



The Keillor Reader

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Stories, essays, poems, and personal reminiscences from the sage of Lake Wobegon

When, at thirteen, he caught on as a sportswriter for the Anoka Herald, Garrison Keillor set out to become a professional writer, and so he has done—a storyteller, sometime comedian, essayist, newspaper columnist, screenwriter, poet. Now a single volume brings together the full range of his work: monologues from *A Prairie Home Companion*, stories from *The New Yorker* and *The Atlantic*, excerpts from novels, newspaper columns. With an extensive introduction and headnotes, photographs, and memorabilia, *The Keillor Reader* also presents pieces never before published, including the essays “Cheerfulness” and “What We Have Learned So Far.”

Keillor is the founder and host of *A Prairie Home Companion*, celebrating its fortieth anniversary in 2014. He is the author of nineteen books of fiction and humor, the editor of the *Good Poems* collections, and a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

The Keillor Reader Details

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Author : Garrison Keillor

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From Reader Review The Keillor Reader for online ebook

Nicki Conroy says

While this was a hard read for me to get into, I loved it. Life lessons abound in it.

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

I received a free copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads. FTC guidelines: check!

Before I read this, I had never heard of Garrison Keillor. Maybe I heard one of his monologues while hanging out with my grandparents way back when, but other than that- I was a blank slate. Unfortunately, this collection wasn't my cup of tea.

I really liked the small bits before each section where he described his life while he was writing each piece and how that experience affected the tone and story lines. The writing itself was meandering. He intended that, especially in the Prairie Home Companion parts, and it may have made for an engaging radio show, but it wasn't very much fun to read. He introduced characters who had one line and then they never showed up again (maybe reoccurring characters from the show? I dunno.) The endings to his stories never felt like endings, just "stoppings", if that makes sense- probably another residual from his performance pieces. I wanted more structure and a focused story- this collection had very little of either.

I laughed a couple times during his 'Little House on the Desert' which was his parody of Laura Ingalls Wilder's Little House in the Woods. He took one of my favorite childhood stories, threw in a different setting, a brother that didn't exist, and some silliness. I enjoyed most of it but that was really the only essay that I liked out of the bunch.

Some of his family stuff was sweet but some of it really wasn't. In "The Death of Byron", he was dealing with the death of his father and was trying to process those feelings through his writing. The characters in that one felt stilted to me, probably exactly what he intended, but they were so emotionally removed that I neither bonded with them nor cared what was going on. That was really my problem with the whole book. Each chapter was only a short story, so Keillor was never able to get an extended narrative going. Maybe it's not that I dislike Keillor's writing as much as I didn't like the length of the stories. Perhaps I would enjoy it more if I read one of his novels.

I also didn't share his sense of humor. He would begin his stories like someone writing in the 1950's but then something totally inappropriate would happen like a girl shoving her male cousin's hand up her shirt to show him that she didn't have a bra on. I suppose that the juxtaposition was supposed to be funny but I wasn't laughing.

I suspect that fans of A Prairie Home Companion will love this. It just wasn't for me.

Elizabeth Powers says

Quintessential Keillor; at times humorous, profound, introspective, folksy. Being a Minnesotan probably helps in terms of truly feeling close to the author and the stories, for example when he lists the streets on Cathedral Hill he has lived on and you too have lived on two of the three. Throughout, though, there is an old school understanding of relations between the genders that, in retrospect, causes a brief pause in light of recent events. Nevertheless, I still love Garrison Keillor and always will!

Garry says

5/12/2017

Ryan Moore says

Keillor is a far better speaker than a writer, but still worth the read.

Heather says

I received *The Keillor Reader* in a Goodreads giveaway and have been enjoying it all summer, reading it in bits and pieces whenever I get a spare moment. Keillor is a master storyteller. Although his writing often veers into the bizarre, he always brings it around to a satisfying conclusion. The collection shows his wide range of talent with monologues, stories, essays, and poems. Autobiographical introductions to each selection provide insight into his life and mindset, which added a lot of value for me.

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I'm always entertained by *The Prairie Home Companion* (especially since I went to college in Minnesota), and it's impossible to read these pieces without hearing Keillor's distinctive voice in my head. A downside of this is that the few times he went rated-R, it felt jarring, almost like he was trying too hard to be edgy. The poetry also fell flat for me. At times it just seemed silly and I found myself skimming most of it.

Overall, this is a fantastic anthology. I'll be earmarking my favorite selections and turning to them whenever I want some bite-size, palate-cleansing reading.

