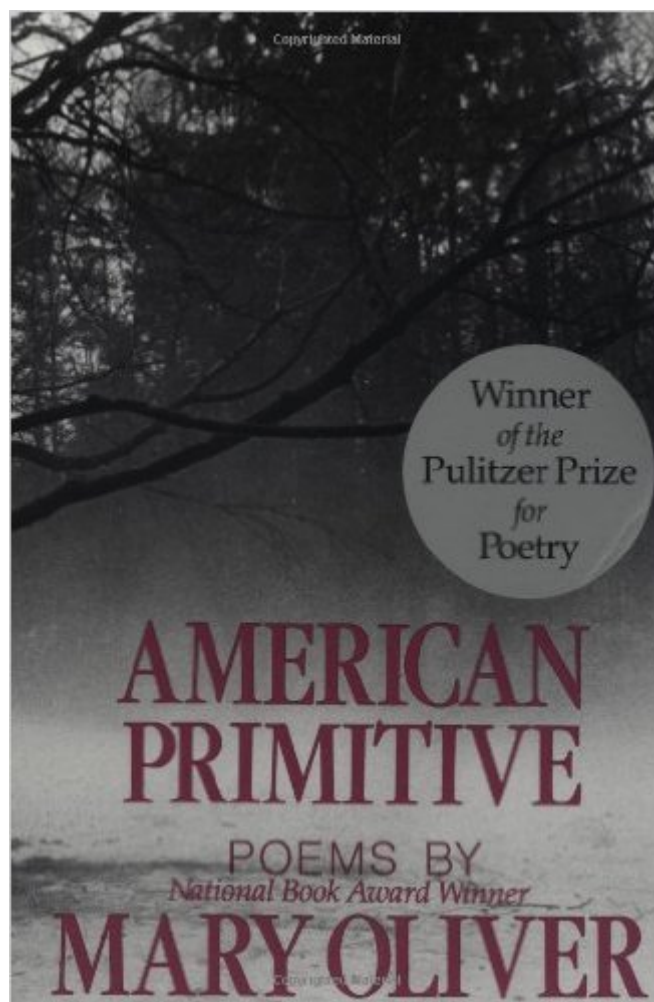


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American Primitive



Synopsis

The fifty poems in "American Primitive" make up a body of luminous unity. Mary Oliver's visionary poems enunciate the renewals of nature and the renewals of humanity in love, in oneness with the natural, in union with the things of this world. Lyrical and elegiac, Mary Oliver celebrates the primitive things of America - the wilderness that survives both within our bodies and outside - in "...the cords/ of my body stretching/ and singing in the/ heaven of appetite."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To read any poem by Mary Oliver is to be in the presence of the exquisite potential of language for marrying beauty and wisdom. Rarely a poet, so inclined not to impose her view nor her beliefs on anyone, can leave such profound impression on how we may come to see the world. And to read -to live, really- each poem of "American Primitive" is to educate your heart. Someone said, very appropriately so, that Oliver's poems may have the less humans in them than any contemporary poet's body of work, yet in the case of this magnificent book, two of its most stunning choices - "John Chapman" and "The Lost Children" - has Oliver bring the same keen compassion and awe for the tragic and the gracious in being our kind, that she does when speaking of foxes, mushrooms, or crows and owls. "John Chapman," for instance, contains some of the wisest lines about being one of us, humans, that you will find in American poetry. Chapman was the real John Appleseed who "thought little, / on a rainy night, / of sharing the shelter of a hollow log touching / flesh with any creatures there" and, yet, as a woman in the poems recalls "he spoke / only once of women and his gray eyes / brittle into ice. "Some / are deceivers," he whispered, and she felt / the pain of it,

remembered it / into her old age."I wonder if Oliver chose him because he lived his life during those times when this country was learning to be this country -and perhaps because of it- we were, for the last time, as close as a species to the rest of nature as we ever had."The Lost Children" is also about those times too, yet about those of one kind taken by those who were the natives to this land.

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