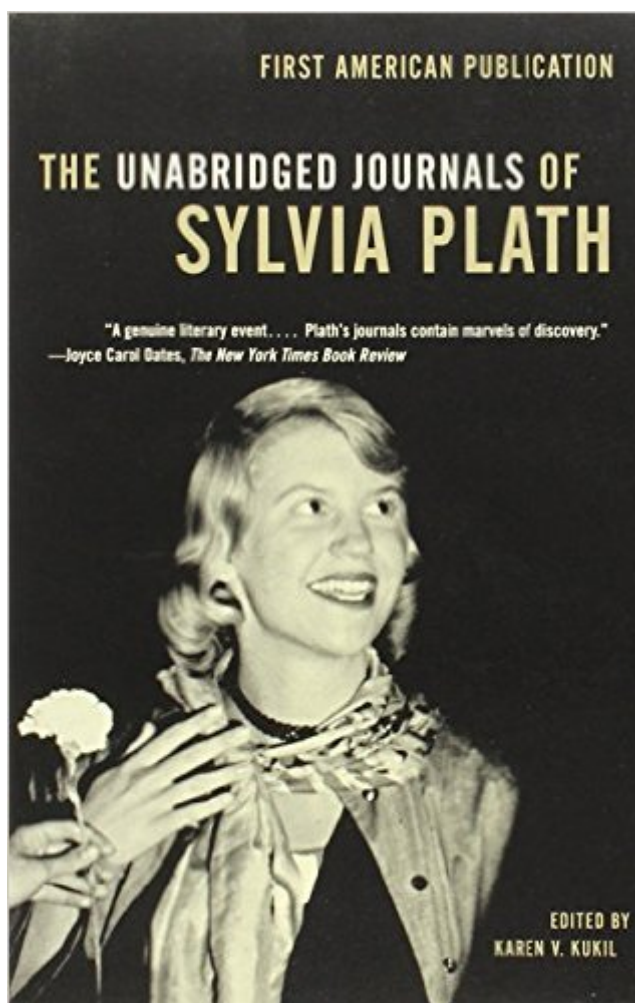


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# The Unabridged Journals Of Sylvia Plath



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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

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. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As the Journals host at BellaOnline, I first heard about this publication a year ago, and my interest was peaked. For years, I wondered, I speculated, what would happen to The Journals of Sylvia Plath once Ted Hughes passed away. For those familiar with the original publication of her journals, the foreword by Hughes (her estranged husband) mentioned that some of her journals which continued the story where the first published edition left off had been either "lost" or "destroyed" by him. Other parts of the journals had been edited. Now that he is no longer able to "hold back" the information, would there be a change to the content of the journals? Yes, but not in an important way. The Unabridged Journals gives us the same vision of life as the original publication, but with more details included. No, the "lost" or "destroyed" journals have not resurfaced, and most of the details Hughes left out were details about him -- Plath's obsession with her husband, that is. Nothing horrible was left out, painting him as a monster. Instead, her fixation with her husband, embarrassing tidbits about her desires for him, are what he had edited out. For die-hard Plath fans, such as myself, this is a nice edition to a collection with some very fascinating tidbits. However, if you're just using the journals for a paper or report, the original edition will do just fine.

Sylvia Plath's work has always captivated me and this book gives further insights into her musings and creative processes. Great read if you are a fan of her work. Drags on slightly long in places, but is worth pushing through for certain!

Here it goes: This is not a novel this is a life composed in words, the words written by Plath. She gone through a lot.. And we clearly see that in this outstanding Journal . This piece of work is written so beautifully that you will want to bookmark and highlight entire novel.. Emotions are just fitted at the right amount of time for me..

Recently fallen in love with reading published journals, and Plath's is no exception. Here you find a raw stream of consciousness in her naturally attractive writing style. You cannot read a person's mind, but with writing you can come close. I've yet to finish it as it is a very large book and each entry takes time to digest unlike your average story that you can steamroll right through. But I'm very much enjoying the journey.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963) is an icon of the alienated poetic soul confronted with a world of potentially numberless Auschwitzes and Nagasakis, the soul who chooses self-destruction in the face of this existential crisis. These unabridged journals, edited by Karen V. Kukil, are a vast improvement over the perniciously edited version published in the 1980s (for too long the only one available), whose preparation was supervised by Plath's ex-husband the poet laureate of Britain, Ted Hughes. Hughes has been cast as the villain of the piece vis-a-vis Plath's life, having been blamed (rather wrongfully) for her suicide at age thirty, and having been accused (more rightfully) of effectively censoring Plath's work, both poem and prose, following her death, whether by legal process, blue pencil, spontaneous rearrangement, or outright destruction of material. Comparing the Hughes edition to the Kukil edition JOURNALS is an eye-opening education. Hughes slashed vast amounts of material from Plath's daily record, and bowdlerized much of the rest. He extensively editorialized the text. The Sylvia Plath of Hughes' creation strikes the reader as remote and too measured---as if she was writing even her journals for an audience. The unexpurgated Sylvia Plath who appears in the Kukil JOURNALS is a far more vulnerable, wistful, soft, tough, gritty, obscene and sexualized person---in short a real woman. Unlike Hughes, Kukil avoided editorializing the text, but perhaps too zealously, thus losing sight of something important. Unless Plath speaks to specific issues, the reader is left unanchored in the 1950s, an era of vast changes whose roil and turmoil unquestionably had subtle (if not always journalistically noted) effects upon Plath. Kukil's edition is purely Plath's voice, wholly on her own. We see Plath struggling with her inner creative processes, her emotional needs, her fears and doubts and certainties, her boyfriends' demands for sex (1950's style), her warring desires for order or chaos, the daily and mundane realities of a husband, children, career and travel, and

paying the electric bill, all this in the face of her underlying lifelong flirtation with suicide. THE UNABRIDGED JOURNALS OF SYLVIA PLATH are an absolutely essential adjunct to Sylvia Plath's writings. They gift the reader with an intimate view into the mind and creative processes of this brilliant, unbalanced, creative and self-destructive woman.

Brilliant, brilliant woman, it is so interesting to read her life as she saw it. Even in her teens her journal entries are evocative and interesting. I definitely recommend it!

Book came in perfect condition. Pages are normal and easy to turn. Content wise...I'm only about 50 pages into it but am loving a glimpse into the young mind of this literary genius. It's so candid and unassuming.

Great book but it does have a Darkside.

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