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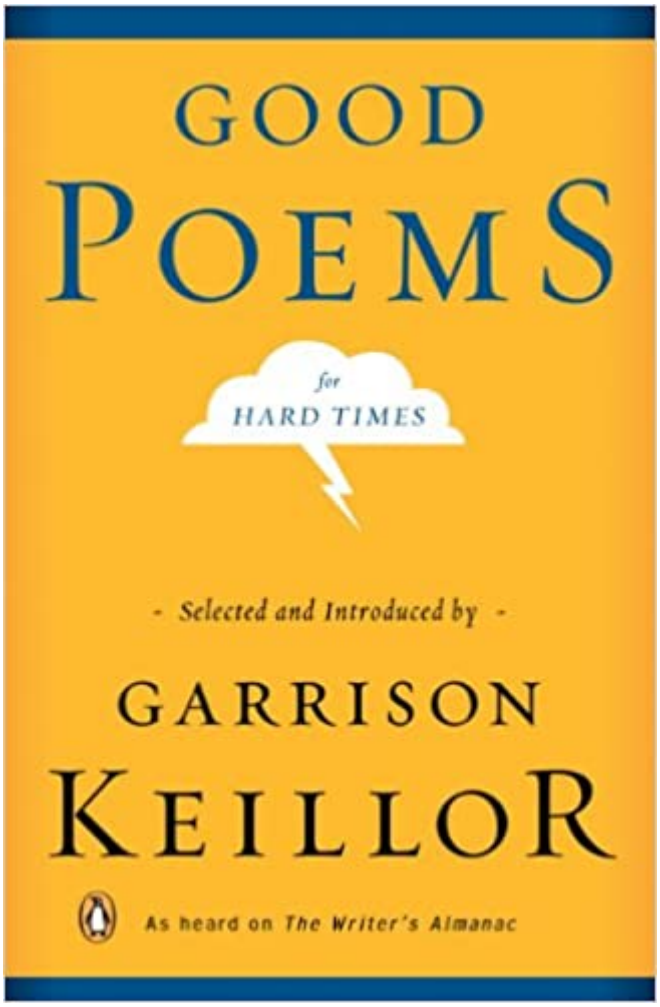
Good Poems For Hard Times



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Synopsis

Chosen by Garison Keillor for his readings on public radio's The Writer's Almanac, the 185 poems in this follow-up to his acclaimed anthology Good Poems are perfect for our troubled times. Here, readers will find solace in works that are bracing and courageous, organized into such resonant headings as "Such As It Is More or Less" and "Let It Spill." From William Shakespeare and Walt Whitman to R. S. Gwynn and Jennifer Michael Hecht, the voices gathered in this collection will be more than welcome to those who've been struck by bad news, who are burdened by stress, or who simply appreciate the power of good poetry.

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Customer Reviews

Having revived the radio variety program with A Prairie Home Companion Garrison Keillor turned to broadcasting poetry in the daily short feature The Writer's Almanac. In any given week, probably more people hear him read poems than attend poetry readings and slams. That's good because his taste is excellent. But then, his criteria are golden. For him, a poem is good if it's memorable, recitable, and accessible. The almost-unheard-of-for-poetry sales of Good Poems (2002) suggest that many endorse his taste and criteria, and the sequel to that success gives them no reason to change their minds. As before, the range of poets represented is broad contemporarily (the majority are alive or very recently deceased) and historically (sixteenth to twenty-first century), though not internationally, for, with one exception (Psalm 51), English is these poems' language of origin. As before, too, these are predominantly poems of domesticity and ordinary things, and when a poem

touches the genuinely extraordinary, it is related to everyday life; for instance, Stephen Dobyns' "Thelonious Monk" relates a particular instance of a kind of experience virtually everyone has--the discovery of greatness. Even those tired of Lake Wobegon, or who think Keillor's a bigoted Democrat (especially after Homemade Democrat, 2004), should grant that he knows good poetry. Ray OlsonCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Praise for Good Poems for Hard Times"If I could choose only one book to give every inhabitant of post-Katrina New Orleans, it would be Garrison Keillor's remarkable and wide-ranging collection of Good Poems for Hard Times. What a lovely, consoling book, perfect reading for these days when everyone is struggling with something . . . the 185 poems in this collection do help."Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •The Times-Picayune (New Orleans)Ã Â "Irresistible."Ã¢â ¬â •The Arizona Republic"[Keillor's] taste is excellent. . . . [H]e knows good poetry." Ã¢â ¬â •Booklist"Those ready to whet their appetites would do well to start with Good Poems for Hard Times." Ã¢â ¬â •The Cleveland Plain DealerÃ Â

Garrison Keillor continues in his quest to bring poetry to the man and woman on the street in this his third collection of poems "as heard on the Writer's Almanac." Certainly he is to be commended for being the one individual who has done more than anyone else-- with the possible exception of perhaps Bill Collins--to bring new poetry converts into his church. Many is the time that I have sat in my car, having arrived at my destination before Mr. Keiller has finished his poem for the day in that immediately recognizable soothing voice of his, to get a fix for the day from his reading. (And sometimes I have ordered an obscure volume of poetry from an unknown poet he has just read, only to discover that too often Mr. K. has read the best poem in the collection!)No amateur with words, himself, Mr. Keillor writes a decent introduction about his childhood in Minnesota, family travels, and how grade school teachers ruin poetry for our youth. "Americans are impatient with riddles and so they give poetry a wide berth, knowing from Miss Fernwood's 8th grade English class that a page of writing with an uneven right margin means a series of jokes with no punch lines, a puzzle with no right answers." Too often poets whom Keillor describes as "upward-striving" write about Europe, but not the writers he has selected in this collection of over 260 poems. He gives a whole laundry list of subjects that these poems write about, purely American, and Europe be damned.Mr. Keillor includes a lot of poems from poets I know and like: Wendell Berry, Robert Bly, Charles Bukowski, Raymond Carver, Billy Collins, Stephen Dunn, Allen Ginsberg, Donald Hall,

