

A Journey Through the Past: The History of Portable Literature and the New Directions Paperbook

In the vast landscape of literature, there exists a realm of books that have transcended time and space, accompanying readers on countless journeys and enriching their lives. Portable literature, a genre that encapsulates the essence of great literary works in compact and affordable volumes, has played a pivotal role in shaping the literary landscape for over a century.

At the heart of this literary adventure lies the New Directions Paperbook, a pioneering publishing house that has dedicated itself to bringing the finest works of literature to a wider audience. Founded in 1936 by the visionary James Laughlin, New Directions has become synonymous with literary innovation, experimentation, and the dissemination of exceptional literature.



A Brief History of Portable Literature (New Directions Paperbook) by Thomas Bunstead

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 990 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Print length : 98 pages



The Genesis: James Laughlin and the Birth of New Directions

James Laughlin, a man of immense passion and foresight, was the driving force behind the creation of New Directions. A graduate of Harvard University and a member of the esteemed family that founded the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation, Laughlin's love for literature burned fiercely within him.

Disillusioned by the literary scene in the 1930s, Laughlin sought to establish a publishing house that would defy conventions and champion emerging voices. With a modest investment of \$5,000, Laughlin launched New Directions in his New York City apartment.

The Mission: Affordable Access to Literary Excellence

Laughlin's mission was clear: to make great literature accessible to all. In an era where books were often prohibitively expensive, New Directions aimed to break down financial barriers and bring the joy of reading to a broader population.

The New Directions Paperbook was born from this desire. These slim, unassuming volumes, adorned with eye-catching covers designed by renowned artists, offered readers a treasure trove of literary classics and contemporary works at an affordable price.

Pioneering Voices and Literary Experimentation

New Directions Paperbooks quickly became a beacon for literary experimentation and the discovery of new voices. Laughlin had an unwavering belief in the power of emerging writers, and he eagerly sought out and published authors who defied traditional norms.

The list of writers published by New Directions reads like a who's who of modern literature, including Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Henry Miller, Jean-Paul Sartre, Samuel Beckett, and many more. These authors pushed the boundaries of storytelling, explored new forms of expression, and challenged the established literary order.

The Impact: A Cultural Legacy

The impact of the New Directions Paperbook on the literary landscape cannot be overstated. For decades, these books have been a staple in bookstores, classrooms, and the personal libraries of countless readers.

By making literature affordable and accessible, New Directions played a crucial role in fostering a love of reading and expanding the literary horizons of generations of readers. The books introduced new perspectives, challenged preconceived notions, and sparked countless intellectual and cultural conversations.

The Legacy: A Continuing Commitment to Excellence

Today, New Directions Paperbooks continue to grace the shelves of readers worldwide. The publishing house remains committed to its mission of publishing the finest works of literature, both established and emerging.

Under the leadership of Laughlin's daughter, Farrar, Straus & Giroux President Jonathan Galassi, New Directions continues to uphold its tradition of literary excellence. The catalog boasts an impressive array of contemporary authors, including Salman Rushdie, Margaret Atwood, Haruki Murakami, and many others.

The story of portable literature and the New Directions Paperbook is a testament to the enduring power of literature to entertain, educate, and inspire. Through their unwavering commitment to literary innovation, affordability, and the discovery of new voices, New Directions Paperbooks have left an indelible mark on the cultural landscape.

As we navigate the ever-evolving world of literature, let us remember the legacy of those who paved the way for generations of readers to enjoy the transformative power of great literature.



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