



The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath

By *Sylvia Plath*

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A major literary event--the complete, uncensored journals of *Sylvia Plath*, published in their entirety for the first time.

Sylvia Plath's journals were originally published in 1982 in a heavily abridged version authorized by *Plath's* husband, *Ted Hughes*. This new edition is an exact and complete transcription of the diaries *Plath* kept during the last twelve years of her life. Sixty percent of the book is material that has never before been made public, more fully revealing the intensity of the poet's personal and literary struggles, and providing fresh insight into both her frequent desperation and the bravery with which she faced down her demons. **The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath** is essential reading for all who have been moved and fascinated by *Plath's* life and work.

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The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath By Sylvia Plath Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

In the decades that have followed Sylvia Plath's suicide in February 1963, much has been written and speculated about her life, most particularly about her marriage to fellow poet Ted Hughes and her last months spent writing the stark, confessional poems that were to become *Ariel*. And the myths surrounding Plath have only been intensified by the strong grip her estate--managed by Hughes and his sister, Olwyn--had over the release of her work. Yet Plath kept journals from the age of 11 until her death at 30. Previously only available in a severely bowdlerized edition, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* have now been scrupulously transcribed (with every spelling mistake and grammatical error left intact) and annotated by Karen V. Kukil, supervisor of the Plath collection at Smith College.

The journals show the breathless adolescent obsessed with her burgeoning sexuality, the serious university student competing for the highest grades while engaging in the human merry-go-round of 1950s dating, the graduate year spent at Cambridge University where Plath encountered Ted Hughes. Her version of their relationship (dating is definitely not the appropriate term) is a necessary, and deeply painful, complement to *Birthday Letters*. On March 10, 1956, Plath writes:

Please let him come, and give me the resilience & guts to make him respect me, be interested, and not to throw myself at him with loudness or hysterical yelling; calmly, gently, easy baby easy. He is probably strutting the backs among crocuses now with seven Scandinavian mistresses. And I sit, spiderlike, waiting, here, home; Penelope weaving webs of Webster, turning spindles of Tourneur. Oh, he is here; my black marauder; oh hungry hungry. I am so hungry for a big smashing creative burgeoning burdened love: I am here; I wait; and he plays on the banks of the river Cam like a casual faun.

Plath's documentation of the two years the couple spent in the U.S. teaching and writing explicitly highlights the dilemma of the late-1950s woman--still swaddled in expectations of domesticity, yet attempting to forge her own independent professional and personal life. This period also reveals in detail the therapy sessions in which Plath lets loose her antipathy for her mother and her grief at her father's death when she was 8--a contrast to the bright, all-American persona she presented to her mother in the correspondence that was published as *Letters Home*. The journals also feature some notable omissions. Plath understandably skirted over her breakdown and attempted suicide during the summer of 1953, though she was to anatomize the events minutely in her novel *The Bell Jar*.

Fragments of diaries exist after 1959, which saw the couple's return to England and rural retreat in Devon, the birth of their two children, and their separation in late 1962. An extended piece on the illness and death of an elderly neighbor during this period is particularly affecting and was later turned into the poem "Berck-Plage." Much has been made of the "lost diaries" that Plath kept until her suicide--one simply appears to have vanished, the other Hughes burned after her death. It would seem rapacious to wish for more details of her despair in her final days, however. It is crystallized in the poems that became *Ariel*, and this is what the voice of her journals ultimately send the reader back to. Sylvia Plath's life has for too long been obfuscated by anecdote, distorting her major contribution to 20th-century literature. As she wrote in "Kindness": "The blood jet is poetry. There is no stopping it." --Catherine Taylor

From Publishers Weekly

This book constitutes a literary event. Over 400 pages of never-before-published personal writings make this

first comprehensive volume of Plath's journals and notes from 1950 to 1962 indispensable reading for both scholars and general readers interested in the poet. Plath's journals were previously published in 1982 and heavily censored by her husband, poet Ted Hughes. But even the diary entries that have been available to the public demand re-reading in the context of fresh materials. In the newly revealed writings, we see an even more complex, despairing psyche struggling to create in the face of powerful demons. Plath's intense bitterness towards her mother emerges in full force, particularly in her notes on her psychoanalysis by Ruth Beuscher in Boston from 1957 to 1959. Plath's writing is by turns raw, obsessive, brilliant and ironic. Her sensitivity about rejections from magazines, her struggle to establish a daily routine of reading and learning, and her ongoing attempts to ward off depression provide reminders of her drive and ambition, despite her feelings of inferiority with respect to her husband. This work constitutes an invaluable primary source as well as a thoroughly engrossing narrative whose omissions are sometimes as important as its inclusions. (There is, for example, surprisingly little on Plath's sudden marriage to Hughes.) Strong print media attention focusing on new revelations will drive early sales of this important work, and it should become a staple backlist title. Editor Kukil is assistant curator of rare books at Smith College, where Plath was an undergraduate and later a lecturer.

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From Library Journal

Plath's admirers should prepare themselves for another dose of her bitter medicine: Anchor Books has announced the U.S. publication of her "complete, uncensored journals." (This unabridged edition appeared first in England.) Judiciously and unobtrusively edited by curator Kukil, who oversees the Plath Collection at Smith College, the text includes the portions suppressed by Plath's husband, the poet Ted Hughes, now deceased, when he authorized an earlier American edition. About two-thirds of the writings, which cover the last years of Plath's fevered life, have not been available to the public previously. All of the difficulties and contradictions that made Plath a literary icon are contained in these intense, confessional revelations, including her anger, egotism, frustrations, self-destructiveness, and passionate need to express herself. Certain to generate dozens of new academic papers, this is essential for anyone engaged in Plath studies. DCarol A. McAllister, Coll. of William & Mary Lib., Williamsburg, VA

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Users Review

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Patricia Smith:

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Cedric Baker:

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Jose Johnson:

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