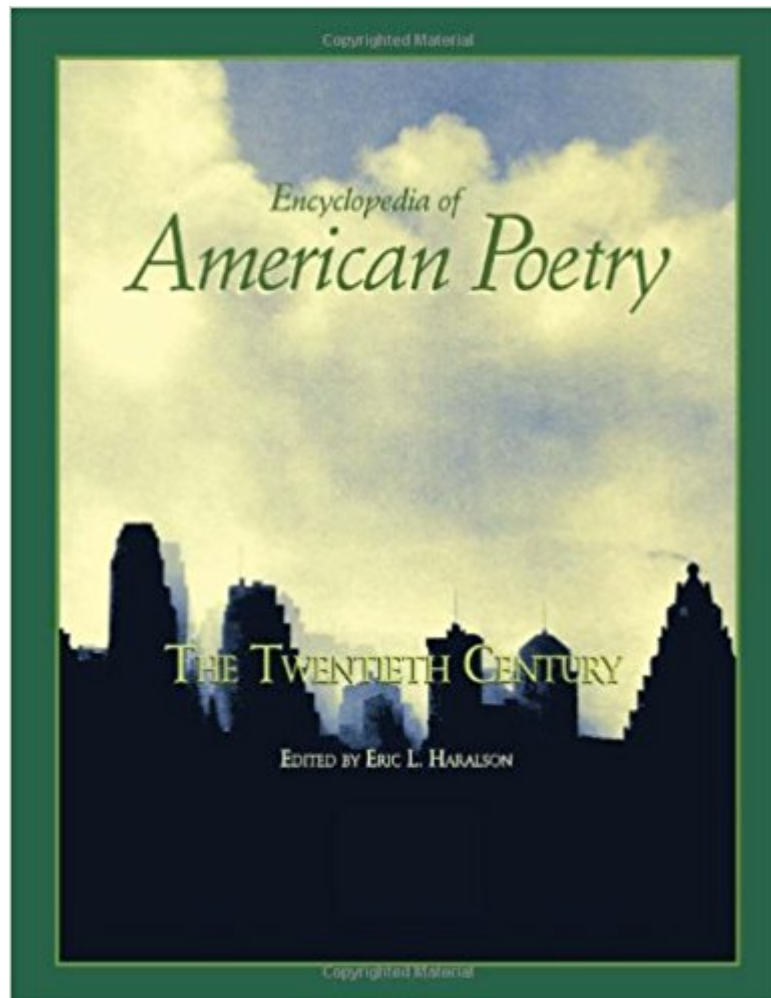




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Encyclopedia Of American Poetry: The Twentieth Century



Synopsis

The Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Twentieth Century contains over 400 entries that treat a broad range of individual poets and poems, along with many articles devoted to topics, schools, or periods of American verse in the century. Entries fall into three main categories: poet entries, which provide biographical and cultural contexts for the author's career; entries on individual works, which offer closer explication of the most resonant poems in the 20th-century canon; and topical entries, which offer analyses of a given period of literary production, school, thematically constructed category, or other verse tradition that historically has been in dialogue with the poetry of the United States.

Book Information

Hardcover: 866 pages

Publisher: Routledge; 1 edition (June 1, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1579582400

ISBN-13: 978-1579582401

Product Dimensions: 11.3 x 8.9 x 2.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.7 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.3 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,196,146 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #105 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books > Bibliographies & Indexes > History #203 in Books > Reference > Writing, Research & Publishing Guides > Publishing & Books > Bibliographies & Indexes > Literature #456 in Books > Reference > Encyclopedias & Subject Guides > Literature

Customer Reviews

This new encyclopedia is a companion to Haralson's well-received Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century (LJ 10/1/98). Like its predecessor, this new volume focuses on individual poets, "landmark" poems (e.g., "Howl," "The Waste Land"), and topics such as the "Black Mountain School," "Imagism," and "Light Verse." The almost 200 contributors include professors, Ph.D. candidates, writers, and school teachers. The signed articles provide biographical information and critical discussion of the literary and historical significance of each poet, excellent bibliographies of both works and criticism, and suggestions for further reading in the topics entries. Both a general index and a title index are included. Though in its biographical and critical aspects this work

overlaps heavily with the Dictionary of Literary Biography and American Writers, those multivolume sets do not provide encyclopedic coverage of topics and are more expensive than this single, though very large, volume. By the same token, the coverage here is much more comprehensive than is possible in, for example, the Oxford Companion to American Literature (Oxford Univ., 1995. 6th ed.). This encyclopedia is thus an excellent choice for any college or public library. DPeter Dollard, Alma Coll. Lib., MI Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Its predecessor, *The Encyclopedia of American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998), served as a companion to the anthology *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century* (Library of America, 1993), but this encyclopedia is not directly tied to *American Poetry: The Twentieth Century* (Library of America, 2000). It is a self-contained encyclopedia intended to "translate . . . a broad selection of poems" and make the reader "consider all that poetry has 'made happen'" in America during the twentieth century. The volume features more than 400 entries written by academic contributors on individual poets, landmark poems, and major topics. The poet entries are usually 1,000 to 2,000 words long and offer critical treatment of the poet's career and major achievements along with a capsule biography. Choices for inclusion usually correspond to the canon. Poets who fail to get their own entry, like C. K. Williams or Ai, are often mentioned in another entry under the style or movement they are affiliated with; disappointing exceptions include Native American poet Sherman Alexie and blues poet Sherley Anne Williams, who are not represented at all. Approximately one-third of the poet entries include subentries for one or more landmark poems. The "major topics" entries are longer (around 3,000 words) and include periods or movements (Black Arts movement, Dada), verse traditions (often ethnic, such as Asian American poetry), and styles and themes (Confessional poetry, War and antiwar poetry). All entries in the encyclopedia include a "Further Reading" list of between five and ten books or journal articles. Additional reader aids include cross-references, a poem title index, and a thorough general index. The closest encyclopedia in scope is *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry in English* (Oxford, 1994), which includes entries on poets as well as genres, movements, and other topics. However, the Oxford entries are much shorter, and the concentration is divided among British and American authors. *Contemporary Poets* (St. James, 2001) offers similar biocritical coverage of American poets in one volume but has fewer suggested readings and also includes British writers. The encyclopedia is written in sophisticated yet readable language best appreciated by undergraduates and above. Most of the information, especially poet and poem analyses, can be found in more detail in multivolume sources such as Gale's various literary criticism series (or the corresponding

electronic Literature Resource Center), but this is a valuable tool for the student interested in twentieth-century American poetry as a whole and offers yet another "expert" voice speaking on the popular poets and poems of the period. Recommended for academic and large public libraries.
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So who didn't make the cut, ten years down the line? Billy Collins. Linda Pastan. Joe Brainard, shortly to be immortalized in Library of America, scrapes in by a whisker. But this hefty tome is a solid benchmark amid the swirling free-for-all of the internet

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