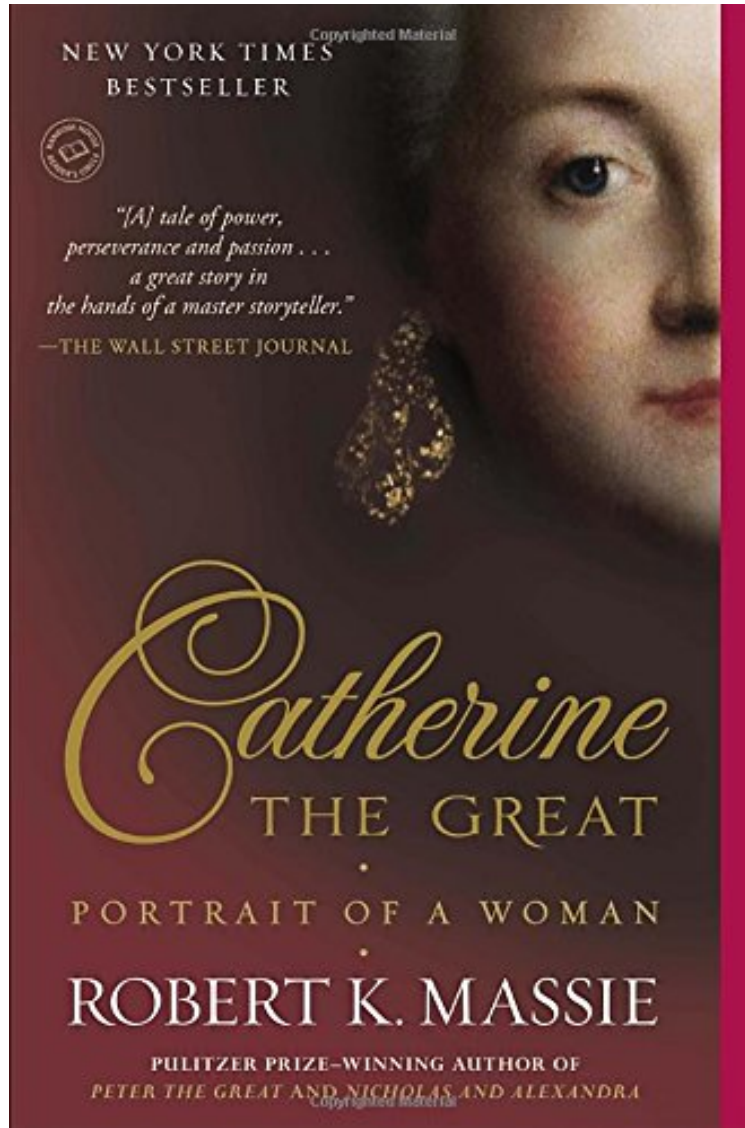


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Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman

Robert K. Massie

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[A] tale of power, perseverance and passion . . . a great story in the hands of a master storyteller.The Wall Street Journal The Pulitzer Prizewinning author of Peter the Great, Nicholas and Alexandra, and The Romanovs returns with another masterpiece of narrative biography, the extraordinary story of an obscure German princess who became one of the most remarkable, powerful, and captivating women in history. Born into a minor noble family, Catherine transformed herself into empress of Russia by sheer determination. For thirty-four years, the government, foreign policy, cultural development, and welfare of the Russian people were in her hands. She dealt with domestic rebellion, foreign wars, and the tidal wave of political change and violence churned up by the French Revolution. Catherines family, friends, ministers, generals, lovers, and enemiesall are here, vividly brought to life. History offers few stories richer than that of Catherine the Great. In this book, an eternally fascinating woman is returned to life. [A] compelling portrait not just of a Russian titan, but also of a flesh-and-blood woman.Newsweek An absorbing, satisfying biography.Los Angeles Times Juicy and suspenseful.The New York Times Book Review A great life, indeed, and irresistibly told.Salon NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times The Washington Post USA Today The Boston Globe San Francisco Chronicle Chicago Tribune Newsweek/The Daily Beast Salon Vogue St. Louis Post-Dispatch The Providence Journal Washington Examiner South Florida Sun-Sentinel BookPage Bookreporter Publishers Weekly

.com Best Books of the Month, November 2011: Once upon a time, there was a minor German princess named Sophia. In 1744, at the age of 14, she was taken by her ambitious mother--removed from her family, her religion, and her country--to a foreign land with a single goal: marry a prince and bear him an heir. Once in Russia, she changed her name, learned the language, and went on to become the world's richest and most powerful woman, ruler of its then-largest empire. She is remembered as Catherine the Great. There may be no better author than Robert K. Massie to take on the daunting task of documenting this most rare of human lives. Massie, a former president of the Authors Guild, is a seasoned biographer of the 400-year Romanov dynasty, most notably with Peter the Great: His Life and World, which won a Pulitzer Prize in 1981 and remains one of the most arresting biographies I've even encountered. In his page-turning chronicle of Catherine II, Massie (now 82) compiles the most complete and compelling narrative to date of this singular woman. Married to an incompetent man-child who was unwilling or unable to help her fulfill her primary role--giving birth to a son--she ultimately grew to become a trailblazer among monarchs: friend of philosophical giants, incomparable patron of the arts, prosecutor of multiple wars, pioneer of public health, maker of kings, and prodigious serial lover. Indeed, her accomplishments and shortcomings as an autocrat and a woman make for a remarkable saga, but that's not to say that just any author could do justice to Catherine's lasting legacy. (Many have tried.) Massie situates Catherine's early life and three-decade reign as empress amidst the tumult of the European Enlightenment, enriching his own narrative with telling excerpts of her letters and rich discussions of her political environment and personal motivations. Put simply, Massie is just the man to take this endlessly fascinating life and craft an utterly memorable book. Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman is a towering accomplishment, one of the year's best books in any genre. --Jason Kirk Featured Images from Catherine the Great The imperial coronation crown designed for Catherine. The crown was used in all six of the Romanov coronations that followed. Catherine's coronation portrait. She is wearing her new imperial crown. Paul, Catherine's son, in one of the Prussian uniforms he delighted in wearing. Portrait of Peter III Gregory Orlov, Catherine's third lover, who was with her for eleven years and helped to put her on the throne. Gregory Potemkin, covered with medals, titles, land, palaces, and responsibilities by a passionately loving Catherine.