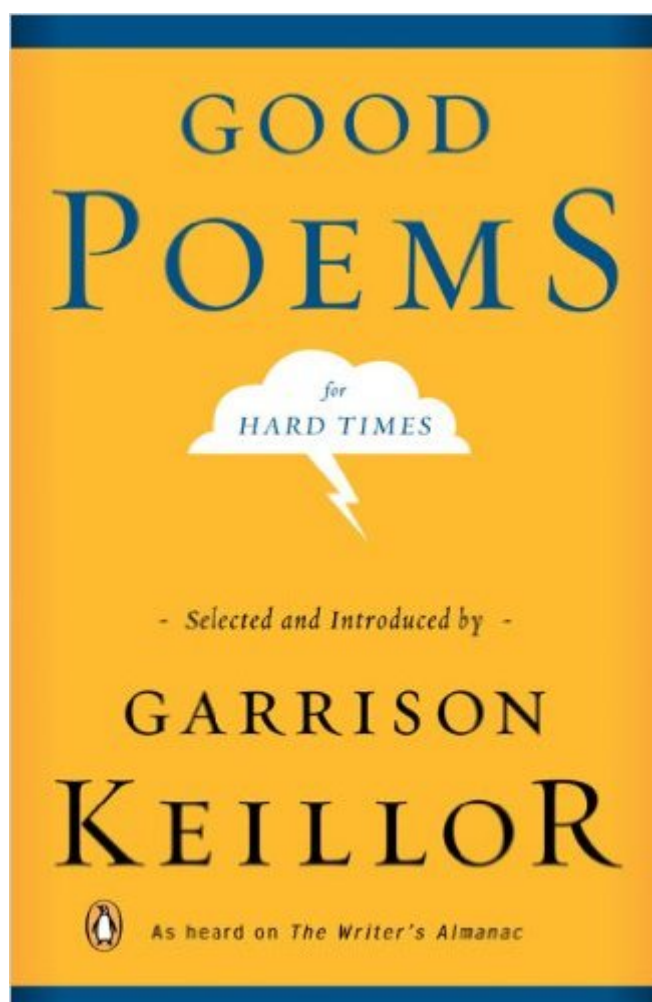


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Good Poems For Hard Times



Synopsis

Chosen by Garrison Keillor for his readings on public radio's *The Writer's Almanac*, the 185 poems in this follow-up to his acclaimed anthology *Good Poems* are perfect for our troubled times. Here, readers will find solace in works that are bracing and courageous, organized into such resonant headings as "Such As It Is More or Less" and "Let It Spill." From William Shakespeare and Walt Whitman to R. S. Gwynn and Jennifer Michael Hecht, the voices gathered in this collection will be more than welcome to those who've been struck by bad news, who are burdened by stress, or who simply appreciate the power of good poetry.

Book Information

Paperback: 368 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; 1 edition (August 29, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143037676

ISBN-13: 978-0143037675

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (95 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

Garrison Keillor calls his latest book of verse *GOOD POEMS FOR HARD TIMES*. He could just as easily have called it *MORE GOOD POEMS* or *FURTHER GOOD POEMS* since he has produced another anthology every bit as good or better than his previous *GOOD POEMS*. These 185 poems from 61 named poets-- there are a couple of anonymous poems and a psalm or two-- were selected from Keillor's "Writer's Almanac" radio show so they are the kind you listen to and grasp the meaning of while waiting for the light to change. These poems are meant to speak to ordinary people through what Mr. Keillor calls "the last presence of honest speech and the outspoken heart." It is worth the price of this book for Mr. Keillor's introduction alone. He opines that America is in "hard times" now with "the levels of power firmly in the hands of a cadre of Christian pirates and bullies whose cynicism is stunning," with the perversion of religion, a tax system that favors the rich,

when newspapers decline and the censor abounds. He fears for a future when America has "no binding traditions," when the public cannot name senators and gets their political knowledge through television and their "only public life at Wal-Mart." He says further about what is already taking place: "You lie in a hotel bed at night, remote in hand and surf a hundred channels of television. . . and you can drift for hours among the flotsam and you will never see anything that shows that you're in Knoxville or Seattle or Santa Fe or Chicago and nobody will ever speak to you as straightforwardly and clearly as poetry does." That's pretty scary stuff. Mr. Keillor is totally democratic in his choice of writers.

Garrison Keillor continues in his quest to bring poetry to the man and woman on the street in this his third collection of poems "as heard on the Writer's Almanac." Certainly he is to be commended for being the one individual who has done more than anyone else-- with the possible exception of perhaps Bill Collins--to bring new poetry converts into his church. Many is the time that I have sat in my car, having arrived at my destination before Mr. Keillor has finished his poem for the day in that immediately recognizable soothing voice of his, to get a fix for the day from his reading. (And sometimes I have ordered an obscure volume of poetry from an unknown poet he has just read, only to discover that too often Mr. K. has read the best poem in the collection!) No amateur with words, himself, Mr. Keillor writes a decent introduction about his childhood in Minnesota, family travels, and how grade school teachers ruin poetry for our youth. "Americans are impatient with riddles and so they give poetry a wide berth, knowing from Miss Fernwood's 8th grade English class that a page of writing with an uneven right margin means a series of jokes with no punch lines, a puzzle with no right answers." Too often poets whom Keillor describes as "upward-striving" write about Europe, but not the writers he has selected in this collection of over 260 poems. He gives a whole laundry list of subjects that these poems write about, purely American, and Europe be damned. Mr. Keillor includes a lot of poems from poets I know and like: Wendell Berry, Robert Bly, Charles Bukowski, Raymond Carver, Billy Collins, Stephen Dunn, Allen Ginsberg, Donald Hall, Robinson Jeffers, Galway Kinnell, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Grace Paley, Kenneth Rexroth, Theodore Roethke, W. D.

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