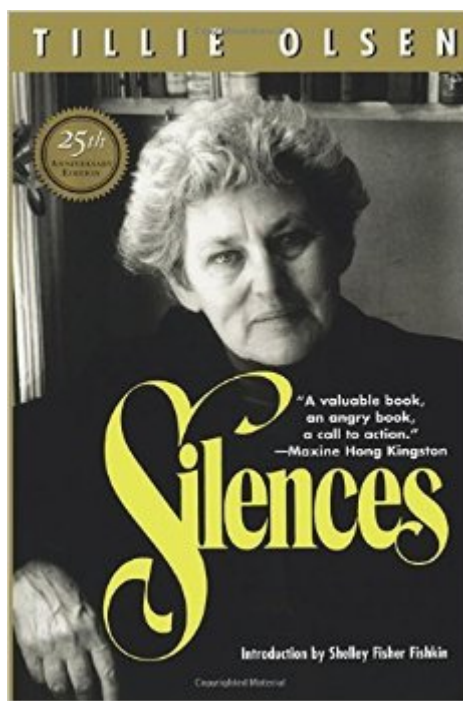


The book was found

# Silences



## Synopsis

First published in 1978, *Silences* single-handedly revolutionized the literary canon. In this classic work, now back in print, Olsen broke open the study of literature and discovered a lost continent—the writing of women and working-class people. From the excavated testimony of authors' letters and diaries we learn the many ways the creative spirit, especially in those disadvantaged by gender, class and race, can be silenced. Olsen recounts the torments of Melville, the crushing weight of criticism on Thomas Hardy, the shame that brought Willa Cather to a dead halt, and struggles of Virginia Woolf, Olsen's heroine and greatest exemplar of a writer who confronted the forces that would silence her. This 25th-anniversary edition includes Olsen's now infamous reading lists of forgotten authors and a new introduction and author preface.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Silences* by Tillie Olsen  
Annotated Bibliography  
This book is addressed to the silences in literature and the ways in which writing ceases to be, to the dying and death of capacity. It is about the censorship and self-censorship of woman primarily. The book is written to encourage everyone who

is marginalized to find a place for their voice amidst the constrictions of wage-labor and child rearing because their experiences are invaluable. Olsen estimates that only one out of twelve writers in our century are women. Olsen goes into great depth telling the story of Rebecca Harding Davis a nineteenth century woman who spoke out through her literature from isolation both as a woman without encouragement and as a citizen of a backward city, without even a library, in what became West Virginia. She wrote and eventually was introduced to society and made great friends with many prominent writers, however, at age thirty-one she married, and once she had children she let her writing go. Her sympathetic perspective about iron-workers in her town is almost inexplicable in terms of her class. Olsen asks how she got the information she used in her story and remarks on her personal qualities that made her into a popular conversationalist before she retreated/succumbed to motherhood and fulfilled the role of what was properly expected of her. Primarily this book is about the silences of women throughout time. It asks why women have not been enabled to publish, why their lives have usually been overwhelmed by child rearing (their work not allowing time for writing), what is wrong with the world that it doesn't ask-and make it possible-for people to raise and contribute the best that is in them.

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