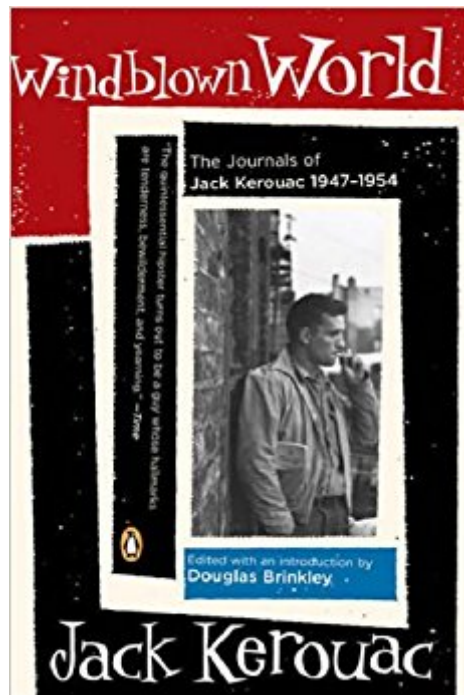




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Windblown World: The Journals Of Jack Kerouac 1947-1954



Synopsis

Jack Kerouac is best known through the image he put forth in his autobiographical novels. Yet it is only his private journals, in which he set down the raw material of his life and thinking, that reveal to us the real Kerouac. In *Windblown World*, distinguished Americanist Douglas Brinkley has gathered a selection of journal entries from the most pivotal period of Kerouac's life, 1947 to 1954. Here is Kerouac as a hungry young writer finishing his first novel while forging crucial friendships with Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Neal Cassady. Truly a self-portrait of the artist as a young man, this unique and indispensable volume is sure to become an integral element of the Beat oeuvre.

Book Information

Diary: 480 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books (April 4, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0143036068

ISBN-13: 978-0143036067

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars See all reviews (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,004,018 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #71 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Beat Generation #1460 in Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Anthologies #3398 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Regional & Cultural > United States

Customer Reviews

Two of Kerouac's journals, published together and finally available for the lay reader to pick up and delve into. Editor Douglas Brinkley does a fine job putting this material into context, even if he makes overstated claims for it, and even if he seems so needlessly to kiss John Sampas' ass, even dedicating this book to him among others of his cohort. We learn a lot about Kerouac from these journals, a lot that's valuable and a lot that shows us just why so many fell in love with his mind and his thoughtful, sometimes halting way of proceeding, always trying to do the right thing despite innumerable obstacles. I think also he had a natural inclination to be sort of the bad boy, and then he had the spectre of his dead brother acting on him as a kind of good angel always steering him right. With utmost seriousness he tried to plot out his life and his course of spiritual action; of course,

as we see, women, booze, guys, and wanderlust got in his way, caused him to stray from the path. His very earnestness however is endearing: "This is why life is holy," he states on pg. 211 (think of the irony on top of which such a statement would be laden today by Kerouac's so-called successors), "Because it is not a lonely accident. Therefore, again, we must love and be reverent of one another, till the day when we are all angels looking back." He sounds an apocalyptic note: "Those who are not reverent now may be the most reverent then (in their other, electrical, spiritual form.) Will there be a Judgement Day? No need to judge the living or the dead: only the happy and the unhappy with tears of pity." Kerouac seems to have seen clearly what escapes all of us but the most enlightened, that we are all creatures of sorrow and of what he calls "electricity," the charge that makes us human.

Kerouac began keeping journals in 1936, and continued for the rest of his life. The journals survive and editor Brinkley, writing in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1998, promised us publication of "a multi-volume edition." Now it seems that all we will be getting is this 370-page book, covering only some of the material from the years 1947 to 1950, and with just a few pages from 1954 thrown in as extra. The parts that have been selected for inclusion are apparently aimed at demonstrating the development of Kerouac's first two major works, *The Town & the City*, and *On the Road*. Strange, then, that nothing from Kerouac's 1948-49 journal of work on the latter book is included, although some of it did appear as a taster in the extracts Brinkley selected for publication in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1998. That must surely be one of the most relevant journals for those interested in the development of *On the Road* and its omission here is a mystery. (Note: Although not in the hardback edition, Kerouac's *On the Road* journal has been added as a "postscript" to the paperback edition of this book.) Other journal extracts published in *Atlantic*, and also in the *New Yorker* in 1998, are missing from the published book. In his introduction, it seems to me that Brinkley places far too much emphasis on demolishing the "myth" that *On the Road* was frantically written in three weeks in April 1951, claiming that Kerouac had begun it much earlier. This may be news to Brinkley, but I'm sure that most Kerouac readers are already aware of that fact. They will have known it since Tim Hunt pointed out that Kerouac began working on the book in 1948, attempting at least five different versions over the next four years.

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