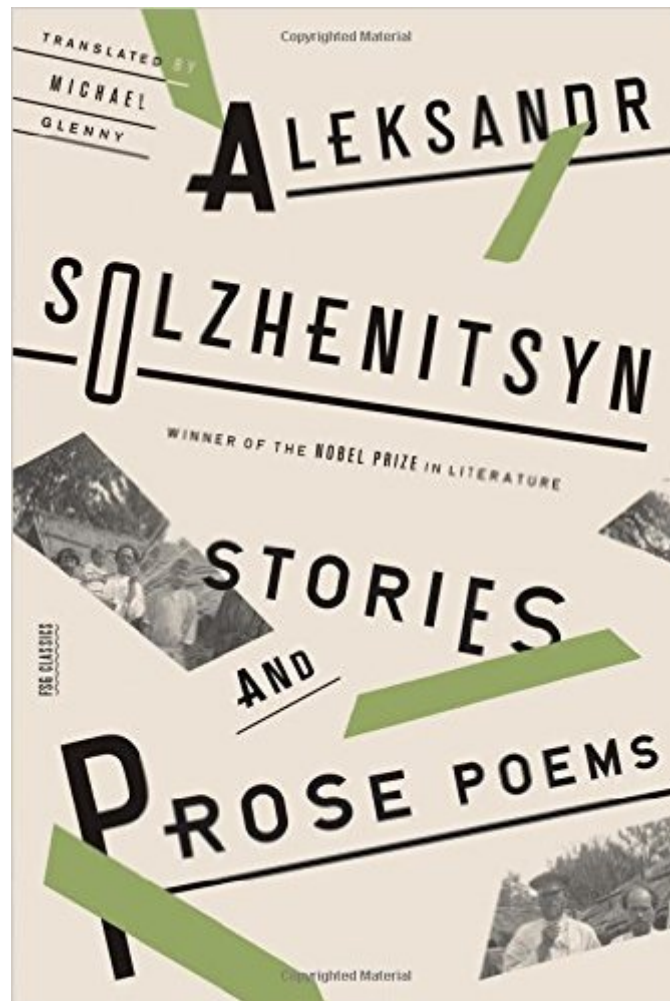


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Stories And Prose Poems (FSG Classics)



Synopsis

A new edition of the Russian Nobel Prize winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's collection of novellas, short stories, and prose poems *Stories and Prose Poems* collects twenty-two works of wide-ranging style and character from the Nobel Prize winner Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose shorter pieces showcase the extraordinary mastery of language that places him among the greatest Russian prose writers of the twentieth century. When the two superb stories "Matryona's House" and "An Incident at Krechetovka Station" were first published in Russia in 1963, the *Moscow Literary Gazette*, the mouthpiece of the Soviet literary establishment, wrote: "His talent is so individual and so striking that from now on nothing that comes from his pen can fail to excite the liveliest interest." The novella *For the Good of the Cause* and the short story "Zakhar-the-Pouch" in particular—both published in the Soviet Union before Solzhenitsyn's exile—fearlessly address the deadening stranglehold of Soviet bureaucracy and the scandalous neglect of Russia's cultural heritage. But readers who best know Solzhenitsyn through his novels will be delighted to discover the astonishing group of sixteen "prose poems." In these works of varying lengths—some as short as an aphorism—Solzhenitsyn distills the joy and bitterness of Russia's fate into language of unrivaled lyrical purity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Reading some of the lukewarm responses to this work from the two reviewers who posted before me, I'm inspired to add my two cents worth. I find what I've read so far in this collection -

"Matronya's House", "For the Good of the Cause", "The Easter Procession", "Zakhar-the-Pouch", and "The Right Hand" - to be fantastic short fiction, powerfully felt and heard with the inner ear that Nabokov urges you to use when you read. I left work last week in a good mood, completed "For the Good of the Cause" on the 45-minute train ride home, and was downright bleak as I walked in the front door. I'm not saying it's good to be down, but a story that can have such an impact that it actually changes your mood has to be tapping into a truly artistic vein. So I'm just going to be a voice here on this forum saying that Solzhenitsyn can really really write, and these stories range from very good to great.

Solzhenitsyn is one of mankind's greatest writers. His 'Gulag Archipelago' is a most powerful work of witnessing which opened to the world the long dark night of the Soviet prison world. In that work he recorded the story of thousands of witnesses, allowed them to speak in their own voices. In this collection of stories and prose poems Solzhenitsyn is not always at his best. But in one story, the opening autobiographical story he tells of his life in a remote central Asian village where he boarded with a peasant woman Maryousha who in her humility is taken by him to be a kind of saint. His depiction of the poverty cruelty and greed of this world is Chekhovian. In other stories Solzhenitsyn tells of the corruption of Soviet bureaucracy, and the distance the people seem to be from true religious life. His love of and search for the true Russia is an implicit theme of the work. It would have been helpful to have some kind of introduction to the work, some explanation of where the individual pieces stand in relation to Solzhenitsyn's work as a whole.

I have read most of solzhenitsyn books but was never able to find his prose and poems, and am enjoying it, Thanks

That this book was published in the early 1970s is no accident. It was at this time that Solzhenitsyn was at the height of his influence and virtually any scrap of nonsense he managed to get to a publishing house would be ravenously devoured and shat out in cloth and paper post-haste. That's why you can find a million used copies of the first volume of the Gulag Archipelago but hardly any of the second or the third. It's not to say that Solzhenitsyn is a bad writer- he's very good- but he was beholden entirely to the Western audience that never understood him except in the crudest sense and would buy anything he wrote simply because his name was on it. It's a shame that this book was published under such shady circumstances and without the prudent editing which would have been involved in a normal release, because some of the material here is quite good. Matronya's

house is a charming provincial fable about the necessity of sacrifice, hard work and steely moral discipline to preserving civilization. The Right Hand is simultaneously tiny slice of Cancer Ward and a bitter rebuke of those who collaborated with the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. For the Good of the Cause is a tale drawn from his days as a teacher and Incident at Keretchkova (I'm positive I misspelled that) Station is a story of wartime Russia and the chaos, confusion, distrust and anger which engulfed it during the most hopeless moments of the German onslaught. Everything else is either middling or worthless. His maudlin Easter Procession is Solzhenitsyn's stubborn orthodoxy and mystic spirituality at its most unbearably preachy and every single one of the prose poems should have been sliced out and left for his Collected Works. Still, the book is cheap and if you're looking for a more nuanced portrait of Solzhenitsyn the man and less Solzhenitsyn the prisoner it can hardly hurt to pick it up.

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