genre's founding documents. Success for me is more people reading original Spenser, not fewer.
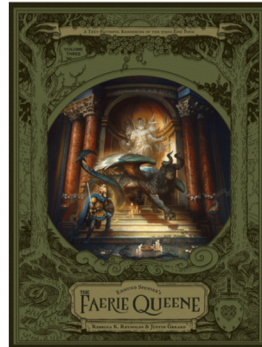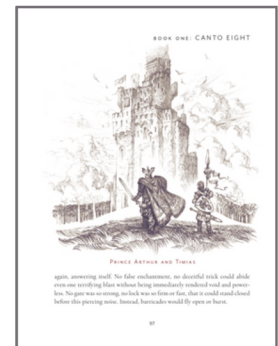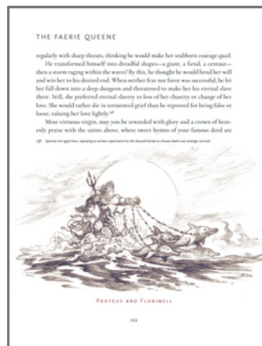
Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

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High-Res Images Available Online, Social Media Assets

Sample of Spenser's Original Text and the Reynolds Rendering

BOOK FOUR
CANTO ONE

FAIR BRITOMART SAVES AMORET; DUESSA BREEDS DISCORD BETWEEN
SCUDAMOUR AND BLANDAMOUR. THEIR FIGHT AND WARLIKE DEEDS.[193]

OF louers sad calamities of old,
  Full many piteous stories doe remaine,
  But none more piteous euer was ytold,
  Then that of *Amorets* hart-binding chaine,
  And this of *Florimels* vnworthie paine:
  The deare compassion of whose bitter fit
  My softened heart so sorely doth constraine,
  That I with teares full oft doe pittie it,
And oftentimes doe wish it neuer had bene writ.

For from the time that *Scudamour* her bought
  In perilous fight, she neuer ioyed day,
  A perilous fight when he with force her brought
  From twentie Knights, that did him all assay:
  Yet fairely well he did them all dismay:
  And with great glorie both the shield of loue,
  And eke the Ladie selfe he brought away,
  Whom hauing wedded as did him behoue,
A new vnknowen mischiefe did from him remoue.

For that same vile Enchauntour *Busyran*,
  The very selfe same day that she was wedded,
  Amidst the bridale feast, whilest euery man
  Surcharg'd with wine, were heedlesse and ill hedded.
  All bent to mirth before the bride was bedded,
  Brought in that mask of loue which late was showen:
  And there the Ladie ill of friends bestedded,
  By way of sport, as oft in maskes is knowen,
Conueyed quite away to liuing wight vnknowen.

MANY PITIFUL STORIES DESCRIBE THE SAD CALAMITIES of lovers from ancient times. However, never has a more pitiful story been told than that of Amoret's heart-binding chain and Florimell's undeserved pain. Compassion over their bitter plight torments my soft heart, and I often grieve over them with tears, wishing their stories had never been recorded.

Amoret's suffering began even before Busirane had captured her. In fact, she had not been able to enjoy a single day from the time Scudamour had won her in a perilous fight, stealing her forcefully from twenty knights (who assailed him all at once before he vanquished them). With great glory, he brought away both the shield of love and the lady herself—who married him, as was fitting. However, almost immediately, she was taken from him by a new, unknown mischief.[194]

For on the day of their wedding, the vile enchanter Busirane crept among the bridal feast while every man was filled with wine, heedless and ill-headed. All the guests were mirthful in these hours before the bride was taken to bed; and here, that villain appeared in the mask of love recently shown to you. The lady was attended poorly by her friends, and by way of sport (as is so common with masks), Amoret was stolen quite away to a place unknown by any living creature.[195]

193 In Book IV, Spenser shifts from private virtues to public virtues. Spenser had originally written to Raleigh that he planned to make this switch in Books VI-XII, but he seems to have veered off his first intention. James Nohrnberg has noted that friendship (Book IV) is a public manifestation of chastity (Book III), justice (Book V) a public manifestation of temperance (Book II), and courtesy (Book VI) a public manifestation of holiness (Book I). To read more about this fascinating concept, see Nohrnberg (1976:779).
194 Scudamour's fight and his seizure of Amoret will be described in Canto X.
195 In Spenser's time, the spelling of "masque" (a processional, as we saw in III xii) was transitioning from "mask" to "masque." The word "mask" could also refer to a physical mask as well as the act of deception. I think Spenser was likely playing on all three meanings here.