Robinson Jeffers, Galway Kinnell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Grace Paley, Kenneth Rexroth, Theodore Roethke, W. D. Snodgdrass, Gary Snyder, William Stafford, John Updike, James Tate, Marge Percy, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Sara Teasdale, May Sarton, Donald Justice, Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Carlos Williams, Anne Sexton, Dana Gioia--and of course the father and mother of twentieth century American poetry, Mr. Whitman and Ms. Dickinson. Mr. Keiller even includes Johnny Cash for his "Folsom Prison Blues." (I cannot imagine, however, hearing anyone read this poem rather than sing it.)There are even more poets I've never heard of in this big collection in praise of America. My two favorites are from poets previously unknown to me: The first is "Bridal Shower" by George Bilgere, a poem that resonated with me to the 12th power. I suspect others feel just as strongly about people who talk on cell phones in public. Here is the poem in its entirety.Perhaps in a distant cafÃƒÂ©,Four or five people are talkingWith the four or five peopleWho are chatting on their cell phones this morningIn my favorite cafÃƒÂ©.And perhaps someone there,Someone like me, is watching them as they frown,Or smile, or shrugAt their invisible friends or lovers,Jabbing the air for emphasis.And, like me, he misses the old days,When talking to yourselfMeant you were crazy,Back when being crazy was a big deal.Not just an acronymOr something you could take a pill for.I liked itWhen people who were talking to themselves might actually have been talking to God or an angel.You respected people like that.You didn't want to kill them,As I want to kill the woman at the next tableWith the little blue light on her earWho has been telling the emptiness in front of herAbout her daughter's bridal showerIn astonishing detailFor the past thirty minutes.O person like mePhoneless in your distant cafe,I wish we could meet to discuss this,And perhaps you would help meMurder this woman on her cell phone,After which we could have a cup of coffee,Maybe a bagel, and talk to each other,Face to face.The second poem, from a section named "Never Expected To Be There" is on a totally different subject, one that will tear your heart out, "Meadowbrook Nursing Home" by Alice N. Persons. The narrator of the poem takes her cat Lucy, who is fifteen and "getting creaky herself," to visit Mrs. Harris in a nursing home. Mrs. Harris speaks:"I had a cat called Lily--she was so pretty, all white.She was with me for twenty years, after my husband died too.She slept with me every night--I loved her very much.It's hard, in here, since I can't get around."Lucy was settling in on the bed."You won't believe it, but I used to love to dance.I was a fool for it! I even won contests.I wish I had danced more.It's funny, what you miss when everything. . . . . is gone."This last was a murmur. She'd fallen asleep.The narrator then goes home and dances to Tina Turner. This poem, to paraphrase Mr. Keillor in describing Emily Dickinson's poetry in his first collection of poems GOOD POEMS, will take your head off.Thank you, Mr. Keillor, for another fine collection of poems with something for everyone.

I am so grateful to Garrison Keillor for bringing so many wonderful poems to my awareness that I might not have otherwise known, whether through his "A Writer's Almanac" on the radio or through his poetry anthologies. He has read or collected so many poems that I have come to love from poets whose work I have sought out as a result of learning about them from him. Garrison Keillor is an American treasure (sometimes a Scandinavian treasure?) and I, one among many, treasure him. This new book is a gem. I gave it to my husband for Christmas and since then have been reading aloud from it. So far, I have laughed! and I have cried! It is a marvelous collection from a wise man and it's just what we need. The Introduction alone is worth acquiring the book, but then the poems...! Thank you, Mr. Keillor.

How could you not love this collection? I try to, at least, read one poem a day. This is a book I will pick up again and again. So glad I ordered a used copy that could be put to good use.

Excellent selection of both classic and less well known poems.

Having Good Poems for Hard Times, by Garrison Keillor on my book shelf is like having a big bouqet of flowers of many colors in my home. I purchased this (and others) from , and was pleased how fast I found it in my mailbox. There's a poem for everyone between the covers of this book, even for those who've never read a poem before, or say they don't like poetry! From well-known poets of the past to more modern ones I had never heard of, each poem has a special meaning just for me. As it will for you. So I bought a couple more from , for my friends. Good Poems for Hard Times will make great Christmas presents. I keep my little volume beside my bed, and pick a flower from it whenever I'm in the mood - which is often. Makes me want to read Mr. Keillor's other poetry selections.

This is my favorite collection of poems. Although I am fairly new to reading poetry, and my experience and exposure are limited, I really enjoyed Good Poems for Hard Times, and considerably more so than Keillor's first collection,Ã Â Good Poems.I bought the Kindle book this morning (24-05-2009) after downloading and reading the free sample, which included only the TOC and part of Keillor's Introduction, then I read the book start to finish over the course of the day. I can't wait to read it again tomorrow.If you want to read some beautiful poems, some that will bring tears to your eyes, some that will make you laugh out loud, and some that will make you read them

two or three times in a row because you like them so much, then buy this book.

A huge sticker on the front obscured part of the author and title. It was a pain to take off and ripped part of the cover. Besides that this book is great, has wonderful content and I would recommend it to people interested in getting into poetry.

A fine collection of top-quality poems. Nothing overly abstract or disjointed, but then, Garrison Keillor was the person who chose them. Worth every cent.

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