



Penguin will be launching a series of ten extraordinary Central European Classics on 6th May 2010

These books all come from a culture which has suffered hideously throughout much of the twentieth century – it has been invaded, despoiled and mutilated in a way which it is hard for outsiders to appreciate.

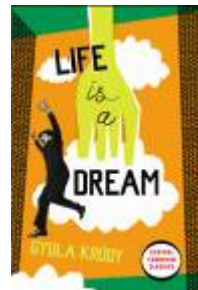
The result of such extremity was the unwilling creation of a uniquely powerful literature – with so many regimes wishing to control or suppress words it is almost unsurprising that words should take on such weight. Words could be used as a consolation, a warning or a weapon.

The series takes you on a political, social and cultural journey from the optimism of pre 1914 Central Europe to the horrors of the Cold War. The books are designed to showcase some of the remarkable writing from the region: including novels and short stories, dystopian satire, short fables, through memoirs and essays.

Central European Classics is designed to transform this wildly disparate group of authors – disparate in form, experience, political views – from their previous roles as guardians of an oppressed, violated or ruined culture into simply being one of the great, fascinating writers.

Gyula Krúdy: *Life is a Dream* – Hungarian Short Stories

Life is a Dream (1931) is Gyula Krudy's magical collection of ten short stories. It is a comic, nostalgic, romantic and erotic glimpse into the Hungary of the early twentieth century. Focussing on the poor and dispossessed, these tales of love, food, death and sex are ironic and wise about the human condition and the futility of life, and display fully Krudy's wit and mastery of the form.



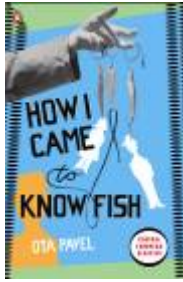
Gregor von Rezzori: *The Snows of Yesteryear* – Cross cultural Memoir

The Snows of Yesteryear (1989) is Gregor von Rezzori's haunting evocation of his childhood in Czernowitz, an extraordinarily multicultural Habsburg town in now Ukraine. Growing up after the First World War, Rezzori portrays a twilight world suspended between the dying ways of an imperial past and the terrors of the twentieth century.

Karel Čapek: *War with the Newts* – Czech Novel

War with the Newts (1936) is Karel Čapek's darkly humorous allegory of early twentieth-century Czech and Fascist politics. A colony of newts is discovered in Sumatra, they are taught to trade, use tools, but also to speak. It is clear that this new species is ripe for exploitation, but the humans have given no thought to the terrible consequences of their actions.



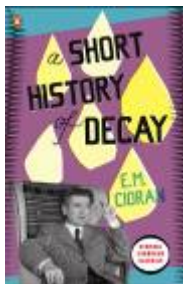


Ota Pavel: *How I Came to Know Fish* – Czech Short Stories

How I Came to Know Fish (1974) is Ota Pavel's magical memoir of his childhood in Czechoslovakia. This is one boy's passionate and affecting tale of life, love and fishing, against a backdrop of war and deprivation.

Josef Škvorecký: *The Cowards* – Czech Novel

The Cowards (1958) is Josef Skvorecky's blackly comic tale of post-war politics that was immediately banned on publication. It follows a group of Czech teenagers who just wish to play in their jazz band, but are constantly thwarted by giant world historical events, such as the Nazis and Soviets battling each other through the streets.

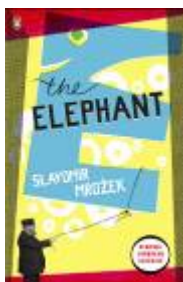
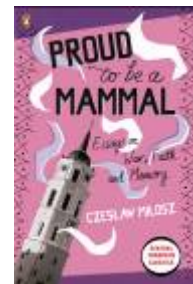


E.M. Cioran: *A Short History of Decay* – Transylvanian / French Philosophy

A Short History of Decay (1949) is E. M. Cioran's nihilistic and witty collection of aphoristic essays concerning the nature of civilization in mid-twentieth-century Europe. Illuminating and brutally honest, *A Short History of Decay* dissects Man's decadence in a remarkable series of moving and beautiful pieces.

Czesław Miłosz: *Proud to be a Mammal* – Polish Essays

Proud to be a Mammal (1942-97) is Nobel prize winning, Czeslaw Milosz's moving and diverse collection of essays. Among them, he covers his passion for poetry, a terrible journey across Nazi occupied Europe, his love of the Polish language that was so nearly wiped out by the violence of the twentieth century, and his happy childhood.

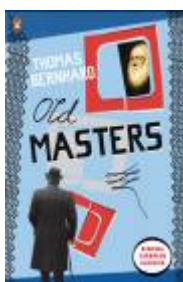


Slawomir Mrozek: *The Elephant* – Polish Short Stories

The Elephant (1957) is Slawomir Mrozek's award-winning collection of hilarious and unnerving short stories, satirising life in Poland under a totalitarian regime. In these tales of bureaucrats, officials and artists, Mrozek conjures perfectly a life of imagined crimes and absurd authority.

György Faludy: *My Happy Days in Hell* - Hungarian Memoir

My Happy Days in Hell (1962) is Gyorgy Faludy's grimly beautiful autobiography of his battle to survive tyranny and oppression. A classic cold war document, which was originally written in exile in England.



Thomas Bernhard: *Old Masters* – Austrian Novel

Old Masters (1985) is Thomas Bernhard's devilishly funny story about the friendship between two old men, one an elderly and distinguished musicologist, who meet in the great art museum in Vienna and mull over the overwhelming artistic failings at the heart of Central Europe.

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