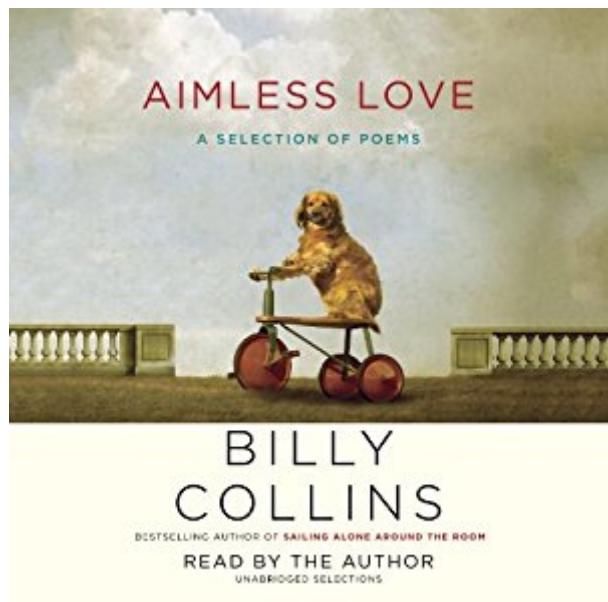


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Aimless Love: A Selection Of Poems



Synopsis

DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE: Includes five additional poems only available on the digital download."Billy Collins puts the 'fun' back in 'profundity.' " --Alice Fulton From the two-term Poet Laureate of the United States Billy Collins comes his first compilation of new and selected poems in 12 years. *Aimless Love* combines new poems with selections from four previous books - *Nine Horses*, *The Trouble with Poetry*, *Ballistics*, and *Horoscopes for the Dead*. Collins's unmistakable voice, which brings together plain speech with imaginative surprise, is clearly heard with every word, reminding us how he has managed to enrich the tapestry of contemporary poetry and greatly expand its audience. His work is featured in top literary magazines such as *The New Yorker*, *Poetry*, and *The Atlantic*, and he sells out reading venues all across the country. Appearing regularly in *The Best American Poetry* series, his poems appeal to readers and live audiences far and wide and have been translated into more than a dozen languages. By turns playful, ironic, and serious, Collins's poetry captures the nuances of everyday life while leading the reader into zones of inspired wonder. In the poet's own words, he hopes that his poems "begin in Kansas and end in Oz." Touching on the themes of love, loss, joy, and poetry itself, these poems showcase the best work of this "poet of plenitude, irony, and Augustan grace" (*The New Yorker*).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Former US Poet Laureate Billy Collins regularly reads to standing-room audiences, and reading his poems, it's not hard to see why. They reward multiple levels of interpretation, unpack hidden implications in seemingly undistinguished moments, and wink sly humor at playfully receptive

readers. But there's a moment in this collection where a switch flips unexpectedly. This produces a book that starts strong, but ends on a surprisingly flat, tired-sounding note. Collins' longtime readers know his familiar arc: an ordinary moment on an ordinary day triggers a Proustian connection, seemingly sudden but wholly consistent. Perhaps memory intrudes, or ruminations run wild--a quote from a writing text imbues a moment with unanticipated urgency, or an ancient photo in a modern building creates a discordance Collins can't easily reconcile. Sometimes he just starts thinking, and the results surprise even himself: "Writing in the Afterlife" ... I had heard about the journey to the other side and the clink of the final coin in the leather purse of the man holding the oar, but how could anyone have guessed that as soon as we arrived we would be asked to describe the place and to include as much detail as possible--not just the water, he insists rather the oily, fathomless, rat-happy water, not simply the shackles, but the rusty, iron, ankle-shredding shackles... While scholarly poets vanish into themselves, equating incomprehensibility with depth, Collins recognizes who reads his work. The baker doesn't bake the bread he wants to bake, but the bread his customers need to eat. No wonder, in a crowded poetry market, readers seek Collins out.

It seems almost churlish to complain about Billy Collins's poetry; he works so hard to be ingratiating while maintaining the appearance of effortless composition. He is popular in several senses--among contemporary poets, "popular" meaning appealing to a large and varied audience, is a rare quality, and yet to all appearances, Collins has gained and maintained an uncommonly wide readership. To his fans and his critics, this is attributable to his approach to poetry--he writes what any reader would agree is "accessible" poetry--poems about chance encounters with familiar objects that prompt odd thoughts or responses, providing new perspectives or witty comments about the familiar; or recognitions of unfamiliar objects or experiences that somehow impinge on his consciousness and force him to reconsider the ways the new perceptions force rearrangements of the old and the familiar. The reader is treated to the shared recognition of that feeling of comfort and familiarity, or the feeling of oddness and possible shock, only to be reassured that the new fits with the old, if only through the exercise of some witty transformation or transition. And there is always wit. Perception and wit, clever verbal manipulations of ideas and feelings--what else could we want from poems? Yet, the repetition of pretty much the same method -- a sharp perception or evocation, a clever move toward defamiliarizing, and comforting reversal returning us to the familiar -- many of the poems reproduce this pattern and suggest to the reader who is traversing many pages of Collins's poems that his work is better read in moderation, a few poems at a time, with long rests between. This is because the patterns so often seem to be the only excuse for the poem.

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