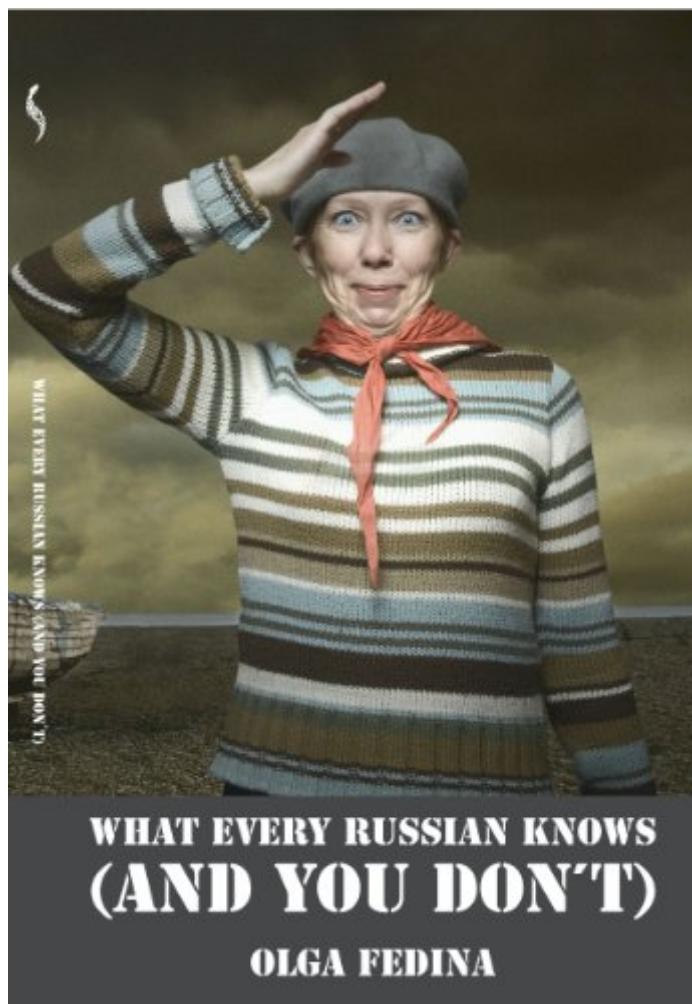


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# What Every Russian Knows (And You Don't)



## Synopsis

This book is a collection of 12 essays looking at touchstones of Russian popular culture, mostly from the Soviet period, that continue to resonate through language, images, and ways of seeing the world in Russia today. These include films: *The Irony of Fate*, *Moscow Does Not Believe in Tears*, *White Sun of the Desert*, *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson*; a novel: *The Twelve Chairs*; animated cartoons: *Hedgehog in the Mist* and *The Prostokvashino Three*; the writer Mikhail Bulgakov; the singer-songwriter Vladimir Vysotsky; stand-up comedians Mikhail Zhvanetsky and Mikhail Zadornov; and a character from a fairy tale, Yemelya the Simpleton. The subjects of the chapters were selected for their influence on Russian language and thinking, and also because they reflect Russian attitudes and perceptions. The author brings them to life through her own experiences of, and responses to, these modern icons. This book, though invaluable for students of Russian, is for everyone interested in Russian language and culture, and explains why certain references and attitudes continue to permeate everyday life. Olga Fedina grew up in Moscow in the turbulent late-Soviet and immediately post-Soviet years, graduating from the Department of Journalism of Moscow State University. She subsequently lived for a decade in London and is currently based in Valencia, Spain. She sometimes misses her homeland, and this book expresses some of the unique aspects of Russia and the Russians that she always carries with her. Though this book is written in English, it contains some "Language Notes" and individual words in Cyrillic script, which some Kindles may not be able to display, though most will not have any problem.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

I have a degree in Russian Language & Literature, I am a Russian translator, and I have been visiting and working in Russia since 1990. I can recite a Pushkin poem in Russian from memory, make a mean Russian meatloaf and propose a heartfelt toast at the drop of a hat; and I know never to leave empty beer bottles on the table or give someone an even number of flowers. However, nearly everything in this book was new to me. Olga Fedina takes us on a whistle-stop tour of some of the highlights of Russian popular culture that most foreigners are unaware of, as the title states. My only criticisms of the book are that it could have been twice as long; and the proofreading could have been done more diligently ("Enjoy You Bath

For anyone who wants to understand more about Russian culture, this book is perfect -- short enough that it will leave you wanting to explore more about Russian TV shows, authors, cartoons and books, and long enough to fill in all the Russian pop culture references that they don't teach you at university. Even for an experienced traveler to Russia, there are lots of little tidbits in there about some of the most iconic figures from the Soviet past, such as Mikhail Bulgakov and Vladimir Vysotsky, that will leave you wanting to explore parts of Moscow in an entirely new way. If nothing else, you absolutely have to read the first chapter on "The Irony of Fate (Or Enjoy Your Bath!)" -- it's simply impossible to discuss New Year's in Russia without understanding something of how the movie is such a cult favorite even to this day. If you take a deeper, philosophical view of the book, it's easy to see why so many average Russians have such a hard time casting aside the Soviet past of the 60s, 70s and 80s - by doing so, they are also tossing aside childhood memories and their shared experiences of laughing at "the authorities." Overall, highly recommended!

This is a charming book about Russian popular culture (as opposed to the high culture that American students typically encounter in their Russian literature classes.) There are discussions of popular Soviet films like "The Irony of Fate" and "Moscow Doesn't Believe in Tears" that continue to attract a popular following in the post-Soviet era. The author also discusses cult novels like "The

"Twelve Chairs" and "The Master and Margarita" explaining why they were initially popular and why they remain popular. She also discusses Russian fairy tales and children's TV shows, as well as standup comedians (or the Russian equivalent). The result is a highly thoughtful book that the reader actually wishes were even longer. Reading "What Every Russian Knows" is like having a discussion with a thoughtful friend. Highly recommended for those interested in Russian life.

I am fairly familiar with Soviet and modern Russian culture, yet learned an amazing amount from the many entertaining and charming stories and insights offered by this well-written book. The focus here is on popular culture, not history, although popular culture is put into a useful historical context. It is great fun to read for anyone with an interest in Russian culture, no matter how much you know or don't know about it. I especially appreciate how the author provided (where relevant) the original Russian words and phrases with Cyrillic characters, together with helpful English translations. This is done in a way that wouldn't interfere with the enjoyment a non-Russian speaker would get from the book, but it offers those who can read a bit of Russian some extra authenticity. Really, a wonderful thoroughly enjoyable book.

For anyone who is interested in the 'Russian side' of the last few years of the USSR. For anyone who is interested in the history of Russia. For anyone who wants to travel to Russia and understand the Russian people! I have laughed and cried my way through this book! Fun to read with some great information !

An upbeat humorous, with salient seriousness, quick look at the fact of pop culture born of the Soviet era and Russian history that puts a diplomatic possibility of friendship within the grasp of "the people", whether or not our politicians can agree with each other, by the simple fact of shared archetypal humanity.

I am learning Russian (very slowly!) and wanted a bit more on the culture. This book is great- it goes over aspects of what we would call "cultural literacy" that the language texts can't cover in depth, such as movies and stories. For example, most Americans (of a certain age, anyway) would know where "The force be with you" came from. According to my Russian source, the topics are very pertinent.

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