FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry
Wendell Berry
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Those among us who admire Berry are always pleased to see his poems come to print because he is a poet who does more than apply fine poetic craft to the page. He also lives the language and the lifestyle he creates for the page. Berry's decision some 20 years ago to leave a successful academic career in order to return to the Kentucky farmland of his childhood—not just to write, but also to accomplish the back-breaking work of restoring a farm—is now legendary. Perhaps that is why, in home libraries too "practical" for poetry, we often find a slim volume of Berry's work, popular among all kinds of readers for being accessible without being trite, rural without being folksy, environmentally conscious without being preachy, and—an often overlooked quality—bitingly respectful of the elders who worked the land before today's too frequently corporate-driven generation of CEO farmers.

This collection is no exception. Of 100 poems selected by the author, we find many of the poems he also chose for Collected Poems (North Point Press, 1984), as well as a representative sampling from his most recent book, Extremities (1997). Thus, though there are fewer poems here than in the collected poems, this group is the perfect introduction and overview to his works, reprinting many of the fine pieces that established him as a poet of the land, including some of his most memorable work: several of the "Mad Farmer" series, "The Country Marriage," and the stunning narrative piece, "Creation Myth." Because of the small size (5"x 8") of this edition, this is perhaps the closest we will come to an old-fashioned pocket version—a practice of which I suspect Berry would approve—for this is the one we can carry into the fields, on a walk into the woods. (And it will use less paper!) The only thing missing from these "selected" works are the "new." Those of us who appreciate the work and life of this unique and much valued voice in American poetry are always hungry for more of his poetry.

Anne-Marie Oomen