

# evergreen review reader 1957 1966

*By Macie Moen on October 15th, 2025*

evergreen review reader 1957 1966 marks a significant period in the history of literary and cultural criticism, capturing the essence of a transformative era in American arts and literature. As a pioneering publication, The Evergreen Review played an influential role in shaping intellectual discourse, offering a platform for avant-garde writers, poets, and thinkers during the late 1950s and early 1960s. The period from 1957 to 1966 embodies a vibrant epoch characterized by bold experimentation, political activism, and a reevaluation of cultural norms, all of which are vividly reflected in the pages of the Evergreen Review. This article explores the origins, evolution, key contributors, and enduring legacy of the Evergreen Review Reader during this pivotal nine-year span.

## ORIGINS AND FOUNDATION OF THE EVERGREEN REVIEW

### THE BIRTH OF A CULTURAL VANGUARD

The Evergreen Review was founded in 1957 by Barney Rosset, a visionary publisher committed to advancing literature that challenged societal conventions. Originally conceived as a literary magazine, it quickly expanded its scope to encompass politics, art, and social issues, becoming a multidisciplinary platform that fostered avant-garde ideas. Its launch coincided with a cultural shift in America, as post-war optimism clashed with Cold War paranoia and burgeoning social movements.

### MISSION AND VISION

The magazine aimed to:

- \* Promote experimental and non-conformist literature
- \* Facilitate open dialogue on controversial topics
- \* Support marginalized voices and new artistic expressions
- \* Challenge traditional cultural and political establishments

This mission positioned Evergreen Review as an essential voice for those seeking to push boundaries and redefine American cultural identity.

## THE CONTENT AND THEMES OF THE EVERGREEN REVIEW READER (1957–1966)

### LITERARY INNOVATION AND EXPERIMENTAL WRITING

During this period, the Evergreen Review was renowned for publishing groundbreaking works of fiction, poetry, and essays. Notably, it featured early writings by authors who would later become literary giants, including:

- \* Allen Ginsberg
- \* William S. Burroughs
- \* Jack Kerouac
- \* Julio Cortázar
- \* Samuel Beckett

The magazine championed the Beat Generation, emphasizing spontaneous prose, free verse, and themes of rebellion and non-conformity.

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CRITIQUE

The late 1950s and early 1960s were marked by intense political activism, and the Evergreen Review reflected these currents with articles on:

- \* Civil rights movement
- \* Anti-war protests, particularly against the Vietnam War
- \* Countercultural movements and student activism
- \* Feminist and LGBTQ+ issues emerging into public discourse

The magazine often featured essays and interviews that questioned authority and highlighted social injustices.

### VISUAL ART AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION

Beyond literature and politics, the Evergreen Review showcased avant-garde art, photography, and design. Its visual content was as provocative and experimental as its written material, fostering a multidisciplinary approach to cultural commentary.

## INFLUENTIAL CONTRIBUTORS AND NOTABLE PUBLICATIONS

### PIONEERING WRITERS AND THINKERS

The period from 1957 to 1966 saw contributions from some of the most influential writers of the 20th century. Their work not only shaped the magazine's identity but also influenced broader cultural movements. Key figures include:

- \* Allen Ginsberg: "Howl" and other poems that challenged conventional morality
- \* William S. Burroughs: Experimental narratives like "Naked Lunch"
- \* Jack Kerouac: The spontaneous prose style exemplified in "On the Road"
- \* Susan Sontag: Essays on aesthetics and politics
- \* Norman Mailer: Investigative journalism and fiction

### ICONIC ISSUES AND PUBLICATIONS

Some issues of the Evergreen Review during this period became legendary for their content, including:

- \* The 1958 publication featuring Allen Ginsberg's "Howl"
- \* The 1960 edition with William S. Burroughs' "Naked Lunch"
- \* The 1963 special issue on Civil Rights
- \* The 1965 issue addressing the Vietnam War protests

These publications not only garnered critical acclaim but also stirred controversy, reflecting the magazine's role as a provocateur.

## THE CULTURAL IMPACT AND LEGACY OF THE EVERGREEN REVIEW (1957–1966)

### SHAPING LITERARY AND ARTISTIC TRENDS

The Evergreen Review was instrumental in shaping the Beat Generation and subsequent countercultural movements. Its publication of experimental literature and radical ideas influenced emerging writers, artists, and activists, fostering a new cultural ethos centered on freedom, rebellion, and innovation.

## FOSTERING POLITICAL AWARENESS AND ACTIVISM

By providing a platform for political discourse, the magazine contributed to raising awareness about social injustices and mobilizing young activists. Its coverage of the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war protests galvanized readership and inspired activism beyond its pages.

## ENDURING INFLUENCE ON PUBLISHING AND MEDIA

The magazine's success demonstrated the viability of independent, avant-garde publishing. Its model inspired other literary and cultural journals and helped pave the way for alternative media outlets that prioritize experimental and socially conscious content.

