



Harvest Poems: 1910-1960

Carl Sandburg , Mark Van Doren (Adapted by)

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A representative selection of poems, culled from the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet's published verse, plus thirteen poems appearing in book form for the first time. "[Sandburg's poetry] is independent, honest, direct, lyric, and it endures, clamorous and muted, magical as life itself" (New York Times). Introduction by Mark Van Doren.

Harvest Poems: 1910-1960 Details

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Julie says

Can four dollars buy you happiness?

Yes. Yes, it can.

Four dollars bought me this book, and this book brought me happiness. So, \$4.00=Happiness.

And, in case you think I'm a cheap date, I've a list of references that will tell you otherwise.

But, I can't speak of dating *another* right now, for I only have eyes for Carl Sandburg (and as my husband will remind me later, when he kindly reads my review, "Ahem, and a husband.")

Yes! Yes, a *husband*, and of course a mad crush on Colin Firth (and all beforementioned literary loves), but right now I wish to speak of my newest man:

Carl Sandburg.

And, incidentally, this book.

This collection, Harvest Poems: 1910-1960, has pulled the best from all of Sandburg's prominent works (two of my favorites being *Good Morning, America* and *Chicago Poems*). And, it's an outstanding grouping of poems.

This is heart-stirring, bold, declarative writing. This isn't weepy verse, and it rarely rhymes.

This is poetry by a man who spray-painted I AM HERE all over the cornfields, buildings and train stations of North America.

This is poetry written by a man who knew he was fallible and knew he would die, but who chose not to live life in the shadows. He's the perpetual jack 'o lantern who smiles in the dark, grinning until the pumpkin rots.

The "Notes for a Preface" by Sandburg, at the beginning of this collection, is worth the price of the book alone, and I think all writers should read it.

And then you get 100 pages of the great, glorious gusto of the best of his poems. (and, in my case, all for four dollars).

*Are you happy? It's the only
way to be, kid.*

*Yes, be happy, it's a good nice
way to be.*

*But not happy-happy, kid, don't
be too doubled-up doggone happy.*

*It's the doubled-up doggone happy-
happy people. . . bust hard. . . they
do bust hard. . . when they bust.*

Be happy, kid, go to it, but not too

doggone happy.
--Snatch of Sliphorn Jazz

Punk says

Poetry. A selection of Carl Sandburg's work taken from eight volumes, along with thirteen poems new to this collection, an introduction by Mark Van Doren, and a preface from Sandburg himself.

About ten years ago, I got about thirty pages into this and couldn't get any further. It's just not my kind of poetry. It's basically a WPA mural. Like carrying an enormous hammer through a field of wheat while listening to jazz and working in factory. You can practically taste the locomotives. And the overalls.

So, ten years pass, during which this book sits like a bug-eyed troll on my bookshelf, unfinished, shelved somewhere near William Carlos Williams and Lawrence Ferlinghetti, I mean that's just how ill-suited it is to my collection. But I had to finish it. Because no way I'm gonna let Carl Sandburg beat me.

It was just as I remembered. Very focused on industry, skyscrapers, agriculture, and despite what Van Doren says about Sandburg being part of a movement that reintroduced humor into poetry, it's kind of dry, a little dense. There is humor, especially in "Name Us a King" which is my favorite poem in this book, but it's quiet, and it doesn't get around much. Mostly Sandburg deals with contrast and repetition to make a point.

Other favorites: Men of Science Say Their Say, Southern Pacific, Death Snips Proud Men, A.E.F., Nine Tentative (First Model) Definitions of Poetry, A Couple.

Sandburg's poetry evokes a strong sense of time and place (and giant hammers). I found several poems to love, and many phrases to underline, but the themes he deals with are not really ones that I find satisfying, or at least not on the scale he was writing them. He does big picture; I like smaller, more personal poems.

Three stars. Has a table of contents, but no index, and the poems don't get their own pages; they're all crammed together with little white space between them.

Megan says

Mrs. Gray, my fifth grade teacher had a one-sided love affair with Carl. She made each student memorize a Sandburg poem and recite it in front of the class. I memorized "Under a Harvest Moon" because it was not too long or short and pictured

"Love, with little hands,
comes and touches you
with a thousand memories
and asks you
beautiful unanswerable questions".

That was more metaphor than my ten year old mind had ever grappled with before. I was enchanted with the poet of the prairie from that point on.

Jim says

In a recreational course on USA - Early 20th Century through literature we've just switched from Kate Chopin to this. None too soon, quite a contrast. I got to read out loud 'Chicago', a poem we all enjoyed greatly.

Michael Cole says

Like most people, I think I first experienced Carl Sandburg in poetry readers / academic compilations, and really only read the poem "Fog." It was only years later I would read this compilation of his work, and I loved it. Sandburg's poetry is not exclusively about the lives of the working class, but it does involve that subject matter, which I'm thankful for. What Sandburg's poetry does **not** involve is intensely confessional material that is only about his life, it is poetry about a man observing life, the world, and the history of the world. Reading this work made me realize that most poetry I read feels genderless to me, while Sandburg's work feels strongly masculine without ever becoming toxic (Bukowski) or so insecure that it becomes at times ridiculous (Hemingway). If you know anyone that simply can't get over their fixation with Bukowski, put this in their hands.

"The old anvil laughs at many broken hammers."

Eugene Pollock says

On New Year's Day 2018, I resolved to keep a book of poetry going in addition to whatever else I might be reading, and this is my most recent one. Sandburg now joins Ashbury and Santayana as my current favorites. The diversity of subjects in this collection is stunning—from how a post-nuclear-war world would function ("Men of Science Say Their Say") to a pro-union manifesto ("Sayings of Henry Stephens") to reflections on consumerism ("Name Us a King"). These poems have made me laugh (at the word problems in "Arithmetic") and cry (over the loss of FDR in "When Death Came April Twelve 1945"). To be sure, it includes "Chicago" and "Fog" from my high school introduction to his work; however, it has much more depth and breadth. Now I not only respect his work, I love, love, love it.

