



The Portable Beat Reader (Penguin Classics)

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The Portable Beat Reader (Penguin Classics) From imusti

Beginning in the late 1940's, American literature discovered a four-letter word, and the word was "beat." Beat as in poverty and beatitude, ecstasy and exile. Beat was Jack Kerouac touring the American road in prose as fast and reckless as a V-8 Chevy. It was the junk-sick surrealism of William Burroughs; the wild, Whitmanesque poetry of Allen Ginsberg; and the lumberjack Zen of Gary Snyder.

The Portable Beat Reader collects the most significant writing of these and fellow members (and spiritual descendants) of the Beat Generation, including Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, Diane di Prima, Bob Dylan, Leroi Jones, and Michael McClure. In poetry, fiction, essays, song lyrics, letters, and memoirs, it captures the triumphant rudeness, energy, and exhilaration of a movement that swept through American letters with hurricane force.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

The Portable Beat Reader is an excellent and thorough study of the Beat Generation, compiled and edited by Ann Charters, biographer of Jack Kerouac and one of our most notable experts on Beat literature and ideas. This lively work of scholarship goes deeply into the history of the Beat movement, investigating events such as the discovery (by writer William Burroughs) of the word *beat* to describe this literary generation. The reader includes essays on all the major prose and poetry writers, such as Allen Ginsberg, and offers rare insight into the literary-historical context of the movement.

From Publishers Weekly

Cutting through bohemian posturing and excess, Charters here reprints much of the most vital, readable and relevant material produced by the Beat generation, primarily in the 1950s and '60s, with some selections from the '70s and '80s. The novels of such leading figures as Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs lend themselves well to excerpting, giving this volume creditable ballast. Representative works of Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Gary Snyder are included along with those of lesser-known Beats (e.g., John Clellon Holmes), fellow travelers like Frank O'Hara and Amiri Baraka, and wives and girlfriends often overlooked at the time, including Hettie Jones, Carolyn Cassady and Joyce Johnson. Charters (Kerouac) offers a broad perspective on this seminal literary movement: she links East Coast Beats to the San Francisco Renaissance poets; pays attention to such latter-day Beats as Ed Sanders and Tuli Kupferberg; and explains the position of non-Beat but related writers--Alan Watts, Anne Waldman, Diane DiPrima and the young Norman Mailer--in her helpful introductory essay and notes preceeding each entry. Her energizing, liberating anthology makes it clear that such Beat preoccupations as the bomb, the meaninglessness of modern existence and ecological destruction remain current.

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From Library Journal

Charters, a noted critic of the Beat generation and Jack Kerouac's first biographer, has chosen a representative sample of Beat writings for the latest addition to the Viking "Portables" series. Arranged chronologically in six sections, it includes excerpts from Kerouac's *On the Road* , Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* , and William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* , as well as work by Herbert Huncke, Ray Bremser, and lesser-known figures. "Beat" is used in its broadest sense to cover the San Francisco Renaissance poets and others, including Bob Dylan, who were influenced by or were sympathetic to the Beats. Robert Creeley's work is conspicuously absent. A general introduction as well as introductions to each section attempt to "situate the writers in their political, social, and literary contexts." This is highly recommended.

- William Gargan, *Brooklyn Coll. Lib., CUNY*

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Users Review

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