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Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

Endorsements:

"Reynolds's new rendering of *The Faerie Queene* was made for people like me—for those of us who time and again have heard of Spenser's great poem but were too intimidated to read it. We're drawn to the feeling of adventure, mystery, danger, and beauty conjured merely by mention of the title, but fear that maybe we aren't smart enough or wise enough or brave enough to enter in to a old tale so revered by so many. Enter Rebecca Reynolds's incredible mind and mastery of language, coupled with hospitality toward the reader; enter also Justin Gerard, a master artist whose gifts are perfectly suited to a vision like Spenser's. Rather than turned away at the door to elfland, I found myself welcomed in to its wonders by Reynolds's clear and careful handling of the original text—along with her generous footnotes and Gerard's stunning illustrations—and was at once surrounded by knights and warhorses, dwarves and dragons, high beauties and heavy skies. This book does a great service not just to Edmund Spenser, but to those of us who will encounter this grand story for the first time."

Andrew Peterson
Author of *The Wingfeather Saga*

"*The Faerie Queene* is one of the most vivid stories ever written in English—intricate and kinetic and forceful all at the same time. Rebecca Reynolds's faithful rendering makes Edmund Spenser's epic available to a whole new audience of twenty-first-century readers. And Justin Gerard's vibrant illustrations are a reminder that *The Faerie Queene* is the great-grandparent of every fantasy novel you ever loved."

Jonathan Rogers
PhD in 17th Century Literature
 Author of the *Wilderking Trilogy*

Did You Know? (A *Faerie Queene* Fact Sheet)

Invented Language: Spenser deliberately created an archaic language that was never actually spoken by average Elizabethans. He mixed Middle English forms with his own inventions to give the poem an ancient, mythical quality that would make it seem like a rediscovered medieval romance.

Unfinished Epic: Though planned as a twelve-book epic (twice the length of Virgil's Aeneid), Spenser completed only six books and part of a seventh before his death in 1599.

The Spenserian Stanza: Spenser invented his own nine-line stanza form specifically for this poem—eight lines of iambic pentameter followed by a final line with twelve syllables (called an alexandrine). This "Spenserian stanza" became hugely influential in English poetry.

Royal Allegory: *The Faerie Queene* is one of several characters who represent Queen Elizabeth I, and the poem is packed with flattering references to the Virgin Queen.

Multiple Reading Levels: Spenser designed the poem to work on several levels simultaneously. It works as an adventure story, a moral allegory, a political commentary, and a religious statement.

Arthurian Connection: Though Prince Arthur appears throughout the poem, he's not yet king.

Irish Influence: Spenser wrote much of the poem while living in Ireland as a colonial administrator. The Irish landscape and his controversial views on English rule there influenced the work's themes and imagery.

A Real Female Protagonist: Britomart, one of literature's first fully-realized female knight protagonists who chooses knighthood by will rather than disguise or magic. Unlike earlier warrior women in literature, she's neither a disguised maiden nor a supernatural being, but a woman who simply decides to become a knight and proves superior to most male warriors.

Revolutionary Structure: Unlike classical epics that follow one hero's journey, *The Faerie Queene* pioneered the "multiple protagonist" structure where different knights lead separate but interconnected storylines.

Spenser's Influence on English Literature

"Spenser's influence on English poetry can hardly be overestimated. **Keats called him "the poets' poet,"** a title which has been universally approved. "He is the poet of all others," says Mr. Saintsbury, "for those who seek in poetry only poetical qualities." His work has appealed most strongly to those who have been poets themselves, for with him the poetical attraction is supreme. Many of the greatest poets have delighted to call him master, and have shown him the same loving reverence which he gave to Chaucer. Minor poets like Sidney, Drayton, and Daniel paid tribute to his inspiration; Milton was deeply indebted to him, especially in *Lycidas;* and many of the pensive poets of the seventeenth century show traces of his influence. "Spenser delighted Shakespeare," says Mr. Church; "he was the poetical master of Cowley, and then of Milton, and in a sense of Dryden, and even Pope." Giles and Phineas Fletcher, William Browne, Sir William Alexander, Shenstone, Collins, Cowley, Gray, and James Thomson were all direct followers of Spenser. His influence upon the poets of the romantic revival of the nineteenth century is even more marked. **"Spenser begot Keats," says Mr. Saintsbury, "and Keats begot Tennyson, and Tennyson begot all the rest."** Among this notable company of disciples should be mentioned especially Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne. If we include within the sphere of Spenser's influence also those who have made use of the stanza which he invented, we must add the names of Burns, Shelley, Byron, Beattie, Campbell, Scott, and Wordsworth. When we consider the large number of poets in whom Spenser awakened the poetic gift, or those to whose powers he gave direction, **we may safely pronounce him the most seminal poet in the language."**

Dr. George Armstrong Wauchope, 1908

C.S. Lewis (1898-1963) Lewis wrote extensively on Spenser as a scholar and drew heavily on *The Faerie Queene* in his *Chronicles of Narnia* series.

