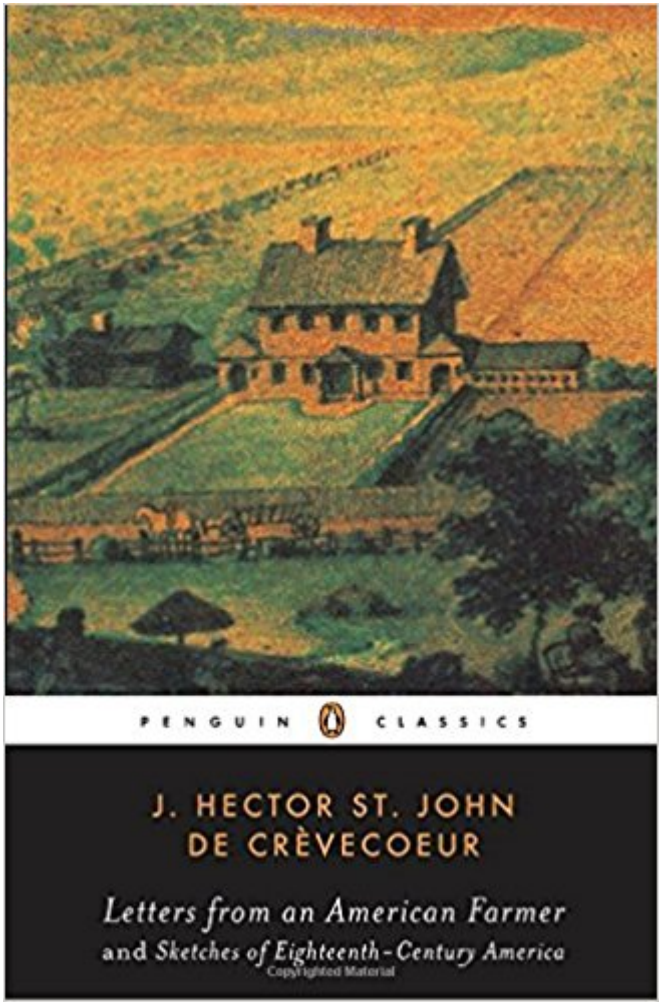
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Letters From An American Farmer And Sketches Of Eighteenth-Century America (Penguin Classics)



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Synopsis

AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s physical and cultural landscape is captured in these two classics of American history. Letters provides an invaluable view of the pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary eras;Ã Â SketchesÃ Â details in vivid prose the physical setting in which American settlers created their history.For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

A must for anyone interested in the beginnings of a national literary culture in the early U.S. republic.

A very entertaining look into 18th century early America.

Husband needed this book for his college course. Found this online in great condition at a fraction of the price. Great buy!

I picked up my copy of this fascinating book on a whim at a library sale, and it’s turned out to be one of my best choices of the past year. A series of letters by a Frenchman on farming life in 18th

Century America, it not only offers a wealth of details that enable the reader to visualize everything, but it's written in comfortably informative prose with a touch of poetry. Both as a vivid description of everyday life & as a naturalist's impressions of the countryside, it places the reader in the midst of that world, engaging all of the senses. For example, the chapter on a snow-storm takes us through the changes of weather as the storm builds & approaches; pays attention to the farmers, their livestock & their fields; and offers countless little human touches -- as when the farmer finishes sheltering his animals at the beginning of the storm, coming inside in a coat of snow & ice, to be greeted by his wife with a mug of gingered cider beside the roaring fire. You can almost smell the wood smoke & the cider!The letters range over a wide swath of territory, sometimes centering on overall sections of the new country, sometimes providing a close-up of something specific, such as a snake or hummingbird. Both the beauties & the perils of farm life are examined with an intelligent, sympathetic eye. In many ways, this strikes me as a predecessor to Thoreau in its delighted interest in & curiosity about tiny things many people might take for granted, if they noticed them at all. For a book well over 200 years old, it's remarkably readable.What makes it even more interesting is the introduction, which explains that it straddles the blurry border between fact & fiction. The letters are presented as the work of an American farmer named James, and it's made clear that its pages are informed by the spirit of the Romantic movement. So it's as much a philosophical worldview as it is a straightforward document, rather in the style of Rouseau. But this only makes it all the more readable -- most highly recommended!

I bought this book on a lark because it piqued my interest. After the first few chapters my interest was definitely piqued.It was great to get a first hand account of rural life in 18th century America. So often we get voluminous accounts of the greatheroes of our new nation, but very little on the average citizen. It was so refreshing to get a new perspective on the daily life of thecommon farmer. I also gained a whole new outlook on the Revolutionary War as viewed by the average frontier citizen. Overall, I canheartily recommend this book to anyone with an interest in early American life.

Before I tell you what I think of this book, hereÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a summary of its structure.He uses the first third of the book to flatter an English aristocrat, to talk about general and trivial farming matters and to speculate on what an American is.The second third of the book is about Nantucket. You might be wondering what Nantucket has to do with farming. So am I. You might also be wondering what this simple Pennsylvania farmer was doing traveling all over the East coast? Could it be that he was actually a French aristocrat?He uses the final third of the book to talk about a

botanist, some curious things he saw around his farm, slavery and a farmer who wants to go live with the Indians to avoid fighting in a war.The letter to the aristocrat is fawning and wordy. He explains America using purple prose and with boosterism that would embarrass a real estate salesman. After an introduction to what seems like a book on farming and America, he veers off on an account of a community of whalers and a grab bag of other topics. The final third of the book is too silly for comment.The author also promotes an obnoxious doctrine about what makes a good American. He seems to have been a post-Calvinist Deist similar to several of the founding fathers. His creed could be summarized as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“maximum production; minimum consumptionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•. This is a fine motto as long as itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s not a standard by which to evaluate people. If someone doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t bother anyone and can do his duty with more consumption and less production, why look down on him? But the author does look down on him and encourages others to do the same publicly.One thing the author likes about the people of Nantucket is that they harassed locals who didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t conform to their own maximum production-minimum consumption ideal. What a creep. I laughed at him when I learned that indeed the Nantucket Calvinists didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t drink. They took OPIUM.To be fair, the author provides interesting insights about AmericaÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s early demographic character and his ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“What is an AmericanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• letter makes an interesting case for whatÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s today sometimes called ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“proposition nationÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• doctrine. My counter is that America is an experiment in freedom. But it also became the homeland of the American people, its greatest achievement so far.This book is suitable for children, especially if they need to be punished.1.5 stars

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