



The Memoirs of Catherine the Great

Catherine the Great , Hilde Hoogenboom (Translator) , Markus Cruse (Translator)

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Empress Catherine II brought Europe to Russia, and Russia to Europe, during her long and eventful reign (1762--96). She fostered the culture of the Enlightenment and greatly expanded the immense empire created by Czar Ivan the Terrible, shifting the balance of power in Europe eastward. Famous for her will to power and for her dozen lovers, Catherine was also a prolific and gifted writer.

Fluent in French, Russian, and German, Catherine published political theory, journalism, comedies, operas, and history, while writing thousands of letters as she corresponded with Voltaire and other public figures. The Memoirs of Catherine the Great provides an unparalleled window into eighteenth-century Russia and the mind of an absolute ruler.

With insight, humor, and candor, Catherine presents her eyewitness account of history, from her whirlwind entry into the Russian court in 1744 at age fourteen as the intended bride of Empress Elizabeth I's nephew, the eccentric drunkard and future Peter III, to her unhappy marriage; from her two children, several miscarriages, and her and Peter's numerous affairs to the political maneuvering that enabled Catherine to seize the throne from him in 1762. Catherine's eye for telling details makes for compelling reading as she describes the dramatic fall and rise of her political fortunes.

This definitive new translation from the French is scrupulously faithful to her words and is the first for which translators have consulted original manuscripts written in Catherine's own hand. It is an indispensable work for anyone interested in Catherine the Great, Russian history, or the eighteenth century.

The Memoirs of Catherine the Great Details

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From Reader Review The Memoirs of Catherine the Great for online ebook

Jeff says

"The Memoirs of Catherine the Great", edited by Dominique Maroger. 1961. Peter the Great set the stage that allowed for a string of powerful women to dominate 18th century Russia. Catherine, along with her predecessors, through art, architecture and fashion, bequeathed Russia with unique sense of style, a kind of femininity that had not before existed. But more than simply leaving Russia with great beauty, Catherine expanded her country's borders and dramatically strengthened her armies forcing Western Europe to acknowledge Russia as a world power. Catherine's writing is intimate, honest and not written for public consumption. Unfortunately it ends all too short, in mid-sentence, just at the point before she seizes the throne. After reading her memoir, I feel as though I know Catherine. I feel as though I would have liked her.

Lindsey says

This was another of the books that I tried to read, didn't have a real objection to, but just couldn't get in to it. Not all books can captivate every reader, so I think it is one you shouldn't discard if you are interested in the Russian royalty. It just wasn't one that grabbed me.

Danine says

Though I enjoyed reading this memoir it took me a very long time to finish. The end of the memoir was pretty dry. The book covers the years of 1728 thru 1759.

I'm drawn to the life of Catherine the Great as I can relate to much of her life. She was cynical and sincere. "A Humanitarian and an enlightened ruler but ruthless." She believed that "human reason, common sense and tolerance could combat ignorance, tyranny and superstition to build an enlightened better world." A graphomaniac who enjoyed philosophy and believed in freedom of the serfs, a strong structured economy and education.

It saddened me to read about how her children were taken away from her at birth and she was not allowed to see them for several weeks after their births and for only a short time. I cannot imagine the loneliness of a loveless marriage and an Empress who forbids you to see your own children.

Peter III was a twit and puss. I can't imagine being married to such an immature dimwit. To know that he would eventually be killed by Scarface didn't bother me one bit. Go big Cath!

I will be looking into reading her personal letters. I wish she would have continued to write a memoir throughout her colorful and political life.

