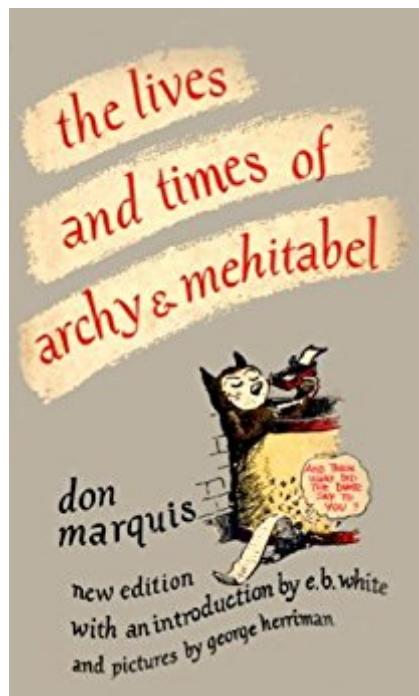


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# The Lives And Times Of Archy And Mehitabel



## **Synopsis**

Of all the literary genres, humor has the shortest shelf life—except for Archy and Mehitabel, that is. First published in 1916, it is a classic of American literature. Archy is a cockroach, inside whom resides the soul of a free-verse poet; he communicates with Don Marquis by leaping upon the keys of the columnist's typewriter. In poems of varying length, Archy pithily describes his wee world, the main fixture of which is Mehitabel, a devil-may-care alley cat.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

This is one of my favorite books by one of my favorite writers. The two main characters, Archy and Mehitabel, dispense wisdom comments that are applicable to the world now even though they were written in the early 1900's. Don Marquis was an astute observer of people and the world and his views are valid today. I have this book in hard copy as well as Kindle format. George Herriman's drawings are priceless and add to the charm of the stories. I got my original copy of "archy and mehitabel" when I was a newlywed (many years ago) and it and the other books that comprise "the lives and times of archy and mehitabel" have become my go-to book, In fact, I own a black cat and

named her Mehitabel.

It's hard not to love the lyrics of Archy. In fact, I would argue that he's probably one of the greatest poets the 21st-century. It might sound like heresy to say the cockroach is such an amazing poet, but , Archy captures the national consciousness. He has so much to say about current events like the war, domestic life, traveling abroad . Lyrics are so frenzied and crazy that most people probably would put this book down after the first couple of pages, but if you allow yourself to drift into Archy's stream of consciousness, it's intensely gratifying experience unlike any other poetry ever read. That being said, I do feel that the e-book version has some quality issues. It seems like there were some typos in the conversion , and the formatting left a lot to be desired . I also would've liked to see some special features, simply more than just a text of the book itself . Overall, this was a great read , and just as memorable as when I read it the first time a few years ago. This book is one of my all-time favorites.

MARQUIS, Don. *archy and mehitabel*. Doubleday (Anchor). 1916-1930; reissued 1973, 1990. 193p. \$8.95. (pb)*archyology*: the long lost tales of archy and mehitabel. UPNE. Republished in 2009. 120p. \$14. (pb)*archyology ii* (the final dig): the long lost tales of archy and mehitabel. Bloodaxe. 2000. 124p. \$13.80 (pb)*expression is the need of my soul* i was once a *vers libre* poet but i died and my soul went into the body of a cockroach it has given me a new outlook on life Thus wrote archy the cockroach in his fist communiquÃƒÂ© to newsman and soon to be friend Don Marquis. The time was 1916. The US wasn't even involved in World War I and Prohibition was yet to come. Marquis was a columnist and reporter for the New York Sun but he was also a frustrated poet. His way out was to write columns in blank verse about Archy, a free verse poet reborn as a cockroach, and archy's raggle taggle alleycat friend mehitabel, who claimed to have been Cleopatra in a former life. His columns had been supposedly written by archy, one letter at a time. archy would climb to the top of Marquis's typewriter, then throw himself head first at the key he wanted to hit. He couldn't print capitals because he didn't have the strength or reach to work the shift bar and a letter at the same time. Thus everything he wrote was in lower case with no punctuation.)*archy's missals* to his reporter friend are as enjoyable to read now as they were when they first appeared between 1916-1930. The political and social commentary that surfaces in some of them is dated now. It's the pieces about archy and mehitabel -a strange friendship--that are timeless. How can you not like a creature who writes: "i see things from the underside now/ thank you for the apple peelings in the wastepaper basket boss/ but your glue is getting so stale/ i cant eat it"? And mehitabel's

devil-may-care approach to life (which usually treats her badly)? "i have had my ups and downs/ but wotthehell wotthehell/ yesterday scepters and crowns/ fried oysters and velvet gowns/ and today i herd with bums/ but wotthehell wotthehell..." archy and mehitabel was made into a not very good musical called Shinbone Alley. Carol Channing sang mehitabel's role on the short version recording of it. Channing was probably as good as you could get for mehitabel but unfortunately, the vehicle was inferior. For the true stuff, you still have to go these three collections of Marquis's columns. (The archyology books are only for fanatics -they're collections of the leftover pieces that somehow had not made it into he original collection.)

I had forgotten how much I enjoyed reading about Archy and Mehitabel many years ago. It's pretty hard to believe that Marquis created Archy almost a century ago - the writing still feels fresh and insightful. And it looks like we have many of the same issues today! The characters really come alive on the page, and apart from being wise, it's just plain fun to read. I would have given it 5 stars except for the typos scattered throughout the book - doesn't any human ever proof ebooks when they create them?? Things like "torn cat" instead of "tom cat" or "j" instead of "i". Hire a proofreader!!

Archy and Mehitabel takes me back to my junior high days, when I discovered the wonderful writing and illustrations of Don Marquis. Archy is a cockroach who types free-verse poetry on the author's typewriter at night. Being tiny, he can't reach the Shift key, and so the poetry is a bit like reading e. e. cummings. Mehitabel is an alley cat who loves Archy, and calls him her "little angel" (or maybe that was Krazy Kat and Ignatz, a rat - both are stories of a strange kitty with a thing for a very different species. Ignatz loved to throw a brick at Krazy Kat's head, and she still loved him). In the case of Archy and Mehitabel, these stories originally were published in 1916, and live on today.

I'm so glad I bought this!! Absolutely love the George Herriman illustrations (Krazy Kat) and the surprising perspectives on life and society in the 1920s / 1930s that only a reincarnated poet / cockroach could bring. Don Marquis created unique characters to cover a range of topics - some more controversial than you might expect - so even when their voices seem strangely dated, they're also timeless. Please forgive my less than expert description of book itself (different than book shown in photo, but lovely!) - it is black hardcover w/ cloth binding and red Herriman illustrations pressed into both covers, front and back. This collection is a fantastic trip!

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