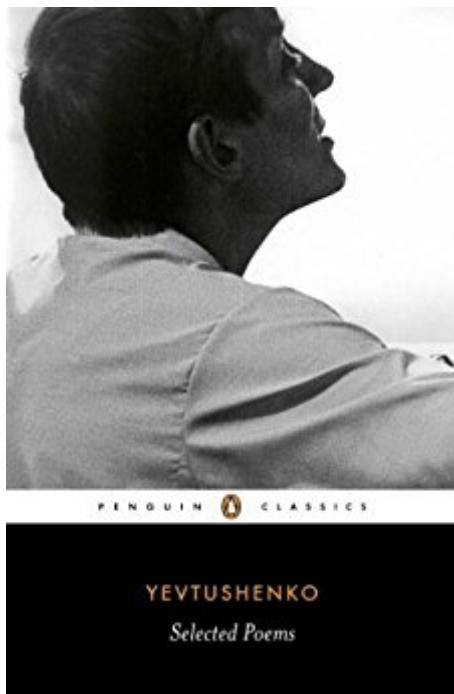


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Yevtushenko: Selected Poems: Selected Poems (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

This volume contains a selection of early works by Yevgeny Alexandrovich Yevtushenko who blazed a trail for a generation of Soviet poets with a confident poetic voice that moves effortlessly between social and personal themes. "Zima Junction" vividly describes his idyllic childhood in Siberia and his impressions of home after a long absence in Moscow. Private moments are captured in "Waking", on the joys of discovering the unexpected in a lover, and "Birthday", on a mother's concern for her son, while "Encounter" depicts an unexpected meeting with Hemingway in Copenhagen. "The Companion" and "Party Card" show war from a child's eye, whether playing while oblivious to German bombs falling nearby or discovering a fatally wounded soldier in the forest, while Yevtushenko's famous poem, "Babi Yar", is an angry exposé of the Nazi massacre of the Jews of Kiev.

Book Information

File Size: 1293 KB

Print Length: 96 pages

Publisher: Penguin (June 26, 2008)

Publication Date: June 26, 2008

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B002RI9WMU

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Not Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #849,267 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #38 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Russian #158 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > Russian #4250 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > European

Customer Reviews

In world literature, Pushkin dominates the early 19th century while Akhmatova takes up residences in the first half of the twentieth. There are numerous other poets to consider and appreciate: Lermontov (19th century), Blok, Pasternak, Mandelstam and Tsetaeva (20th) but after them, it

seems it gets a little complicated or if anything confusing. The greats have been established, lauded and loved. The closer we get to modern literature, the more chaotic it feels with so many names vying for the spotlight (and this goes for all nations with their share of writers and poets). After reading Selected Poems (translated beautifully by Robin Milner-Gulland Peter Levi), I would have to say Yevgeny Yevtushenko belongs in the pantheon of Russian greats. Yevtushenko was born in Siberia but came to prominence after Stalin's death in 1953. There is something ecstatic, majestic and carefree about his poetry and yet at the same time, it is tender and aware of the trials of the twentieth century. 'Zima Junction' simply cannot be read once. It is more a kaleidoscope of Yevtushenko's world and the world springing from his childhood. It is a journey through the past laden with nostalgia, philosophy, wonder and charisma. The aforementioned poem is necessary to loving the poet's approach. The remainder of the volume is made up of shorter poems, many of them smaller versions or off-shoots of 'Zima Junction'. Not to say the poet is repeating himself but the concerns that erupt in the epic poem echo throughout the book. History and family is important to Yevtushenko and his family have key roles in 'Weddings' and 'On a Bicycle'. After 'Zima Junction', the second most important poem is 'Babiy Yar' which focuses on the Nazi mass-murder of Kiev Jews.

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