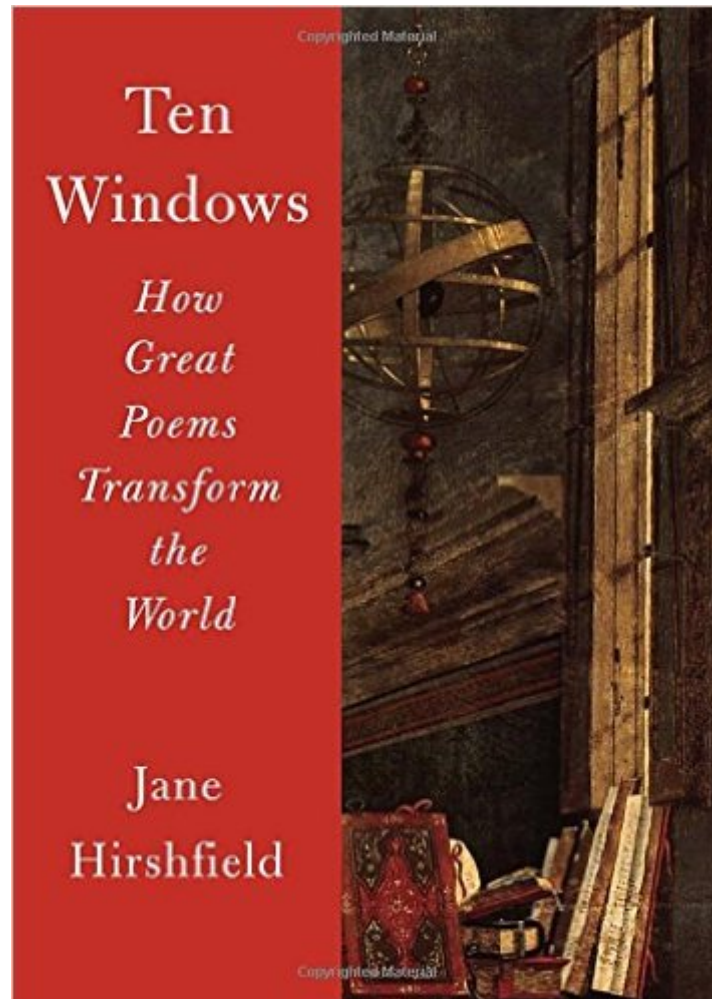# Ten Windows: How Great Poems Transform The World

Synopsis

A dazzling collection of essays on how the best poems work, from the master poet and essayistÂ â œPoetry,â • Jane Hirshfield has said, â œis language that foments revolutions of being.â • In ten eloquent and highly original explorations, she unfolds and explores some of the ways this is doneâ ”by the inclusion of hiddenness, paradox, and surprise; by a perennial awareness of the place of uncertainty in our lives; by languageâ ™s own acts of discovery; by the powers ofÂ image, statement, music, and feeling to enlarge in every direction. The lucid understandings presented here are gripping and transformative in themselves. Investigating the power of poetry to move and change us becomes in these pages an equal investigation into the inhabitance and navigation of our human lives. Closely reading poems by Dickinson, BashÅ•, Szymborska, Cavafy, Heaney, Bishop, and Komunyakaa, among many others, Hirshfield reveals how poetryâ ™s world-making takes place: word by charged word. By expanding what is imaginable and sayable, Hirshfield proposes, poems expand what is possible. Ten Windows restores us at every turn to a more precise, sensuous, and deepened experience of our shared humanity and of the seemingly limitless means by which that knowledge is both summoned and forged.

Book Information

Hardcover: 320 pages

Publisher: Knopf (March 17, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385351054

ISBN-13: 978-0385351058

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.1 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (39 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #47,454 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)   #21 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Poetry   #67 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Books & Reading > General   #231 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Essays

Customer Reviews

With TEN WINDOWS Jane Hirshfield, one of this planetâ ™s premier poets, has left her indelible mark on literature-- even if she never produces another book of prize-winning poems. Let me

support that claim with a little back-story. I was an English literature major at Harvard, was married to a best-selling novelist for forty-five volatile years, have published three editions of a legal treatise, and three volumes of prose-poetry.Thatâ ™s why Iâ ™m in awe of Janeâ ™s ability to pack such powerful, original, and creative analysis into such lucid prose. No high-school English teacher should start another term without digesting TEN WINDOWS. On the other hand, I doubt most college English professors would dare mention the book, lest students force them to re-cast their own lectures to accommodate Hirshfieldâ ™s exhilarating compendium of insights.The depth of Hirshfieldâ ™s penetrating gaze isnâ ™t confined to poetry, however. Sparkling beneath the surface of her unique literary analyses rest gems of profound wisdom about life itself. Indeed, I was so often dazzled that I could only absorb a few pages per day from her treasure trove. Let me cluster some samples appearing between pages 250 and 251:â œThe abiding necessity of surprise [in poetry] is one reason that factual recitation alone, though highly effective as an element, rarely leads to the transformation we seek and feel in good poems. The difference between â ˆfactâ ™ and â ˆtruth,â ™ the physicist Niels Bohr once said, is that a fact must be either true or false, while two opposing truths can be equally right, resonant, and informing. For determining facts, we turn to science (or, less happily, at times to courtrooms), but the business of writers is not answers; it is finding right questionsâ ¦. Good poems make clear without making simpleâ ¦.

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