J. Watson (aka umberto) says

Reading this interesting memoir, I think, was a bit tough due to its length and innumerable important persons involved as narrated in her account; therefore, this extract should suffice to those keen future readers:

... Begun nine years after her accession, this is the apologia for her course of action leading to the coup d'état in 1762 and the deposition of her husband. Her account contains the intimate revelations of a woman of astonishing complexity; a woman whose ruthless schemes for Russian world leadership; a woman intellectually conscious of the nature of her moral lapses, yet emotionally incapable of resisting temptation. (Front flap)

Alex Farrand says

The Memoirs of Catherine the Great wasn't the greatest. I picked up this book from the library, because Catherine was a strong woman who helped give Russia her beauty, and she (unfortunately?) murdered her husband to become Czar. She was the last female emperor in Russia, because her son, after inheriting the throne, hated her so much that he made it a law that females could not inherit the throne unless ALL the male line somehow vanished from the scene. (talk about family problems.) She sounds like a badass, and if I could go back to the future I hope to be friends.

Sadly, I guess, I was expecting more from her memoirs. It began with her first day at Russian court and ended sometime after a tiff between her husband and herself. It was all a bunch of everyday, blah, blah that I can barely recall it. Yeah, obviously, not everyone can be cool all the time, but I was just expecting something different. It probably is due to the fact that she didn't have much power at this stage of her life, so I will have to research for her other memoirs. Catherine might of done this on purpose, since she did have a "reputation". Her memoirs made her out to be the innocent one, which could be true or not. History can always be rewritten.

My take aways were: I was not made to be royal. Eating all the delicious foods, sitting on my butt all day, wearing a fake beauty mark, and going to balls seemed to be the life. No, not really. I mean, I can eat delicious foods, but all the drama for no real reason at all. Gosh, people you guys must be bored to make up stories. Too much drama for my blood. I rather be poor and worry about real issues.

I am still interested in Catherine, and I hope to be more impressed in my future readings. Just this book didn't satisfy me.

Julie says

What a woman!

Catherine the Great had an amazingly difficult life since her arrival in Russia, even if it could've seemed easy and luxurious. How many sacrifices she had to make to become the Great Empress: her marriage with Peter III, immature cruel beast, her life apart from her mother, because the latter was not welcome in the kingdom, her separation for 40 days with her first infant. All the people who watched her every move to report it afterwards to Empress Elizabeth and all those intrigues..

Natalia Sysoeva says

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[illegible][illegible]

I used to admire Catherine the Great, Russia's first (and only) Tsarina. The strong woman who fought the Ottomans and gained more territory for Russia. The brave woman who brought the Enlightenment to Russia. The attractive woman who radically used her sex to influence politics. In her memoirs, SHE IS SO ANNOYING. She was the only female Tsarina of Russia, and all she writes about is crying over something her mom did or a servant the Empress sent away. She described her what she had for dinner and what she wore to the masquerade more than anything political or even somewhat relevant to history. I am sorry, Catherine, but I do not care about how your face broke out in pimples or how to cure sunburn. This was such a waste of my time.

This was an very good portrayal of one of history's greatest leaders, Catherine the Great. Robert Massie was able to give a more personal look into Catherine's life via letters from friends and loved ones. Though Madariaga's biography was more concise, I liked this book better because it afforded me the opportunity to "see" what it was like to live in Catherine's 1700s. Massies' book really delved into Catherine's love life which always seemed related to her political life. All in all, a great book -even for those not excited by historical fiction.

Sotiris Karaikos says

Η Αικατερίνη η μεγάλη ήταν μια απ' τις σπουδαιότερες γυναίκες της ιστορίας, οπότε εμάστε ιδιαιτέρως τυχεροί που μέσα απ' τα απομνημονεύματά της μπορούμε να ακούσουμε τη φωνή της. Το κακό βέβαια είναι ότι η αφήγηση της σταματάει στα τριάντα χρόνια πριν την ενθρόνισή της, κάτι που μας στερεί τη δική της οπτική στα σημαντικότερα γεγονότα της ζωής της που διαμόρφωσαν τη ρωσική ιστορία. Παρόλα αυτά απομνημονεύματά της είναι σημαντικά καθώς μας δίνουν μια ματιά στην ψυχοσύνθεση της αποκαλύπτοντάς μας τη γυναίκα πίσω απ' την αυτοκρατορία. Παρόλληλα είναι μια εξαιρετική καταγραφή των ηθών της αριστοκρατίας και των πολιτικών παιχνιδιών που κυριαρχούσαν στην προνομιόχια ζωή της.

