

MARY  
OLIVER



Devotions

*The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*

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## Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver

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**Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver** Mary Oliver

**Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mary Oliver presents a personal selection of her best work in this definitive collection spanning more than five decades of her esteemed literary career.**

Throughout her celebrated career, Mary Oliver has touched countless readers with her brilliantly crafted verse, expounding on her love for the physical world and the powerful bonds between all living things. Identified as "far and away, this country's best selling poet" by Dwight Garner, she now returns with a stunning and definitive collection of her writing from the last fifty years.

Carefully curated, these 200 plus poems feature Oliver's work from her very first book of poetry, *No Voyage and Other Poems*, published in 1963 at the age of 28, through her most recent collection, *Felicity*, published in 2015. This timeless volume, arranged by Oliver herself, showcases the beloved poet at her edifying best. Within these pages, she provides us with an extraordinary and invaluable collection of her passionate, perceptive, and much-treasured observations of the natural world.

### Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver Details

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Author : Mary Oliver

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## **From Reader Review Devotions: The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver for online ebook**

### **Cheryl Crotty says**

Read half...highlighted many, and will continue on. It now moves from the nightstand to the living room. Mary Oliver places all her best in this big volumn. She continues to inspire and delight. A keeper for sure.

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### **Kathryn says**

This book was abundantly full of poetry from over the years of Mary Oliver's writing. Her thoughts are clear and natural although with some I struggled clearly understanding what was being said. Poetry is something I do not have much background in and I feel Mary Oliver's poems are the perfect place to begin.

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### **Robyn says**

A wonderful collection - absolutely beautiful from start to finish.

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### **Laura Hoffman Brauman says**

Mary Oliver's poems are always gorgeous -- her nature imagery and ability to call out the small, exquisite moments from the wilderness is perfect. I wish, though, that the collection had been put in chronological order instead of reverse chronological -- I would have rather enjoyed seeing how her work evolved as I dipped in and out of the collection.

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### **Esra Tasdelen says**

An excellent collection, will stay on my bedside table all year. She is the best.

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### **John says**

With Mary Oliver's recent passing, I wanted to read her selected poems in order to see why she was so popular and also to find enjoyment in them as well. My first advice for this book and other selected or collected poems of poets is to read them starting with the early books and moving forward from there. You will see how the poet develops.

I cannot give these poems any accolades for their craft or uniqueness. They reminded me of the old Swanson TV dinners in foil trays: uniformly prepared and only requiring heating. Nothing is demanded of the reader; it is there for easy consumption and no more. A poet like Kay Ryan, for example, requires a thinking

interaction with her readers. Oliver does not.

I can see why, though, that the poems are popular. They are spiritual and have an uplifting quality to them. They express a profound love and appreciation of nature. There's nothing wrong with that, but I tend to believe that poetry demands more. I think Oliver would have been a great nature essayist, as the writing is mini-essays rather than poems.

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## Martha says

Mary Oliver Speaks to Me

Her solo is a spare song,  
Sung in that way of pure unaccompanied human voice  
That is raw honesty.

I love how the first note of each poem  
Pierces the white page,  
And humbles me with Love  
Of this world  
That only moments before  
I had forgotten.

Backwards through a life of figuring out  
With words....

Sing on beautiful bird!  
And thank you  
For letting me live in your world for a few hours,  
All I need  
And my reading glasses.

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## Jeannie says

This is a beautiful collection of poetry from Mary Oliver. I finished it with a tear in my eye knowing there won't be anything more from her. She just passed away this year. There is something about her poetry that is comforting to me. I'm sorry she is gone.

It was very hard to pick a favorite poem from this book because there are so many I loved.  
This one is still one of my favorites.

What Gorgeous Thing

I do not know what gorgeous thing  
the bluebird keeps saying,  
his voice easing out of his throat,  
beak, body into the pink air  
of the early morning. I like it

whatever it is. Sometimes  
it seems the only thing in the world  
that is without dark thoughts.  
Sometimes it seems the only thing  
in the world that is without  
questions that can't and probably  
never will be answered, the  
only thing that is entirely content  
with the pink, then clear white  
morning and, gratefully, says so.

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## **Margene says**

Mary is one of my constant companions. This book is one I will be reading today, tomorrow, the next day, the next year, and the next, because I will read it for the rest of my life. Thank you, Mary for giving my love of life and nature voice.

