



Windblown World: The Journals of Jack Kerouac 1947-1954

By Jack Kerouac

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Jack Kerouac is best known through the image he put forth in his autobiographical novels. Yet it is only his prolific journals, in which he set down the raw material of his life and thinking, that reveal to us the real Kerouac—his true, honest, deep, private, philosophical self.

In *Windblown World*, distinguished Americanist Douglas Brinkley has gathered a selection of journal entries from the most pivotal period of Kerouac's life, 1947–1954. Here is Kerouac as a hungry young writer finishing his first novel, *The Town and City*, while forging crucial friendships with Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Neal Cassady. Truly a self-portrait of the artist as a young man, these journals show a sensitive soul charting his own progress as a writer and responding to his literary forebears. Finally and perhaps most appealing to Kerouac's legion of fans, the journals tell of the events that would eventually be immortalized in *On the Road*, as Kerouac narrates two trips across the United States and Mexico and slowly cultivates his idea for a jazz novel. This unique and indispensable volume is sure to garner major critical attention and become an integral element of the Beat oeuvre.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Much of Kerouac's reputation rests on his first two novels, and these selections from a series of spiral notebooks into which the fledgling author constantly poured story ideas and private thoughts offer an intimate perspective on those novels' development. Anybody who's ever started a novel will grasp Kerouac's obsession with his daily word count and the periodic frustration and self-doubt. "I know that I should never have been a writer," Kerouac laments at one dark moment; in another, he wonders, "Why doesn't God appear to tell me I'm on the right track?" Historian Brinkley, author most recently of a book on John Kerry (*Tour of Duty*), addresses this religious devotion in an introduction that effectively establishes the historical context, clarifying, too, just how much time Kerouac really spent refining the allegedly spontaneous *On the Road*. Still, there's plenty of the familiar Kerouac on hand: all-night drunken conversations with other Beat writers, casual sexual encounters and a final notebook entitled "Rain and Rivers," filled with real-life episodes in an early version of the freewheeling style that transformed Kerouac from a promising young novelist to a literary legend. These journals are an essential resource for American literature scholars, but the force of Kerouac's personality makes them an engrossing read for lay admirers.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—These entries cover Kerouac's mid-20s, when he was completing his first novel, *The Town and the City*, and beginning what were to become *Dr. Sax* and *On the Road*. Much of the book is devoted to issues of writing—character, plot, style—and a daily obsession with word count that any writer will appreciate. Discussions of favorite authors like Céline, Twain, and Dostoyevsky highlight some influences, and Kerouac shows his early iconoclastic tendencies through an almost rampant hatred of academics and the literary establishment. Anecdotes about partying with Allen Ginsburg and William S. Burroughs, the New York jazz world, and finding a girlfriend are peppered throughout. The final section is devoted to the cross-country trip made with Neal Cassady and others that inspired *On the Road*. These narratives of the landscapes of the U.S. and Mexico are hauntingly beautiful and contain hints of the quasi-spontaneous style that made both Kerouac and the Beat movement so different and so popular. The introduction, notations, and index are invaluable to those less familiar with the time period or Kerouac's life. But the real charm of this title is in his words; seeing this young, brilliant author develop and continually push himself toward greatness is gripping and astonishing. The reality of Kerouac proves far more moving and interesting than the bad-boy image.—Matthew L. Moffett, Northern Virginia Community College, Annandale

From Booklist

The Kerouac archive continues to yield gold. Readers have encountered the discerning, observant, spiritual, and driven writer behind the glamorized iconographic Beat image in Kerouac's revealing letters. Now historian Brinkley ably and avidly introduces the lustrous and awe-inspiring journals Kerouac kept from mid-1947 to early 1954, the years during which he wrote his first novel, *The Town and the City*, and the novel that made him famous, *On the Road*. Here Kerouac meticulously records how many words he writes each day, what he's reading, and the nature of his moods. He writes character sketches and test-drives scenes. He makes resolutions, comments fervently on the state of the American soul, and describes places he travels to, wild binges, and epic conversations. And he gives thanks to God. Ravenous and raving, exacting and lyrical, exalted and despairing, profoundly receptive to the world and relentlessly introspective, Kerouac, as much a mystic as he was an artist, sought redemption in writing and wrote like a desolate angel. *Donna Seaman*

Users Review

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Lori Roth:

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