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In this indispensable introductory study of the sonnet, Michael R.G. Spiller takes the reader on an illuminating guided tour. He begins with the invention of the sonnet in thirteenth-century Italy and traces its progress through to the time of Milton, showing how the form has developed and acquired the capacity to express lyrically 'the nature of the desiring self'. In doing so he provides a concise critical account of the major British sonnet writers in relation to the sonnet's history. Tailor-made for students' needs, this will be an essential purchase for anyone studying this enduring poetic form.

Poets covered include: Petrarch, Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton and Dante.