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## **?Kimari? says**

I pre-ordered Devotions without looking at the description, because Mary Oliver! I didn't realize it's a collection of previously published work. I own all of her ebooks, so much of the content isn't new to me. It is very nice to have selected poems from books not available as ebooks and those that are out of print: What Do We Know, The Leaf And The Cloud, White Pine, American Primitive, Twelve Moons, The River Styx, Ohio, and No Voyage.

For those with a Mary Oliver collection, here's what's included:

### **From: Felicity 2015**

I Wake Close to Morning  
This Morning  
The World I Live In  
Whistling Swans  
Storage  
For Tom Shaw S.S.J.E. (1945–2014)  
I Know Someone  
That Little Beast  
The Pond  
I Have Just Said  
The Gift

### **From: Blue Horses 2014**

After Reading Lucretius, I Go to the Pond  
I Don't Want to Be Demure or Respectable  
Stebbin's Gulch  
Franz Marc's Blue Horses  
On Meditating, Sort Of  
Loneliness

Do Stones Feel?  
Drifting  
Blueberries  
The Vulture's Wings  
What Gorgeous Thing

**From: Dog Songs 2013**

The Storm  
Percy (One)  
Little Dog's Rhapsody in the Night (Percy Three)  
Percy (Nine)  
Benjamin, Who Came From Who Knows Where  
The Dog Has Run Off Again  
Bazougey  
Her Grave  
The Poetry Teacher  
The First Time Percy Came Back

**From: A Thousand Mornings 2012**

I Go Down to the Shore  
I Happened to Be Standing  
Three Things to Remember  
Lines Written in the Days of Growing Darkness  
An Old Story  
The Instant  
Tides  
The Poet Compares Human Nature to the Ocean From Which We Came  
Life Story  
Varanasi

**From: Swan 2010**

I Worried  
I Own a House  
Don't Hesitate  
Swan  
Passing the Unworked Field  
How I Go to the Woods  
On the Beach

**From: Evidence 2009**

Violets  
We Shake With Joy  
It Was Early  
With Thanks to the Field Sparrow, Whose Voice Is So Delicate and Humble  
A Lesson From James Wright  
Almost a Conversation  
To Begin With, the Sweet Grass  
Evidence  
Prayer  
Mysteries, Yes  
At the River Clarion

**From: The Truro Bear and Other Adventures 2008**

The Other Kingdoms  
The Gift  
Coyote in the Dark, Coyotes Remembered

**From: Red Bird 2008**

Night Herons  
Mornings at Blackwater  
The Orchard  
Sometimes  
Invitation  
From This River, When I Was a Child, I Used to Drink  
We Should Be Well Prepared  
Meadowlark Sings and I Greet Him in Return  
Of the Empire  
Red  
Night and the River  
Self-Portrait  
With the Blackest of Inks

**From: Thirst 2006**

When I Am Among the Trees  
When the Roses Speak, I Pay Attention  
Six Recognitions of the Lord  
Gethsemane  
The Poet Thinks About the Donkey  
Praying  
Doesn't Every Poet Write a Poem About Unrequited Love?  
On Thy Wondrous Works I Will Meditate (Psalm 145)  
The Chat  
Thirst

**From: New and Selected Poems, Volume Two 2005**

Hum  
Lead  
Oxygen  
White Heron Rises Over Blackwater  
Honey Locust  
Song for Autumn  
Fireflies  
The Poet With His Face in His Hands  
Wild, Wild  
North Country  
Terns

**From: Blue Iris 2004**

Just Lying on the Grass at Blackwater  
Sea Leaves  
Morning at Blackwater  
How Would You Live Then?  
How the Grass and the Flowers Came to Exist, a God-Tale

**From: Why I Wake Early 2004**

Why I Wake Early  
Spring at Blackwater: I Go Through the Lessons Already Learned  
Mindful  
Lingering in Happiness  
Daisies  
Goldenrod, Late Fall  
The Old Poets of China  
Logos  
Snow Geese  
At Black River  
Beans  
The Arrowhead  
Where Does the Temple Begin, Where Does It End?

