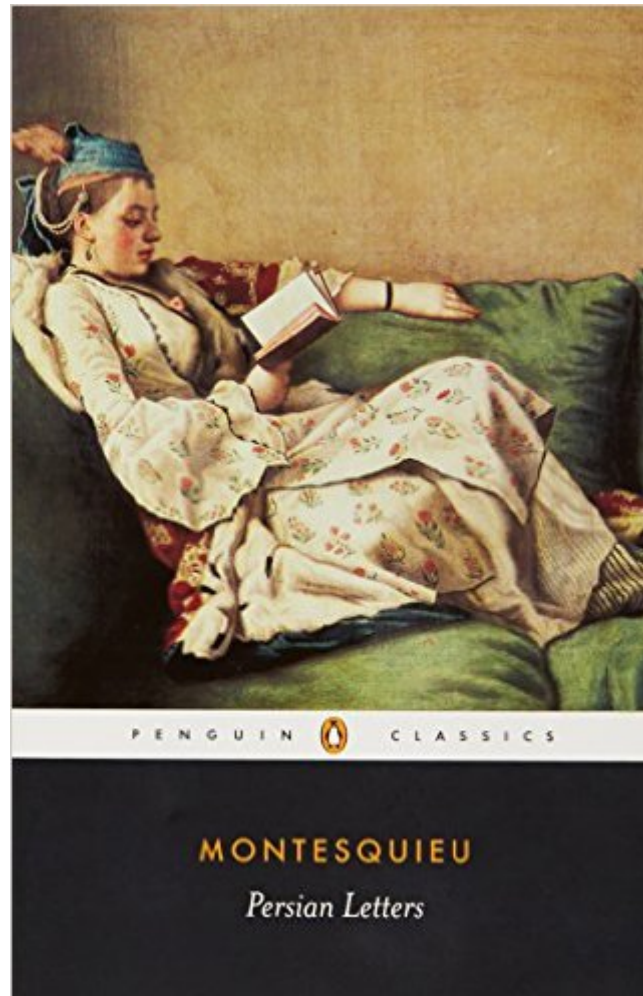


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# Persian Letters (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

Tells the story of two Persian noblemen who have left their country - the modern Iran - to journey to Europe in search of wisdom. This title explains the libertarian, critical spirit of the early eighteenth century.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (13 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

This was one of the books I read in my History of the Enlightenment Class my junior year of college. Our brilliant professor didn't assign all of the letters to read, though, and later I went back and read all of the book, not just the ones we'd been assigned to read for class. A lot of books about the politics and philosophy of a certain period in time don't age well, but this one, for the most part anyway, sounds just as fresh and entertaining today as it did in the eighteenth century. And using the pretence of this being a collection of real letters he intercepted from some Persian houseguests, Montesquieu was able to communicate the new exciting beliefs of his age by having them be told through the so-called eyes of Usbek, Rica, and Ibben, who were experiencing this all for the very first time and having to get adjusted to a real clash of values. This also worked to his advantage in a few cases, like where Usbek is talking about how there is a magician even greater than the King of France, saying "This magician is called the Pope" and going into a whole scathing litany about the Pope. He was able to attack the King and the Church by pretending that foreign travellers were writing and believing these things. The subplot is very interesting too. While Usbek and his friend Rica are away in France for seven years soaking up the Enlightenment, Usbek's wives, concubines,

and slaves are getting more and more restless. While the cat's away, the mice will play, and the guiltiest party is the one the reader least suspects. This brings up the Enlightenment question about personal freedom, and how someone might react in such a situation.

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