Born fifty years ago this fall, undergraduates were assigned their freshman's survey of English literature. Here, M. H. Abrams, general editor, discuss the history of the anthology, the challenges attended to class and read it anywhere, including under a tree as the original prefaced said. I think we still do say that.

How much has the anthology changed over the years?

For a prospective undergraduate reading this Q. and A., how would you answer the question, "Is the Norton Anthology still useful and relevant today?"

What is the most significant change the anthology has undergone over the years?

The anthology changes, but it is meant to last. Even now in its somewhat bulky form, people leave my classes feeling like poetry is something that is alive and relevant to their lives—not just something practiced by dead white guys with patches on their elbows.