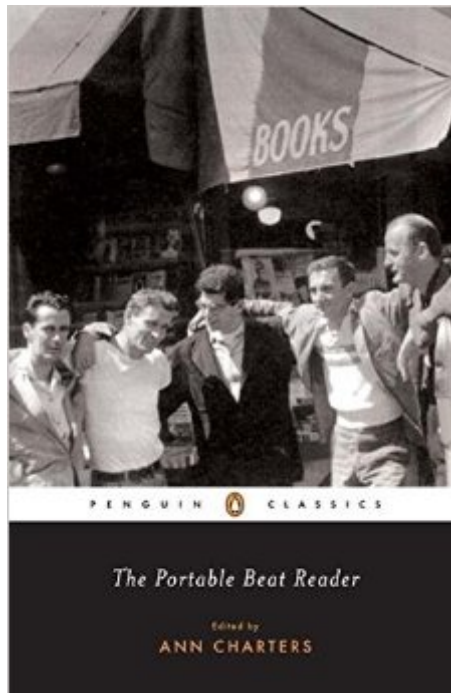


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# The Portable Beat Reader (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Beginning in the late 1940's, American literature discovered a four-letter word, and the word was "beat." Beat as in poverty and beatitude, ecstasy and exile. Beat was Jack Kerouac touring the American road in prose as fast and reckless as a V-8 Chevy. It was the junk-sick surrealism of William Burroughs; the wild, Whitmanesque poetry of Allen Ginsberg; and the lumberjack Zen of Gary Snyder. The Portable Beat Reader collects the most significant writing of these and fellow members (and spiritual descendants) of the Beat Generation, including Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, Diane di Prima, Bob Dylan, Leroi Jones, and Michael McClure. In poetry, fiction, essays, song lyrics, letters, and memoirs, it captures the triumphant rudeness, energy, and exhilaration of a movement that swept through American letters with hurricane force. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

Series: Penguin Classics

Paperback: 688 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics (July 29, 2003)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0142437530

ISBN-13: 978-0142437537

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.1 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (33 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #45,450 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Movements & Periods > Beat Generation](#) #73 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Anthologies](#) #86 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Classics](#)

## Customer Reviews

Nice sampler... all the writers you should expect are in here. A feature I enjoyed particularly was the intro section. Read "about the writer" before the piece. Since I had not heard of so many of these writers, I found it intriguing to see how many were part of the same group of friends. The Beats

largely were connected with each other's lives and fed off each other's style and work. Buy this book, then go get the full works of these individual writers. For an anthology of Beat writers, you will find no better book. I fully recommend this book. Anthony Trendl [anthonytrendl.com](http://anthonytrendl.com)

This book features some excellent beat writers and includes informative blurbs on their history and style. Each artist has a little chunk of their writing for you to sample, and the material is everything from stories to letters to classically bad prose. What impressed me were the essays by each other, on the actual generation hype. "Young people seemed more intense, clutching, and I couldn't help feeling they took themselves too seriously... 'good, clean fun' appeared to be a thing of the past. Or perhaps the aura of suspicion and defensiveness was merely a reflection of my own fears..."

--Carylon Cassidy  
It's a great book for deciding which authors you want to read more of.

After riding the whirlwind of *On The Road* and *Howl*, many readers will acquire an appetite for Beat literature that will lead them to this book. Ann Charters serves up some of the best pieces of Beat Literature in this anthology. However, some inclusions, such as excerpts from *On The Road*, could be considered sacrilege, as the texts were never meant to be cut up, and suffer as a result. The Bob Dylan lyrics included by Charters indicate that she was no Dylan scholar, as other tracks would have been more suitable. However, with inclusions such as Neal Cassady's letters, William S. Burroughs adventure narratives, and the lesser known Beat poetry, this anthology is indispensable.

Simply put, this is what I turn to when I need inspiration for reading, for creating, for anything. It combines wonderful bios of everyone from Kerouac to Bob Dylan, and their poems, book excerpts, and lyrics galore. Absolutely enjoyable, absolutely essential. Thank god for Ann Charters.

If someone wants to start reading about the Beat Generation, this is the book to start with. It gives a lot of good poetry and prose from many writers and captures the spirit of the movement. It is a great springboard to starting to read the complete *On the Road* or *Naked Lunch* or Ginsburg's poems. Very illuminating.

This book is major marker on the road of my personal and intellectual development. I had just finished *On The Road* and was interested in exploring some more Beat writing - but was completely at a loss as to where I should begin. Charter's anthology was like a literary mindbomb from the minute I began the Forward until I finished the last poem. After I was done, I just couldn't think of

writing (or writers) in the same way. It managed to connect so many literary, intellectual, and musical "schools" of the West and East - I was left dazed as I saw smatterings of Rimbaud, Buddha and Bird all through the "Beat" works. Beauty, obscenity, freedom - every aspect of life can be found there. This book is just a beginning - but it's a great beginning.

This gargantuan Beat Reader compiles various poets to categorize them as a model citizenship representing a generation of beat poets trying to get published. A great must have for any reader that enjoys this type of literature.

Very enjoyable selection of Beat literature. Not only do you get a sampling of their writing, but also background information on how they lived through some personal essays. In particular, for me, was Ken Kesey's reaction to Neil Cassady's tragic death. But more important is being introduced to lesser Beat celebrities like Leroi Jones, Gary Snyder, and Diane di Prima. Quite a selection of writings, and the author does the reader service by providing historical references to the Beat's milieu. With the spate of Beat movies lately, this is a good start to explore their literature.

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