

Small Memories

José Saramago

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José Saramago was eighteen months old when he moved from the village of Azinhaga with his father and mother to live in Lisbon. But he would return to the village throughout his childhood and adolescence to stay with his maternal grandparents, illiterate peasants in the eyes of the outside world, but a fount of knowledge, affection, and authority to young José.

Shifting back and forth between childhood and his teenage years, between Azinhaga and Lisbon, this is a mosaic of memories, a simply told, affecting look back into the author's boyhood: the tragic death of his older brother at the age of four; his mother pawning the family's blankets every spring and buying them back in time for winter; his beloved grandparents bringing the weaker piglets into their bed on cold nights; and Saramago's early encounters with literature, from teaching himself to read by deciphering articles in the daily newspaper, to poring over an entertaining dialogue in a Portuguese-French conversation guide, not realizing that he was in fact reading a play by Molière.

Written with Saramago's characteristic wit and honesty, *Small Memories* traces the formation of an artist fascinated by words and stories from an early age and who emerged, against all odds, as one of the world's most respected writers.



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