



The Selected Letters of Willa Cather

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This first publication of the letters of one of America's most consistently admired writers is both an exciting and a significant literary event. Willa Cather, wanting to be judged on her work alone, clearly forbade the publication of her letters in her will. But now, more than sixty-five years after her death, with her literary reputation as secure as a reputation can be, the letters have become available for publication.

The 566 letters collected here, nearly 20 percent of the total, range from the funny (and mostly misspelled) reports of life in Red Cloud in the 1880s that Cather wrote as a teenager, through those from her college years at the University of Nebraska, her time as a journalist in Pittsburgh and New York, and during her growing eminence as a novelist. Postcards and letters describe her many travels around the United States and abroad, and they record her last years in the 1940s, when the loss of loved ones and the disasters of World War II brought her near to despair. Written to family and close friends and to such luminaries as Sarah Orne Jewett, Robert Frost, Yehudi Menuhin, Sinclair Lewis, and the president of Czechoslovakia, Thomas Masaryk, they reveal her in her daily life as a woman and writer passionately interested in people, literature, and the arts in general.

The voice heard in these letters is one we already know from her fiction: confident, elegant, detailed, openhearted, concerned with profound ideas, but also at times funny, sentimental, and sarcastic. Unfiltered as only intimate communication can be, they are also full of small fibs, emotional outbursts, inconsistencies, and the joys and sorrows of the moment. *The Selected Letters* is a deep pleasure to read and to ponder, sure to appeal to those with a special devotion to Cather as well as to those just making her acquaintance.



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