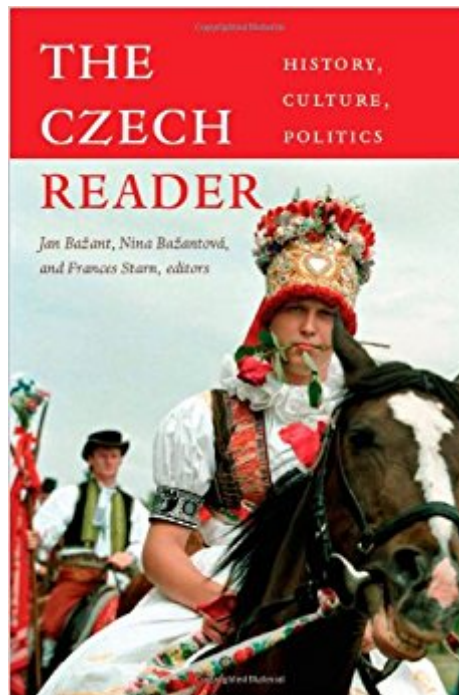




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The Czech Reader: History, Culture, Politics (The World Readers)



Synopsis

The Czech Reader brings together more than 150 primary texts and illustrations to convey the dramatic history of the Czechs, from the emergence of the Czech state in the tenth century, through the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1918 and the Czech Republic in 1993, into the twenty-first century. The Czechs have preserved their language, traditions, and customs, despite their incorporation into the Holy Roman Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Third Reich, and the Eastern Bloc. Organized chronologically, the selections in The Czech Reader include the letter to the Czech people written by the religious reformer and national hero Jan Hus in 1415, and Charter 77, the fundamental document of an influential anticommunist initiative launched in 1977 in reaction to the arrest of the Plastic People of the Universe, an underground rock band. There is a speech given in 1941 by Reinhard Heydrich, a senior Nazi official and Deputy Reich Protector of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as one written by Václav Havel in 1984 for an occasion abroad, but read by the Czech-born British dramatist Tom Stoppard, since Havel, the dissident playwright and future national leader, was not allowed to leave Czechoslovakia. Among the songs, poems, folklore, fiction, plays, paintings, and photographs of monuments and architectural landmarks are "Let Us Rejoice," the most famous chorus from Bedřich Smetana's comic opera The Bartered Bride; a letter the composer Antonín Dvořák sent from New York, where he directed the National Conservatory of Music in the 1890s; a story by Franz Kafka; and an excerpt from Milan Kundera's The Joke. Intended for travelers, students, and scholars alike, The Czech Reader is a rich introduction to the turbulent history and resilient culture of the Czech people.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

One can consider The Czech Reader an important contribution for individuals who are seeking an introduction to the history and literary history of the Czech lands. For people on their travels to the Czech Republic, who are interested in knowing more about this small and interesting nation, this book will serve well. Also, undergraduate students interested in the history of Central Europe will find many important Czech texts translated into English here and this could further stimulate their interest in the Czech history. People who are familiar with the history of the Czech lands and academic researchers could also use this book. University lecturers can use the texts in seminars and lectures to provide background to the dry historical presentation of past events.

• - Jan Látník, History

The Czech Reader, a unique and vast compilation of Bohemian and Czech primary sources for a general English speaking audience, will be welcomed by anybody interested in a Czech general history of Bohemia, Czechoslovakia, or the Czech Republic. In addition, the material may enrich any college survey course with a focus on the region of Central Europe. The book may also serve travelers who are looking for a deeper historical, political, and cultural understanding of the Czechs and their tumultuous history.

• - Zbyšek Brezina, History: Reviews of New Books

The editors have performed quite a service in making these materials available in English in one convenient location. Every university library should have a copy as should any instructor in the field.

• - Andrew Drozd, Slavic and East European Journal

The Czech Reader is a real gem, an immensely informative, balanced, and up-to-date compendium on Czech history and culture.

• "John Neubauer, University of Amsterdam

There is nothing comparable to The Czech Reader. It makes a unique and highly valuable contribution to understanding the Czech interpretation of their own history, of who they are and what historical events constituted them as a nation and a people.

• "Silvia Tomášková, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

One can consider The Czech Reader an important contribution for individuals who are seeking an introduction to the history and literary history of the Czech lands. For people on their travels to the Czech Republic, who are interested in knowing more about this small and interesting nation, this book will serve well. Also, undergraduate students interested in the history of Central Europe will find many important Czech texts translated into English here and this could further stimulate their interest in the Czech history. People who are familiar with the history of the Czech lands and academic researchers could also use this book. University lecturers can use the texts in seminars and lectures to provide background to the dry historical presentation of past events.

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Written in buffet style which allows the reader to select which writers and poets to be studied, this collection gives great insight into Czech history and culture. It is sure to please those, such as the reviewer, whose knowledge of this part of Europe is limited and who are curious as to some of the conflicts that existed for example between Czechs and Germans before World War II. It also offers a view into the consciousness of Czech citizens during the immoral occupation of their country by the Soviet Union and how they dealt with it personally and in their chosen professions. It is readily apparent that for the Czech people literature and poetry was a catharsis, they were wise to utilize it in this manner, as do many other peoples that have been subjected to tyranny, violent suppression, and censorship. The editors of the book do a fine job of putting the literary entries in a historical context by introducing them with an overview of the events of the time. The reviewer found in particular that this feature of the book, and the resulting selections give a better understanding for example of the reasons for Nazi interest in taking over the Sudetenland in 1938. More perhaps than any other single event before World War II, the Nazi excursion into the Sudetenland has been used in the West to justify the belief that one must not appease a dictator. Neville Chamberlain is constantly held up as the best example in history of poor diplomacy, and the reviewer is not aware of any studies that challenge this belief. A study of this book may however lead readers to conclude that the situation between Germans and Czechs was more complex than the Western press asserts as axiomatic. The Soviet invasion of Prague in 1968 has resulted in a voluminous literature and commentary on this event. This book will serve as an introduction to this literature and even to some of the documentaries and movies that have been created on this topic.

Some of the political and literary figures during the time of Soviet occupation such as Vaclav Havel and Milan Kundera are discussed with some detail, allowing readers to investigate their contributions to Czech politics and literature in more depth if desired.

Just received this book in the mail a few days ago and, already, I'm about 1/5 of the way through it. I bought another book called "Central Europe," and am using The Czech Reader to supplement the information given in the latter. The Czech Reader is making all of the info much more personal, as far as perspective and intimacy with those who experienced history first-hand is concerned. I HIGHLY recommend The Czech Reader. It's not only informative, but very easy to read. On my lunch hour today, I read about 40 pages before realizing my hour was already up! I hope these readers are available for other nations, as well!

This book will keep you busy for a while. Good selections, all of which will lead you to do more digging. Serious excerpts. Exactly what an anthology should be, in my view.

A dense academic collection, more textbook than enjoyable reading.

Good book.

Great selection of Czech life!

This book was purchased as a textbook for a study abroad program to the Czech Republic. I was pleased with the choice-the book is easy to read, to follow, and provides the reader with a LOT of valuable information. While visiting the Czech Republic (specifically, Prague) I was able to recall information from the book. Overall, a pleasing textbook and informative book.

This book is a great introduction to Czech history and culture and has helped me start to develop a working understanding of this complex part of Europe.

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