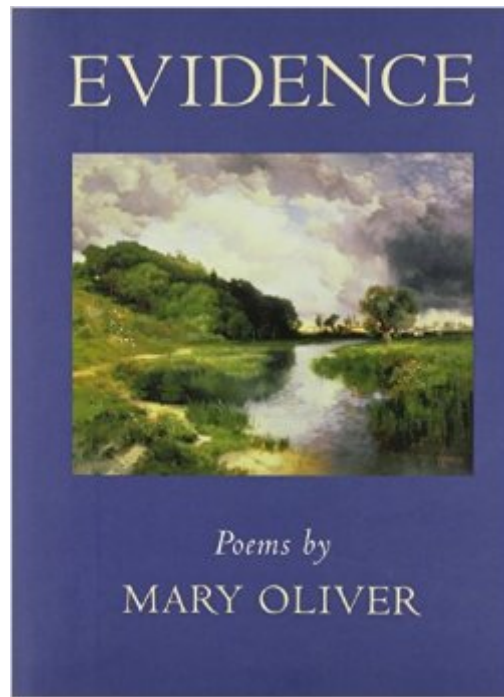


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Evidence: Poems



Synopsis

Never afraid to shed the pretense of academic poetry, never shy of letting the power of an image lie in unadorned language, Mary Oliver offers us poems of arresting beauty that reflect on the power of love and the great gifts of the natural world. Inspired by the familiar lines from William Wordsworth, "To me the meanest flower that blows can give / Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," she uncovers the evidence presented to us daily by nature, in rivers and stones, willows and field corn, the mockingbird's embellishments, or the last hours of darkness. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (40 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

This newest volume of Mary Oliver's poetry is as good as any she has published. It is experience, thought, and feeling distilled as few can do so well as Oliver. She has managed to eliminate even more adjectives than in earlier poems. She can look at the complexity of life, including its pain, and still rise to praise.

Oliver's poetry bridges humanity to the natural world in a humbling way that demands the reader to become cognizant of his or her vulnerability - the vulnerability that is often neglected in today's culture of convenience and disconnection from nature. She broaches simple necessities that we take for granted, such as water, and crafts beautiful and powerful poetry to demonstrate their importance and our absolute reliance on them. Life, death, the omnipotence of nature, God, and

many variety of birds are common themes and symbols used throughout this collection to weave a powerful compilation of evidence, as its title proclaims, of our place in the natural world. Poetry is a genre that I generally keep my distance from because of my own personal misgivings, but Oliver is one of the few who I am instantly able to connect with because of her excellent ability to intertwine basic human needs and experiences with the beauty of the natural world that so many of us often overlook. If you are a person who appreciates the beauty of a nest of bird eggs or a blooming jacaranda tree, Oliver's poetry will speak to you in a way that other poetry fails to do. She hones your attention on enjoying the moment and what is real and organic - enjoying the yellow finches, the mockingbirds, and even the buzzards.

I came across Mary Oliver's poetry a few years ago and eagerly awaited this new collection. I think it's brilliant. I wasn't that impressed with her collection entitled *Thirst*. I found it a bit too religious. This one (*Evidence*) is a delight. There's a brightness and liveliness to a lot of the poems, combined with some very moving sections - I don't know how she does it but she can tug at my heart in the space of just one line sometimes! Remarkable poet and I highly recommend this wonderful new collection.

Mary Oliver's poetry has an almost Zen-like precision as she gazes at the natural world. and the poems in this volume are no exception. Fans of her earlier poetry will still find the short lines and vivid images that have made her one of the best-known poets in the U.S. Newcomers will find the influence of Dickinson, Frost and W.C. Williams to be quite prevalent in her verse. Overall, *Evidence* is an enjoyable collection of lyric poetry. Not all the poems in this collection are destined to be long-remembered, however. Oliver can sometimes slip into a voice that tries to pass off familiar wisdom as deep insight. She can also be quite sentimental at times, though at other times her vision is ice hard. Her spirituality veers from the orthodox Christian to the new age mystic, but both are always at the service of an adoration of nature; she seems to me to be a pantheist in Christian garb. These issues, though, did not prevent me from enjoying the collection.

This is a book I want to keep by my bedside where I will see it and remember to pick it up and re-read the poems...to be reminded of thoughts such as this from "Deep Summer" "The mockingbird opens his throat among the thorns for his own reasons..... Your clocks, he says plainly, which are always ticking, do not have to be listened to. The spirit of his every word."

I read one poem every morning and carry it with me throughout the day. Each one lingers, as if an angel were just behind me. I continue to be dazzled, filled with wonder at her ability to find the simplest ways to say what is at the heart of our experience of ourselves in nature. "First love yourself. Then forget it. Then love the world."

What she sees with her huge heart and wonderfully life embracing spirit she hangs gently on a framework of language careful not to say too much, add too much, careful to preserve the freshness and shimmer for us. Evidence is a celebration of the mysteries within us and around us even in ragweed, thistle or a little pine cone.

Mary Oliver was a new poet to me when I received Evidence: Poems in the mail from the Goodreads First Reads program. Oliver reminds me of two of my favorite poets, Luci Shaw and Wendell Berry. Nature speaks to her and her love of nature infuses her poetry. The lessons Oliver learns in nature inform her view of life, love, death, and the world around her. Unlike some modern poets, Oliver isn't in love with her own pen, and she doesn't use overly frilly or incomprehensible language - she simply expresses what she feels. I enjoyed most of the poems in this book very much, but as with any collection - whether it is poetry or short stories or essays - there were also some that just didn't appeal to me. Reading poetry is a personal experience - what speaks to one reader may be completely different than what speaks to another. So even though I only rated it 3 stars, I still recommend this collection - especially for those who are looking to experience some modern poetry that is simply, yet beautifully written.

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