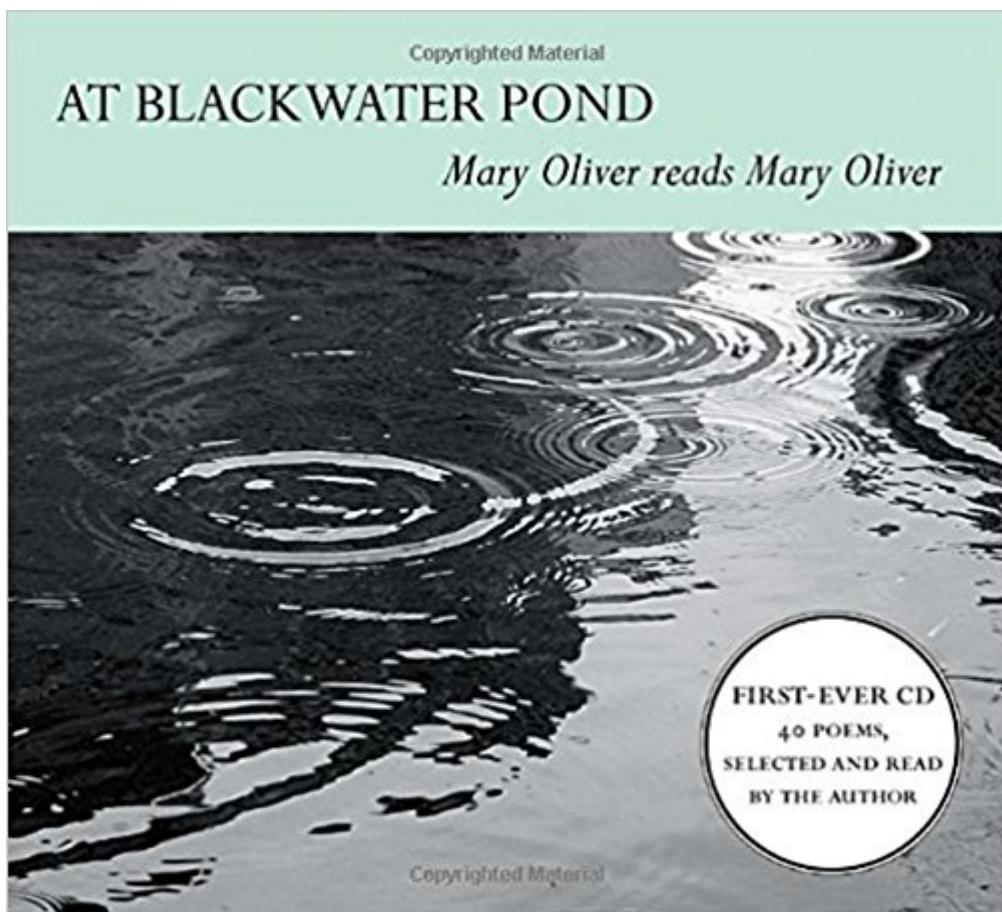


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# At Blackwater Pond: Mary Oliver Reads Mary Oliver



## Synopsis

One of the astonishing aspects of Oliver's work is the consistency of tone over this long period. What changes is an increased focus on nature and an increased precision with language that has made her one of our very best poets. --Stephen Dobyns, New York Times Book Review

Mary Oliver has published fifteen volumes of poetry and five books of prose in the span of four decades, but she rarely performs her poetry in live readings. Now, with the arrival of *At Blackwater Pond*, Mary Oliver has given her audience what they've longed to hear: the poet's voice reading her own work. In this beautifully produced compact disc, Mary Oliver has recorded forty of her favorite poems, nearly spanning the length of her career, from *Dream Work* through her newest volume, *New and Selected Poems, Volume Two*. The package is shrink-wrapped so that the elegant clothbound audiobook can take its place on the poetry shelf. It also includes a fifteen-page booklet with an original essay, "Performance Note," photos of the author at Blackwater Pond, and a full listing of the poems and their sources.

