



## *A Mother's Guiding Poems for Her Children, 1757*

In 1757 Martha Wadsworth Brewster, a Connecticut mother in her twenties, composed two acrostic poems of advice for her young children. In acrostics, a popular format of the time, the first letters in each line of a stanza spell out a word or name. What are her guiding principles for her children? How does her advice to her son differ from that to her daughter?

### *An Acrostic for my only Son*

**W**hile Amorous, Gay, and Sanguine swells thy Veins,  
**A**n Offspring of first Fruits, *Jehovah* Claims.  
**D**ue Odours of a sweet Perfume Present,  
**S**teep'd in the Blood of the new Covenant;  
**W**hat vulgar Notes Applaud, must be Suspected;  
**O**bedience to the Standard ne'er Neglected;  
**R**etire within the Mind, and shut the Door,  
**T**o all disord'ed Passions, Rude and Sow'r,  
**H**ere summons, and exert each Manly Pow'r.

**B**Y Adequate, and Studious Observation,  
**R**ise to the Poles, then dive to Navigation.  
**E**arly enrich thy Heart with moral Virtues,  
**W**hereby to rectify inverted Nature:  
**S**urvey the Globe of Man, then turn thine Eyes  
**T**o search through Nature's obscure Mysteries;  
**E**nvoy may Hiss in Vain, at virt'ous Minds,  
**R**egent in her own Breast, she sits Enshrin'd.

### *An Acrostic for my only Daughter*

**R**ecieve good Counsel of the Wise, nor let  
**U**nhallow'd Lips Provoke, or Cause to Fret.  
**B**e Wise and Virt'ous, Modest, Chaste and Grave,  
**I**ncrease in Learning, practice what you have,  
**E**nter the List 'gainst Sin, with Courage Brave.

**B**E not Exalted far above your Sphere;  
**R**egard those Minds that truly Noble are:  
**E**steem a real Friend, if such there be;  
**W**ith Kindness overcome an Enemy:  
**S**et not your Heart on Pomp, and Worldly Pleasure,  
**T**is not a lasting, nor a solid Treasure.  
**E**mploy your Thoughts on Good, delight in Reading,  
**R**ecieve the *Lord*, and Live, and Die Believing.