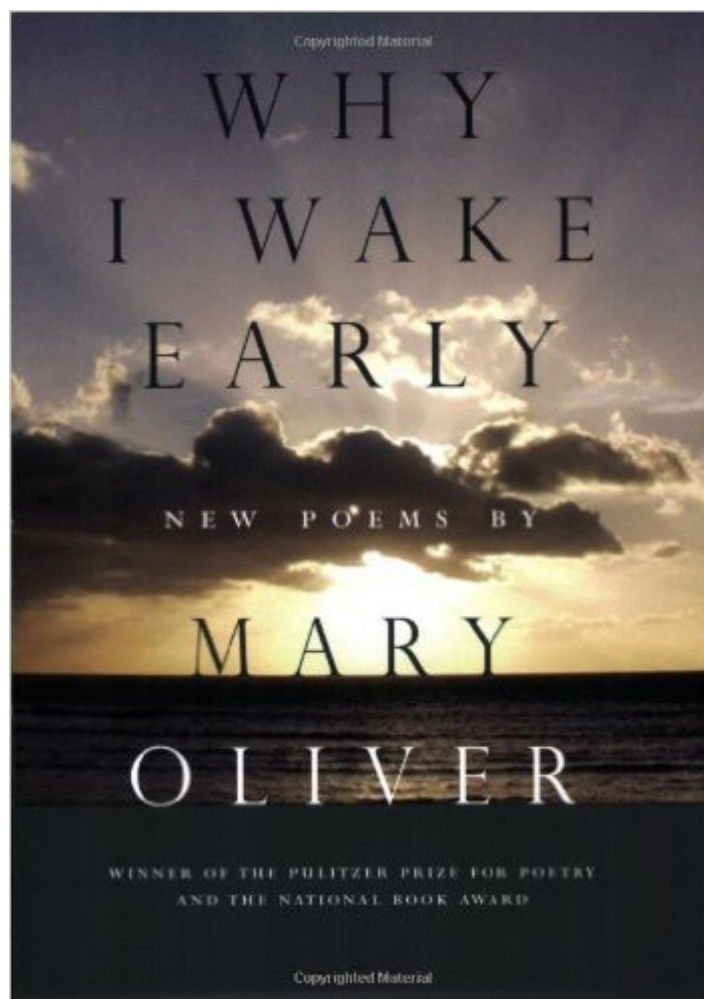


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Why I Wake Early: New Poems



Synopsis

The forty-seven new works in this volume include poems on crickets, toads, trout lilies, black snakes, goldenrod, bears, greeting the morning, watching the deer, and, finally, lingering in happiness. Each poem is imbued with the extraordinary perceptions of a poet who considers the everyday in our lives and the natural world around us and finds a multitude of reasons to wake early.

Book Information

Paperback: 88 pages

Publisher: Beacon Press; Reprint edition (April 15, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0807068799

ISBN-13: 978-0807068793

Product Dimensions: 6.3 x 0.3 x 8.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

Mary Oliver has written a beautiful collection of 47 poems that shows her love of nature, and really why she does wake early to greet the day. One of the qualities of her writing that I most enjoyed is that she expresses her intricate love of nature with a joy that lacks sentimentality. She spends her time determining what she is seeing and hearing and writes about that rather than looking inward to how she feels about everything. Therefore, her joy and feeling come through in the words she chooses to describe her subjects, and not in a list of subjective feelings. For me, that made her poetry universal and a communication that I could share in. I highly recommend this book for both the poetry and nature lover.

This is a lovely, uplifting book of poems. It celebrates the gifts life provides if we would only wake and observe the natural world. These poems bring solace to the soul. They seem to come from a place where one's life is winding down, slowing to a comfortable and relaxed peace - as if Mary Oliver is held in the arms of the natural world near the end of life and describing how wonderful it all

is. This book tells us it is enough to be at peace with the world and to enjoy what we've been given. Now in her seventies, she may have moved beyond the inner struggles of past and worries of future. The poems in *Why I Wake Early*, seem to say that for her it is now enough to observe, describe, and enjoy what nature offers. She does not need to wrestle with meaning - just be and enjoy. Perhaps I am too cynical, certainly less evolved or mature. However, I was hoping for more poems that touched upon the conflicts and cruelty we observe and survive. I wanted to experience more poems with challenge and pain - like those in *American Primitive*. I was hoping for poems that moved through beauty and darkness, then resolved in a wiser, deeper peace. So, I was disappointed because the poems in *Why I Wake Early* lacked angst and profound observations. Don't get me wrong - these poems are eloquent, beautifully descriptive and gentle - full of appreciation and respect for the natural world. They are each a gift of thanks. I just happen to prefer the depth and range of her earlier poems. I recommend new readers get and read her *Selected Poems* first, then read this book. All of her books are treasures, including this one - so whatever you do, read Mary Oliver's work. I've given books by her to many friends, and each of them comments on what amazing poems they are. She is a remarkable, gifted poet - one of the best in America.

This slim volume is so aptly named - it could be the opposite of a lullaby - a book filled with "songs to awaken by"..... A pure celebration of life, I slowly revealed in each poem... at times gasping out loud by the gentle ferocity of the words and imagery. Favorites include "Where Does the Temple End and Where Does it Begin?" and "Just a Minute" said a voice. I know this is a title I will read over and over and over and over again.....

Mary Oliver not only observes the natural world around here but finds language to express its many moods and meanings, linking them to her outer and inner life. The "simple" cadences of her lines carry a hidden depth to them. Well worth reading and meditating upon.

This is what I'm talking about... There are things you can't reach. But you can reach out to them, and all day long. The wind, the bird flying away. The idea of God. And it can keep you as busy as anything else, and happier. From *Where Does the Temple Begin, Where Does It End?* Certainly, Mary Oliver knows this haiku by Zen poet, Basho? The temple bell stops but I still hear the sound coming out of the flowers. What poem could you write?

Savoring Mary Oliver's poems bring me joy, they are a respite from the news of our times and a

balm to my soul. The theme throughout this book is to pay attention, to stop and watch and be amazed. Look and See This morning, at waterside, a sparrow flew to a water rock and landed, by error, on the back of an eider duck; lightly it fluttered off, amused. The duck, too, was not provoked, but, you might say, was laughing. This afternoon a gull sailing over our house was casually scratching its stomach of white feathers with one pink foot as it flew. Oh Lord, how shining and festive is your gift to us, if we only look, and see. Last night I attended a talk at The Wisconsin Book Festival by Rick Bass and Terry Tempest Williams. Their theme was to not only pay attention to the wonders of nature, but to pay attention to what is happening to it, local warming, the lack of water in the West, the disruption of migration patterns and habitat. Pay Attention.

I really don't know much about poetry, except that I like that it seems to be less fettered by rules. I like it for its rhythms and possibility and for its hope. A friend showed me a poem of Mary Oliver's this spring, This Morning I Watched the Deer, and I thought more people will read poetry if they are shown this poem.

In some enlightened future, Mary Oliver's poems will be read as part of the liturgy in churches for people who will still choose to gather in those structures, as well as those of us who prefer Nature "in woodlands, meadows, along river banks and in sand dunes facing the great oceans. Her poems quietly and eloquently sing the praises of our natural world, in the dwindling places it can still be found.

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