

TRADITIONS AND CHANGES

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TARAS SHEVCHENKO IN THE MODERN WORLD

Taras Shevchenko is an outstanding Ukrainian writer. But for us, Ukrainians, he is not just a writer. He is a great mind of the Ukrainian people. He has become a symbol of the whole Ukraine, its struggle for freedom and independence, a symbol of the victory of the Ukrainian spirit over enslavement.

Taras Shevchenko's poetry and his bright image have always accompanied Ukrainians around the world in good and bad times. His fiery words fill our hearts with love and patriotic feelings for our native land. With the word of Shevchenko, Ukrainian heroes have always defended the Ukrainian land, and they are still defending it today.

Taras Shevchenko was born on 9 March 1814 in the village of Morinty (then Kyiv province, now Zvenyhorod district, Cherkasy region) in a peasant family.

His parents died early in life, and the young boy had to work as a labourer, and later Mr Engelhardt took Taras as a servant (Cossachok) to his house. Together with the Engelhardt family, Taras Shevchenko came to Vilna (now Vilnius, Lithuania), and then to St. Petersburg (then the capital of the Russian Empire).

In 1832, Shevchenko was sent to study painting with the artist V. Shiryaev. The leading people of that time noticed Taras Shevchenko's great talent. In 1838, with the participation of artists and writers, Taras Shevchenko was redeemed from serfdom with a price of 2500 karbovanets.

Taras Shevchenko was a serf, that is, a slave, but he became a free man and reached the heights of art. Taras Shevchenko's first collection of poetry, "Kobzar," was published in 1840.

The poet saw Ukraine, which was dear to his heart, in 1843 and 1846. During a trip to Kyiv, he joined the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, a secret society that advocated the idea of freedom.

In March 1847, Taras Shevchenko, along with other members of the brotherhood, was arrested. While behind bars, he wrote the cycle "In the Casemate." During interrogations, Taras Shevchenko did not renounce his views and did not betray any comrades. The court was unable to prove his involvement in the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, but still punished him for the poems of the cycle "Three Years" that were seized from him during his arrest and sentenced him to be assigned as a private soldier to the Orenburg Corps with a ban on writing and drawing.

In 1850, Shevchenko was arrested again for violating the conditions of his imprisonment (paintings and poems were found in his possession) and placed in the Novopetrovsky coastal fort on the Mangyshlak peninsula. During his seven years there, despite the difficult circumstances, the poet secretly painted and wrote poetry.

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In 1857, Taras Shevchenko was released, but until his death he was under secret police surveillance.

In 1858, the poet arrived in St. Petersburg and settled in a room at the Academy of Arts, where he lived out his life. For the third and last time, the poet visited Ukraine in 1859, where he was arrested again and ordered to leave Ukraine forever. The poet was forced to return to St. Petersburg. The last years of his life were surprisingly efficient for his work. In 1859, Taras Shevchenko wrote the pearl of his legacy, the poem “Maria”; in 1860, an expanded collection of his works, “Kobzar,” was published. The artist was awarded the title of academician of engraving. Despite the public recognition, Taras Shevchenko dreamed of settling “at least in a small hut” on the slopes of the Dnipro River. Corresponding with his relatives, he sent them money and asked them to buy him a “hut” on the Dnipro hills.

Having lived all his life alone, Taras Shevchenko died on 10 March 1861 far from his homeland – in St. Petersburg, where he was buried. Taras Shevchenko was reburied on 22 May 1861 near the town of Kaniv, on Chernecha Hill.

Chernecha Hora or Taras Hill near Kaniv in Ukraine is the place where Shevchenko was re-buried. The hill formerly was the burial place of several hetmans of Ukraine: Ivan Pidkova, Samiylo Kishka etc. That’s why this place was chosen. A museum has been created in honor of Taras Shevchenko. And alongside Shevchenko’s alley 19 sculptures dedicated to the characters of his works were installed. There is a library of more than twenty three thousand books in Shevchenko National Preserve. Art exhibitions, poetry readings and other special events are held here. A lot of people from Ukraine as well as foreigners come to Taras Hill to express gratitude to the great poet. This place is sacred to every Ukrainian.

Throughout his life, Taras Shevchenko deeply studied the history of the Cossacks, which was reflected in his works, where he described heroic and tragic chapters of the Cossacks’ lives. The poet paid special attention to depicting the figures of Cossack leaders who were able to lead the people and defend their homeland from invaders.