**From: Long Life 2004**

Just as the Calendar Began to Say Summer  
Can You Imagine?  
Softest of Mornings  
Carrying the Snake to the Garden

**From: Owls and Other Fantasies 2003**

The Dipper  
Spring  
While I Am Writing a Poem to Celebrate Summer, the Meadowlark Begins to Sing  
Catbird  
Backyard

**From: What Do We Know 2002**

Summer Poem  
The Loon  
Winter at Herring Cove  
Mink  
Blue Iris  
You Are Standing at the Edge of the Woods  
The Roses  
Stones  
One Hundred White-Sided Dolphins on a Summer Day

**From: The Leaf And The Cloud 2000**

Flare  
From the Book of Time

**From: West Wind 1997**

Have You Ever Tried to Enter the Long Black Branches  
Seven White Butterflies  
At Round Pond  
Black Oaks  
Am I Not Among the Early Risers  
Fox  
From the Poem "West Wind"

**From: White Pine 1994**

May  
Yes! No!  
In Pobiddy, Georgia  
Porcupine  
Wrens  
Mockingbirds  
I Found a Dead Fox  
Morning Glories  
August  
Toad  
I Looked Up  
The Sea Mouse

**From: New and Selected Poems, Volume One 1992**

The Sun  
Goldenrod  
When Death Comes  
Whelks  
Goldfinches  
Poppies  
Water Snake  
White Flowers  
Peonies  
The Egret  
Rice  
Rain  
Picking Blueberries, Austerlitz, New York, 1957  
October

**From: House of Light 1990**

Some Questions You Might Ask  
The Buddha's Last Instruction  
The Summer Day  
Spring  
Little Owl Who Lives in the Orchard  
The Kookaburras  
Roses, Late Summer  
White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field  
Singapore  
The Hermit Crab  
The Kingfisher  
The Swan  
Turtle  
The Loon on Oak-Head Pond  
Five a.M. in the Pinewoods  
Some Herons

**From: Dream Work 1986**

One or Two Things  
Morning Poem

Wild Geese  
Shadows  
The Journey  
Poem  
Two Kinds of Deliverance  
Black Snakes  
1945–1985: Poem for the Anniversary  
The Sunflowers

**From: American Primitive 1983**

August  
The Kitten  
Moles  
Clapp's Pond  
First Snow  
Ghosts  
Skunk Cabbage  
The Snakes  
White Night  
The Fish  
Humpbacks  
A Meeting  
The Roses  
Blackberries  
Tecumseh  
In Blackwater Woods

**From: Three Rivers Poetry Journal 1980 and "Three Poems for James Wright" 1982**

At Blackwater Pond  
The Rabbit  
Three Poems for James Wright

**From: Twelve Moons 1979**

Sleeping in the Forest  
Snakes in Winter  
Music Lessons  
Entering the Kingdom  
The Night Traveler  
Beaver Moon—the Suicide of a Friend  
Last Days  
The Black Snake  
The Truro Bear  
Mussels  
Snow Moon—Black Bear Gives Birth  
Strawberry Moon  
Pink Moon—the Pond  
Aunt Leaf  
Farm Country  
The Lamps

**From: The River Styx, Ohio 1972**

Learning About the Indians  
Going to Walden  
Night Flight

**From: No Voyage 1963 and 1965**

No Voyage  
Jack  
Beyond the Snow Belt  
The Swimming Lesson  
On Winter's Margin  
The Return  
Morning in a New Land

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**Gabriela Ventura says**

Amigos me apresentaram a Mary Oliver no dia em que ela morreu. Fiquei pensando que, há dez anos, eu não teria aproveitado a poesia dela - ela teria me parecido, então, muito pouco literária.

O tempo passa e, com alguma sorte, a gente fica um pouco menos bobo. (o que, dependendo do ponto de vista, pode parecer um pouco mais bobo, tudo depende do referencial, é claro).

Passei horas lendo poemas sobre o mundo natural, sobre deitar-se na grama e exercer o direito ao ócio, sobre cachorros, estações, mortes, renovações, sobre pensar enquanto se caminha, sobre prestar atenção aos movimentos internos e externos. Mary Oliver assegura que todos nós (mesmo os mais bobos, e também os que morrem de medo de serem vistos como tal) temos nosso lugar na família das coisas.

Devotions é uma bela coletânea de poemas.

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**Laura says**

Reading Mary Oliver is like meeting with an old friend and settling into quiet, gentle conversation, the kind that just makes you feel good and puts a smile on your face. I've read most of the poems in this collection before, some of them favorites that I've read many times, but there were a few that were new to me and some old ones that spoke in a new way.

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**The Loon**

Not quite four a.m., when the rapture of being alive  
strikes me from sleep, and I rise  
from the comfortable bed and go  
to another room, where my books are lined up  
in their neat and colorful rows. How

magical they are! I choose one  
and open it. Soon  
I have wandered in over the waves of the words

to the temple of thought.

And then I hear  
outside, over the actual waves, the small,  
perfect voice of the loon. He is also awake,  
and with his heavy head uplifted he calls out  
to the fading moon, to the pink flush  
swelling in the east that, soon,  
will become the long, reasonable day.

