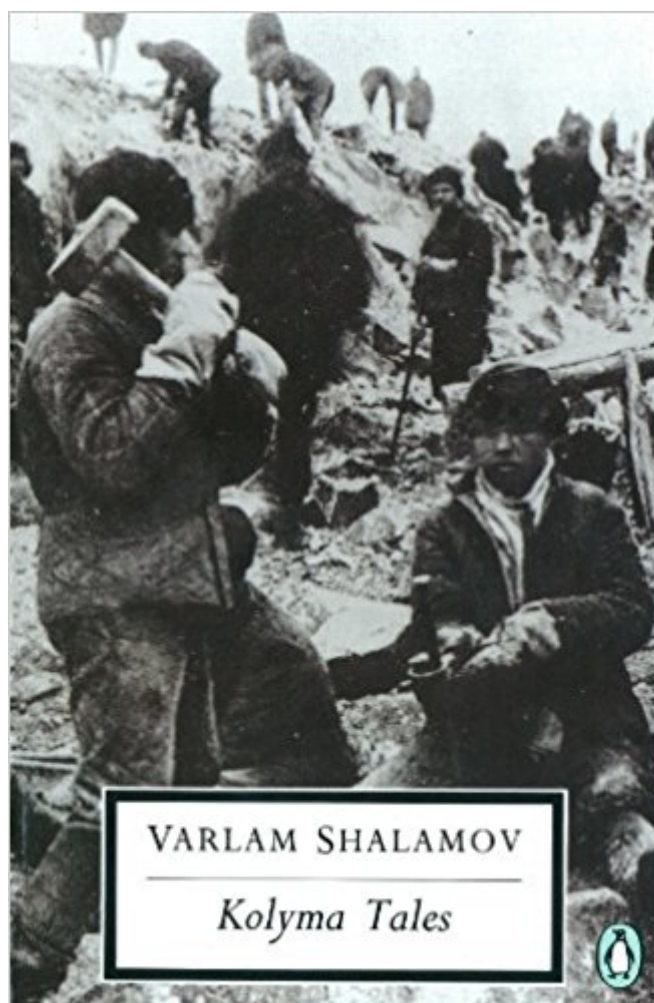


The book was found

Kolyma Tales (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin)



Synopsis

It is estimated that some three million people died in the Soviet forced-labour camps of Kolyma, in the northeastern area of Siberia. Shalamov himself spent seventeen years there, and in these stories he vividly captures the lives of ordinary people caught up in terrible circumstances, whose hopes and plans extended to further than a few hours. This new enlarged edition combines two collections previously published in the United States as *Kolyma Tales* and *Graphite*. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

Book Information

Series: Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin

Paperback: 528 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin edition (February 1, 1995)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140186956

ISBN-13: 978-0140186956

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.1 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 89 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #107,177 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Short Stories & Anthologies > Anthologies #36 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Historical > Short Stories & Anthologies > Short Stories #791 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Short Stories & Anthologies > Anthologies

Customer Reviews

Text: English, Russian (translation)

It is estimated that some three million people died in the Soviet forced-labour camps of Kolyma, in the north-eastern area of Siberia. Shalamov himself spent seventeen years there, and in these stories he vividly captures the lives of ordinary people caught up in terrible circumstances, their hopes and plans extending no further than a few hours.

The Chekov of the Gulag, Varlam Shalamov, needs to be commended, one, for surviving seventeen years of imprisonment in the mines of the frozen north and two for telling the tale. The style, which, I believe, suffers from an indifferent translation, is spare and straightforward; Chekhovian, leaving the reader to make his/her own interpretations. There is none of the hopefulness of *One Day in the Life* or the sarcasm of *The Gulag Archipelago*, none of the ironic and deliberate distancing of the brilliant stylist Borowski's *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentleman* [on Auschwitz] or any of the moral questions that the memorialists of the Nazi concentration camp universe usually ask. Instead, things are as they are: people starve, struggle to stay alive, work under brutal conditions for long hours, interact among themselves and with their jailers, get frostbite, go to hospital to rest and recover for the next round of work in the mines and so on. The end result is a portrait of the worker's paradise as a hugely inefficient and impersonal machine which is indifferent to human life and suffering, and, in one, which despite its stated and supposedly humanitarian aims, slave labor is the fodder for the continuous turning of the economic wheel. Once again with 's rating system, it is a hard book to assign stars. While I can't say I love or like it per se, or that it is a work I would return to, *Kolyma* is important as a historical document and a unique blend of fact and fiction depicting a terrible world unknown to most of us.

