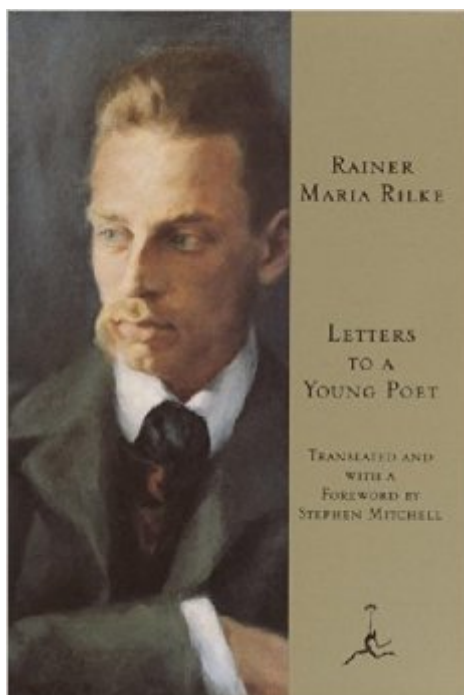


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Letters To A Young Poet (Modern Library)



Synopsis

Rilke's Letters to a Young Poet are arguably the most famous and beloved letters of the twentieth century. Written when the poet was himself still a young man, with most of his greatest work before him, they were addressed to a student who had sent Rilke some of his own writing, asking for advice on becoming a writer. The two never met, but over a period of several years Rilke wrote him these ten letters, which have been cherished by hundreds of thousands of readers for what Stephen Mitchell calls in his Foreword the "vibrant and deeply felt experience of life" that informs them. Eloquent and personal, Rilke's meditations on the creative process, the nature of love, the wisdom of children, and the importance of solitude offer a wealth of spiritual and practical guidance for anyone. At the same time, this collection, in Stephen Mitchell's definitive translation, reveals the thoughts and feelings of one of the greatest poets and most distinctive sensibilities of the twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Written with a simple, elegant, and com(passionate) prose, Rainer Maria Rilke pens a series of letters to a young aspiring poet, Franz Xaver Kappus that contain a stunningly beautiful argument and plea for living an authentic life, that addresses the silent questions that exist in the deepest chambers of our hearts, the grand themes of literature, and hence life: the meaning of solitude and how to love. The first letter gives the greatest advice anyone can give to someone aspiring to be

anything. You have to ask yourself the following question: "must I?" If you answer in the affirmative, then "build your life in accordance with this necessity; your whole life, even into its humblest and most indifferent hour, must become a sign and witness to this impulse." That you must only judge Art by the following value, has it arisen out of necessity? The second letter, he warns against the role of irony running through your life and one must guard against it by searching "into the depths of Things: there irony never descends." The third letter argues that one must always trust in yourself and your own feelings. Do not fall victim to convention. Which is nothing more than unwillingness on each of our parts to not fully engage life, but rather to take what others have said and done as well-traveled roads to walk through life upon. For the person living a poetic life, "everything is gestation and then birthing. To let each impression and each embryo of a feeling come to completion, entirely in itself, in the dark, in the unsayable...and with deep humility and patience to wait for the hour when a new clarity is born: this alone is what it means to live as an artist: in understanding as in creating." The fourth letter argues for one to trust in Nature.

. This book is a treasure of a man of solitude and poetic ability to FEEL life, not simply an intellectual exercise like 99% people in our so called "enlightened" world so do. It's amazing how insightful Rilke was at such a young age. And yet the world today, the power, control and politics currently live in a fundamentally thinking world of one-sided blindness that is so far apart from Rilke that it is like a regression of humanity of large and major proportion, and in such a short amount of time. On solitude and the ability to be childlike (not childish), that is, living in the present moment in appreciation of what simply is, apart from all concepts, occupations and fundamental thinking and answers of security and certainty, Rilke writes: "There is one solitude and that is great . . . a great inner solitude. Going into oneself and for hours meeting no one - this one must be able to attain. To be solitary, the way one was solitary as a child, when the grownups went around involved with things that seemed important and big because they themselves looked so busy . . . and when one day one perceives that their occupations are paltry, their professions petrified and no longer linked with (real) living . . . Only the individual who is solitary is like a thing placed under profound laws, and when he goes out into the morning that is just beginning, or looks out into the evening that is full of happening . . . all status drops from him as a dead man, though he stands in the midst of sheer life. pp. 45-47 Rilke knew that life was creative, an art not grasped by criticism and intellectualism: "Words of art are of an infinite loneliness and with nothing so little to be reached as with criticism. Only love can grasp and hold and be just toward them." p.

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