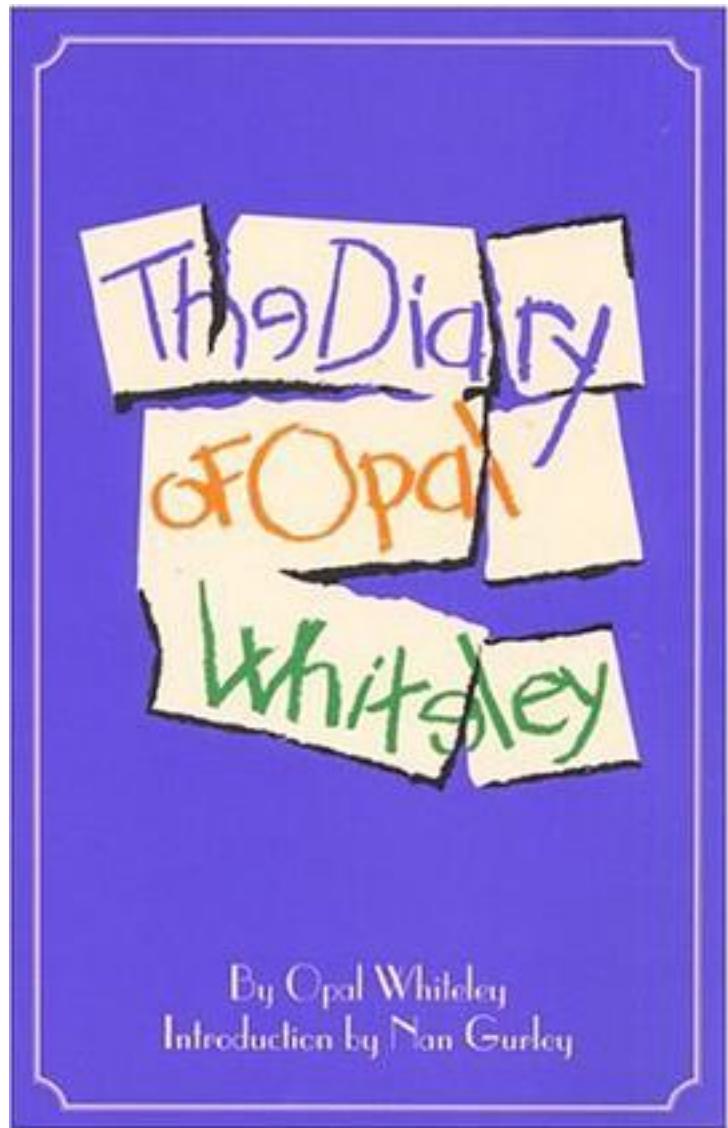


# The Diary of Opal Whiteley



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著者:Opal Whiteley

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As a child growing up in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon at the turn of the century, Opal Whiteley roamed the fields and forests and logging camps, recording all she saw in a secret diary. She began her diary at the age of six, writing with colored pencils on scraps of butcher paper, wrapping paper and the backs of envelopes.

Opal preferred to be alone, spending her days in the forests with the animals and trees. Some of her friends were Michael Angelo Sanzio Raphael, the "most tall fir tree that grows back of the barn," and Thomas Chatterton Jupiter Zeus, "that most velvety wood rat."

Opal was considered by her family as an odd and different child. What they didn't know was that Opal was schizophrenic. The illness manifested itself in a heightened sense of awareness of the sights and sounds around her.

Her heightened sensibilities and her genius for expressing herself combined to create the most fascinating diary ever written.

Writing each day, she observed her surroundings in the mill town and wrote "a long time ago this road had a longing to go across the river, and some that had understanding made it a bridge to go across on."

While picking up potatoes in the field with her grandfather she wrote, "All the times I was picking up potatoes, I did have conversations with them. I have thinks these potatoes growing here did have knowings of star-songs. I have kept watch in the field at night, and I have seen the stars look kindness down upon them. I have walked between the rows of potatoes, and I have watched the star-gleams on their leaves. And as the wind did go walking in the field, I did follow her down the rows. Her goings-by made ripples on my nightgown."

Opal hid her secret diary in a hollow log in the woods near her home in Cottage Grove, Oregon. When Opal was 14, her younger sister found the diary and tore it to pieces in a fit of jealous anger. Heartbroken, Opal kept the pieces and stored them at a neighbor's house in an old hatbox.

When Opal was 23, she met Ellery Sedgwick, publisher of the Atlantic Monthly. Hoping he would publish her nature books for children, she told him of her childhood in the logging camps of the Cascade Mountains. Intrigued with her personality and her memory for detail, Sedgwick wondered if she had kept a diary as a child. She said that she had, and he asked to see it at once.

For nine months, Opal worked to piece her diary back together, and in 1920 The Diary of Opal Whiteley was published by the Atlantic Monthly. Hailed as a work of genius, capturing "the essence of the spirit of childhood," the diary of this 7 year-old girl became a national best-seller. But because of the diary's brilliance, people soon began to question if one so young could have written it, and Opal was quickly assailed as a fraud.

Ten months after its publication, the diary was out of print and Opal was disgraced. People were convinced they'd been tricked. They returned their copies of the diary and demanded repayment. Accused of literary fraud, Opal left the United States and made her home in England.

Opal's illness went untreated until 1948. She was found rummaging in the bombed-out rubble of buildings in England during World War II. She was looking for books. Her neighbors in the tenement house where she lived called the authorities and Opal was taken to a public mental hospital in Napsbury, England. She lived there as a patient until she died on February 16, 1992.

Was the childhood diary a fraud, written by an adult hungry for publicity, or was it simply the genius of a disturbed young girl? Reprinted after nearly a century of obscurity, the mysterious "DIARY OF OPAL WHITELEY" comes to life again.

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