



Catherine the Great

By Simon Dixon

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Catherine the Great By Simon Dixon

Admired for her achievements and satirized for her personal life, Catherine the Great was one of the most celebrated monarchs in history, turning eighteenth-century Russia into arguably the largest and most powerful state since the fall of the Roman Empire. She promoted radical political ideas while emphasizing moderation in government. She could be ruthless when necessary, but she charmed everyone she met, joking at private dinner parties in the Hermitage, which she had built for her own use. Determined to endear herself to the Russians, she made religious devotions in which she never believed.

Intimate and revealing, *Catherine the Great* examines the lifelong friendships that sustained the empress throughout her personal life and places her within the context of the royal court: its politics, its flourishing literature and the very culture that became central to her exercise of absolute power.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Catherine II of Russia (1729–96) might have been forgotten as a German-born Romanov brood mare but for her unscrupulous seizure of the Russian throne in 1762 and subsequent lengthy reign as the quintessential Enlightenment monarch—achievements that have fascinated posterity ever since. For her remarkable story, British historian Dixon, steeped in Catherine’s setting, positions his work between the scholarly and the salacious and accents courtier politics and the autocrat’s sensibilities. After recounting the palace coup that brought Catherine to power, Dixon develops her approach to wielding it through her interactions with builders, diplomats, generals, lackeys, and pen pals, such as Voltaire, on the receiving end of her reforming zeal. With the building boom in St. Petersburg, constitutional changes, and territorial expansion that accompanied her reign as backdrops to his portrait, Dixon sympathetically educes Catherine’s personal life; that is, the train of swains caught up in her—as one chapter title puts it—“search for emotional stability.” An appreciation of the person Catherine the Great that is full of insightful perceptions. --Gilbert Taylor

Review

“Like Catherine herself, Simon Dixon’s new biography is attractive, engaging, and very intelligent. It wears its scholarship lightly, too, but established fans of the Russian empress will find plenty of new material and those who are meeting her for the first time will be dazzled.” (Catherine Merridale, author of *Ivan's War* and *Night of Stone: Death and Memory in Russia*)

“There is lots new in this superb biography . . . [Dixon] manages to be scholarly, refreshing, commonsensical and compelling, vividly portraying the charismatic Empress and her times.” (Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of *Sashenka* and *Young Stalin*)

From the Back Cover

In 1745 a little-known German princess named Sophie of Anhalt-Zerbst married the nephew of Empress Elizabeth of Russia. Seventeen years later she overthrew her husband to become Catherine the Great, one of the most celebrated monarchs in history, turning eighteenth-century Russia into arguably the largest and most powerful state since the fall of the Roman Empire.

Admired for her achievements and satirized for her personal life, she wrote the most revealing memoirs by any European ruler. She promoted radical political ideas and emphasized moderation in government. Ruthless when necessary, she charmed everyone she met, joking at private dinner parties in the Hermitage, which she had built for her own use. Determined to endear herself to the Russians, she made religious devotions in which she never believed.

Intimate and revealing, Simon Dixon's new biography examines the lifelong friendships that sustained the empress throughout her personal life, and places her within the context of the royal court: its politics, its flourishing literature, and the very culture that became central to her exercise of absolute power.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Florence Lentz:

Do you have favorite book? Should you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or perhaps goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their the perfect time to read a book. They are reading whatever they take because their hobby is reading a book. Think about the person who don't like reading a book? Sometime, man feel need book whenever they found difficult problem or maybe exercise. Well, probably you'll have this Catherine the Great.

Bradley Harshbarger:

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