

## If All Who Have Begged Help

AUTHOR Akhmatova, Anna

GENRE Poetry

OVERVIEW With her precise language and clear imagery, Anna Akhmatova was a leading figure in the Acmeist movement of Russian poetry a candidate for the Nobel Prize in both 1958 and 1965. She expands upon her ongoing theme of love in the short poem "If All Who Have Begged Help" as she considers the exchange between those who give and those who receive. What, exactly, is exchanged in this poem? What are the expectations of givers and receivers?

FULL TEXT\* <http://www.angelfire.com/ca/iloveDave/myaa.html>

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TYPE Reading - Short Enough to Read Aloud.

THEMES [Giving and Receiving](#) [Money and Wealth](#) [Poverty and Need](#)

BIG QUESTIONS [When I give, what do I expect in return? What do I receive?](#) [Who should we give to and why?](#) [Is money a good gift?](#) [How should we respond to people and communities in need?](#)

PUBLICATION Civically Engaged Reader

### SAMPLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the narrator want at first from those who have begged her for help?
2. Why doesn't the narrator say whether she was able to give help to those who begged for it?
3. What kind of strength does the narrator recognize in the people she describes? What does she mean when she says that "they shared with me their strength"?
4. What is "even this" that the narrator says she can bear?
5. Why do we respond to someone begging for help? Why do we not respond to someone begging for help?
6. What do we receive from those who beg for our help?

# Anna Akhmatova: If All Who have Begged Help

by [Colin Penter](#)

September 15th, 2015

*"If all who have begged help  
From me in this world,  
All the holy innocents,  
Broken wives and cripples,  
The imprisoned, the suicidal-  
If they had sent me one kopek  
I should have become 'richer  
Than all Egypt....'  
But they did not send me kopeks  
Instead they shared with me their strength,  
and so nothing in this world  
is stronger than I,  
and I can bear anything even this"*

*Anna Akhmatova  
If All Who have Begged Help*



The poet [Anna Akhmatova](#) (1889-1966) is regarded as one of the greatest

Russian poets.

[Akhmatova](#) lived in two different kinds of Russia, pre-revolutionary Russia and the post revolutionary Soviet Union. Her writing falls into two periods -the early work (1912–25) and her later work (from around 1936 until her death), which was more political. Her work was condemned and censored by Stalinist and Russian authorities. For long periods, particularly in the Stalin years and the 1950's, Akhmatova was in official disfavour and many of those close to her died at the hands of the authorities. She was considered an official enemy and forced to live a terribly hard life. Her first husband was executed by the Soviet secret police, and her son and third husband spent years in Soviet prisons and gulags, where her third husband died. In 1949 her son was sentenced to 10 years in a Siberian prison camp. She survived, partly because her work was so popular and Stalin and the authorities were careful not to attack her directly. Her most famous poem [Requiem](#) documents her experience at the time of her son's imprisonment. The poem comprises fifteen short poems and explores the grief of mothers for their imprisoned sons and daughters and the suffering and persecution of the Russian people under the rule of Stalin.