This work is justifiably noteworthy as a chronicle of the horror of Stalin's slave labor camps as told by one who was there. Not as politically charged (or preachy) as Solzhenitsyn's more famous work, but it still tells the tale in the form of short stories of what life (?) was like in the camps and just outside them. It is becoming increasingly hard for the new generation to believe that such things took place, but this work should be required reading for all students.

In the far northeast corner of Russia, astride the Arctic circle, lies Kolyma, an desolate, inhospitable area named after a river and mountain range, inaccessible except by sea. Unfortunately for the hapless victims of Stalin, gold and other minerals were discovered there in the 1930s. Stalin barbarically ordered the area to be developed and mined using prisoner labor. That labor included victims of collectivization and unending purges, common criminals and political prisoners, captured enemy combatants and returning Russian soldiers who had the misfortune of having been captured rather than fighting to the death. It is estimated that about one million prisoners died in the 80 prison camps making up the Kolyma complex. They died of starvation, exposure, illness and abuse. Varlam Shalamov was a political prisoner who served a 17-year sentence in the Kolyma camps,

managing to survive using his intelligence and cunning to avoid certain-death assignments. Kolyma Tales is a collection of vignettes describing events and incidents lived by the author and fellow prisoners. The stories are utterly fascinating, told in a personal intimate style, with a disarming sense of humor, without bitterness. Solzhenitsyn so admired Shalamov's writing that he named him one of the best writers of the period. Unfortunately, despite his talent and genius, Shalamov failed to fulfill his promise with further works. I highly recommend Kolyma Tales not only because of its historic value (there are few accounts of Kolyma), but also because Shalamov's writing style so wonderfully simple, direct, positive and objective. One ends up concluding that all Shalamov's characters, prisoners and their keepers, are victims in a tragic irony, and asking oneself, "what is life?".

This is an important book even though it is a combination of personal experience and fiction since it chronicles the lives of several prisoners in the gulag system in Russia during the Stalin years. It is comparable to "A Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch" by Solzhenitsyn. Rather than concentrating on one particular day it covers many years and relates experiences of the author or that the author learned about when he was in captivity. Anyone interested in that particular subject or in the depths of suffering that humans can be put to when ruled by absolute power should read this book.

[Download to continue reading...](#)

Kolyma Tales (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) Kolyma Tales (Penguin Modern Classics)
Dinnerware of the 20th Century: The Top 500 Patterns (Official Price Guides to Dinnerware of the 20th Century) The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) North of South: An African Journey (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) The Economic Consequences of the Peace (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) The Ramayana: A Shortened Modern Prose Version of the Indian Epic (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) A Russian Journal (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) The Aran Islands (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) My Childhood (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin) The Siberian BAM Guide: Rail, Rivers & Road: North-East Russia's Siberian BAM Railway, Lena River & Kolyma Highway (Trailblazer Guides) The Pearl (Penguin Great Books of the 20th Century) Fifty Ballet Masterworks: From the 16th Century to the 20th Century The Myth of the Twentieth Century: The Myth of the 20th Century; Mythus des 20. Jahrhunderts; An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice And 21st Century Potential Tales of the Seal People: Scottish Folk Tales (International Folk Tales) Great Classic Love Stories: Six Classic Tales of Love and Romance Classic Fairy Stories 2D Traditional Tales (Classic Literature With Classical Music. Junior Classics)

Programs and Manifestoes on 20th-Century Architecture How to Read a Dress: A Guide to
Changing Fashion from the 16th to the 20th Century

[Contact Us](#)

[DMCA](#)

[Privacy](#)

[FAQ & Help](#)