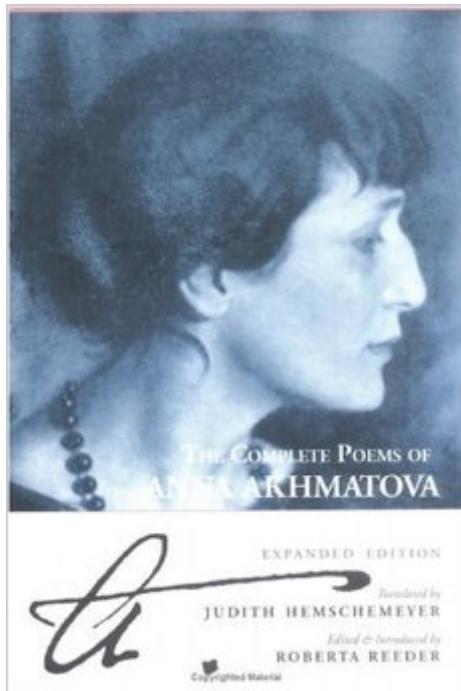


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The Complete Poems Of Anna Akhmatova



Synopsis

Initially published in 1990, when the New York Times Book Review named it one of fourteen "Best Books of the Year," Judith Hemschemeyer's translation of The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova is the definitive edition, and has sold over 13,000 copies, making it one of the most successful poetry titles of recent years. This reissued and revised printing features a new biographical essay as well as expanded notes to the poems, both by Roberta Reeder, project editor and author of Anna Akhmatova: Poet and Prophet (St. Martin's Press, 1994). Encyclopedic in scope, with more than 800 poems, 100 photographs, a historical chronology, index of first lines, and bibliography. The Complete Poems will be the definitive English language collection of Akhmatova for many years to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Finally, the poems of one of my favorite authors are out in one book, and what a book this is! For lovers of graceful, touching, heartfelt poetry, but also for those who are interested in that period of Russian history between the twilight of the Czars and the horror of Stalin, Akhmatova's poetry covers a very wide spectrum. She wrote of love and nature. She wrote about and for her friends. She wrote about her personal tragedies and the tragedy of her country. If you have never read Akhmatova, do yourself a favor and discover her in this magnificent translation by Judith Hemschemeyer: translating poetry is particularly tricky, but the job is superbly done here, because it feels as if the author had written her verses in English, not Russian. If you like what you have read,

or if you already appreciate Akhmatova's style and are interested in more about her life, nothing better than the book by Roberta Reeder on Anna Akhmatova. Reeder has also edited this volume and her love for the work of a great poet is evident. These "Complete Poems" are truly complete and satisfying, ordered chronologically, supported by biographical material, photographs, and an astonishing section of notes. A book for the poetry lover in us, and also a book for the student. I must also say that the translation of "Requiem," my favorite poem by Akhmatova, is one of the best I have read. My only complaint has to do with the binding: this is a paperback, and we all know what happens to paperbacks, and at 948 pages this one may break fairly soon. My advice is to buy it nonetheless, and also buy one of those plastic, self-adhesive covers on sale in most big bookstores, protect the book with it and, as an additional touch, put one more layer of the hard plastic on the spine, so it'll reinforce it better and your book will last a lot longer. At least that is what I did with my copy and after almost two years it still looks new. So, a great collection, indeed, by a great poet, and by people who truly cared about her art. Five stars is the maximum, but I would give it more.

For the totally nonRussian speaking English speaker, this is definitely the definitive Akhmatova (...say that ten times fast...). Not only are all her poems here (over 800), but we get a host of other useful things like introductory essays, an essay by Isaiah Berlin, chronology, notes, and tons of beautiful pictures of the beautiful poet herself. Akhmatova is one of the premier 20th century poets, and it is a shame that her reputation is still only establishing itself among English speaking countries. This volume should help in that regard. However, it must be strongly emphasized that readers who hear Akhmatova only in English are really missing most of the beauty of her poems. Russian poetry is musically beautiful, and this is NOT carried over into the Enlgish, although it must be granted that Hemschemeyer does make some pretty valiant attempts to do just this. So the reason for the four stars is that there is no Russian in this edition. Granted, the size of it would hardly permit it. So I would ask that people complement it with an edition of Akhmatova's poems in the original, and either learn cyrillic or get someone who can read them to read them to you! You will hardly recognize them, they are so beautiful. She is a master of alliteration, assonance and rhyme... all of these being so important to her lyricism. I actually bought this edition, and when I found there was no Russian, I returned it and got Hemschemeyer's "Selected Poems of Anna Akhmatova" instead, which only has 100+ poems but has the Russian on the opposing pages. It was sad to have to do this, but after I sat down and read through some of the poems, I realized I had made the right decision. What I miss most are the pictures...

Akhmatova was one of the few unrepentant Acemist poets to survive Russia's Bolshevik revolution and subsequent Stalinist takeover and purges. She was seen by authorities as a dangerous element, related to the pre-revolutionary order. Somehow, even as her fellow poets - including friend Osip Mandelstam and husband Nikolay Gumilov - were executed, exiled, sent to camps, or fled, she managed to survive - outliving Stalin himself. Her poems range from the early tales of love and unrequited love, to the tormented later works such as Requiem - a harrowing dedication to the victims of Stalinism. Her use of words is fantastic - the reader can truly feel her presence. This collection is very comprehensive, and well-translated from the original Russian. Definitely worth the \$21.

The Complete Poems of Anna Akhmatova translated by J. Hemschmeyer (expanded paperback edition) offers an incredible affordable offering of world class Russian poetry. Akhmatova's poems are universally accessible to an English speaking/reading audience. You can jump right into the poetry and bypass the introductory material on Anna but my guess is that after sampling these incredible poems most readers will satisfy at least some of their curiosity about the poet and investigate what Anatoly Naiman and Isaiah Berlin have written about Akhmatova. Furthermore the text supplies numerous pointers to places for more information. But the poetry itself is well worth the money for this text. Like Yeats, Akhmatova draws the reader into a poem's world with an ease and grace which belies the efforts of writing whether the subject is heartbreak, love, travel, nature etc.. Akhmatova's "voice" is not that of a supreme being lecturing on high but rather of one person conversing, confiding, contemplating with another. Thus, this Russian woman enters your life through the poetry of her own and it's a very gratifying experience.

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