

# ALDA MERINI

ITALY (1931–2009)

LANGUAGE: ITALIAN

POETIC FORM: QUATRAINS

## UNTITLED

Le più belle poesie  
si scrivono sopra le pietre  
coi ginocchi piagati  
e le menti aguzzate dal mistero.

Le più belle poesie si scrivono  
davanti a un altare vuoto,  
accerchiati da agenti  
della divina follia.



Alda Merini is one of Italy's most beloved poets. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature. Born in Milan on the first day of spring, she began writing at a young age. As an adult, she suffered from mental illness and spent more than twenty years in psychiatric hospitals. This experience influenced her writing. Her poems discuss solitude, love, magic, and the beauty that can be found even in sad, difficult moments. Of her poetry, she once said: "I find verses by dipping my inkwell into the sky."

TRANSLATOR'S GLOSSARY		
WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
accerchiati da (adj.+ prep.)	at the center of a circle or things or people	surrounded by, encircled by
agenti (n.)	people who assist or help in doing a task	helpers, aides, mediators, supporters
aguzzate (adj.)	having a sharp edge or point	sharpened, pointed, honed
altare (n.)	a place where religious rituals are celebrated	altar, platform
coi (prep.)	accompanied by another person or thing	with, accompanied by
dal (prep.)	expressing cause or agency	by, through, as a result of, with
davanti a (prep.)	indicates direction or position	in front of, facing, before
della (prep.)	expressing ownership or the relationship between a part and a whole	of the, from the
divina (adj.)	used to describe something godlike or heavenly	divine, holy, godly
e (conj.)	in addition to	and, as well as
follia (n.)	a state of mental weakness or strangeness	madness, folly, insanity
ginocchi (n.)	the joints in the middle of the legs	knees
le (art.)	refers to a person, place, or thing that is unique	the
menti (n.)	the parts of humans that think and feel	minds, heads, thoughts, brains
mistero (n.)	something with a hidden or secret meaning, beyond human comprehension	mystery, enigma, riddle
piagati (adj.)	having traces of an injury	scarred, wounded, hurt
pietre (n.)	a hard mineral material	rocks, stones, pebbles

WORD	DEFINITION	POSSIBLE SYNONYMS
più belle (superlative adj.)	most pleasing to the senses	finest, loveliest, most beautiful
poesie (n.)	compositions often including rhyme, rhythm, or line breaks	poems, poetry, verses
si scrivono (v.)	from the verb <i>scrivere</i> , meaning to write	are written, we write
sopra (prep.)	at a higher level than	above, on top of, over
un (pron.)	used to refer to someone or something for the first time	a, an, one
vuoto (adj.)	containing nothing	empty, vacant, bare

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

## PHRASE BY PHRASE

UNTITLED \_\_\_\_\_

Le più belle poesie \_\_\_\_\_

si scrivono sopra le pietre \_\_\_\_\_

coi ginocchi piagati \_\_\_\_\_

e le menti aguzzate dal mistero. \_\_\_\_\_

Le più belle poesie si scrivono \_\_\_\_\_

davanti a un altare vuoto, \_\_\_\_\_

accerchiati da agenti \_\_\_\_\_

della divina follia. \_\_\_\_\_



## DEFENDING YOUR TRANSLATION—FINDING THE MEANING

Group Member Names:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Pick a scribe for the group, and work together to answer the questions.

What are the best parts of this translation, and why do you think they are good?

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What elements of the original poem did you lose in the translation? What did you manage to keep?

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Did you achieve something new with your translation, and if so, does it make sense in the poem or not?

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