

Russian Schoolgirl Replaces Mandelshtam Poetry With Oxxxymiron Rap Lyrics

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A schoolgirl in the Far East recited the lyrics of a Russian rap song in literature class, presenting them as the work of Soviet-era poet Osip Mandelshtam — and was awarded an “A” by her teacher, the Meduza news website reported Wednesday.

A video, apparently taken by the girl's classmates in the city of Khabarovsk and posted online, showed the girl standing in front of the class and presenting a soulful recitation of the lyrics of rapper Oxxxymiron's song “Perepleteno” (Intertwined).

A fellow student — who appeared to recognize the lyrics' author — could be heard giggling in the background.

On Thursday the director of the school explained to the state-run RIA Novosti news agency that the girl was not trying to deceive the teacher — the students were assigned to compare a

piece of classic literature to a modern piece. The girl confirmed to the TJournal news website that she was simply completing an assignment.

Oxxxymiron — whose real name is Miron Fyodorov, and who is an Oxford University graduate with a degree in English literature — seemed to enjoy the incident, saying via Twitter it tells “a bit about liberal arts education.”

Russia has recently celebrated the 125th anniversary of Mandelshtam's Jan. 15, 1891 birthday, with programs broadcast about his legacy — and high-school assignments related to his poetry.

Mandelshtam is widely viewed as one of the greatest Russian poets of the 20th century. He was a nonconformist who did little to disguise his opposition to dictator Josef Stalin's regime and was harshly persecuted by Soviet authorities.

He was arrested in 1934 after writing the epigram “Kremlin Highlander,” which harshly lampoons Stalin and describes the fear that permeated the country under his rule. Mandelshtam read the poem at a few small private gatherings.

Russian writer Boris Pasternak, a winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, called the epigram an “act of suicide.” But somewhat miraculously, the 1934 arrest resulted in neither a death sentence nor a long term in a Gulag camp, but in exile.

Mandelshtam was arrested again in 1938 and this time sentenced to the gulags. He died in a transit camp later that year and was buried in an unmarked mass grave.

Soviet authorities “rehabilitated” Mandelshtam of the 1934 charges three years after Stalin's 1953 death, but did not clear him of the 1938 charges until the late 1980s — during the tenure of Soviet reformist President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Ahead of Mandelshtam's 125th anniversary, the head of Russia's federal agency for media development, Mikhail Seslavinsky, called for naming a street or park in Moscow in the poet's honor, the state TASS news agency reported at the time.

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