



Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories

E. L. Doctorow

Download now

Read Online ➔

Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories

E. L. Doctorow

Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories E. L. Doctorow

A son is set the task of concealing his father's death; a drowned child is callously handled by rescuers; a lonely schoolteacher is shot by a hunter; a boy witnesses his mother's act of infidelity; a car explosion kills a foreign schoolgirl; and the middle-aged author of these tales depicts his own consciousness. In a perceptive work about a writer of stories, acclaimed author E.L. Doctorow opens to the reader the creative imagination of a writer.

Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories Details

Date : Published May 1st 1997 by Plume (first published 1984)

ISBN : 9780452278790

Author : E. L. Doctorow

Format : Paperback 160 pages

Genre : Short Stories, Fiction, Literature, American, 20th Century, Literary Fiction

 [Download Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories E. L. Doctorow

From Reader Review Lives of the Poets: A Novella and Six Stories for online ebook

Grant says

Quite good, I think it will get better with age. Short and fun, I'm happy I picked it up, I've never read anything by Doctorow I have not enjoyed.

Heather says

Hmm....I don't know about this book. Every year, I try to read something by authors that are considered "important" (whatever that means) just for enrichment. So, I thought I'd try this because it wasn't too long. I liked it, then I hated it, then I hated it then I liked it again. It's a perfect example of why I choose to never quit a book- sometimes the ending is worth the struggle and sometimes it redeems itself. The last "story" is just kind of stream of consciousness bitching and rambling, more than once I was reminded of those curmudgeonly, grumpy monologues by Andy Rooney on 60 minutes. But then, as I sort of removed my expectations for it and just resigned myself to hating it- I started to like it. So I'm just not sure how I feel about it. I do want to try one of his proper novels, but not anytime soon.

Rick says

Like all Doctorow's books I enjoyed it as he gives us so much to think about and there is simply some very brilliant writing; for that matter there are a couple of paragraphs that are some of the best written I have ever read. That being said, the reason for my rating is this is one those Doctorow books that is so frustrating in, what I have to call, experimental writing. Some flows some elevates the reader some forces you to think and reread sections to be able to get your mind around it. Finally there is a certain unevenness about it that spoils the beauty you find. It is distracting and to me spoils the reading experience. Maybe my problem is I am reading his books in the reverse order they were written

In many ways it feels almost like the precursor to City of God and leaves me feeling not quite satisfied but not disappointed. No matter what, Doctorow is a true author: not a writer, not a story-teller, but one of the best authors of his time. To me, author and is the highest praise that can be given to any writer and Doctorow's death was a loss to all of us who relish a good book.

Simon Mcleish says

Originally published on my blog here in January 2002.

This collection, one novella and six short stories, is connected because all its contents are written in the first person and read as though they are selections from autobiographies. (The plural is because they are mutually contradictory, even though they share details and anecdotes.)

The title story is the novella, and is a memoir of the New York literary scene, all about the marital difficulties of middle aged couples in the late seventies. The narrator of the story is one of the few who have remained faithful to their partners though this seems to be more because of his absorption in his hypochondria than for any moral scruples.

Of the other stories, The Waterworks deserves mention because it was later adapted into an episode in the novel of the same name. It is the most individual member of this collection, being the only one with a setting in a past not within living memory. It also seems less real than the other stories, as Doctorow tries out a rather different voice.

The general standard is nevertheless high, as might be expected from Doctorow. He doesn't have so much to say in the short story form, with the result that the collection is a little purposeless; but each story is exquisitely crafted.

Julie says

This collection of short stories give you a lot to think about and many issues are brought to light.

Alan says

1993 notebook: boy who writes letters supposedly from his dead father to his grandmother. Sitting in the car with Aunt France's, the kids on the street, his realisation about their mother - 'her hair was undistinguished'. Then a stunning and mysterious 3 pages about someone witnessing the aftermath of an accident - a child caught in the machinery of a great reservoir. Horses, carts - is it the 19th C.? Who is the narrator? Then another equally breathtaking one about a boy in a field. An almost mystical experience of sunshine - 'an Egyptian eye that.. lights up one side only.' Then standing at the barn door, spotting his mother in flagrante.

M. D. Hudson says

To my surprise I did not hate this book, because man oh man did I hate Ragtime, which was smug, arrogant and ridiculous (but very easy-to-read and engaging). Doctorow really seems to think good sex was invented in 1967. Never have I felt more sorry for fictional characters, or wanted to rescue them from their dastardly author than I did while reading Ragtime.

