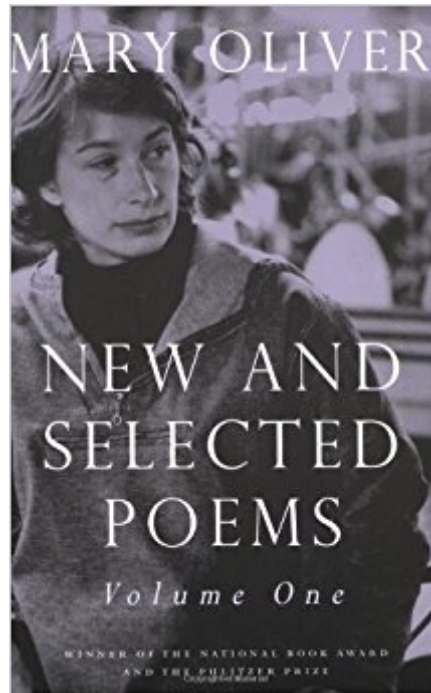




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New And Selected Poems, Volume One



Synopsis

When *New and Selected Poems, Volume One* was originally published in 1992, Mary Oliver was awarded the National Book Award. In the fourteen years since its initial appearance it has become one of the best-selling volumes of poetry in the country. This collection features thirty poems published only in this volume as well as selections from the poet's first eight books. Mary Oliver's perceptive, brilliantly crafted poems about the natural landscape and the fundamental questions of life and death have won high praise from critics and readers alike. "Do you love this world?" she interrupts a poem about peonies to ask the reader. "Do you cherish your humble and silky life?" She makes us see the extraordinary in our everyday lives, how something as common as light can be "an invitation/to happiness,/and that happiness,/when it's done right,/is a kind of holiness,/palpable and redemptive." She illuminates how a near miss with an alligator can be the catalyst for seeing the world "as if for the second time/the way it really is." Oliver's passionate demonstrations of delight are powerful reminders of the bond between every individual, all living things, and the natural world.

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Customer Reviews

Praise for the poetry of Mary Oliver: 'One of the astonishing aspects of Oliver's work is the consistency of tone over this long period. What changes is an increased focus on nature and an increased precision with language that has made her one of our very best poets . . . There is no complaint in Ms. Oliver's poetry, no whining, but neither is there the sense that life is in any way easy . . . These poems sustain us rather than divert us. Although few poets have fewer human beings in their poems than Mary Oliver, it is ironic that few poets also go so far to help us forward.'

-Stephen Dobyns, New York Times Book Review' Mary Oliver's poetry is fine and deep; it reads like a blessing. Her special gift is to connect us with our sources in the natural world, its beauties and terrors and mysteries and consolations.' -Stanley Kunitz' One would have to reach back perhaps to [John] Clare or [Christopher] Smart to safely cite a parallel to Oliver's lyricism or radical purification and her unappeasable mania for signs and wonders.' -David Barber, Poetry' I have always thought of poems as my companions-and like companions, they accompany you wherever the journey (or the afternoon) might lead . . . My most recent companion has been Mary Oliver's *The Leaf and the Cloud* . . . It's a brilliant meditation, a walk through the natural world with one of our preeminent contemporary poets.' -Rita Dove, Washington Post

A private person by nature, Mary Oliver has given very few interviews over the years. Instead, she prefers to let her work speak for itself. And speak it has, for the past five decades, to countless readers. The New York Times recently acknowledged Mary Oliver as "far and away, this country's best-selling poet." Born in a small town in Ohio, Oliver published her first book of poetry in 1963 at the age of 28; *No Voyage and Other Poems*, originally printed in the UK by Dent Press, was reissued in the United States in 1965 by Houghton Mifflin. Oliver has since published many works of poetry and prose. As a young woman, Oliver studied at Ohio State University and Vassar College, but took no degree. She lived for several years at the home of Edna St. Vincent Millay in upper New York state, companion to the poet's sister Norma Millay. It was there, in the late 1950s, that she met photographer Molly Malone Cook. For more than forty years, Cook and Oliver made their home together, largely in Provincetown, Massachusetts, where they lived until Cook's death in 2005. Over the course of her long and illustrious career, Oliver has received numerous awards. Her fourth book, *American Primitive*, won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984. She has also received the Shelley Memorial Award; a Guggenheim Fellowship; an American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters Achievement Award; the Christopher Award and the L.L. Winship/PEN New England Award for House of Light; the National Book Award for New and Selected Poems; a Lannan Foundation Literary Award; and the New England Booksellers Association Award for Literary Excellence. Oliver's essays have appeared in *Best American Essays* 1996, 1998, 2001; the *Anchor Essay Annual* 1998, as well as *Orion*, *Onearth* and other periodicals. Oliver was editor of *Best American Essays* 2009. Oliver's books on the craft of poetry, *A Poetry Handbook* and *Rules for the Dance*, are used widely in writing programs. She is an acclaimed reader and has read in practically every state as well as other countries. She has led workshops at various colleges and universities, and held