## CONCLUSION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EVERGREEN REVIEW READER 1957–1966

The period from 1957 to 1966 encapsulates the transformative years when The Evergreen Review established itself as a beacon of avant-garde art, revolutionary literature, and radical politics. Its bold editorial choices and groundbreaking content challenged societal norms and expanded the boundaries of cultural expression. Today, the Evergreen Review remains a symbol of intellectual daring and artistic innovation, inspiring new generations to question, create, and engage with the world in meaningful ways. The legacy of its reader during these formative years continues to influence contemporary literature, journalism, and activism, cementing its place in the history of 20th-century cultural movements.

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## Evergreen Review Reader 1957-1966: An Analytical Overview of a Cultural Milestone

The Evergreen Review Reader 1957-1966 stands as a pivotal artifact in the landscape of mid-20th-century avant-garde literature and cultural critique. Spanning nearly a decade of literary experimentation, political upheaval, and aesthetic innovation, this collection encapsulates a transformative period in American and global arts. Published as a compendium of select essays, poems, translations, and critical writings, the Reader offers not only a snapshot of the intellectual currents of its time but also a reflection of the editors' commitment to fostering a truly international, boundary-pushing literary community. This article explores the origins, content, influence, and enduring significance of the Evergreen Review Reader covering the years 1957 to 1966, providing a comprehensive understanding of its role as a cultural touchstone.

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## ORIGINS AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE EVERGREEN REVIEW

### FOUNDING PRINCIPLES AND MISSION

The Evergreen Review was launched in 1957 by Barney Rosset, a publisher known for his willingness to challenge censorship and promote experimental art. Originally conceived as a literary magazine, it quickly evolved into a revolutionary platform that defied conventional standards of taste, morality, and literary form. Its mission was rooted in fostering an open dialogue on avant-garde literature, political activism, and social upheaval.

The magazine's founders envisioned it as a space where radical voices could be heard, where translations of international writers could bridge cultural divides, and where new literary forms could flourish. This mission aligned with the broader countercultural currents emerging in the late 1950s, characterized by a rebellion against traditional values and a quest for new modes of expression.

## HISTORICAL BACKDROP: THE 1950S-60S CULTURAL CLIMATE

The period from 1957 to 1966 was marked by seismic shifts across political, social, and artistic domains. The Cold War intensification, the Civil Rights movement, and the early stages of countercultural revolutions shaped the intellectual environment. The rise of Beat poetry, the emergence of experimental art, and the questioning of authority found fertile ground in publications like the *Evergreen Review*.

During this era, censorship and societal conformity began to be challenged openly. The magazine's content reflected this atmosphere, featuring works that questioned American imperialism, advocated for sexual liberation, and explored Eastern philosophies. It also became a conduit for translating and disseminating European and Latin American avant-garde movements, providing American audiences access to international intellectual currents.

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## CONTENT AND STRUCTURE OF THE READER 1957-1966

### SELECTION CRITERIA AND EDITORIAL APPROACH

The *Evergreen Review* Reader 1957-1966 was curated to showcase the most influential and representative works published during the magazine's first decade. Its editorial team prioritized pieces that exemplified experimental aesthetics, political radicalism, and cross-cultural dialogue. The selection process was driven by a desire to present both established and emerging voices, emphasizing a diversity of perspectives.

The editorial approach was characterized by a willingness to challenge literary orthodoxy. The editors valued innovation in form and content, often including untranslated foreign works alongside English-language pieces to emphasize the global scope of the magazine's mission.

## CONTENTS OVERVIEW

The Reader is divided into thematic sections, each highlighting different facets of the magazine's editorial focus:

- \* Literature and Poetry: Featuring works by authors such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and William S. Burroughs, representing the Beat Generation's ethos of spontaneity and rebellion.
- \* International Voices: Translations of European avant-garde, Latin American writers like Julio Cortázar, and Asian philosophers that broadened the scope of American literary experimentation.
- \* Political and Cultural Essays: Critical writings on Cold War politics, civil rights, and social upheavals, including works by Herbert Marcuse and Frantz Fanon.
- \* Experimental and Visual Arts: Selected contributions that pushed the boundaries of traditional art forms, including early conceptual art and photography.

## NOTABLE SELECTIONS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

Some of the most influential pieces featured in the Reader include:

- \* Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" – Embodying the raw energy and dissent of the Beat Generation, this poem challenged censorship laws and redefined American poetic expression.
- \* Jean-Paul Sartre's existential essays – Introducing American readers to European existentialism and its relevance to contemporary social issues.
- \* Translations of Surrealist poetry – Bridging the gap between American experimentalism and European avant-garde movements.
- \* Feminist and Civil Rights writings – Early expressions of social activism that would shape future generations.

