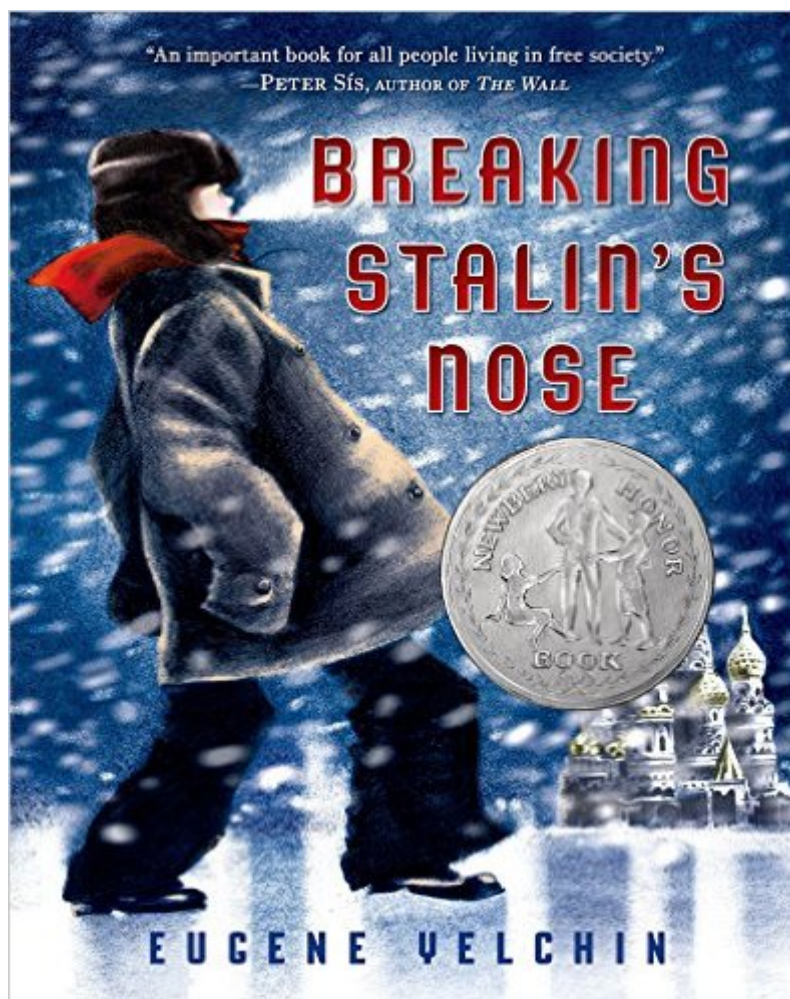


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# Breaking Stalin's Nose



## Synopsis

Breaking Stalin's Nose is one of Horn Book's Best Fiction Books of 2011. Sasha Zaichik has known the laws of the Soviet Young Pioneers since the age of six: The Young Pioneer is devoted to Comrade Stalin, the Communist Party, and Communism. A Young Pioneer is a reliable comrade and always acts according to conscience. A Young Pioneer has a right to criticize shortcomings. But now that it is finally time to join the Young Pioneers, the day Sasha has awaited for so long, everything seems to go awry. He breaks a classmate's glasses with a snowball. He accidentally damages a bust of Stalin in the school hallway. And worst of all, his father, the best Communist he knows, was arrested just last night. Eugene Yelchin's moving story of a ten-year-old boy's world shattering is masterful in its simplicity, powerful in its message, and heartbreaking in its plausibility.

## Book Information

Paperback: 176 pages

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Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (96 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #24,850 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #30 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Europe](#) #116 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Boys & Men](#) #163 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Parents](#)

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

This beautiful and sad story touched my heart. During the time of Stalin's terrifying reign over Russia many millions of people were imprisoned and executed for a variety of "crimes", many of which were innocent. It was a time of terror and fear for the Soviet people. This book takes place over a two or three day period in the life of Sasha Zaichik, an upper elementary aged boy whose father is part of Stalin's secret police. His mother has died under mysterious circumstances much earlier and his world is about to be turned upside down. Mr. Yelchin's story is frightening and very

sad. I felt for Sasha and his father. The various characters in the book make choices in desperate situations.....I felt for all of them. The emotional impact of this story is strong and I thought on this book, these characters and what it all meant for several days. I had my husband read the book so we could talk about it. Is this book for children? You might ask yourself that after reading the above. Absolutely, YES! This is a book that children should read but parents should read it as well so that the topic can be discussed. Why did Sasha and his father behave as they did? Why did the teacher manipulate the students so badly? What happened to Sasha after the book was over? What happened to Sasha's classmates? And, most importantly, what would I do if I were placed in a situation where doing the right thing was costly for me? Many good conversations can come from reading a book together and this book is a good one to that end. I highly recommend "Breaking Stalin's Nose".