Peggy Roberson says

I was really hoping that this book was going to be better than it was, after seeing the movie about him, but I was slightly disappointed. There were a couple of stories that I found so boring, that I couldn't wait for them to be over. Others I found to be very heartwarming, and they tugged at my heart. The book, in its' entirety, is a mixed bag of his life, so if you like reading that type of thing, it's a worthwhile read.

Tom Schwerbrock says

I was on about page 271 when allegations of Keillor's sexual misconduct hit the news. The whole thing kinda colors my view of his writing now. Which makes me feel a bit like a turncoat, a Benedict Arnold to my own kind- men that is, not sexual predators. I've always been far too much of a coward, far too intimidated by females to be a predator. I'm more like prey. You can call it respectful of the gentler of the sexes, but it's a respect rooted in fear, that prevented me from ever "coming on" to a girl. Sexual predation? I had trouble crossing the floor to ask a girl to dance. And a single negative response to such an inquiry would render me paralyzed for days. "She doesn't like me! What am I to do!" What I'm trying to say- there is nothing noble in my deference to the female of the species. I'm just a chicken. But a man. A man chicken. Somewhat loyal to other man chickens. I can't help it.

But, back to Keillor, after reading of his being swept up in this latest wave of revelations and accusations, his frequent tales of past sexual encounters by him, or his presumed sexual prowess of his grandfather who sired 12 children- does suddenly stand out like a sore thumb. He talks about sex a lot. His writings are peppered with sex. Why?

And how does one end up in 3 marriages like Keillor? Optimism. "This next one'll surely be the marital bliss I've dreamed of!" Or you're just plain made to fall for the wrong girl, over and over. And then you write about it. A cure for writer's block. "Honey! Sorry, but I had an affair with the secretary, I needed some new material. And yes, I called the lawyer already." Or you're just a danged pervert. That's what Minnesota Public Radio says he is.

Wait a second, this is supposed to be a book review, isn't it?

Keillor's stories reminisce of kinder, gentler times, yet he doesn't allow his ancestors off the hook. They're all humans. Prone to human failings. They have sex. They had to. Grandpa had 12 kids, remember? His characters are judged but never condemned. Forgiven. Unless they're Republicans.

He has a style all his own, or seems to have to a newbie like me. He is a great storyteller. He has real comic talent. He appears to understand comedy on a visceral level. He finds it everywhere he looks it seems. It surprises the reader. I sit and laugh and people look at me like I'm insane.

"It's the book, not my witzelsucht this time."

So, read the book. Does Keillor deserve the public lashing he's getting at the moment? I don't know. (Although, he is a Democrat!) But the stories he writes are lighthearted, a great escape from the dismal news, dismal TV drama, and dismal pulp fiction that dominates Amazon these days. I highly recommend it.

Nick says

A wonderful collection, which when brought together, is almost an auto-biography. Inevitably perhaps, it can be repetitive at times, but we forgive him.

Peter says

A wonderful read, much more than Lake Wobegon! I loved the tempo.

Melanie says

This book was a gift from my father, as a fondness for Lake Wobegon is a shared connection between us. It is a collection of short stories, poems and essays, some related to Lake Wobegon and some not, gathered from Keillor's long career. I read it thinking of dad and of what I would say to him and recommend or not about each piece. I was partial to those which were less autobiographical and essayish in nature, his more fun works, "Don Giovanni" and "Zeus the Lutheran", for example, as well as his reworking of "Casey at the Bat" (dad will love this one). I liked his lists: "What Have We Learned So Far?" and "Rules of Orchestra", the latter reminding me of a former student of mine. Some Wobegon favorites like "Pontoon Boat" and "Truckstop" were there, each with its slow drawing out of the plot, little wisdoms and surprise twists. And that, I think, is enough Keillor for a while.

Linda says

A master at the art of storytelling and a softie that values the "old" values of home, family and friends.

Douglas says

I have to start off with the fact that I've read and researched the allegations against the author. I'm truly convinced that this is nothing more than some people being shocked that their first boss is arrogant and rude.

Mr Keillor is totally aware of his shortcomings and the shortcomings of humanity. That's why his writing is so good. He's a treasure, a true renaissance man. I highly recommend this book.

Sharon says

"Your book saved my life, Mister." 2018

Sylvia Snowe says

A selection of Keillor's favorite pieces, along with stories and reminisces of his life and his family. Most of this is beautifully woven together, with his narrative and then the piece. I'm giving it a four, although I'd prefer to call it a four and a half. Ladies, skip some of the chapters in the latter part of the book, where he tortures us all with his tortuous relationships with controlling, manipulative women. One in particular, his Danish ex, and you don't want to hear about his bitterness over this. Otherwise, I highly recommend the book. A beautiful remembrance of the Minnesota of my parents and grandparents, as well as a retrospective of Keillor's life and his work.

