



Gulag Voices: An Anthology

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Anne Applebaum wields her considerable knowledge of a dark chapter in human history and presents a collection of the writings of survivors of the Gulag, the Soviet concentration camps. Although the opening of the Soviet archives to scholars has made it possible to write the history of this notorious concentration camp system, documents tell only one side of the story. *Gulag Voices* now fills in the other half.

The backgrounds of the writers reflect the extraordinary diversity of the Gulag itself. Here are the personal stories of such figures as Dmitri Likhachev, a renowned literary scholar; Anatoly Marchenko, the son of illiterate laborers; and Alexander Dolgun, an American citizen. These remembrances—many of them appearing in English for the first time, each chosen for both literary and historical value—collectively spotlight the strange moral universe of the camps, as well as the relationships that prisoners had with one another, with their guards, and with professional criminals who lived beside them.

A vital addition to the literature of this era, annotated for a generation that no longer remembers the Soviet Union, *Gulag Voices* will inform, interest, and inspire, offering a source for reflection on human nature itself.

Gulag Voices: An Anthology Details

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From Reader Review Gulag Voices: An Anthology for online ebook

Brittany says

A nice companion piece to Applebaum's Gulag: A History.

Grant says

The size of the gulag system and the length of time it operated in the USSR defy easy summary or simple descriptions, but Applebaum's judiciously selected memoir excerpts do an excellent job of giving the feel of the lives of gulag prisoners. I assigned this as a required text in my undergraduate Russian history class, and it has proved very effective.

Mindy Halleck says

This collection of survivors of the Gulag stories sheds light on the Soviet concentration camps and is a must read for anyone interested in that history.

Paul Blair says

A series of essays from victims of the Soviet terror GULAG! Would like to seek out the actual books the stories were taken from but most were in Russian or Polish and were translated specially for this volume. Harrowing stuff but small book and not much to get your teeth into. Read her GULAG A History for a real read!

Alex says

Anne Applebaum is a wonderful author. This anthology of stories from the gulag shouldn't be called excellent because the subject matter is awful but they are well-written and interesting. Morbid fascination, perhaps?

Rosalie says

Phenomenal and life-changing.

Jaci says

Anne Applebaum received a Pulitzer Prize for her work, *Gulag*. It was a comprehensive overview of the prisoner work camp system that was developed in Russia, much earlier than the days of the USSR when it reached its zenith.

This volume contains actual first person reports of experiences in these camps by some famous and not famous individuals. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* is not included given its wide publication. I read one report a day in that they are emotionally stressful. What it takes to survive such conditions and treatment is beyond my imagination.

Doug says

I would have given this five stars had it not been that the selections were so short. Amazing collection of excerpts from authors who had experienced the Soviet Gulag. While I have read a bit of Solzhenitsyn, I didn't even know of these other writers whom I will now explore. How people be so cruel on such a vast scale still boggles my mind. How ordinary Soviet citizens could not stand up to their government is easy to see given what happened to those who did.

Elena says

The essays are too short, the introduction written by Applebaum to each story too superficial. Too many stories, too many memories, treated "lightly", only briefly told, sometimes maybe in contrast with each other.

Alexandra says

Ms Applebaum has certainly made the effort to cover a wide range of writers - in terms of ethnic and class backgrounds - who are almost unknown in the West, several of whom having never before been published in English before.

The arrangement of her material is interesting, and useful, in that it makes no attempt to follow the chronology of the writers, but instead, through a series of excerpts, takes the reader through the hideous process, from arrest, to interrogation, and so on.

So certainly this is a good way to introduce a reader with no prior knowledge of the subject to the surreal world, the state-within-a-state, that was the Gulag.

But this is all that this book is. It is a brief, light-weight introduction. The excerpts are short, the typeface large, the book slender. I suppose it is ideal for someone who feels that they ought to 'familiarise' themselves with the subject, without too much effort - except the cost to their peace of mind if they actually take on board one tenth of the reality that this book touches on...

The archives may have opened, but memoirs of these terrible times are unfashionable in Russia now. And memories are fading, as the last inhabitants of that era die. The voices are no longer silenced, but they go

unheard.

And that is why this book left me with an abiding sense of frustration. Ms Applebaum has taken the trouble to search out unknown voices, each with a terrible story to tell. Many speak with an electrifying clarity, about a world one would wish to believe could never have existed. Yet the excerpts are brief; their individual stories remain largely unheard. Are we really such a sound-bite culture, that everything has to be reduced to these tiny morsels, in order to be ingested?

kmm1985 says

Excellent perspective on the GULAG experience as viewed through the eyes of those who lived it.

Julene says

An unfortunately dry read. Going to investigate the writers included in this anthology outside of Applebaum's inept assembly.

Rebecca says

An intense and horrifying survey of the Soviet gulags from the 1930s-1960s. In some ways it felt a little choppy because so many short excerpts from different authors were used, but it also gives you a wide range of experiences. I also thought it was interesting the way the author arranged them, so that the excerpts went from interrogation to arrival at the camp to camp life to release. However, I would not recommend someone to read it as quickly as I did. It was really too much for me to take to read it all in two days, it's so graphic that I should have spread it out more.

Burnsy06 says

In her introduction, Applebaum writes:

"Some important aspects of the Gulag experience are not reflected in any of these essays. By definition, all the writers featured here survived, and all of them emerged both physically and mentally intact. They were all literate. They were all educated. They all had enough psychological distance from their experience to be able to describe it on paper. Those factors alone make them exceptional. The reader will not find here the testimony of those who died in the camps; those who survived through stealth, murder, or collaboration and could not bear to talk about it afterward; those who were driven mad or physically broken. Although the majority of the Gulag's prisoners, particularly in the early days, were peasants and uneducated workers, their experiences do not feature here either, for the simple reason that they could not write. Nor are there any memoirs of professional criminals: with one or two exceptions, they could not or did not choose to write either. In that sense, this anthology, like other Gulag anthologies, is necessarily skewed..." (x)

The first time I read that, I saw the words, filed them in a cranny in my brain, and moved on into the meat of the anthology. However, though the full import didn't hit me then, it hit me like a ton of bricks when I reached the piece written by Hava Volovich. I don't know if it's the female aspect, the heart aspect, or just the human aspect in me but it suddenly hit me: there are 12 pieces contained within this anthology. Stalin is believed to have been responsible for the deaths of anywhere between 10-60 million people (who knows if we'll EVER have an official tally), several MILLION of those coming from the Gulag system. How many voices won't be heard?

This Anthology was beautiful, powerful, heart breaking. If you are AT ALL drawn to Russian history, particularly Stalinist/Soviet history I would most definitely recommend this.

Janina says

Gulag Voices includes 13 stories of Gulag survivors - but not their whole stories, only part of it. The first story tells about the arrest and the last story is the release from the Gulag. In between are stories about mass rape, the daily routines, beliefs etc.

Very well built up and very interesting while shattering at the same time.

Carolyn says

Hard to read, hard to put down. These are true testaments to human strength and witnesses to human cruelty. I found this to be a very important book.

Brad says

Wow. Just wow. Of all the horrifying accounts I have read for my Russian terrorism class, these are the most poignant, the most evocative.
