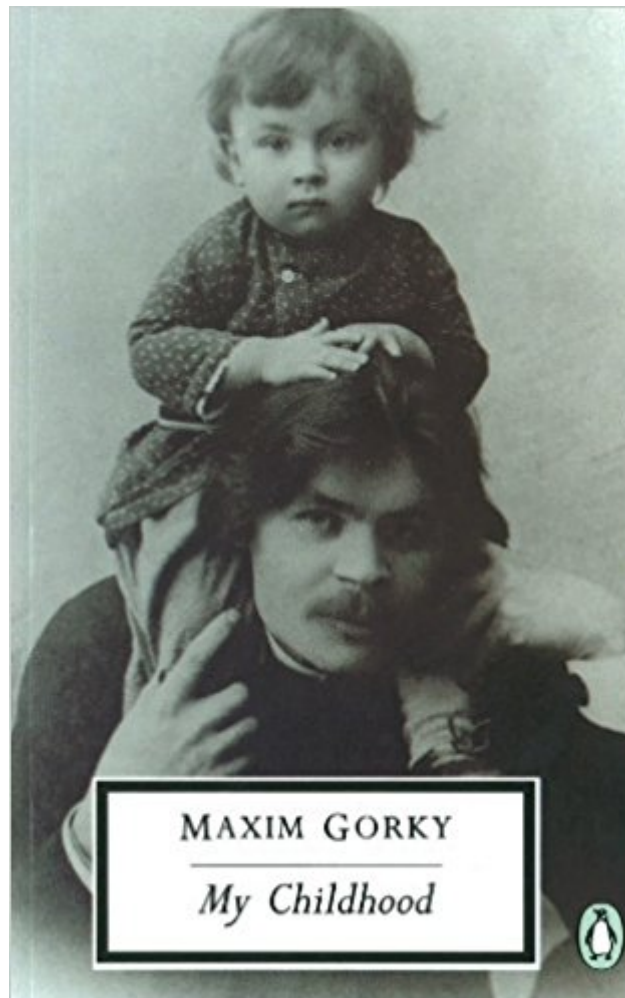




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# My Childhood (Classic, 20th-Century, Penguin)



## Synopsis

Coloured by poverty and horrifying brutality, Gorky's childhood equipped him to understand - in a way denied to a Tolstoy or a Turgenev - the life of the ordinary Russian. After his father, a paperhanger and upholsterer, died of cholera, five-year-old Gorky was taken to live with his grandfather, a polecat-faced tyrant who would regularly beat him unconscious, and with his grandmother, a tender mountain of a woman and a wonderful storyteller, who would kneel beside their bed (with Gorky inside it pretending to be asleep) and give God her views on the day's happenings, down to the last fascinating details. She was, in fact, Gorky's closest friend and the epic heroine of a book swarming with characters and with the sensations of a curious and often frightened little boy.Â Â 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 (Book 650)

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Penguin Classics; Revised ed. edition (November 1, 1991)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140182853

ISBN-13: 978-0140182859

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.6 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 43 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #185,121 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #70 inÂ Â Books > Literature & Fiction > World Literature > Russian #141 inÂ Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Europe > Russia #1091 inÂ Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Arts & Literature > Authors

## Customer Reviews

The first book of an autobiographical trilogy by Maksim Gorky, published in Russian in 1913-14 as *Detstvo*. It was also translated into English as *Childhood*. Like the volumes of autobiography that were to follow, *My Childhood* examines the author's experiences by means of individual portraits

and descriptions of events. He reveals that his mother was mostly absent after the death of his father and that his upbringing was in the hands of his brutal grandfather. He also creates a compelling portrait of his unlearned but loving grandmother. Leaving home at age 12, the young Gorky learns self-reliance and begins to educate himself by reading. The subsequent autobiographical volumes are *V lyudyakh* (1915-16; *In the World*; also published as *My Apprenticeship*) and *Moi universitety* (1923; *My Universities*; also published as *My University Days*). Considered to constitute one of the finest Russian autobiographies, the books reveal Gorky to be an acute observer with great descriptive powers. -- The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature

Maxim Gorky was born in 1868 in Nizhny Novgorod. After a grim childhood and some years of wandering he began to write stories and by his thirties had become famous both for fiction and plays. He became involved in revolutionary activity against the tsarist regime in Russia and had a confused, difficult relationship with the Soviet dictatorship, partly living abroad and yet becoming the USSR's most feted and widely read author. He died in 1936 under suspicious circumstances and Stalin and Molotov were among the bearers of his coffin.

I purchased this inexpensive Kindle version only to find it so riddled with errors that it was unreadable. 19 errors on a single page!

This is the heart rending account of a person who not only survived the poverty and miserable conditions of his environment and the cruel treatment by his grandfather but went on to become a great man , compassionate in his treatment of his fellowmen, a great literary figure, and one of the few moderate and sensible socialist leaders of the pre-stalinist period. Even Lenin respected him though they were at opposite ends of the political spectrum!.

Like Dostoevsky? Then this is for you. Great literature in every sense -- extremely well written -- a passionate account of Gorky's life in a large family growing up 19th Century Russia. Vividly described through his own eyes as a child suddenly thrust into a hurricane of conflicting, very Russian beliefs, desires, hatreds, traditions and often violent rages. After his father dies when he's a young boy, his mother distances herself from him and his grandmother takes him to her own family in another city, where he imperfectly fits into a tradesman's family consisting of a violent but somehow lovable grandfather, young angry uncles vying for their father's inheritance, tragic nieces . . . There's an account of beatings from his grandfather you'll never forget!

It is difficult to judge how authentic these youth memoirs are. This book is like a window opening into Russian life in the late nineteenth century showing the poverty of the people and how they managed to survive. The way Gorky depicts his maternal grandparents is magnificent. Especially the beliefs and ideas of his grandmother are echoes of a now long gone past. In the middle ages and in late antiquity people would understand her way of life better than we 'modern' readers. I enjoyed the book from beginning to end even though I am certainly not a Gorky fan.

It is an engrossing view into the hard life of Russian villagers in the late 19th century. Gorky sees the humanity in them with a keen and tender eye, even though the worst of their brutality towards each other (in particular women and children). He spares the reader nothing: the ugliness of poverty, the greed that prosperity brings, the violence of the oppressed towards others, etc. But he also describes the beauty of Russia and of solidarity, as in how the women help and support each other. In a way, the memoir presages the coming Russian revolution which was still some decades away.

This is necessary reading if you want to understand the Russian soul, but is really hard for my pampered American soul to endure. It did give me some background which I appreciated when I was able to visit his childhood home and appreciate the respect the Russians give to their elders.

I have been a lover of late 19th, early 20th century literature for sometime, but had never read anything by Gorky. What an oversight. My Childhood is an engrossing and captivating read. It's wonderfully written and almost poetic in its description of life as a Russian peasant. I'd heartily recommend it.

A humane account of the savagery endured in the hopeless, chaotic, lower strata of Russian society, 1870s-90s (most of the book). The last part is quite brief.

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