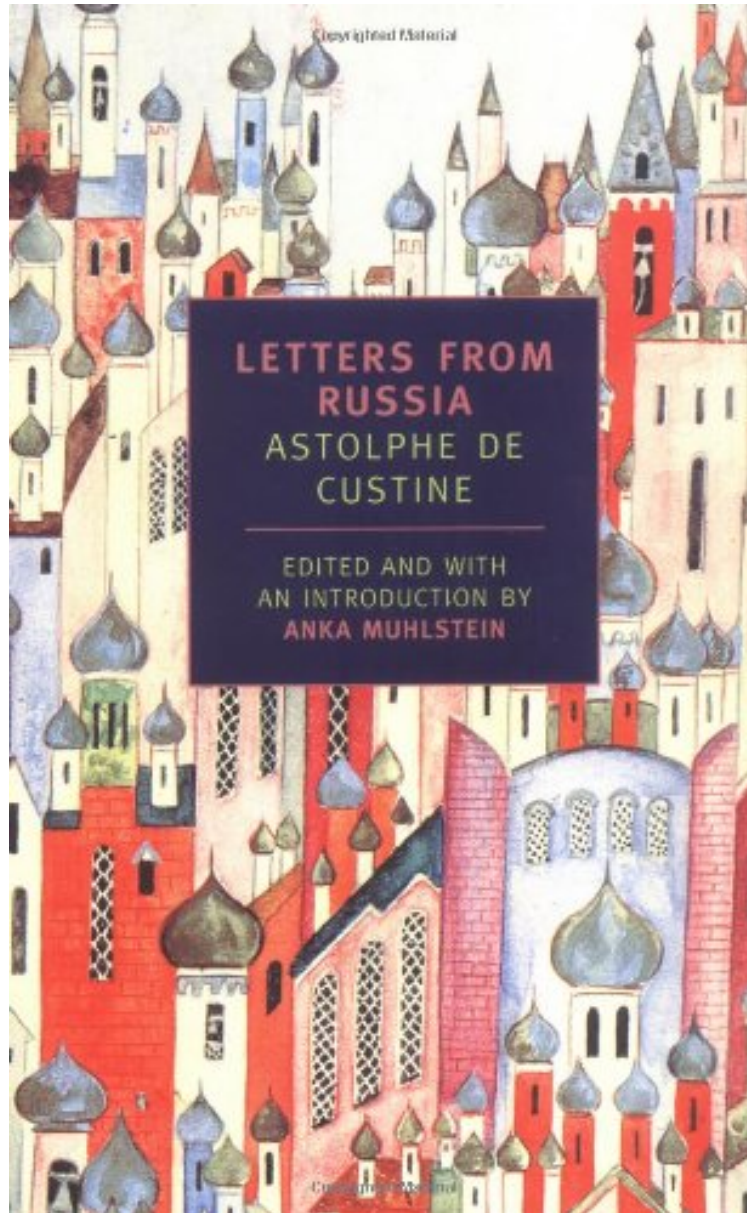


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## Letters from Russia (New York Review Books Classics)

*Astolphe De Custine, Astolphe de Custine*  
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**Astolphe De Custine, Astolphe de Custine : Letters from Russia (New York Review Books Classics)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Letters from Russia (New York Review Books Classics):

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. In-depth travelogue authored by a 19th Century frenchman..Still

