



Complete Stories (Penguin Classics)

By Dorothy Parker

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Complete Stories (Penguin Classics) By Dorothy Parker

As this complete collection of her short stories demonstrates, Dorothy Parker's talents extended far beyond brash one-liners and clever rhymes. Her stories not only bring to life the urban milieu that was her bailiwick but lay bare the uncertainties and disappointments of ordinary people living ordinary lives.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Perhaps it was a disservice to collect all of Parker's stories in one place. Despite insistence to the contrary in a reasoned but ultimately unconvincing introduction by Regina Barreca, Parker wrote decently about the same things over and over and over. This volume includes 13 stories and nine sketches which were previously uncollected, but they blend right in with the other material on drinking and divorce among those of a certain class. Parker's stories tend to float in the shallow end of the literary pool. It's not that any individual piece is of poor quality, it's just that, collectively, the the sameness becomes unbearable. Her humor, in particular, strikes the same note every time. A quick run-through of several plots exhibits this perfectly: two women insincerely discuss an impending divorce; a couple gets drunk in preparation for becoming teetotalers the next day. The nine sketches included here are more of the same, minus any actual plot. Descriptions such as "Lloyd wears washable neckties," are amusing, but go no further. It is ironic that feminist critics are attempting to resurrect Parker, since her writing makes her disdain for her own sex perfectly clear: she feels free to disparage these women for whom marriage and dinner parties are everything, but she always goes for the easy laugh at their expense rather than explore the larger context that forced them into such rigid roles.

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From Library Journal

Now remembered almost solely as the lone female member of the New York writers' group known as the Algonquin Round Table, Parker was one of the most popular and published writers of the interwar years whose stories and light verse were eagerly sought by the best magazines. Although widely represented in short story anthologies, Parker's entire corpus of stories has never been collected in a single volume: editor Breese includes 13 stories and nine "sketches" not previously anthologized. Read as a collection, however, the famous sardonic wit becomes too intrusive, and similarities of plot and character are annoyingly apparent. Reliance on heavy social drinking as a staple of her plots is less humorous to Nineties readers, and some of Parker's ideas on the relationship between the sexes are equally dated. Still, many of the stories, such as the often reprinted "Big Blonde," are moving, and the whole volume is an unsettling portrait of the era. For all fiction and research collections. ?Shelley Cox, Southern Illinois Univ., Carbondale

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From [Booklist](#)

Parker has been subjected to an inordinate amount of disrespectful criticism. The cult of personality and the elevation of gossip over genuine analysis, combined with the tiresome and offensive habit of sexism, has very nearly obscured the importance of her work. This invaluable collection of nearly 50 of her superb stories, some never before collected, will cut right through that fog because Parker is potent. Her precision is unerring, her humor wicked, her anger searing, and her compassion profound. She has a keen sense of the absurd as well as the unjust, and an incredible eye and ear for detail. Regina Barreca, author of *Perfect Husbands (and Other Fairy Tales)*, provides a rousing and refreshing introduction to Parker's work, pointing out that what was extraordinary about Parker was her art and her wit, not her much maligned personal life, which, frankly, resembled that of many celebrated writers. *Donna Seaman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Richard Stratton:

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