J.R.R. Tolkien (1892-1973) Tolkien listed *The Faerie Queene* among works that influenced his thinking on fairy stories, and several characters in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954) seem to have been inspired or influenced by Spenser's epic.

George MacDonald (1824-1905) MacDonald was directly influenced by Spenser, quoting from The Faerie Queene in his *Phantastes*. The word "Phantastes" itself originates from The Faerie Queene, where it refers to the part of the brain where images collected by the senses are stored before being processed.

Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 159OS EPIC POEM

For Department Chairs, Curriculum Committees, and Renaissance Literature Instructors

The Challenge of Spenser

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* remains one of the most significant yet challenging texts in the English literary canon. While universally acknowledged as foundational to understanding Renaissance allegory, epic tradition, and the development of English poetry, its deliberately archaic language creates an insurmountable barrier for most undergraduate students. Faculty regularly report that students abandon the text within the first canto, missing entirely the sophisticated thematic content that makes Spenser essential to literary education.

A Scholarly Solution

Classical educator Rebecca K. Reynolds spent six years creating a line-by-line prose rendering of *The Faerie Queene,* developed with oversight from Renaissance scholars. This rendering offers an unprecedented pedagogical tool that maintains textual fidelity while providing accessibility. This is not a simplification or summary, but a careful linguistic translation that preserves Spenser's allegorical complexity, narrative structure, and thematic depth while rendering the language comprehensible to contemporary readers.

Pedagogical Innovation

The adaptation employs a gradual immersion methodology: early passages use contemporary prose, while subsequent volumes progressively incorporate Spenser's archaic vocabulary and syntax. By the final volume, students are equipped with the linguistic familiarity necessary to engage directly with the original text. This scaffolded approach transforms *The Faerie Queene* from an insurmountable hurdle into an achievable learning progression.

Author Presentations Include:

- "Bridging Centuries: Pedagogical Innovation in Teaching Spenser"
- "Preserving Allegorical Complexity in Textual Adaptation"
- "When Justice Becomes Tyranny: Deconstructing Spenser's Authoritarian Fantasy""
- The Making of a King: The Education of Prince Arthur in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*"
- "From Fragmentation to Transcendence: *The Mutabilitie Cantos* as Spiritual Breakthrough"
- "Neither Angel nor Monster: Britomart's Humanity Amid a Tradition of Flattened Female Types"

Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene
A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

Undergraduate Curriculum Integration Suggestions
(More Available Upon Request)

High School Honors English Literature (Grades 10-12)
Unit: "Heroes and Quests: From Ancient Epics to Modern Fantasy"
Duration: 3-4 weeks
Reading: Reynolds adaptation, Book I (The Red Cross Knight) + selected passages from Book III (Britomart)
Pairing with: Excerpts from T*he Odyssey, Beowulf,* or age-appropriate Arthurian legends
Skills focus: Character development, symbolism, quest narrative structure
Creative project: Students design their own allegorical quest, identifying what virtues their knight represents
Assessment: Character analysis essay comparing Spenser's knights to modern heroes

High School AP English Literature (Grade 12)
Unit: "Allegory and Symbol in Literature"
Duration: 4-5 weeks
Reading: Reynolds adaptation, Books I and II (complete)
AP Skills alignment: Complex literary analysis, historical context, thematic interpretation
Writing focus: AP-style essay prompts analyzing allegorical techniques
Comparative analysis: Spenser's allegory vs. other AP texts (*The Scarlet Letter, The Great Gatsby, Animal Farm,* etc.)
Mock AP question: "How does Spenser use the Red Cross Knight's journey to explore themes of spiritual growth?"

High School Creative Writing (Grades 10-12)
Unit: "Writing Fantasy: Building Imaginary Worlds"
Duration: 3 weeks
Reading: Reynolds adaptation, Book III (Britomart's story) as model for character-driven fantasy
Skills focus: World-building, symbolic character creation, sustained narrative voice
Workshop component: Students peer-review allegorical short stories
Final project: Original short story using allegorical techniques learned from Spenser.

