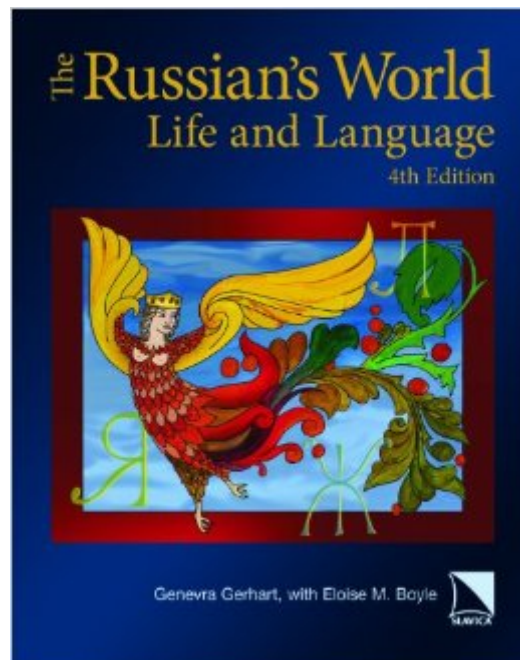


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# The Russian's World: Life And Language, Fourth Edition



## Synopsis

THE RUSSIAN'S WORLD is a unique achievement, which presents carefully selected portions of the Russian lexicon within a broad cultural context. It explains aspects of Russian culture and of Russian life (in short, the Russian's world) in a lively and engaging manner and contains information that is of value to students of Russian language, literature, history, and culture of all levels, from those just past the beginner stage to the most advanced, and with every interest, be it nineteenth-century literature or contemporary society. Excerpt from the Special Achievement Award conferred upon the second edition of THE RUSSIAN'S WORLD by the Publications Committee of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL) in December 1993.

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## Customer Reviews

It cannot be easy to describe an entire country, its People, its culture and its customs, in 400-odd pages. Nonetheless, that is exactly what Ms. Gerhart has done here. She covers not only the basics, the "everything you want to know about Russia" -- she delights her readers by covering several things they may not have realized they wanted to know. For instance, the intelligentsia ordinarily shies away from discussing slang and "mat", perhaps thinking it beneath them. Yet Ms. Gerhart recognizes that, as a practical matter, this is something that simply has to be covered for people visiting or living in real-world Russia. You may not want to use bad words yourself, but you certainly want to know when the gentlemen in the flat-top haircuts and leather coats, walking towards you outside the metro station, are using them towards you... So in a completely proper and not at all

vulgar manner, she tells you everything you really need to know about cursing in Russian -- along with a clear injunction to "not try this at home" yourself. Personally, my favorite part of the book was her discussion of tools used in woodworking, a hobby of mine. I found the translations of these words, not commonly needed by a tourist in Russia, invaluable when I went on a short shopping spree seeking locally forged axes and chisels in podmoskovia. This section may not be for everyone, but it is demonstrative of a point I wish to make about the book as a whole: While not everything in the book may interest everyone, everyone who reads the book will find something that interests them -- perhaps something they never expected to find there.

I have the 1974 paperback edition, and I can't give it enough praise. It's simply awesome! It gives a unique insight into the customs of Russian people as related to their history, their land, and their language. In the preface, the author states that her goal is to "explain in what physical ways the Russian world differs from [the American], both the given world of nature and the world of objects the Russian and his forbears have created to cope with it." In this she has succeeded beautifully. In many ways, everyday Russian life is powerfully affected by environment and tradition. Here is everything you need to know before you go. One of my travel tourguide books claims that many American visitors are "ultimately disappointed" by Russia. This is because they do not experience the \*real\* Russia, nor even know what to expect. If you are planning a vacation trip, read this book first and your visit will be much enhanced. If you stay there with Russian friends and associates, this book will enable you to understand and appreciate their quite different customs. And if you are learning Russian, this book gives a fascinating insight into the relationship between the language and the people who speak it.

Having lived in Russia for the last two years, and dealt with Russians and Russian life daily, I believe the author has accurately summarized everything you should know prior to arriving or doing business here. Useful for both the unstudied tourist and students of Russian language.

If you are looking for a grammar book, this isn't it. It does however do a wonderful job explaining Russian culture and providing you the vocabulary for all of those 'oh, that's what's called. I've always wondered' moments. I had a copy years ago and one of the biggest regrets was not hanging on to it. This edition is definitely an upgrade and I cannot recommend it strongly enough.

This book can be used by students at any level from beginner to advanced as well as by tourists or

other travelers to Russia who don't speak the language, but want to understand the people. The author touches on sensitive issues while remaining relatively non-judgemental, which is unusual and refreshing to find.

Sorry to use the word "unique", irritatingly over- and misused. However, this book was\* in fact, to my knowledge, one of a kind. You might say that this book attempts to cover the assumed cultural inventory resident in the average Russian's head, the background knowledge that a native has of the culture when making conditioned judgments of whatever kind, aesthetic, behavioral, historical. Chapters (from the 1974 edition): The man himself (body parts, physical characteristics, jewelry, family, etc) Names Clothing Housing Education Holidays Transportation Play Speech (speech styles, cussing, etc) Animals Numbers (tricks of numbers and counting, arithmetical expressions, etc) Abbreviations and acronyms Appendices on chemical formulas, Morse code, Braille, and common birds The entirety is very closely tied to the Russian language, with the common Russian word (stress marks provided, of course) for every meaning and purpose clearly given. I suppose the book would be usable for an interested reader of Dostoyevsky or more modern writers, but the book is clearly aimed at learners of the Russian language and will be useful principally to them. Russia is one of those cultures in which "folklore" and "folkways" loom larger in the foreigner's picture of the culture, or at least are identified as such. Because of this, and because of the long-standing alienation between the USA and Russia during the Cold War (recently experiencing some renewal, unfortunately, due to the Putin mafia's aggression inside the old Soviet, and the aggression of NATO from America to the Black Sea, as well as the political bullying and one-upmanship in the American political machine), such a book appeared more necessary and saleable than it might have been for, say, Spain. In fact, the people of all cultures have a comparable knowledge load, and students in the USA (and elsewhere) could benefit by such a book, whatever language they are studying. \*the author has in fact produced, jointly with co-author Eloise Boyle, the book: The Russian Context: The Culture Behind the Language I have not seen this yet, but it appears to be complement "The Russian's World", rather than supersede it.

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