Skelton, John, 1460-1529, English poet and humanist. Tutor to Prince Henry (later Henry VIII), he later (c.1502) became rector of Diss, Norfolk. In 1512 he began to call himself royal orator, a position that may have been conferred by Henry VIII requiring that Skelton carry on some royal correspondence and write occasional official poems. Philip Sparrow. Many of his works are written in verse forms he himself devised, called Skeltonics. They consist of short lines and insistent rhymes, sometimes repeated through several sets of couplets; they also employ alliteration. Skelton, John, 1460-1529, English poet and humanist. Tutor to Prince Henry (later Henry VIII), he later (c.1502) became rector of Diss, Norfolk. In 1512 he began to call himself royal orator, a position that may have been conferred by Henry VIII requiring that Skelton carry on some royal correspondence and write occasional official poems. Many of his works are written in verse forms he himself devised, called Skeltonics. They consist of short lines and insistent rhymes, sometimes repeated through several sets of couplets; they also employ alliteration. Read more →. Poems is a compilation of 12 of his works, and although the author did write more (and for most of his life), a great number of his works wouldn’t come to be published until late in his life, and even more posthumously (Poems is published in 1969). Biography. While much is alluded to about the life of John Skelton not much is actually known, and what is known is conflicting (John Skelton, and its variants, being common names) or omitted by him throughout the breadth of his works. These poems by Skelton were largely written in the late 15th century ushering in the early Renaissance period. This period was a time full of exploration and conquest. A selection of his works was edited by WH Williams (London, 1902). See also Zur Charakteristik John Skeletons by Dr Arthur Koelbing (Stuttgart, 1904); F Brie, “Skelton Studien” in Englische Studien, vol. 38 (Heilbronn, 1877, etc.); A Rey, Skelton's Satirical Poems (Beme, 1899); A Thummel, Studien über John Skelton (Leipzig-Reudnitz, 1905); G Saintsbury, Hist. of Eng. Prosody (vol. i, 1906); and A Kolbing in the Cambridge History of English Literature (vol. iii, 1909). The Poems of John Skelton Complete works in modern spelling with notes, for online reading and multiple download formats at Exclassics. Skelton's Grave. Ware the Hawk. THE INTERPRETATION of the poetry of John Skelton, the greatest English poet to have been born in the fifteenth century,¹ that I put forth here is admittedly a partial one. But it is an essential perspective in appreciating Skelton’s particular inventiveness and a necessary modification of the exclusive picture of Skelton as an early Tudor humanist (in the work of William Nelson), a poet chiefly concerned with medieval strategies of satire (as seen by A. R. Heiserman), or a poet who invokes a reader-response through his personal. All of these previous readers of Skelton have given us special insights, but they have not presented the comprehensive evaluation we seek nor even, I think, the basic thrust and aesthetic of Skelton’s poems. His primary vocation was that of a priest, not a