Which is to say I had no interest in reading anything else by Doctorow. But a really nice copy of Lives of the Poets turned up in a local thrift store (first edition with dust jacket, woo hoo), so I dug in. I was pleasantly, if mildly surprised. I didn't hate it. This was some months ago, and now much really stuck to me, so I don't have much to say specifically. There were one or two outright dogs, and one or two things that were surprisingly good. The title story was in the middle somewhere. As I recall, "Lives of the Poets" full of fantastically self-indulgent, selfish artistic-academic-intellectual types, circa 1974, ditching spouses and making up fantastic excuses for their piggy lives. Doctorow reports it all pretty straight, poking at the pretense here and there, but not really criticizing it. He's an establishment writer of an obsolete type, one of those tadpoles swimming in the shallows while Saul Bellow and John Gardner breach the surface out in deeper waters. Or something like that. Read this if you like "quality" 2nd rate short fiction from the '70s.

Dylan Perry says

Finishes first story, sets book down

Opens Youtube, finds video

Glances at book sitting on my desk

Pauses video 1 minute in

Picks book back up and reads the next story all the way through

This was how my day went, from 5 until now, just after midnight. I rarely finish a book in a day, even slim ones like this. But the stories were (for the most part) compulsively readable and engaging. A sign of a great book is when my usual distractions seem suddenly dull in comparison.

I docked a star for one story I didn't care for and DNFin the titular novella at the end.

However, I still recommend this for anyone looking for some good short stories. I'll be checking out more E.L. Doctorow in the future.

Kathie Harper says

I picked up this work after finishing Ragtime and enjoyed the short stories but was disappointed with the novella. I thought it would never end.

Megan Davis says

Wanted to like this because of the title, but it turned out to be nothing like what I expected. Kind of an odd, lesser-known piece of work, but not really in a good way.

Elaine says

I'm a big fan of Doctorow's novels, and the short stories just do not come up to that gold standard. Probably the wrong genre for him -- too confining for his sprawling, complex works about key moments/characters in U.S. history. The title novella, Lives of the Poets, however, is a fascinating look at the rambling mind of middle-aged, white, male academic poet and his friends of exactly the same ilk. Lots of sexist talk, drinking, ambition, comfort in privilege. Very revealing and I bet his fellow male literati were squirming, and yelling "ouch!" when this was published in 1984.

Cody Sexton says

A collection of mediocre stories followed by a failed novella. If you really feel the need to tackle this book save yourself some time and only read "Willi," "The Writer in the Family," and "The Hunter."

Riley Haas says

The Writer in the Family (9)

The Water Works (8)

Willi (9)

The Hunter (7)

The Foreign Legation (10)

The Leather Man (7)

The Lives of the Poets (10) is fantastic and hilarious.

Kevin says

As a collection, this is ambitious, but uneven. Early on, the title novella courts dismissal as one more trip to the well chronicled land of white people's problems, upper middle-class, middle-aged men's division. It somehow manages to transcend this well-trod terrain and deliver something of genuine interest and engagement, only to fumble the whole thing in the last few pages (but don't let that stop you from reading it).

Marina says

I agree with most of the comments here (which I had unfortunately not read when I picked up this book, in a 2nd-hand book-store in Chiang Mai!) that the first story is wonderful, but the rest not so much. The other 5 stories, with varying degrees of postmodernity, are stylishly beautiful but hard to understand, sometimes even, I'd say, there isn't much to understand. Still, I dog-eared enough pages for quotations and ideas that I liked for you to not trust me on this.

The novel I found interesting, both in the way that's written and the people it talks about--the poets, the writer friends of the narrator, and their wives. He was too unlikeable for me though: Not only the narrator (which is clearly an alter ego of the author, though I don't know to which degree is he based on himself), which was the worst, but the author--which I differentiate by the way he's chosen his narrator to speak about others. I perceived 0 empathy on him, but more of a condescending tone. Specially condescending when talking about women and particularly his wife, which made the fact that some of his points were sound just superfluous, because I really couldn't take anything he said seriously. Just the fact of agreeing with him, sort of repulsive. Also a bit uncomfortable with the way he tagged everybody by their race, ethnicity or religious belief, although there was a point to it, it sort of escaped me.
