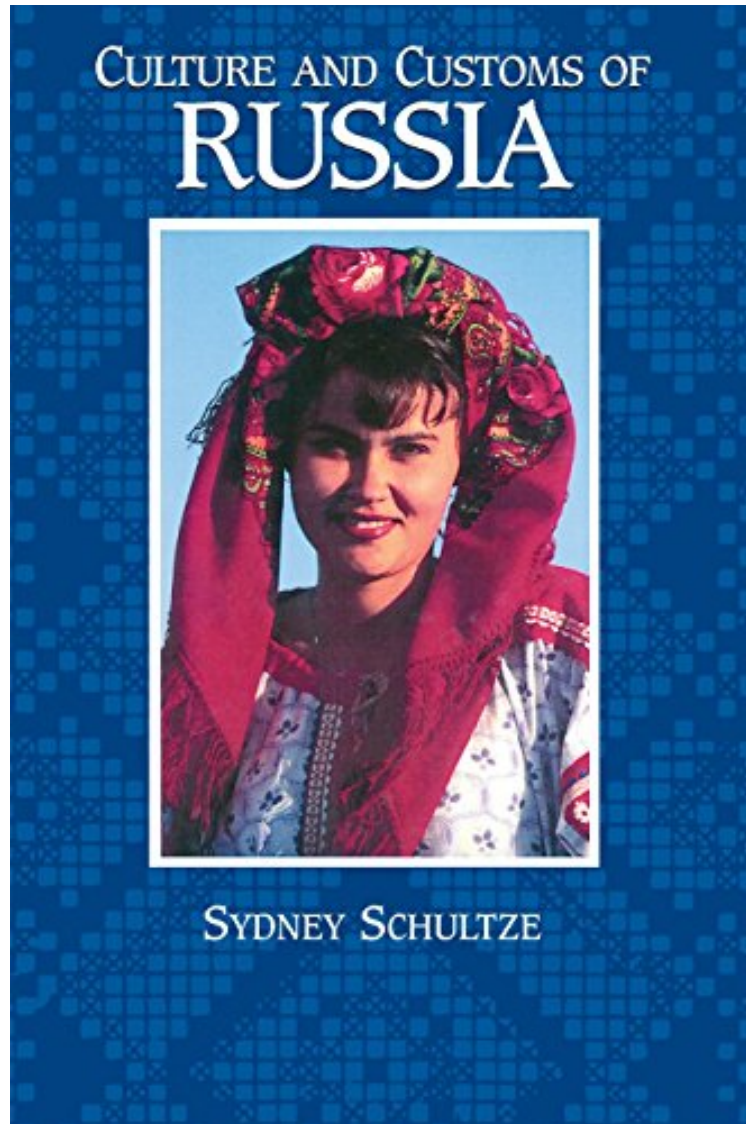


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## Culture and Customs of Russia (Cultures and Customs of the World)

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**Sydney Schultze : Culture and Customs of Russia (Cultures and Customs of the World)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Culture and Customs of Russia (Cultures and Customs of the World):

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This book provides an excellent overview of Russian culture. However, the reader must have access to some source for viewing/reading the material discussed, since there are few reproductions of texts or artwork.

Culture and Customs of Russia is a splendid introduction to the largest country in the world. This timely volume gives the scope of the country from earliest history through the breakup of the Soviet Union to the present day. Students and a general audience will learn about the land, history, thought and religion, social customs, marriage and family, education, cuisine, fashion, literature, media, film, the arts, and architecture. The authoritative breadth of coverage, accessibility, and engaging writing style are truly outstanding. Culture and Customs of Russia encompasses the grand achievements of Russian society and the everyday life and traditions of average citizens. A Land, People, and History chapter surveys the geography and Russian population and succinctly chronicles the long, fascinating Russian saga, peopled with imposing figures such as Ivan the Terrible, Catherine the Great, and Joseph Stalin. The Thought and Religion discussion is highly informative as it traces the role of and attitudes toward religion through the centuries. Russian proverbs and superstitions are also included. The current state of marriage, gender roles, children, and education is surveyed next. Holidays and leisure activities, the famous Russian cuisine, and fashion, both traditional and contemporary, are charmingly evoked. The literature chapter illuminates not only the classic writers such as Leo Tolstoy but modern authors and poets such as Anna Akhmatova plus popular fiction and fairy tales. The Media and Cinema chapter brings more of the Russian contemporary popular culture to life. A chapter on Russian performing arts reflects the golden age of Russian music with composers such as Tchaikovsky, and also examines folk instruments and pop and rock, the famous Russian ballet scene, and the equally esteemed drama and theater. The art chapter includes icons, painting, folk art and decorative arts such as needle crafts and wood toys. The final chapter on architecture describes homes, churches, and public buildings. A glossary, timeline, and numerous photos enhance the text. This volume provides a vast amount of information that is up to date as well as accessible.

From School Library Journal  
Gr 10 Up-History, high culture (thought and religion; literature, art, and architecture; the performing arts), popular culture (leisure activities, holidays, fashion, the media), and topics of sociological interest (marriage, gender, children, and education) are all clearly presented, from tsarist Russia to the recent years of the Russian Federation. While much of the historical information can be found in references such as *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Russia* (Cambridge, 1994; o.p.) and in books on each topic, the strength of Schultze's book is that it offers an array of informed commentary in a concise format and gives excellent coverage to the past decade. For example, there is up-to-date information on the status of women, changes in the media and the arts, and much more. The author knows the culture well and does a good job of contextualizing the material with only occasional lapses into lists. There are suggested readings at the end of each chapter, a glossary, and a six-page bibliography. However, the illustrations are disappointing—a mere 16 pages of grainy, black-and-white photos that have been inserted in the middle of the book. In addition, the crude map seems to indicate that Russia and Turkey share a border, and, while two Siberian rivers are marked, the Volga, which is so important to Russian culture, is not. Nonetheless, this book has an excellent text and should be a useful resource.—Elizabeth Talbot, University of Illinois, Champaign  
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From Library Journal  
Schultze (classical and modern languages, Univ. of Louisville) has written an exhaustive description of Russia's geography, history, religion, society, education, food, and the arts, making this an excellent, introductory reference work. She presents the information in a factual manner, with little interpretation. James Billington's *The Icon and the Axe* (1968; Peter Smith, 1994. reprint), aimed at graduate specialists in literature or history, is superior in its interpretations and concentration on cultural history but omits Russia's daily life. Genevra Gerhart's *The Russian's World* (Harcourt, 1995) provides a wealth of detail on individual life and personal relations, with an emphasis on Russia's rural heritage, but it presupposes knowledge of Russian and is more appropriate for the advanced student. Schultze describes an urban Russia for readers with a minimal knowledge of Russia; it is particularly suited for high school students and beginning college students. Recommended for high school and public libraries. Bert Beynen, Des Moines Area Community Coll., Ankeny, IA  
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