

## Fires : Essays, Poems, Stories *by* RAYMOND CARVER



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**Author:** RAYMOND CARVER

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## Reviews of the **Fires : Essays, Poems, Stories** *by* RAYMOND CARVER

Manazar

When Raymond Carver died in 1988 at 50, the literary world lost a truly unique short story writer. Carver, a master at dialogue and often called a minimalist, created stories with substance where a mystery looms beyond the surface, stories so commonplace, with common people doing common things.

It's true, the stories are laced with people who endure alcoholic sadness, financial burdens, emotional immaturity and those just searching for the dream that doesn't quite happen.

We get a glimpse into their lives and these characters reflect everyday America whether it was the 60s or the 90s. Those characters are his life and they are us! Read any Raymond Carver story and you can identify with some element.

Referring to the title, "Fires", Carver is talking about two strong influences in his life, one being Gordon Lish, at that time, a literary editor and the other, John Gardner, who said to become a writer you need the necessary "fire". The profound essays are titled "John Gardner, The Writer as Teacher", and the other is "On Writing." He offers excellent advice.

Carver believes the strongest "fire" he had was his two children, a time he refers to as "ravenous and ferocious years of parenting." He writes of that epiphanous moment in a laundromat, laboring over washers and anxiously waiting with frustration over the next available dryer before picking up the kids. This parental chore was NOT what he envisioned great writers doing.

Sadly, what he means about the children being a great influence in his words: "And I would always have them, and always find myself in this position of unrelieved responsibility and permanent distraction."

The bulk of the book is poems that reflect his life, and the poem about Charles Bukowski is here. If you prefer his literary poems, a wonderful collection is here and just a few other short stories "Distance", "Harry's Death", "The Lie" and an amusing story, "Where is Everyone", the title later revised to "Mr. Fixit." If you know Carver's many stories were revised by Carver or possibly the editors, but this collection includes the longer version of "So Much Water So Close to Home"

And, like any other Carver collection, this is especially good because of his essays on the "fires" in his life. ...Rizzo.

iSlate

Wow, Carver is great! His storytelling skills are unsurpassed.

PanshyR

AMazing amazing Carver collection. For any true Carver fan I am advocating this book and seller - great quality of a more obscure Carver collection

Shem

No comments

Faugami

This review relates to the poems, and not the essays and the stories. The poems are among Carver's best. They mark out the time of life when he is most deeply disturbed. So the poems about alcoholism ( although this is not the right way of saying it because they are never simply just about that) are among the most moving. His long poem on Charles Bukowski is very effective. It gives a sense of how this kind of 'portrait of another person' by seeing the world through his voice, can truly be an insight into the writer's own life also. Of course the poems about marital discord and break - up also tear at the heart. Carver writes "Someone else is raising my children, and bedding my wife"

All in all the honesty, the direct language and feeling, the storytelling power , the sense of appreciation of everyday seeing and feeling of life- all this work together to make these poems of fire ,poems which even when they tell of destruction give off a burning light.

Braswyn

I've always thought Carver's prose was better than this poetry, but I think I like the poetry in this book better than the prose. Maybe that's because I've seen most of the prose in other books in slightly different forms. So Much Water So Close to Home is one of my favorite Carver stories, but I like it better in What We Talk About When We Talk About Love.

Anyway, the poetry shines here, which is good because they take up the majority of the book. The essays are nice as well, showing a slightly different side of the author. They may be more valuable to a Carver enthusiast like myself than to someone picking him up for the first time. The stories are okay, but I'd rather read "Cathedral" or "What we Talk About" for the stories. There is something precious about a final edition, the edition the author decided he wanted you to see when he wrote the piece. Most of these stories are earlier editions.

So. A good book for a Carver enthusiast. It has turned me on to his poetry, and I'll have to check more of it out now. Not the first Carver book you should read, though. That would be Cathedral, I think.

Kakashkaliandiia

Raymond Carver's "Fires" is a quick introduction to the author who personifies literary minimalism. In this slim volume, the reader is treated to essays and poems, as well as Carver's trademark: taut short stories that, in remarkably few words, paint a vivid tableau of so much of American life.

Carver's subjects are ones that other writers shy away from: working-class stiffs and the mundane lives they lead. But Carver's magic lies in his ability to fascinate the reader with seemingly uninteresting topics. The characters' souls are bared, the torment of their lives is revealed, the desperation of their economic situations is rendered so masterfully, and in so little space, that the reader marvels at how Carver manages to accomplish the feat. For students of the writer's trade, Carver offers a valuable lesson in how to use minimal syllables for maximum impact.

As spare as they are, most of Carver's short stories strike me as a bit long-winded. Not so his poetry, which treats his usual themes--alcoholism, working-class poverty, and rocky relationships--with greater wit and vigor than his prose. The essays will be of interest to would-be writers and Carver biographers, but what makes this book outstanding is the 60 pages of poetry which comprise its heart.

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