Adelaide Crapsey was born in Brooklyn Heights, New York. She attended Vassar College in 1897, where she was class poet for three years, editor-in-chief of her senior yearbook, and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. She is known as the inventor of the cinquain (five non-rhyming lines varying stresses), which she introduced in her 1914 collection Verse. She spent much of her life studying English prosody. Her early work consists mainly of elegies and short poems. The bulk of her work was written after she was admitted to a private tuberculosis sanatorium in 1913. She died shortly after the book was published.