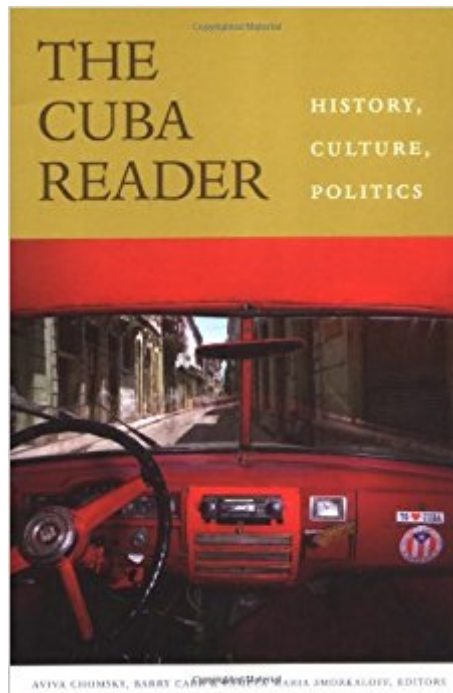




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# **The Cuba Reader: History, Culture, Politics (The Latin America Readers)**



## 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

“What a beautiful journey through five hundred years of Cuban history, culture, and politics! The Cuba Reader is a sumptuous medley of poetry, song, speeches, interviews, and vignettes from novels new and old. You’ll hear the voices of santeros and sugar workers, prostitutes and politicians, revolutionaries and reporters, dissidents and dancers. It’s the next best thing to being in Cuba, so sit back with a mojito and enjoy the masterfully guided tour.”

—Medea Benjamin, activist and cofounder of Global Exchange

The Cuba Reader offers a splendid overview of the Cuban experience, past and present, through a dazzling array of points of view. The voices of participants and observers and perspectives on the extraordinary and the commonplace with imagery conveyed by way of photography and poetry, through the lyric of music and the nuance of the novel make for a compelling collection of material. The very fullness of its vision makes The Cuba Reader an indispensable book for courses of every academic discipline on Cuba.

—Louis A. Pérez, Jr., author of *On Becoming Cuban: Identity, Nationality, and Culture*

[A] classic. The editors of this book and their many accomplices deserve nothing but praise for producing the best introduction to Cuba one can possibly find.” (Gavin O’Toole *The Latin American Review of Books*)

[A] crash course in Cuban history. If you’re looking for a single (hefty) volume to get you up to speed about the past 500 years of Cuban politics and culture, this is it.” (Julie Schwieter Collazo *The Guardian*)

[An] ambitious and impressive anthology, a sweeping collection of source materials by and about Cubans both on the island and living in other countries. The editors . . . have wisely chosen songs, paintings, photographs, short stories, essays, speeches, government reports, cartoons and newspaper articles that span Cuban history. . . . What The Cuba Reader does extraordinarily well is to reveal the nuances and complexity of the Cuban experience. All shades of politics are here, and they infuse Cuban dance, music, film and religion.” (Susan Fernandez *The Miami Herald*)

[T]he editors should be congratulated for their Herculean effort. The reader will be most useful for undergraduate courses where it will provide students with an

impressive overview of the Cuban experience over the last five centuries. In fact, anyone interested in obtaining a comprehensive and multifaceted firsthand account of Cuban history will benefit from this book." (John J. Dwyer *The Americas*) "This Reader provides a wonderfully eclectic selection of writings from and about Cuba. . . . [A] very useful resource for the teaching of courses relating to Cuba, providing a taster of many aspects of the island's history that should encourage those who dip into it to come away with a more nuanced understanding of an island that has been plagued by caricature." (Jonathan Curry-Machado *Journal of Latin American Studies*)

"[An] ambitious and impressive anthology, a sweeping collection of source materials by and about Cubans both on the island and living in other countries."--Susan Fernandez, *The Miami Herald*

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 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.

Read this before I visited Cuba and was impressed with all the facts in it. Things nobody tells you.

This contains articles and excerpts from a host of sources. It is fascinating reading.

As the other reviews have already said, *The Cuba Reader* is a compilation of short stories, poems, newspaper articles etc. interspersed with sections which provide historical background. This is a good book for people who want to see Cuban history through the eyes of Cubans. It will make you fall in love with the people and their culture.

Allows the reader to use introductory narrative for each chapter as a guide as to whether you want, at that time, to read the supporting primary documents. Content well organized with excellent primary documents allowing the reader to weigh alternative conclusions as compared to more "off-the-street" popular notions.

I read this book before going on a 2-week study abroad in Cuba. As someone who knew almost nothing about Cuba before this book, I found it interesting and enlightening. It provided a great overview of Cuban history from source document perspectives. The editors did a very good job gathering diverse and interesting sources. I would recommend this book to anyone planning on travelling to Cuba or who is just interested in Cuban history.

This was a great overview of the history, culture and politics of Cuba. A huge volume, it contains a handful of pages from a wide variety of articles and sources on each topic -- allowing readers to choose what they want to focus on and what they can pass by. It was a great companion on a recent trip to Cuba and made the trip much more interesting as I felt grounded a bit in the history, without having to read dozens of books.

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