residencies at Case Western Reserve University, Bucknell University, University of Cincinnati, and Sweet Briar College. From 1995, for five years, she held the Catharine Osgood Foster Chair for Distinguished Teaching at Bennington College. She has been awarded Honorary Doctorates from The Art Institute of Boston (1998), Dartmouth College (2007) and Tufts University (2008). Oliver currently lives in Provincetown, Massachusetts, the inspiration for much of her work. Beacon Press maintains a Mary Oliver website, maryoliver.beacon.org. You can also become a fan on Facebook at www.facebook.com/poetmaryoliver.

Mary Oliver overwhelms my visual and auditory senses with her language; it is precise and controlled; her imagery is brilliant. Using carefully chosen words she captures the "essence" of living things in the natural world. Each work is masterful and seems a deep meditation that leaves a reader feeling refreshed and somehow privy to a personal, even private part of the poet as an investigator and witness to nature and its secrets. Each time I read one of her poems I feel as if she is inviting me into the woods with her to witness the natural world in all of its sacredness. I have yet to read a poem of hers that disappointed me. Her mood-infused poem "Rain" (the first poem in the book) is sublime; and "Mushrooms" is glorious! Read "Mushrooms" slowly and listen to the language; see the imagery in the mind: Rain, and then the cool pursed lips of the wind draw them out of the ground---red and yellow skulls pummeling upward through leaves, through grasses, through sand; astonishing in their suddenness, their quietude, their wetness, they appear on fall mornings, some balancing in the earth on one hoof packed with poison, others billowing chunkily, and delicious---those who know walk out to gather, choosing the benign from flocks of glitterers, sorcerers, russulas, panther caps, shark-white death angels in their torn veils looking innocent as sugar but full of paralysis: to eat is to stagger down fast as mushrooms themselves when they are done being perfect and overnight slide back under the shining fields of rain. My God! I don't think that even a mushroom would know itself in that way. She is a sublime witness to the natural world. Mary Oliver is one of my favorite poets -- and let me tell you, I don't have many "favorite poets". I recommend this poetry collection to you!

I admit to not liking most of the contemporary poems and poets I have read in various poem publications and books. Many of the so-called modern free verse poems today are incomprehensible and absolutely meaningless with no purpose except to confuse anyone reading them. The old masters will always remain my favorite poets. However, after reading a recently published Mary Oliver book of poems, which I enjoyed, I decided to read more of her poems. This poetry collection (New and Selected Poems by Mary Oliver) was published in 1992 and includes a

large number of her poems created between 1963 and 1992. Her poetry is often beautiful, easy to understand and have real meaning. This poems in this volume are organized into the years they were written. New poems (1991-1992), from House of light (1990), from Dream work (1986), from American primitive (1983), from Twelve Moons (1979), from The night traveler and Sleeping in the forest (1978 also includes five poems not previously published in any volume), from The river Styx, Ohio and other poems (1972), and from No voyage and other poems (1963-1965). There are so many wonderful poems in this collection that it is difficult to choose any favorite ones, but here is just a small sample of the ones I really liked a lot. When death comes, The waterfall, October, The sea, Wild Geese, Starfish, Sunrise, Lightening, and The first snow. In conclusion, if you are a fan of Mary Oliver's poetry, you should check out this volume. Rating: 4 Stars. Joseph J. Truncale (Author: The Samurai Soul: An old warrior's poetic tribute)

The best poems say with words that which can't be said with words. I know that sounds like double-talk, but it's true. The best poems act as catalysts, creating emotions and connections in us that the words taken by themselves just don't convey. For example, veteran poet Mary Oliver's poem "Rain" (the first in her "New and Selected Poems, Volume One") opens with "All afternoon it rained, then / such power came down from the clouds / on a yellow thread, / as authoritative as God is supposed to be. / When it hit the tree, her body / opened forever." Beautiful, profound, and any attempt at explanation effectively kills the poetry. Mary Oliver's poems are like that: clear imagery, simple language, common themes brought together like "power . . . on a yellow thread" that packs a wallop. How's THIS for a brightly-lit thought: "Is the soul solid, like iron? / Or is it tender and breakable, like / the wings of a moth in the beak of the owl?" And this seasoned poet has a few observations about life to share with us: "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. / You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves." I've already ordered her "New and Selected Poems, Volume Two."

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