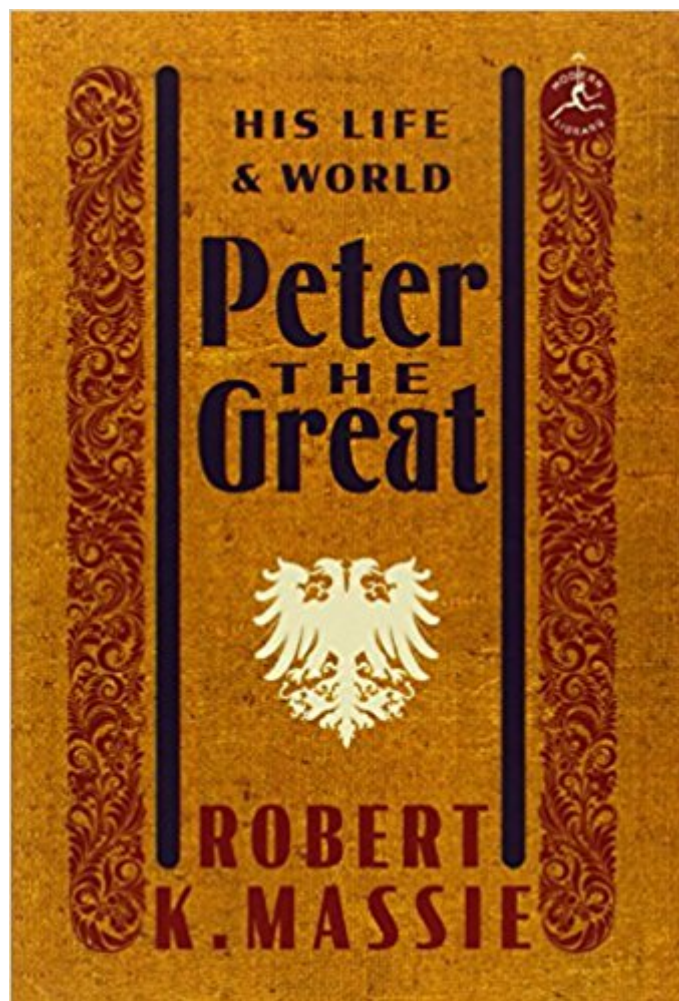


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Peter The Great: His Life And World (Modern Library)



Synopsis

From the Modern Library's new set of beautifully repackaged hardcover classics by Robert K. Massie—also available are *Nicholas and Alexandra* and *The Romanovs*—Against the monumental canvas of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe and Russia unfolds the magnificent story of Peter the Great, crowned co-tsar at the age of ten. The acclaimed author of *Catherine the Great*, Robert K. Massie delves deep into the life of this captivating historical figure, chronicling the pivotal events that shaped a boy into a legend—including his incognito travels in Europe, his unquenchable curiosity about Western ways, his obsession with the sea and establishment of the stupendous Russian navy, his creation of an unbeatable army, his transformation of Russia, and his relationships with those he loved most: Catherine, the robust yet gentle peasant, his loving mistress, wife, and successor; and Menshikov, the charming, bold, unscrupulous prince who rose to wealth and power through Peter's friendship. Impetuous and stubborn, generous and cruel, tender and unforgiving, a man of enormous energy and complexity, Peter the Great is brought fully to life. The Modern Library of the World's Best Books Peter the Great Winner of the Pulitzer Prize "Enthralling . . . as fascinating as any novel and more so than most." The New York Times Book Review "Nicholas and Alexandra" "A magnificent and intimate picture . . . Not only the main characters but a whole era become alive and comprehensible." Harper's "The Romanovs" "Riveting . . . unfolds like a detective story." Los Angeles Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

I thoroughly enjoyed this book that Robert K. Massie wrote about the life and personality of Peter the Great and the challenges he faced in trying to make Russia a major power on the European stage of the 18th century. Although Peter is accurately described as being a driven, uncompromising, and oftentimes ruthless man, this book also presents his softer, warmer side that usually opened up only to his second wife Catherine and to his inner group of trusted friends. In reading the biography of Peter, a great deal of insight is also gained into the society and politics of 17th-18th century Russia and Europe, which in the hands of any other historian might be written in a dry and abstract manner. With Massie, however, he has such an engaging narrative style that the book reads like an action novel at times (such as in describing the Battle of Poltava). Each personality of monarchs that Peter dealt with in Europe and the Middle East is given an ample introduction in "Peter the Great", which is entertaining reading in its own right. For example, we learn that Augustus II, King of Poland and useless ally of Peter in the Great Northern War, was a sexual philanderer of extreme proportions and that Frederick Wilhelm I, King of Prussia, had his famous collection of giants and suffered from pains that almost drove him to insanity. Of course, a major portion of the book is devoted to the conflict between Peter and his archnemesis Charles XII in the Great Northern War. Massie recounts how Charles' fanaticism and his legendary aura of invincibility eventually brought the Swedish empire to its knees. All in all, this is a book that would appeal to the general interest reader, as well as to the Russophile and to the person interested in European history.

Recuperating from illness at the house of an American friend in New Delhi. I discovered this book tucked away in his library. My bedridden days flew by as I became engrossed in one of the best biographies I have read in a long time. What a magnificent attempt at describing the life and time of a truly remarkable individual like Peter the Great. Mr Massie presents the historical fact in a clear and concise manner without sacrificing detail. The work is both rewarding for serious history students as well as those of us after a good read. Indeed the charm of this book is that it reads like a real page turning novel. The reader gets a wonderful insight right through the book of what life in Russia was like in the 17th century not just for a Tsar but for the common people as well. Loads of little anecdotes and commentaries colour the story without obscuring it. This is a story of awakening, will to power and courage - Of a man and a nation - par excellence. The book starts with the context that Peter was born into. A Russia still very much steeped in the deep middle ages of superstition and religious fundamentalism. His father Tsar Alexis and his mother Tsaritsa Natalya doted on him as well as his sickly half brother Ivan (his later co Tsar until he died at age

29) and from the very beginning the young prince showed that he was made of special stuff. The untimely death of his father, his days at Preobrazhenskoe playing soldier as a boy(the Preobrazhenskoe regiment was the automatic regiment that all Tsars belonged to until 1917 following in the tradition started by Peter) as well as the Strelsky revolt that nearly saw him and his mother slaughtered by the palace guards gets illuminated as the main formative events in the young prince's life.

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