

3. *Songs of Innocence*

London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1954

This title page represents well Blake's view of innocence by focusing our attention on the attractive, positive aspects of natural human feelings, thoughts, and actions before they are spoiled and corrupted by experience. The poems in *Songs of Innocence* also convey a child-like quality --- one which demonstrates the belief that all children are born innocent, naïve, and pure. As the piper/singer/writer of the volume expresses, "And I wrote my happy songs/ Every child may joy to hear."

The details and colors in this introductory print are significant. The lettering for "S O N G S" has a florid, youthful, bouncy touch. The citrus-colored letters that stand out from the turquoise background in this copy are very decorative and cheerful to represent zest and hopefulness. The use of light, sherbet-like watercolors further enhances the feeling of innocence. Two details that foreshadow the "Introduction" to the volume are the Piper leaning against the letter "I" of "Innocence" and the writer or reader standing within the letter "N" of "S O N G S." In the fourth stanza of the "Introduction," the "child" on a "cloud" commands, "Piper sit thee down and write in a book that all may read," which could be a direct reference to Blake himself. The sepia-toned tree and the vine that wraps around its trunk also stand out. The tree with its dangling fruit above the children may represent the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil while the vine may represent youth and learning. In the foreground, an experienced mother or nurse in a lilac-colored dress reads from a book to two pure-minded, yet eager-to-learn children on the inevitable path that will take them from innocence to experience.

--- Brooke Yanow '03