

Literature Insights
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*Gerard Manley
Hopkins: Selected
Poems*

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Part 1. Life and Times

1.1 Early life and Schooldays

Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in 1844 at Stratford in Essex, the eldest of nine children, several of whom were talented. Two of his brothers, Arthur and Everard grew up to be artists and illustrators for prominent publications such as *Punch* and the *Illustrated London News*. A brother, Lionel, became a Consul in China and an expert on the Chinese language, while a sister, Grace, had skills as a musician and composer. The children's father, Manley Hopkins, acted as Consul-General for Hawaii, pursued a profession as a marine insurance adjuster and was, by degrees, mathematician, poet, novelist and reviewer. His wife, Kate, was well-educated with literary and musical tastes and a competence in languages, and his sister, Ann ('Aunt Annie'), a



'Gerard Manley Hopkins'
by Anne Eleanor Hopkins (1859)
National Portrait Gallery, London

talented painter, produced the portrait of G. M. Hopkins at the age of fourteen which is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London. In Gerard, it seems, all these various accomplishments in language, in literature, art and music came together to produce in the course of time the unique corpus of poetry that would make him famous.

The Hopkins family was solidly middle-class and Anglican in religion. From childhood, Gerard shared their devoutness which deepened as he matured, leading finally to his conversion to Catholicism and ordination into the Roman Catholic priesthood. When he was eight years old the family moved from Stratford to fashionable Hampstead in North London and he was sent to Highgate School. There he became friendly with, among others, Marcus