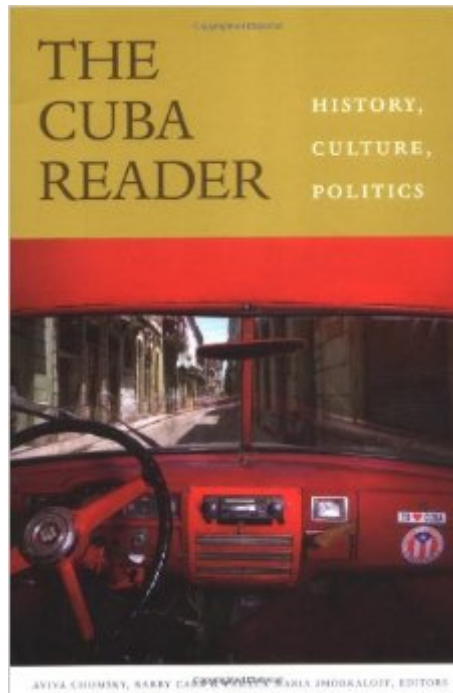


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The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics (The Latin America Readers)



Synopsis

Cuba is often perceived in starkly black and white terms—either as the site of one of Latin America's most successful revolutions or as the bastion of the world's last communist regime. The Cuba Reader multiplies perspectives on the nation many times over, presenting more than one hundred selections about Cuba's history, culture, and politics. Beginning with the first written account of the island, penned by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the selections assembled here track Cuban history from the colonial period through the ascendancy of Fidel Castro to the present. The Cuba Reader combines songs, paintings, photographs, poems, short stories, speeches, cartoons, government reports and proclamations, and pieces by historians, journalists, and others. Most of these are by Cubans, and many appear for the first time in English. The writings and speeches of José Martí, Fernando Ortiz, Fidel Castro, Alejo Carpentier, Che Guevara, and Reinaldo Arenas appear alongside the testimonies of slaves, prostitutes, doctors, travelers, and activists. Some selections examine health, education, Catholicism, and santería; others celebrate Cuba's vibrant dance, music, film, and literary cultures. The pieces are grouped into chronological sections. Each section and individual selection is preceded by a brief introduction by the editors. The volume presents a number of pieces about twentieth-century Cuba, including the events leading up to and following Castro's January 1959 announcement of revolution. It provides a look at Cuba in relation to the rest of the world: the effect of its revolution on Latin America and the Caribbean, its alliance with the Soviet Union from the 1960s until the collapse of the Soviet bloc in 1989, and its tumultuous relationship with the United States. The Cuba Reader also describes life in the *periodo especial* following the cutoff of Soviet aid and the tightening of the U.S. embargo. For students, travelers, and all those who want to know more about the island nation just ninety miles south of Florida, The Cuba Reader is an invaluable introduction.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have always been interested in Cuba, but I have tended to focus on the Health System there and have learned very little about Cuba before Castro and the revolution. This book gives an overall picture of Cuba as it developed through the years from all different perspectives, both positive and negative. Even though the different sections are simply short excerpts from different works, the editors have been able to put everything together in order to show all different aspects of Cuba and its history.

'The Cuba Reader' is a simply outstanding anthology of Cuban speeches, legal texts, poems, fiction, essays, photography, historical analysis and more besides. It starts at pre-colonial Cuba and looks at the indigenous population, before moving onto the slavery and sugar plantations, the Batista regime, the revolution, all the way up to the 'special period'. This isn't quite a coherent narrative of events in Cuba (rather lots of snap shots of various aspects of Cuban life), but coupled with a good history (Like 'Cuba: A New History' by R Gott) this makes for a wonderfully rounded view of this fascinating country. The speeches are particularly interesting to read, as are the interviews with Cubans which gives a deeper insight into their country. I love how the book flowed from essay to poem, to fiction excerpt and then political text, to a landmark speech and then back to a poem (for example). It makes for an engaging and rounded insight into the various facets of Cuban society. If you have already read about Cuba and have a thirst for more information then this is highly recommended and if you want a clear narrative history of the country, try the aforementioned book, but make sure you come back and look at this, as it is truly fascinating, well researched and great to dip in and out of. Feel free to check out my blog which can be found on my profile page.

This is the best documentary history of Cuba printed recently. It has not only documents, but also pictures, songs, etc. As Cuba is a controversial subject, the authors give broad swath of documents to present Cuban history.

I couldn't put the book down. Perhaps because I miss my country so much. The book is so accurate I actually traveled back in time. I totally recommend this read especially to those whose nostalgia for the old country continues to glow. Andrew J. Rodriguez Award-winning author: "Adios, Havana," a Memoir

This book is essential if you plan to do serious research on Cuba. It is essentially a compilation of the major documents of great importance written in or on Cuba. It starts with colonial writings (passages from Spanish colonizers) and works its way through time up to and through the Cuban revolution. It contains everything from speeches to journal entries and songs. It is incredibly comprehensive and the summaries at the beginning of each passage are instrumental in guiding the researcher through so much material quickly.

This is not a normal history but if you are willing to read an anthology rather than a normal guide, this will give you an excellent description of Cuban life and history. I have read the Peru reader as well and this whole series is excellent. The book is very long and inevitably some things were left out but overall I found this to be extremely thorough. I was disappointed that some of the poems did not have side by side Spanish and English translations but that is a minor quibble. This book includes plenty of Cuban and non-Cuban sources.

This book is "must reading" for anyone whose memory is blank on Cuba. A long list of relatively short essays tracing the long, colorful, sometimes painful Cuban history. We read it in short takes of two, three chapters at a sitting. Again, a "must read" for Cuba buffs and travelers. If you are lucky enough to book a legal trip, give yourself a few months before departure to this beautiful island to read through this thick volume. Be prepared to re-read some of the scholarly essays for a full understanding of Cuba's sometimes bumpy, sometimes gracious history. PAUL WM. SCHUBERT

Good book for looking into primary sources in Cuban history. Sometimes it came up short on exactly what I was looking for, but, overall, it has a good number of sources.

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