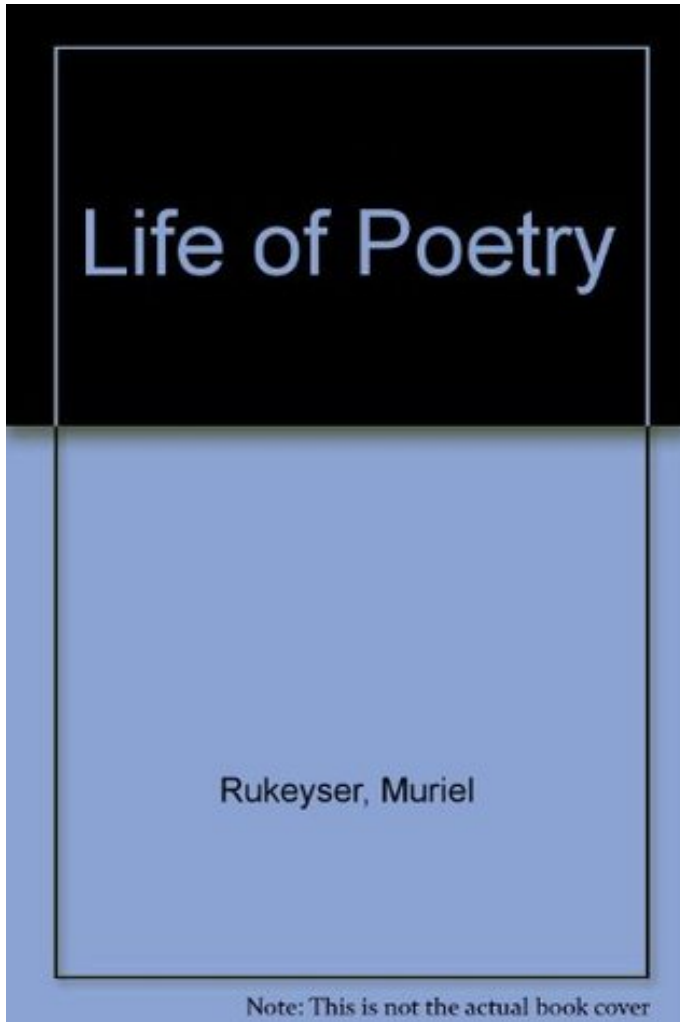

Muriel Rukeyser

Life of Poetry



Title: Life of Poetry

Author: Muriel Rukeyser

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Description

In an era in which art is increasingly dictated by marketers, and publishers and filmmakers don't seem to make a move without first consulting focus groups, poetry might seem, at first, a bit superfluous. It's "difficult," for one thing, subject to many interpretations; it's also deeply personal, unsuited to creation by committee. So what possible use does the modern world have for poetry? Muriel Rukeyser answers this question in *The Life of Poetry*, a book that just keeps coming back in time for each new generation. First published in 1949, it was reissued in 1974 and returns to print again in 1997, courtesy of Paris Press. Rukeyser's presents many definitions of poetry: it is an exchange of energy, a record of the emotional meaning of every moment, a concentration of universal joys and sorrows. It is a thing "in which we may live and which will save us."

Rukeyser, herself a poet, was a woman who understood that poetry alone was not enough to save the world. An activist on behalf of West Virginia coal miners and later censored South Korean writers, Rukeyser had an intimate understanding of the place principle and action occupy in saving the world. But the world needs a soul as well as a mind and a will, and for Rukeyser, poetry fills that role. *The Life of Poetry* is about poetry, but within that realm fall subjects as varied as musicals; war; and the works of Whitman, Dickinson, and Lorca, among others. Rukeyser died in 1980, but her fierce intelligence and great heart live on in this marvelous meditation on the universal applications of poetry.

Insightful reviews

Newengland: This is one of those serious books that I read quickly -- not a good combination. And I suppose, given the many 5-stars, it shows just how shallow I am when it comes to poetry. Yep. Kept thinking it was like a textbook. Or criticism. Rough, meet sailing. But I DID love her brief chapter toward the end -- the one with childhood memories written in a poetic way. Rukeyser takes her poetry straight up and on the rocks. Seriously. Alas, more seriously than I do....

Liza: When I was 15 I started reading this in the bathtub and stayed in there until I got pruned and the water turned cold and then slowly drained out, and I really felt that she had the right idea about the anti-touch people and the anti-poetry people and how they ruin everything and the fear of poetry is the fear. The ideology didn't hold up very well, and I hold that against this book, maybe unfairly.

Daniel Klawitter: "Anyone dealing with poetry and the love of poetry must deal, then, with the hatred of poetry, and perhaps even more with the indifference...If you ask your friends about it, you will find that there are a few answers, repeated by everyone. One is that the friend has not the time for poetry. This is a curious choice, since poetry, of all the arts that live in time--music, theater, film, writing--is the briefest, the most compact."

Urmy: Brilliant!

Melissa: nice for restoring your faith.

Hugh Martin: Wow. i'll use quite a bit in right here while i must safeguard poetry and why it matters. "Why is it feared?" Rukeyser asks. "It calls for complete consciousness..."

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