relevant to 21st Century problems. By Gene Brosius How can I comment on an author's work who was ahead of his time? A first description ever to be written about Russian society and government. It has been re-translated within the past 10 years and I'm sure that most Russians still have never read it or know of its publication. No other western writer has authored a novel that was able to illustrate all of Russia. The book was prohibited from circulating in Russia at least two times because of the author's true account and how he observed life in Russia. I admire the author greatly on his attempt to illustrate the "people of the north" through his many accounts and interactions while he traveled between Moscow to St. Petersburg and to outlying regions in the north. He was one of the only western authors to have an "ear" of the Tzar and his family at that time. Yet, he not only observes imperialism and the noble gentry, it was the observation of the commoner; working class, and peasantry societies that evokes a clear picture of 19th century Russia. I learned a lot about the author's recount of the living conditions and the travel conditions that I have not read previously. Some of his stories were very comical while others were just haring to read! Although at times, the author is repetitive and some of his "letters" are quite long, he is quite foretelling that the Russian character; is more one of follower than leader, a life of servitude rather than liberty. It is really remarkable how one person can describe the character of a nation which is still relevant to 21st Century politics. Thievery, corruption, unimaginative, autocracy, despotism, lying, uninventive, religion, tolerance and absent of liberty are all topics of observation and thought provoking as the Russia that came after the authors demise. The reader can relate how imperialism transformed into a revolution that morphed further into suppression of millions and millions of people while others lives were extinguished without the ability to experience liberty and the pursuit of happiness.. There are so many poignant statements the author makes in his travel writing and too numerous to state here. I do believe that this book deserves further review and as such I will quote or paraphrase several of the author's observations from his travels....and it is up to you if they are relevant in 2014--almost 200 years later! "Wealth in Russia is the food of vanity" "The Russian people are accounted very religious; it may be so: but what kind of religion can that be which is forbidden to be taught? They never preach in the Russian Churches. The Gospel would proclaim liberty to the Slavs." "The somber cathedrals of the Kremlin, with their narrow vaults and thick walls, resemble caves, they are painted prisons, just as the palaces are gilded jails....so of the wonders of this architecture--they are horribly beautiful." "Despotism discourages and casts a spell of indifference even over minds that are the most determined to struggle against its glaring abuses." "We can not save one part of the world by deceiving the other." I hope you will add this to your reading repertoire on Russian literature and historical analysis. 17 of 17 people found the following review helpful. A "must-read" for students of Russian history By Peter H "Letters from Russia" is a remarkable travelogue by Adolphe De Custine - a somewhat haughty Frenchman - who travelled to Imperial Russia in the middle of the 19th century. De Custine himself was the descendant of aristocrats - his father and grandfather were both executed during the Terror in the aftermath of the French Revolution. De Custine was certainly convinced of the superiority of the aristocracy and Catholicism but was not taken with the Russian incarnation of these institutions. What makes this book so interesting is De Custine's incredibly perceptive comment on the Russian psyche, which so easily explains how Russia could move from the tyranny of the all-knowing, all-powerful Tsar to the totalitarianism of the Communist regime. De Custine writes in a florid, sentimental style, typical of the age, which makes this long book somewhat heavy going. However, there are plenty of zingers along the way and many beautiful descriptions of the Russian landscape to keep the reader entertained. Probably not recommended to the average reader, but for students of Russian history this is certainly a "must-read". 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. This is the seminal book to read to understand the ... By Oscar India This is the seminal book to read to understand the Russian character and culture. Written in 1839, this work still describes the Russian heart as accurately as Democracy in America reveals the 1835 and 2015 American

The Marquis de Custine's record of his trip to Russia in 1839 is a brilliantly perceptive, even prophetic, account of one of the world's most fascinating and troubled countries. It is also a wonderful piece of travel writing. Custine, who met with people in all walks of life, including the Czar himself, offers vivid descriptions of St. Petersburg and Moscow, of life at court and on the street, and of the impoverished Russian countryside. But together with a wealth of sharply delineated incident and detail, Custine's great work also presents an indelible picture--roundly denounced by both Czarist and Communist regimes--of a country crushed by despotism and "intoxicated with slavery." Letters from Russia, here published in a new edition prepared by Anka Muhlstein, the author of the Goncourt Prize-winning biography of Custine, stands with Tocqueville's Democracy in America as a profound and passionate encounter with historical forces that are still very much at work in the world today.

Language Notes Text: English (translation) Original Language: French About the Author Astolphe de Custine (1790-1857) was born at the onset of the French Revolution and died under the Second Empire. His father was guillotined and he and his mother barely survived the Terror. A poet and novelist of slight repute, Custine gained recognition with the publication of the travel books Spain under Ferdinand VII and Letters from Russia, an enduring analysis of the roots and character of Russian despotism. Anka Muhlstein was born in Paris in 1935. She settled in New York in 1974 where she began her career as a writer in French. She was awarded the Goncourt Prize in 1996 for her biography of

Custine, and has twice received the History Prize of the French Academy.