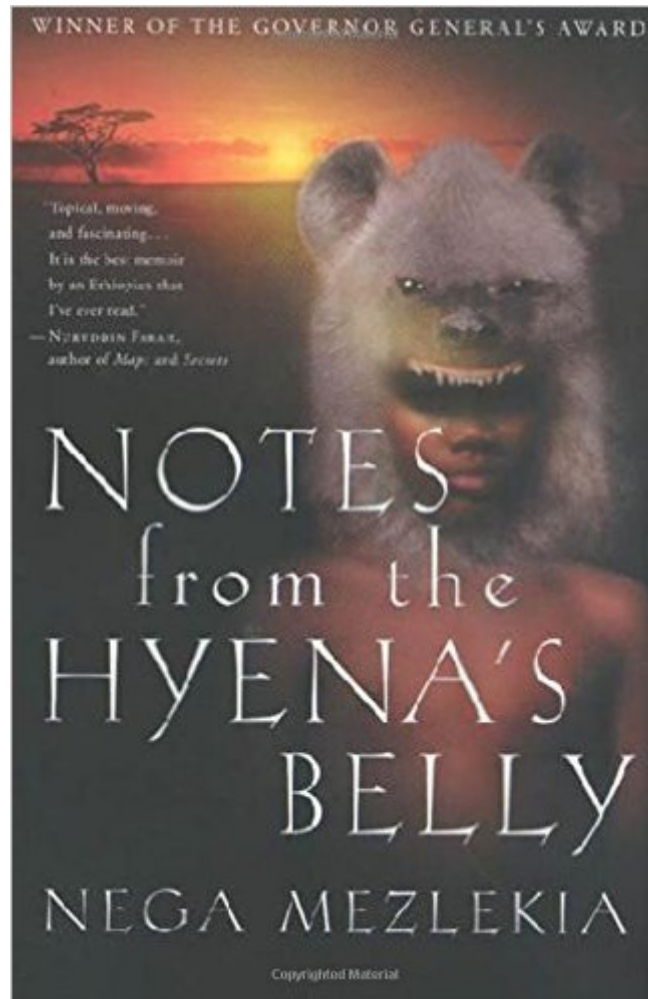


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Notes From The Hyena's Belly: An Ethiopian Boyhood



Synopsis

In this acclaimed memoir, Mezlekia recalls his boyhood in the arid city of Jijiga, Ethiopia, and his journey to manhood during the 1970s and 1980s. He traces his personal evolution from child to soldier--forced at the age of eighteen to join a guerrilla army. And he describes the hardships that consumed Ethiopia after the fall of Emperor Haile Selassie and the rise to power of the communist junta, in whose terror thousands of Ethiopians died. Part autobiography and part social history, *Notes from the Hyena's Belly* offers an unforgettable portrait of Ethiopia, and of Africa, during the defining and turbulent years of the last century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a memoir of the author's boyhood and young manhood in Ethiopia. Born in 1958 to a middle-class family in the city of Jijiga, Mr. Mezlekia left Ethiopia in 1980 and is now a professional engineer living in Toronto. Narrated with a light touch and a mixture of myth and fantasy, he opens a world for the western reader that has too long been influenced by nothing more than photos of skeletal images of starving children and grinding poverty. This story, however, is much more than that. From the start, there's a wide variety of interesting characters and a rich warm family life. There's Mustafa, the swindler, who boards at his home; there's Mr. Alula, the teacher, whose severe forms of discipline call for retribution by boyhood pranks; there's Wondwossen, his childhood companion, who joins a guerilla army with him; there are his sisters who never stop feuding. But most memorable of all is his mother, who holds her family together during the extreme hardships which inevitably come to this violent and war-torn land. He was 14 years old in 1972, a time when

idealism and student protests were sweeping the globe. In Ethiopia, however, students were gunned down and murdered. Young Nega was jailed often and regularly, and always tortured, but somehow his descriptions of this time in his life are told with a touch of lightness. Years later, in 1977, when over 100,000 people are murdered in seven months during the "Red Terror" and bodies laid out over the streets, he yearns for the time when they were all just simply tortured. Throughout the book, I couldn't help shuddering at the all the cruelty.

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