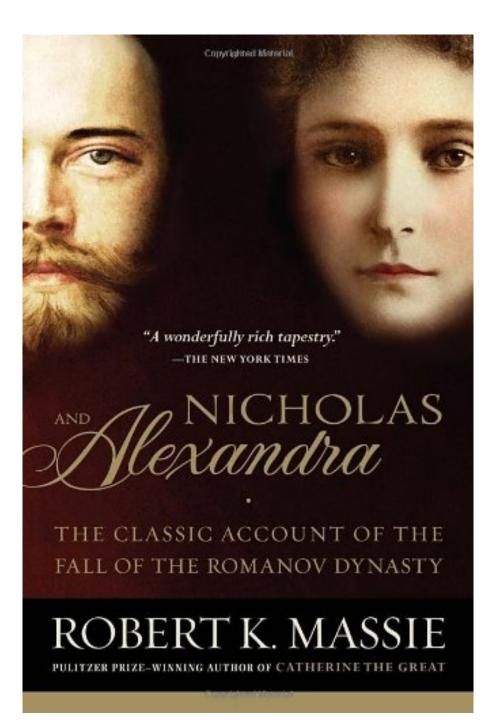


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Review

"A larger-than-life drama."-Saturday Review

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From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Robert K. Massie was born in Lexington, Kentucky, and studied American history at Yale and European history at Oxford, which he attended as a Rhodes Scholar. He was president of the Authors Guild from 1987 to 1991. His books include Nicholas and Alexandra, Peter the Great: His Life and World (for which he won a Pulitzer Prize for biography), The Romanovs: The Final Chapter, Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War, Castles of Steel: Britain, Germany, and the Winning of the Great War at Sea, and Catherine the Great: Portrait of a Woman.

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The story of the love that ended an empire

In this commanding book, Pulitzer Prize–winning author Robert K. Massie sweeps readers back to the extraordinary world of Imperial Russia to tell the story of the Romanovs' lives: Nicholas's political naïveté, Alexandra's obsession with the corrupt mystic Rasputin, and little Alexis's brave struggle with hemophilia. Against a lavish backdrop of luxury and intrigue, Massie unfolds a powerful drama of passion and history—the story of a doomed empire and the death-marked royals who watched it crumble.

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Most helpful customer reviews

186 of 199 people found the following review helpful.

Fascinating look at a bygone era.

By mirope

This is generally considered to be the definitive biography of Tsar Nicholas II and his wife, Alexandra. Massie's expert storytelling is well-suited to the compelling story of the last Russian tsar and his consort. The history of Russia was no doubt changed by the deliberate myopia and general inadquacies of these two people. Nevertheless, Massie manages to uncover a more sympathetic side to the ill-fated duo. Massie's writing is as good as that of any acclaimed novelist - there's a fascinating and fastpaced plot, finely nuanced lead characters, an intriguing supporting cast, all against a beautiful background of a majestic bygone era.

This book was researched and written before the fall of the Soviet empire when the state archives were opened and new information about the Romanovs was revealed. Consequently, this book is necessarily incomplete, especially as concerns the execution of the royal family. Massie has since written another text called "The Romanovs: The Last Chapter" which devels deeply into the newly available data and the forensic studies that followed. Consider it an essential volume II to "Nicholas and Alexandra".

132 of 143 people found the following review helpful.

A true masterpiece...

By Cynthia K. Robertson

I started a love affair with European royalty while in junior high, and as luck or fate would have it, Robert Massie's Nicholas and Alexandra was published during this time. I was bitten by the Romanov bug and have suffered from this malady ever since.

Nicholas and Alexandra, the last Tsar and Tsarina of Imperial Russia, came from a distinguished royal pedigree. Nicholas was the son of Tsar Alexander III, and his aunt was Princess Alexandra of Wales. Alexandra was a Hessian princess and granddaughter of Queen Victoria. As youngsters, they fell in love and "Nicky" knew that "Alix" was fated to be his bride. Theirs was a true love match at a time when royal marriages were arranged for any reason but love.

Two events conspired to cause the Romanov tragedy. First, Nicholas was not a very strong-willed man. He let others dominate him (including his wife). When his father died suddenly at the age of 49, the young Nicholas was totally unprepared and untrained to be Ruler of all the Russia's. Second, Nicholas and Alexandra were very family oriented, and it was a crushing blow when their 5th child and only son was born with hemophilia. In desperation, they alienated much of Russia (to protect this secret) and fell under the harmful influence of Rasputin. Russia was ripe for revolution, and Nicholas and Alexandra were too blind to see what was happening in their own country until it was too late.

Massie does a stellar job of bringing Russian history to life in a way that reads like a novel. He also writes with a passion born of experience. When his son was born with hemophilia, Massie started researching how hemophilia affected the royal houses of Europe-especially the Romanov's. He details not just Russian history, but the history of this dreaded disease including various types of hemophilia, treatments, new advances, etc. The only negative about this book is in the timing. Massie wrote what was known in the late 1960's. But since the fall of communism and perestroika, we now know so much more about what happened to the Imperial family. Massie took this new information and finished the story in The Romanov's: The Final Chapter. One book should not be read without the other.

Nicholas and Alexandra is one of my favorite nonfiction books, and I find myself rereading it every five to six years or so. I enjoy it just as much with each subsequent reading. My original paperback was in such tatters that I finally treated myself to a new hardback copy. Even after all these years, the tragic fate of the Romanov's continues to haunt us.

59 of 64 people found the following review helpful.

very readable account of the life of the last Tsar

By A Customer

Massie's work is very readable; more like a novel than a biography. There were times I couldn't believe some of the intimate details could be real, for how would Massie know? But at the back of the book he has extensive notes indicating the sources for all the details including diaries and memoirs. I thought Massie did an excellent job illustrating the roots of World War I, especially the relationship between Nicholas and Kaiser William II. Also excellent was the way he makes the enigma of Rasputin understandable and how he reconciles the public disfavor and lack of understanding of the tsar and his wife with their noble intentions with the good of Russia in mind. In reading history it is easy to imagine that the participants were ignorant or oblivious to larger trends that would envelop them, especially in light of subsequent historical events. Massie's story brilliantly sheds light on the story of the last tsar such that the reader can genuinely understand the motivations of most of the participants. Very enlightening reading. I strongly recommend the book for anyone interested in Russian history or just looking for a readable story.

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