Inside the house  
it is still dark, except for the pool of lamplight  
in which I am sitting.

I do not close the book.

Neither, for a long while, do I read on.

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## Laysee says

Feb 17, 2019

**Evidence (2009)** by Mary Oliver

If you live in the city like I do, I wonder if you have sometimes pined for the woods or a pocket of green where you can be in communion with the natural world. I have discovered over and over again that reading Oliver's poetry provides a transport of delight to beauty and wonder. With Oliver, nature rambles are the rich soil of contemplation. In this selection of eleven poems from **Evidence (2009)**, Oliver called attention to the business of living and the sanctity of life.

In It Was Early Oliver woke with the dawn to look at the world – the owl under the pines, the mink with his bushy tail, the soft-eared mice, the pines heavy with cones – and was astounded by the many gifts that greeted her, which prompted this thought:

**Sometimes I need  
only to stand  
wherever I am  
to be blessed.**

There is a lovely poem titled To Begin With, The Sweet Grass, in which she considered the '*the witchery of living*' and bid us to treasure life, to give both ourselves and others a chance, to evolve and be more than ourselves.

**We do one thing or another; we stay the same, or we change.  
Congratulations, if  
you have changed.**

Here's a question worthy of thought:

**And, if you have not been enchanted by this adventure -  
your life -  
what would do for you?**

In the poem, Evidence, Oliver reflected that memory can either be '**a golden bowl, or a basement without light**'

**Some memories I would give anything to forget.  
Others I would not give up upon the point of  
death, they are the bright hawks of my life.**

And thus, we have a choice over what we wish to hold on to.

Lastly, Oliver invited us to take a lesson from nature:  
**And consider, always, every day, the determination  
of the grass to grow despite the unending obstacles.**

Today is a Sabbath Day. You can say I just read a poetic homily.

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**Jan 30, 2019**

**From Swan (2010) by Mary Oliver**

The seven poems Oliver selected from **Swan (2010)** for inclusion in **Devotions** beckoned us to embrace life, especially, to embrace joy. More than just beautiful, they exude a sage-like quality.

These poems were inspired by what is often unobserved - Queen Anne's Lace in an 'unworked field' making 'all the loveliness it can' or a swan 'rising into the silvery air, an armful of white blossoms, a perfect commotion of silk and linen.' They also steer our thoughts toward beneficent ways of approaching the hosts of things that worry us or claim our lives. Most of all, I love reading about how she went about walking in the woods.

Here are excerpts from two poems I love. The first is prose-like and too lovely not to reproduce in full.

Don't hesitate

**If you suddenly and unexpectedly feel joy, don't hesitate. Give in to it. There are plenty of lives and whole towns destroyed or about to be. We are not wise, and not very often kind. And much can never be redeemed. Still, life has some possibility left. Perhaps this is its way of fighting back, that sometimes something happens better than all the riches and power in the world. It could be anything, but very likely you notice it in the instant when love begins. Anyway, that's often the case. Anyway, whatever it is, don't be afraid of its plenty. Joy is not made to be a crumb.**

How I Go To The Woods

**Ordinarily I go to the woods alone, with not a single friend, for they are all smilers and talkers and therefore unsuitable.**

**I don't really want to be witnessed talking to the catbirds or hugging the old black oak tree.....**

**...Besides, when I am alone I can become invisible.....**

**...If you have ever gone to the woods with me, I must love you very much.**

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**Jan 27, 2019**

**From A Thousand Mornings (2012)** by Mary Oliver

**From A Thousand Mornings (2012)** is a meditative ensemble of ten poems whose dominant subject is water, be it the sea or the River Ganges. Other poems contain Oliver's reflections on the approach of winter and her own Life Story against the infinite cycle in nature's diurnal ebb and flow.

In Tides, Oliver's keen eye surveyed the sea ('blue gray green lavender'), old whalebones, white fish spines, barnacle-clad stones, and the 'piled curvatures' of seaweeds. There is a pleasing, relaxed contrast to the busyness of the sea pulling away, the gulls walking, seaweeds spilling over themselves. Oliver said,

**And here you may find me  
on almost any morning  
walking along the shore so  
light-footed so casual.**

I appreciated the understated humor in this delightful poem, I Go Down To The Shore

**I go down to the shore in the morning  
and depending on the hour the waves  
are rolling in or moving out  
and I say, oh, I am miserable,  
what shall -  
what should I do? And the sea says  
in its lovely voice:  
Excuse me, I have work to do.**

There is no room for self-pity, is there?