## Book Information

Audio CD

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## Customer Reviews

For decades, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Oliver has written in praise of the natural world, searching nature for answers to questions about belonging, faith, love, life and death. She is a poet of empathy, but she lets no one off easy—her love is sometimes tough. Still, there is powerful consolation everywhere in her work, as in her well-known poem, "Wild Geese: You do not have to be good./ You do not have to walk on your knees/ for a hundred miles through the/ desert repenting./ You only have to let the soft animal of your body/ love what it loves." In Oliver's world, a

heron becomes "an old Chinese poet," and a worker bee's three-week life is long enough "to know that life is a blessing." Now, in her first CD of recorded readings, Oliver reads poems from several books spanning her entire career, including the acclaimed House of Light and Dream Work and Why I Wake Early. In clear, crisp studio sound, Oliver's voice comes across insistent and calming. Released just in time for National Poetry Month, this CD makes a good introduction or companion to Oliver's accessible work and an inviting gateway to poetry for newcomers. (Apr. 15) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Much of the work of the poet is a mystery, but the last labor is clear; it is the deliverance of the poem. Often this happens through a manuscript or a book, but it can occur in a vocal way also. Has everyone at some time looked up the original meaning of performance? It means, says Webster, 'to finish, to complete.' The poem is meant to be given away, best of all by the spoken presentation of it; then the work is complete. Which makes performance sound, does it not, like part of the life-work of the poem, which I think it is. As if the poem itself had an independent life, or the endless possibility of its own life, in minds other than the poet's, which I think it has.--Mary Oliver, from "Performance Note," an original essay first published in *At Blackwater Pond*

Poems are, as my English teacher once told me, meant to be read aloud. I never feel as if I know a poem, as if it has been allowed to reach the deepest parts of my soul, until I have either read it out loud myself or heard it read. Mary Oliver is my favorite modern poet, bar none. I was so thrilled to find this CD (apart from the fact that I could not find anything anywhere to tell me what poems were on it before I bought it). I love it. To be honest, Ms. Oliver's voice took, for me, a little getting used to. There is nothing wrong with it, just not quite what I was expecting. Once I adjusted to it, I found myself enjoying her readings very much. What I find a little irritating (hence the four instead of five star rating) is the fair audio quality. Occasionally, you can hear pages turning and little throat sounds that, while human, ought not to be on a CD of this day and age. Still, I would suggest getting this with all my heart; hearing the poems, for me, added another dimension to Ms. Oliver's incredible work. Since I found it frustrating that I couldn't find a list of tracks, I assume others will. So, here are the poems you will find on this CD: Some Herons Wild Geese Beans The Swan Bone Hermit Crab Goldenrod I Looked Up The Buddha's Last Instruction The Kingfisher Bear Some Things, Say the Wise Ones Her Grave Mindful Lonely, White Fields Where Does the Temple Begin Goldfinches Song of the Builders Peonies Five A.M. in the Pinewoods The Summer Day The Sun The Snow Cricket Whelks Hum White Flowers Rice Little Owl Who Lives in the Orchard Maybe When Death

Comes Lingering in Happiness The Ponds Roses, Late Summer The Notebook Daisies The  
Lily Kookaburras Marengo White Owl Flies Into and Out of the Field At Blackwater Pond

As an annual visitor to Provincetown, where Mary Oliver resides, I first discovered her poetry in a local bookstore. While standing in it's cramped quarters, I was riveted by her matter of fact, yet stirring observations of life and nature. As listened, I imagine hers as the life I would love to live. I walk and observe through her eyes and ears and my life is much richer for having done so. Once back into my routine of commuting to work in New York City, I have recorded Mary's first CD onto my iPod. I can only attempt to express my joy-- at stepping upon the concrete sidewalks amidst crowds of busy people and rows of cars, trucks and taxis-- to hear Mary's quiet voice describing a Kingfisher. When I travel, when I'm weary and put-upon, when I'm just so pummelled by the obligations of work and routine, I select "At Blackwater Pond" and immediately calm and delight my soul. I cannot thank Mary Oliver enough.

Poetry read by Mary Oliver, could it get any better than that?

Hearing how Mary Oliver read her poetry gave me 'lessons' in how to approach and make pointed pauses that give the poetry breathing time to resonate with the thought. Which can make a huge difference in the meaning. Poetry grows with familiarity and understanding.

I love to read Mary Oliver's work, discovering one poem at a time and having my perspective altered by her masterful description of familiar, yet mysterious creatures and places. When this first recording became available, I had no idea how melodic, reverent, and strong Mary Oliver's voice would be as she reads her own words. This CD is becoming a favorite gift to give. Everyone who has received it has loved her imagery and has been fed by it.

Mary Oliver is certainly one of our finest contemporary poets. Her terse and sparse use of language in effect widens our horizons as we readers are able to expand our vision through her creative work. This CD has ample examples of her poetry, from several different volumes, and the listener can accompany the readings with personal copies of the published works. Oliver's ability to use the natural settings of her New England environment to state something profound about the human condition is one of her gifts. To see in the ordinary what is unforgettable, is another. Her language is visual, so that we see what she describes in new ways. This collection of poems, read by the poet,

is a classic and one to be treasured and listened to over and over.

Mary Oliver's poems have always spoken to me, and to hear her read them "speaks" to me in an even more wonderful way!

How can it get better than a beloved poet reading her beloved poetry.

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