



# A Reader's Guide to Wallace Stevens

*Eleanor Cook*

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Wallace Stevens is one of the major poets of the twentieth century, and also among the most challenging. His poems can be dazzling in their verbal brilliance. They are often shot through with lavish imagery and wit, informed by a lawyer's logic, and disarmingly unexpected: a singing jackrabbit, the seductive Nanzia Nunzio. They also spoke--and still speak--to contemporary concerns. Though his work is popular and his readership continues to grow, many readers encountering it are baffled by such rich and strange poetry.

Eleanor Cook, a leading critic of poetry and expert on Stevens, gives us here the essential reader's guide to this important American poet. Cook goes through each of Stevens's poems in his six major collections as well as his later lyrics, in chronological order. For each poem she provides an introductory head note and a series of annotations on difficult phrases and references, illuminating for us just why and how Stevens was a master at his art. Her annotations, which include both previously unpublished scholarship and interpretive remarks, will benefit beginners and specialists alike. Cook also provides a brief biography of Stevens, and offers a detailed appendix on how to read modern poetry.

*A Reader's Guide to Wallace Stevens* is an indispensable resource and the perfect companion to *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, first published in 1954 in honor of Stevens's seventy-fifth birthday, as well as to the 1997 collection *Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose*.

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