Thomas Gray was born in London and was the only of twelve siblings to survive. Although his family had a modest income, Gray was able to attend Eton and Cambridge with his uncle’s help. In 1742 he wrote his first important poems, including “Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.” When he wrote, he perfected each line before moving on to the next; he took years to complete “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” now one of the most frequently quoted English poems.