Tom says

This slim collection of Sandburg's poetry left me hungry for more. Sandburg's style initially feels lackluster then, upon rereading, the brilliant images jump out at you like a bullfrog shot from a cannon. At times, perhaps, a little too colloquial, over-emphasizing "common wisdom" to a fault. Still, Sandburg was a true American bard in the tradition of Walt Whitman.

Russ says

My Grandmother gave me this book as a gift at age 10. He has been the reason I write poetry now. His verse uses everyday language to point at topics of War, and Unions and problems of everyday people.

One of my favorite books of all time

Kalico says

Granted, some of the poems sound like drunken ramblings, but consider this excerpt from "The People, Yes:"

They have yarns/Of a skyscraper so tall they had to put hinges/On the two top stories so to let the moon go by...

Sparks the imagination, no?

Linda says

There was more humor here than I anticipated. I preferred the early and late poems more than the middle, war year ones.

Betsy says

A gift from a loved one for my October birthday, I immediately flipped to my long-time favorite, "Theme in yellow." Then I read it through from beginning to end, rediscovering old treasures and finding new favorites, especially "improved farm land," "nine tentative (first model) definitions of poetry," "phizzog," and "number man." Sandburg marvels at the endurance and ingenuity of Man, ponders poetry, glories in nature, glorifies God, weeps over war, and carries everything along in the musical, sometimes rhapsodic, sometimes wise-cracking, voice so beloved in his Rootabaga Stories.

Tom Romig says

A poet of his time, Sandburg has an outmoded feel, though there are clearly some wonderful sparks in works such as "The People, Yes," "At the Gates of Tombs," "Sayings of Henry Stevens," "A Couple," and others. Check this out:

GRASS

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work--
I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:
What place is this?
Where are we now?

I am the grass.
Let me work.

Or as Basho had it:

Summer grass:
Of stalwart warriors' dreams,
The aftermath.

Leah Angstman says

I wanted to like this, being from the Midwest myself, and considering how much I love his poem, "Fog." But I am emphatically not a fan. Sandburg repeats words constantly, and not in a meaningful way. I think some of his poems are supposed to be funny, but they don't come off that way (which could just be changing times, but still ... I'm reading it in 2016, and that can't be helped). My biggest problem was that the words were simply not poetic. They were blunt, hard-sounding words, often in just chopped up sentences with words repeating and repeating words and then something basic, followed by a repeating word. My second big beef is that the endings just fell flat; half the time it felt like they weren't even connected to the same thought or same poem. He does not know how to end a poem poetically. I don't know why Sandburg was so popular. This book gives me no clues.

There were a couple standout poems: "Fog," "Personality," "At the Gates of Tombs," and "Improved Farm Land," and a couple snippets of longer poems that were not terrible, namely some sections of "Prairie," "Smoke and Steel," and "The People, Yes." For 125 pages of poems, that's not very many.

G.D. Master says

With three Pulitzer prizes, two for poetry and one for a biography of Abraham Lincoln, Carl Sandburg is a pillar of American ingenuity. With this novella, or collection of some of his most popular poems, readers get a manageable helping of an intellectual powerhouse. Poems written with attention to structure pounded into twenty-first century college students pour from these pages like life lived to its complete and fullest degree. Sandburg's poems describe places and people with sharp and discerning senses. His direct language and ability to recognize metaphysical problems with empirical substance and human behavior is unmatched. Reading Sandburg's poems, a person experiences an easy to grasp story, but gets a massive dose of reflective literature, more is going on than just Sandburg's solid and stand-alone description. His poems are lyrical in a way that is not sing song. They have sensible meter without seeming repetitive. Readers are led through cities, lives, events, silly allegories, and humorous anecdotes without regret or any sense of political correctness. There is nothing offensive about Sandburg's poems, but they are not subtle and are brutally honest in a way that has been left behind by many contemporary writers in the twenty-first century.

An inexpensive and short novella of poetry, Harvest Poems is a perfect introduction to Sandburg, poetry, prose, and unrivaled literary skill worth being aware of, if not attempting to emulate in some way. Even recreational readers at high school level should find something of interest in these poems. While readers

should have no problem around children with these works, they are written with adult rationality and may leave young children bewildered or bored. As for young literary prodigies, enjoy these works and the rest of us can catch up with you later.

Gina says

I picked this small collection of Sandburg's poetry up at one of my favorite thrift shops this fall. Spanning 40 years, Harvest Poems offers a great introduction to his prolific career. I related to many of the poems solely because of the wonderful depictions of the place I call home - the midwest. Sandburg describes so much movement, his words are like the wind.... constantly changing direction yet on a steady path. From man's creation of skyscrapers being built up, and torn down, to the thinnest blade of prairie grass; reading these poems felt like a glimpse into a warmly lit house's kitchen window on a cold, crisp night. I particularly enjoyed Harvest Moon, Sea Wash, For You, From the Windy City, At the Gates of the Tombs, Phizzog, They Ask: Is God, Too, Lonely?, and Freedom is a Habit, There was a definite presence of togetherness in his poems, meaning in everything, that all are one in this constantly changing world... and I found something really striking about that idea. I'm terrible at articulating the certain kind of joy I get from poems like this, if you take anything away from my review let it be that I had a really nice feeling while reading this collection. I'm also in love with the fact that this edition fits in my winter coat's pocket perfectly. 4/5 stars.
