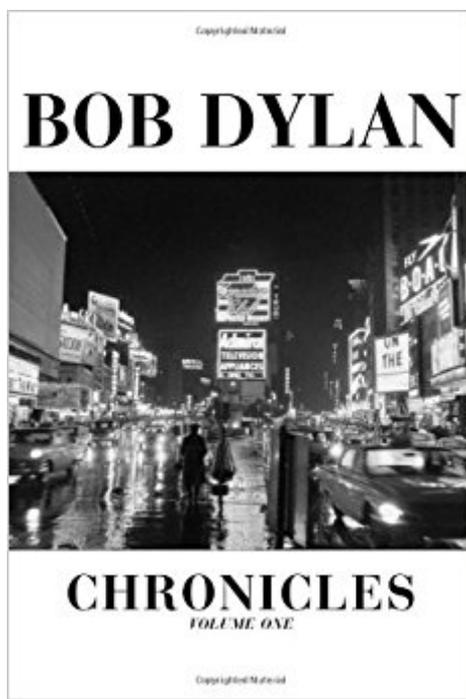


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Chronicles, Vol. 1



Synopsis

"I'd come from a long ways off and had started a long ways down. But now destiny was about to manifest itself. I felt like it was looking right at me and nobody else." So writes Bob Dylan in *Chronicles, Volume I*, his remarkable, book exploring critical junctures in his life and career. Through Dylan's eyes and open mind, we see Greenwich Village, circa 1961, when he first arrives in Manhattan. Dylan's New York is a magical city of possibilities - smokey, nightlong parties; literary awakenings; transient loves and unbreakable friendships. Elegiac observations are punctuated by jabs of memories, penetrating and tough. With the book's side trips to New Orleans, Woodstock, Minnesota and points west, *Chronicles: Volume One* is an intimate and intensely personal recollection of extraordinary times. By turns revealing, poetical, passionate and witty, *Chronicles: Volume One* is a mesmerizing window on Bob Dylan's thoughts and influences. Dylan's voice is distinctively American: generous of spirit, engaged, fanciful and rhythmic. Utilizing his unparalleled gifts of storytelling and the exquisite expressiveness that are the hallmarks of his music, Bob Dylan turns *Chronicles, Volume I* into a poignant reflection on life, and the people and places that helped shape the man and the art.

Book Information

Hardcover: 293 pages

Publisher: Simon & Schuster; 1st edition (October 5, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0743228154

ISBN-13: 978-0743228152

Product Dimensions: 8.7 x 6.1 x 1.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (500 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #345,962 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #139 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Country & Folk](#) #153 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Folk & Traditional](#) #483 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Popular](#)

Customer Reviews

When I was in college back in the mid-1960s, I remember a piece in the student newspaper that sought to explain the new folk music phenomenon Bob Dylan. I wish I had a copy of that story today, just to see how it matches up with the man revealed in Dylan's new autobiography,

Chronicles Volume One. My dim recollection is that the sophomore student article painted Dylan as an inscrutable eccentric trickster, deep yet elusive. That's pretty much the general impression I've had of Dylan since I first heard him around 1964 or '65. And, of course, I thought of him as the conscience and voice of my generation. Well, it turns out that he's neither, at least not in the way most of us thought. Dylan, in his own words, comes across as a regular guy who just wanted to do his job and go home to his family without being hassled by every freak and geek who imagined him to be the new Messiah. In a recent radio interview on NPR - the first he's given in my memory - he's asked if he ever thinks about walking away from music. "Every day," is his comeback. The book reveals a devoted family man who has spent much of his life plugging away at his craft and trying to shield himself and his loved ones from the glare of offstage attention. The further I went in the book, the more shared impressions and cultural perceptions I discovered. I became a grandfather earlier this year and have been wrestling with the idea and its implications of advancing age and life changes. I feel a whole lot better about it now that I know Dylan owns a "World's Greatest Grandpa" bumper sticker.

So the man has finally gotten around to writing about himself in prose, and you're thinking of grabbing this, the first fruit. A few remarks are in order, then, to help you decide whether to shell out the bucks. First I want to banish some possible misconceptions (ones I had and you very well might share); then I'll take a longer view of the book and tell you why I think it's worth five stars. First, it's not an autobiography in the usual sense of the word. Sure, Bob is writing about himself and what he's done, but time flows freely forward and back and the subject changes (sometimes radically) every few paragraphs. He doesn't indulge in much self-justification, he doesn't try to chart a distinct arc of personal development, and it's not rare for him to start down a detour that screams for more exploration and then to turn the bus around. The comparison to X-Ray, the autobiography of Ray Davies of the Kinks, isn't entirely justified -- I don't think Dylan fictionalized much -- but Chronicles is closer in spirit to that than to more conventional rock autobiographies. Second, Dylan lets you into his mind but he doesn't much open his heart. Suze Rotolo is the subject of some lyrical reminiscence, for instance, but their relationship is kept very abstract -- maybe he's protecting her privacy, I don't know. He talks about his love for his wife and kids at length in the "New Morning" chapter, but they never even show up as characters! His second (?) wife does show up in the "Oh Mercy" chapter, but she remains nameless and faceless. The only emotions Bob really describes are awe for his idols in his early days and frustration and loathing for himself in the "Oh Mercy" period. Third, and finally, don't overestimate how much ground it covers.

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