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**January 26, 2019**

**From Dog Songs (2013)** by Mary Oliver

**From Dog Songs (2013)** is a heartwarming collection of poems that will resonate with readers who love dogs. Oliver wrote with deep affection for her dogs and devoted a handful to Percy 'our new dog, named for the beloved poet.'

It is easy to see why one might perchance envy a dog's life – 'breaking the new snow with wild feet' and 'not thinking, not weighing anything, just running forward.'

Here's a charming extract from the poem, Little Dog's Rhapsody in the Night (Percy Three):

**Tell me you love me, he says  
Tell me again.  
Could there be a sweeter arrangement? Over and over  
he gets to ask it.**

**I get to tell.**

Aww.... a perfect devotion on an indolent Saturday evening.

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**January 25, 2019**

**From Blue Horses (2014)** by Mary Oliver

*'Nature never did betray the heart that loved her.'* ('On Tintern Abbey', William Worthsworth)

This review update is based on a selection of poems '**From Blue Horses (2014)**'. The eleven poems in this collection expressed the repose and comfort Oliver found in the natural world and quietly invited the reader to share her gratitude. She truly was a poet after the nature lover's own heart.

The subject of these poems included the slippery green frog, stones on the beach, blueberries, a vulture's wings, and the gorgeous bluebird. Reading the poems is like going on a nature ramble with her and seeing what we often take for granted with new eyes.

I also appreciate her idea of meditation, which was lounging under a tree and falling asleep. That it can be refreshing is evident in these lines:

On Meditating, Sort Of

**'Of course I wake up finally  
thinking, how wonderful to be who I am,  
made out of earth and water,  
my own thoughts, my own fingerprints -  
all that glorious, temporary stuff.'**

There is a constancy or fidelity in nature elegantly communicated in my favorite poem in this collection:

Loneliness

**I too have known loneliness  
I too have known what it is to feel  
misunderstood  
rejected, and suddenly  
not at all beautiful  
Oh, Mother Earth,  
your comfort is great, your arms never withhold.  
It has saved my life to know this.  
Your rivers flowing, your roses opening in the morning.  
Oh, motions of tenderness.**

Read Mary Oliver. We will look at nature quite differently.

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**Devotions** is an exquisite anthology of poems by Mary Oliver who died on Jan 17, 2019. She was 83. This treasure trove, put together by Oliver herself, contains poetry from her first book of poetry, **Voyage and Other Poems (1963)**, to her most recent collection, **Felicity (2015)**.

Reading a couple of Oliver's poems each morning is like having a devotion, a communion of sorts with the beauty that resides in the goodness around us. This review will be built up bit by bit at the breakfast table.

Jan 23, 2019

### **From Felicity**

This selection of eleven poems is Mary's reflections on love, her perceptive participation in the natural world, and her discovery of the things that matter. Four poems express the thankfulness one feels towards a beloved (a 'gift') and the pangs of impending or actual loss. A handful of poems draw attention to the miracle of redbird chicks chirping for food, whistling swans in a posture of prayer, and lilies bowing to the 'tug of desire.' Few poets write about nature with deep moving eloquence. With Oliver, nature almost always awakens an awareness of a larger interior world. Here's a line from Whistling Swans:

**"Rumi said, There is no proof of the soul.  
But isn't the return of spring and how it  
springs up in our hearts a pretty good hint?"**

There is a thoughtful poem titled Storage on the joy of uncluttering. Below is a fitting response to 'things':

**Burn them, burn them! Make a beautiful  
fire! More room in your heart for love,  
for the trees! For the birds who own  
nothing - the reason they can fly.**

Herein lies wisdom.

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### **julieta says**

I feel totally connected with Mary Oliver's images;  
nature, trees, insects, spirituality, joy.  
Just wonderful and enlightening.

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### **Harry Allagree says**

This lovely book of poems spans 52 years, from 1963-2015. I have a number of "favorite" poets, among them T. S. Eliot, George Herbert, Emily Dickinson. But as I've come to read more of her work over the past 15 years, Mary Oliver has indeed captured my heart. As I read this book, it occurred to me that though her fundamental stance on life & the world has remained essentially the same, her way of expressing that reality has matured, grown in simplicity but also in perception & depth of meaning. She's what I would call an "Ur Woman". She is two years older than me & I hope we're both around for a good bit of time ahead, so that I can soak up more of her wisdom!

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