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## IMPACT AND INFLUENCE OF THE EVERGREEN REVIEW READER

### ON LITERARY AND ARTISTIC MOVEMENTS

The Reader served as a catalyst for the dissemination of avant-garde ideas, significantly influencing the trajectory of modernist and postmodernist literature. It provided a platform for writers who would later be recognized as foundational figures in American literature, such as Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs.

Furthermore, its international scope helped foster cross-pollination among different artistic movements, encouraging experimentation in poetry, prose, and visual arts. The inclusion of translated works introduced American audiences to European surrealism, French existentialism, and Latin American magical realism, broadening the understanding of global artistic practices.

### ON CULTURAL AND POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The magazine's emphasis on social critique and political activism amplified voices advocating for civil rights, anti-colonial struggles, and sexual liberation. The Reader's editorial stance challenged mainstream narratives, influencing the emergence of countercultural values that would become prominent in the late 1960s.

By publishing works that questioned authority and promoted individual freedom, the Reader contributed to shaping the intellectual groundwork for the protests and social movements of the late 20th century.

### LEGACY AND ENDURING SIGNIFICANCE

Although the original publication ceased in 1966, its influence persists. The Reader's curated selections continue to be referenced in academic studies, and its role in shaping the American literary underground is widely acknowledged.

The collection exemplifies how a periodical can serve as a mirror to its times—highlighting the tumult, creativity, and



revolutionary spirit that characterized the late 1950s and early 1960s. It also underscores the importance of international dialogue in fostering innovation and understanding within the arts.

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## CONCLUSION: THE EVERGREEN REVIEW READER 1957-1966 AS A CULTURAL CATALYST

The Evergreen Review Reader 1957-1966 stands as a testament to the transformative power of independent publishing and intellectual daring. By compiling a diverse array of writings that challenged conventions, it encapsulated a critical decade of upheaval and creativity. Its influence extended beyond its pages, inspiring future generations of writers, artists, and activists to pursue new modes of expression and social engagement.

In an era marked by Cold War tensions, civil rights struggles, and cultural revolutions, the Reader provided a space for voices that dared to imagine different futures. Today, it remains an essential historical document—an artifact of resistance, innovation, and cross-cultural dialogue that continues to resonate in contemporary discussions of literature, politics, and art.

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## References and Further Reading

- \* Barney Rosset's memoirs and interviews on the founding of Evergreen Review.
  - \* Critical analyses of the magazine's role in American counterculture.
  - \* Collections of essays and poetry published in the magazine during 1957-1966.
  - \* Biographies of key contributors such as Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Julio Cortázar.
  - \* Academic studies on the influence of Evergreen Review in shaping postwar literary movements.
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This comprehensive overview underscores the importance of the Evergreen Review Reader 1957-1966 as both a reflection and catalyst

of a revolutionary era in cultural history, emphasizing its enduring legacy in the landscape of modern literature and social thought.

> QuestionAnswer

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> What was the significance of the Evergreen Review Reader published between 1957 and 1966?

> The Evergreen Review Reader from 1957 to 1966 is significant because it compiled influential literary and cultural works that

> reflected the avant-garde and countercultural movements of the era, serving as a pivotal anthology for modernist and

> experimental literature.

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> Which notable authors were featured in the Evergreen Review Reader 1957-1966?

> The reader included works by prominent writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Samuel Beckett, and

> other influential figures of the Beat Generation and modernist movements.

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> How did the Evergreen Review Reader influence the literary scene of the late 1950s and early 1960s?

> By curating groundbreaking, often controversial works, the reader helped popularize avant-garde literature, fostered the rise of

> the Beat Generation, and challenged traditional literary norms, significantly impacting the countercultural landscape.

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> What types of content were included in the Evergreen Review Reader from 1957 to 1966?

> The reader featured a mix of poetry, essays, fiction, and experimental writing, alongside artworks and critical essays that

> explored themes of society, politics, sexuality, and artistic innovation.

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> Why is the Evergreen Review considered a key publication in literary history?

> Because it was instrumental in introducing and promoting experimental writers and new literary styles, it played a crucial role

> in shaping modern literature and alternative cultural movements during its publication years.

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- > How did the Evergreen Review Reader reflect the social and political issues of its time?
- > The collection addressed topics such as censorship, civil rights, sexuality, and anti-war sentiments, mirroring the tumultuous
- > social and political climate of the late 1950s and 1960s.
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- > What is the legacy of the Evergreen Review Reader 1957-1966 today?
- > Its legacy lies in its role as a catalyst for literary experimentation and cultural change, influencing subsequent generations
- > of writers, publishers, and activists interested in avant-garde and countercultural movements.
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- > Where can one find copies of the Evergreen Review Reader from 1957 to 1966 today?
- > Copies are available through rare book dealers, university libraries, and digital archives specializing in mid-20th-century
- > literary publications, making it accessible for research and study purposes.

Related keywords: Evergreen Review, William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, 1957-1966, literary magazine, beat generation, avant-garde literature, American counterculture, experimental writing, 20th-century literature