We can provide:
- Faculty review copies
- Curriculum integration consultation

Undergraduate Curriculum Integration Suggestions
(More Available Upon Request)

Composition & Rhetoric
Unit: "Complex Narrative Construction"
Duration: 2 weeks
Skills focus: Sustained allegory, interwoven plot lines, character development
Reading: Reynolds adaptation, Book IV
Analysis paper: Examine how Spenser maintains coherence across complex narrative threads

Medieval & Early Modern Survey
Unit placement: "The Chivalric and The Pastoral"
Duration: 3 weeks
Reading sequence: Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* → Reynolds' *Faerie Queene* (Books I, VI) → excerpts from Sidney
Focus: Spenser's integration of both chivalric and pastoral conventions as he moves through *The Faerie Queene.*
Assignment: Evaluate the pastoral nature of Book VI in light of the chivalric traditions established in Book I.

Fantasy Literature & Genre Studies
Foundational unit: "Where Fantasy Began"
Duration: 4 weeks
Reading sequence: Spenser (Reynolds adaptation) → MacDonald → Lewis → Contemporary authors
Creative project: Student creation of modern allegorical fantasy drawing on Spenserian techniques
Research paper: Influence mapping from *The Faerie Queene* to chosen modern work

Ethics & Literature (Philosophy/English crossover)
Case Study: "When Justice Becomes Tyranny"
Duration: 3 weeks
Reading sequence: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (justice) → Spenser Book V → modern totalitarian literature
Discussion focus: Rigid vs. flexible justice, mercy vs. law, individual vs. state authority
Philosophical questions: Can perfect justice exist? What are the dangers of mechanized enforcement?
Assessment: Students write position papers defending or critiquing Artegall's methods using both literary and philosophical evidence

Edmund Spenser's The Faerie Queene

A TEXT-FAITHFUL RENDERING OF THE 1590S EPIC POEM

400-Year Old Source Code of Fantasy Literature Unlocked

This is where it all began. Every fantasy trope you love (knights on quests, magical forests, shapeshifting villains, allegorical naming, multi-book epic structure) was crystallized in Spenser's 1590s masterpiece. *The Faerie Queene* didn't just influence modern fantasy; it created the template fantasy authors have followed.

For 400 years, fantasy's founding text has been locked away behind archaic language that defeated even dedicated readers. Now, Rebecca K. Reynolds's prose adaptation of Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* finally makes the DNA of modern fantasy accessible to the community that most needs to discover it.

For the Gaming Community
This is your source material. In *The Faerie Queene*, you will find the paladin, fighter, ranger, cleric, witch, artificer, monk, sorcerer, shapeshifter, fallen knight, nature spirit, dragon, and construct—essentially every archetypal character that defines fantasy RPGs.

Campaign Structure: *The Faerie Queene* pioneered the episodic quest structure that defines tabletop RPGs. Here you will find interconnected but standalone adventures where characters cross between storylines, moral choices carry real consequences, and rich world-building drives political intrigue across multiple campaign arcs.

Monster Manual Origins: Spenser created the fantasy bestiary you know: shapeshifting villains, symbolic dragons, enchanted forests with sentient threats, and magical artifacts that test character morality became the template for every fantasy game's creature catalog.

Video Game Parallels: *The Faerie Queene* functions like an RPG. Knights face trials that strip away illusions, multiple protagonists weave intersecting stories like modern open-world design, and moral choices shape character development exactly like contemporary game systems.

For Content Creators: This is untapped goldmine material. 400 years of fantasy influence wait to be explored through podcasts analyzing literary DNA, videos breaking down character archetypes, and blog series connecting Renaissance allegory to modern gaming culture. Possible topics include:

- "Your D&D Character Has a 400-Year-Old Ancestor"
- "The Secret History of Fantasy Literature"
- "Why Every Fantasy Author Steals from This 400-Year-Old Book"
- "The Epic That Broke Fantasy (And How to Finally Read It)"
- "From Dragons to Dungeons: How One Renaissance Poet Built Modern Fantasy"
- "Character Breakdowns of Spenser's Knights as D&D Builds"
- "World-Building Lessons from *The Faerie Queene*"
- "How to Run a Spenser-Inspired D&D Campaign"
- "Reading *The Faerie Queene* as a Fantasy Gamer"