Among them is the image of the leader Ivan Pidkova. According to the legends, he had a rare physical strength and was extremely tall (about 2 meters 30 cm), and was able to break horseshoes with his hands, for which the Cossacks nicknamed him Pidkova (literally Horseshoe). He arrived at the Zaporizka Sich (semi-autonomous Cossack community where they lived) in 1556 and brought a whole Cossack army with him. He took part in campaigns led by Samiylo Kishka. Later he fought with the Cossacks against the Turks and Tatars (populations of the former Golden Horde).

In 1577, he together with Hetman Yakiv Shah chased Peter the Lambe from the throne and resisted the first wave of violent Ottoman reaction. When Ivan Pidkova’s army obtained a victory, he was proclaimed the Moldovan lord. But in the following year, 1578, the troops of the Ottoman Empire entered the Principality of Moldova. In the end, Pidkova was taken prisoner by Poles and decapitated in Lviv on 16 June 1578.

According to legend, his last words were:

“I am being led to death, even though I had done nothing in my life to deserve such an end. One thing I know for sure: I have always fought with courage as an honest knight against the enemies of Christianity and always acted for the good and benefit of my homeland, and my only desire was to be its guardian and protector...”

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The Cossacks transported Ivan Pidkova's body to Kaniv, where he was buried in one of the monasteries near Taras Hill.

Taras Shevchenko wrote the poem "Ivan Pidkova." In the poem, Ivan Pidkova is empowered with supernatural abilities. He is a brave, wise, and fearless Cossack who leads his troops to a victory. Not only his comrades were under his command but also the natural elements obeyed to him. He has the qualities of not only a true knight, but also the characteristics of a leader of the Ukrainian nation.

The image of Taras Shevchenko has a place of pride in the work of Ukrainian artists. Almost two dozen paintings on Shevchenko's theme were created by Oleh Shupliak, an artist from Ternopil region. He said,

"...I wanted my paintings to be distinguished by national spirit. I wanted to capture all the national symbols in one painting – the Dnipro River, the cliffs, the flight of a falcon, and a Cossack with a bandura. And, most importantly, all the symbols together create an image of the greatest son of Ukraine – Taras Shevchenko."

In 2013, the artist won the Ukrainian open competition for the best logo concept to mark the 200th anniversary of Taras Shevchenko's birth. This logo was on the billboards in Kyiv's Maidan during the Revolution of Dignity.

It is known that Taras Shevchenko died far from his homeland. In the poem "When I die, bury me..." (1845), the poet wills to be buried in Ukraine on a high mountain.

This poem is also called "Testament." It was written on Christmas Day in 1845 in Pereiaslav. Once the poet was staying at a farm in the Poltava region and suddenly became seriously ill, was suffering terribly, and was hallucinating. The owner of the farm took him to Pereiaslav to see a doctor, Andriy Kozachkovsky who took care of the sick poet. On the night of 24-25 December 1845, Taras Shevchenko barely recovered and wrote this poem.

"When I die, bury me..." unites the past, present, and future. The poem organically combines the personal fate of the lyrical hero (poet, kobzar, fighter) and the fate of the people (the artist's dream of a happy future for the nation and his passionate belief in it).

The central image of the work is Ukraine. The image of Ukraine is complemented by the image of a poet-prophet who not only wills to be buried in his homeland, but also calls on the people to resist the enslavers, break the chains, and gain freedom.

The text of the poem "When I die, bury me..." is the basis for works of great musical forms, such as cantatas by S. Liudkevych, V. Liatoshynskyi, L. Revutskyi, and others. Dozens of musical interpretations of the work are known. As early as March 1868, M. Lysenko and M. Verbytskyi presented their versions of the music. The most popular was the melody composed in the early 1870s by Gordii Gladkyi, a Poltava music and choral singing teacher. It is this version of The Testament that is often performed during celebrations.

There are over 1100 monuments to the great Kobzar in the world. There are monuments to Taras Shevchenko on all continents. The first monument on Ukrainian soil was installed in Kharkiv in 1897. Today it is covered with sandbags and guarded because the war in Ukraine is ongoing.

About 50 countries have honored the memory of our genius with sculptures. One of the most interesting foreign monuments to Taras Shevchenko is located in Rome (Italy), which

depicts Kobzar in the image of an ancient philosopher. And this is no accident, as the power of Taras Shevchenko's wisdom is recognized all over the world.

There is a monument to Taras Shevchenko in Denmark, in the city of Copenhagen. The poet's memory is honored there every year. It is organized by members of the Ukrainian-Danish society. Students of Poltava V.G. Korolenko National Pedagogical University studying in Denmark also participate in these events.

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