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By Simon Schama



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Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution By Simon Schama Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #47477 in Books
- Brand: Vintage
- Published on: 1990-03-17
- Released on: 1990-03-17
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.12" h x 1.64" w x 6.31" l, 3.54 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 976 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In what PW called a "sprawling, provocative, sometimes infuriating chronicle that stands much conventional wisdom on its head," Schama argues that the Revolution did not produce a "patriotic culture of citizenship" but was preceded by one.

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From School Library Journal

YA-- This well-written, thoroughly documented book should be on every high-school library shelf. It explains the self-destructive, bloody orgy that occurred in France but not in England or Prussia, countries in similar states of poverty and with similarly deprived, disenfranchised populaces. Schama theorizes that the cause of France's revolution lies in the self-deception of the ruling intelligentsia, who believed that they could make a Utopian France by allowing controlled violence, murder, and the destruction of property in the name of liberty, and all to exist simultaneously with good government. Schama presents Talleyrand, Lafayette, and others with more understanding than they are given in most histories, setting them amidst a web of violence of their own making. This book speaks to today's world, as nations strive to move from despotism to democracy. A more modern view of these same problems is found in Z. Brzezinski's *The Grand Failure* (Scribners, 1989).

-Barbara Batty, *Port Arthur I.S.D., TX*

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From Library Journal

The appearance of this book is certain to be one of the main publishing events of the bicentennial year of the French Revolution. It blends gritty details about everyday life with an old-fashioned, dramatic narrative form. Among other things, Schama argues that the Old Regime fell not because it was stagnant but because it was moving too fast. Unlike Marxists and "new historians," Schama stresses the importance of individual events and people. He detects the emergence of a patriotic culture of citizenship in the decades preceding 1789 and explains how citizenship came to be a public expression of an idealized family during the Revolution. One criticism: there are no footnotes citing sources. Despite this flaw, Schama's book will please scholars and a wide general readership.

- Thomas J. Schaeper, *St. Bonaventure Univ., N.Y.*

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