Elysium says

Book covers years 1728 thru 1759. I think it was pretty dry and book really doesn't need prologue of 100 pages.

Jessica G. says

A wonderful memoir! It is a truly honest work by a no holds barred woman. This work gives fine detail about court life in 18th-century Russia. Although Catherine was constantly surrounded by people at court, she often remarked about being bored and lonely (it didn't help that she had a childish and cruel husband who was a complete maniac) and usually kept to herself by reading and walking around in the garden. I was really surprised by how much the royal family moved around. They had summer and winter palaces and were always on the move. I was also surprised by how many masquerades, balls, ballets, and plays they went to. Sometimes, they had masquerades almost every night. Didn't these people have anything better to do? Overall, this was a great read except for the long prologue, the large cast of characters from the court, and the abrupt ending. I wish the ending was better, but maybe she never finished that part of her memoirs or maybe that section was lost. I didn't like how it left you hanging - it was as if it ended in mid-sentence.

Daniel Swanger says

Very different than the cyclopedic entries on this empress' life! We read of Paul III and yet the stunning details of his spousal removal are not included; a gossip magazine once said that Catherine assembled numerous lovers and ruled, though most of us can do only one of those things. Romantic impressions from Hollywood's THE SCARLET EMPRESS with Marlene Dietrich sum up our appreciations of Catherine, despite her real life as lived and seen by us here; we read of mother-in-law unpleasant masquerades whereby male courtiers would have to don cheesecloth and ladies trouser roles; we read of manifold court figures, and of predecessor Empress Elisabeth, the wisest and best Empress of Russia, according to a still-extant bronze cast bell inscription from the Kremlin. Unfortunately German Pomerania of Catherine's hometown principality Stettin is since 1945 German-expelled and Polish-administered with German Silesia and German East Prussia. But Catherine's separate Partition of Poland would make Poland as Austrian-German Prussian-Russian by an undying Three Emperors' League of the Three Northern Courts and the Holy Alliance of later treaties. Though as here presented, Catherine was an unusual bluestocking (a woman writer), she is one of

the Greats. Her Imperial Majesty's goals included overturning the Ottoman Empire and bringing back the Glory That Was Greece, though Her Imperial Majesty passed away before that could take place and seemingly only saw herself as something like a schoolteacher from these pages.

Noah says

Die Autobiographie der Zarin Katharina der Großen von ihren Jugendjahren bis zur Krönung ist für ein Werk des Rokoko unglaublich lebhaft und aktuell geschrieben. Eine bunte Mischung aus zeithistorischem Dokument, Klatsch aus der russischen Society und Intrigantenstadel. Dabei bekommt man auch einen lebhaften Einblick, wie Petersburg und Moskau vor 250 Jahren ausgesehen haben müssen und wie es sich dort als Mitglied des Hochadels gelebt hat. Meine Ausgabe ist mit sinnvollen Fußnoten und einer interessanten Einführung und einer Kurzbiographie versehen. Einziges Ärgernis sind die vielen Tippfehler.

Skylar Hatfield says

This book illustrates the characteristics required of an empress, wisdom, grace, beauty, intelligence, loyalty, honesty, wit, patience, intuition, etc. The funny part of this book is that Catherine is described as having all these characteristics by...Catherine. I gave this book only a three star rating, because I found it difficult to keep up with all the characters and plots within plots detailed in this memoir. Also, this memoir ends abruptly at an integral point in Catherine's life. Therefore, I am going to have to buy a biography of Catherine the Great to discover how it was that she came to reign and how she maintained her throne.