Sasha lives in the USSR with his father in a communal apartment with 47 other people. He has dreamed of becoming a Young Soviet Pioneer all his short life and serving Stalin whom he worships. Then one night his father is arrested and slowly everything Sasha knows, loves and believes in begins to crumble. Written to be accessible to young readers this is a look into the Cold War that just might send readers looking for more. Heavily illustrated and printed in a format that reluctant readers will be also be drawn to. As an adult I can only wonder how anyone survived this time period. Eugene Yelchin won a 2012 Newbery Honor for BREAKING STALIN'S NOSE and I am glad he did otherwise I am not sure I would have read this book. Recommended for middle graders that enjoy historical fiction.

A touching account of a young boy's misadventures in Stalinist Russia. It pulls no punches about the evils of communism. You might call this a kid's version of Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago. Harrowing but never gruesome.

The title of this book intrigued me enough to pull it off the shelf. The cover picture drew me in. I read this book in about an hour. I couldn't put it down! Most of that hour I kept shaking my head wondering how anyone in USSR survived the Cold War without going mad. The mind games that adults played! This story shows us the effects of dictatorship and misinformation with heartbreaking results. For adults as well as young adults.

This book left me with such mixed feelings. It is well written and covers an interesting topic (the

Soviet Union under the rule of Stalin.) As an adult, I appreciated the simple and direct writing style, which somehow seemed to fit with what I think of as the "no-nonsense" attitude of the time. The writing has a commanding, slightly "pushy" tone that I almost didn't notice as a reader but it fit with the (to me) overbearing style of the government at that time. So here's my problem with the book. Our hero is 10 years old. The book is small, with full page illustrations every 8 pages or so, and half page illustrations more frequently. Lots of white space, big print and short chapters. It looks like a book for 4th graders. But it isn't. It is a book for (maybe) 6th graders, most of whom (at my school at least) will turn up their noses at what they see as "too babyish." Going back to the positive (because I do think it's a good book) I will totally suggest this to older readers who are studying that period in history. I can see an 8th grader who wants to gain an overall sense of that time without reading a "boring" text book passage. This book could be read in 1-2 hours by many readers and I hope I can find a way to partner it with 8th grade or high school readers seeking a non-threatening way to get a feel for one view of the time. About me: I'm a middle school/high school librarian How I got this book: I purchased it.

Sasha Zaichik is the protagonist in this short novel, *Breaking Stalin's Nose*, by Eugene Yelchin. Sasha is less a hero than an innocent victim, for what else can you call a ten-year old who's been brought up with nothing but lies in a cynical, totalitarian state that maintains itself through fear and terror. At first glance Yelchin's novel looks like a book for children, but don't be fooled--it carries a message that resonates with readers of all ages. I'm talking about the human toll of Stalin-era Communism in the Soviet Union, but it could apply to any dictatorial government or ideology, past or present. Think Nazi Germany, Maoist China, North Korea, Iran, Zimbabwe, the Taliban, etc. Sasha, like most children in the USSR, was brought up to idolize Joseph Stalin and the Communist system. Parents were too fearful to do otherwise. Sasha eagerly anticipates becoming an official Young Pioneer at a school ceremony because this is the ideal he has been indoctrinated with. During a 24 hour time span we, the readers, come to see the lies and fear of this era through the innocent eyes of this idealistic young boy. The rotten foundation the structure is built on is exposed and put on display as Sasha experiences the disintegration of his whole world and can't quite comprehend what happened. I can't tell you much more without giving away the whole story, so read it. Most adults will finish this book in about an hour, which includes viewing the many illustrations.

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