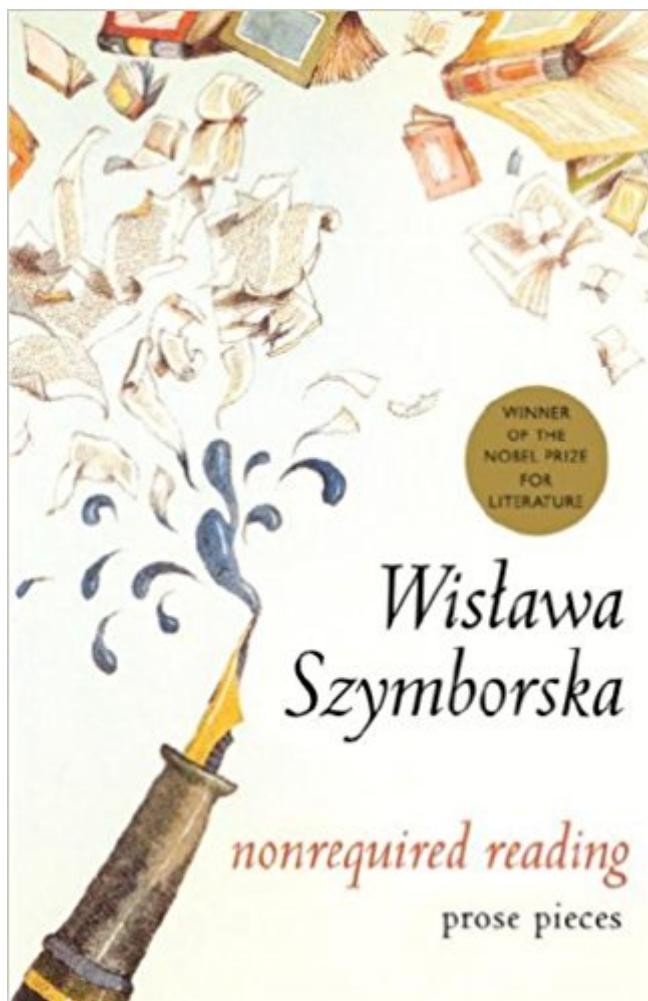


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Nonrequired Reading: Prose Pieces



Synopsis

Wislawa Szymborska's poems are admired around the world, and her unsparing vision, tireless wit, and deep sense of humanity are cherished by countless readers. Unknown to most of them, however, Szymborska also worked for several decades as a columnist, reviewing a wide variety of books under the unassuming title "Nonrequired Reading." As readers of her poems would expect, the short prose pieces collected here are anything but ordinary. Reflecting the author's own eclectic tastes and interests, the pretexts for these ruminations range from books on wallpapering, cooking, gardening, and yoga, to more lofty volumes on opera and world literature. Unpretentious yet incisive, these charming pieces are on a par with Szymborska's finest lyrics, tackling the same large and small questions with a wonderful curiosity.

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Customer Reviews

This is a book of prose essays by the 1996 Nobel Prize winning author Wislawa Szymborska. They were from her newspaper column of 30+ years ago, "Nonrequired Reading". They are the musings on everyday books and subjects. It is a wide ranging and eclectic collection. There will be one essay on a touching Korean fable. Then, the next will be on how to make a reptile aquarium. Many of these essays were book reviews. However, they are more her thoughts on the subjects than reviews. When I say this book is like a "box of chocolates" it is in the Gumpian sense of the word. You never know what you're going to get and it will be interesting no matter what the topic. The aforementioned reptile aquarium piece was not only interesting but, philosophical as well. That the

book was from a translation was not a problem. Ms. Cavanaugh, the translator, was the winner of the PEN Translator prize. Reading this, it seems to have travelled without a problem. For those buying this book: please read it! Do not put it on your coffee table to show off your erudition of having a Nobel Prize winning author's book so prominently on display. There is too much enjoyment to be had by reading this book. The essays are from one page to a page and a half in length. Hopefully, there will be more essays to come in the future.

I love Wislawa Szymborska. Although I am not a fan of poetry in general, I began reading this book of her thoughts and feelings and criticisms which are never vicious, cruel, or even negative. She finds something positive about everything from Ella Fitzgerald to Alfred Hitchcock and many other subjects about books. I think there is a fascination with this woman because she is a Nobel Prize winner for literature in 1996 and from Poland. She is the first Polish woman to receive such an honor. She is quite humble about such honors. We know little about her life. We know she has a sister. She might be a widow and she has no children. She is a smoker and lives in a three room flat in Cracow where she has lived since her family moved there. Wislawa has now popularity because of her top honors for her services to literature. I would love to read a biography or autobiography about her. I loved her story about her relationship with another Polish Nobel prizewinner and fellow poet, Czeslaw Milosz. As long as there are writers like Wislawa around, we can be sure that she is not done yet.

I love the sweep. Szymborska can make any topic fascinating. She finds deep and homey lessons in a broad range of topics. And of course, she's a real writer.

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