

If you were me and lived in... Russia: A Child's Introduction to Culture Around the World**Carole P. Roman**

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Through clever armchair globe-trotting, children can have fun learning about Russia.

With the latest installment in her award-winning *If You Were Me and Lived In...* series, Carole P. Roman encourages kids to daydream about what their lives would be like if they lived abroad. This time the spotlight is on Russia, and as with her picture books on India, Mexico, and beyond, Roman uses select vocabulary, a pronunciation guide, and simple, rich-hued illustrations to depict country-specific foods, holidays, and games.

Much of the strength of the series lies in Roman's ability to present complex matters at a level appropriate for kids ages three to eight. With *If you were me and lived in... Russia: A Child's Introduction to Culture Around the World*, she hints at the country's incredibly large land mass and its particularly diverse population with the simple statement: "You might call it the Russian Federation because it has many different nationalities and ethnic groups living within its vast borders."

Yet another strong suit is Roman's inclusion of cultural aspects that highlight just how similar Russian children's experiences are to their American counterparts. Take, for instance, their winter holiday. As in the West, children believe an elderly man delivers presents under a decorated tree, but in Russia, he is joined by his granddaughter, and the holiday is celebrated on New Year's Day.

The book's rich pedagogy begins on the cover, where an image shows two children pointing to Russia's location on the globe. Inside, at least every other spread contains a full-page illustration to complement Roman's text. In addition, each of the left-hand page numbers is accompanied by a drawing of a small, smiling nesting doll, a toy the author later identifies as *matryoshka* in Russian. Children can have fun learning other Russian words, too, such as mother (*mamochka*), the game of tag (*fipe*), and school (*shkola*).

One of the few shortfalls of this picture book is that the amount of text per page varies widely. Sometimes it is as brief as a single sentence and sometimes the text fills the page, obscuring the beautiful artwork.

Otherwise, *If you were me and lived in... Russia: A Child's Introduction to Culture Around The World* maintains the high level of both entertainment and education that characterizes other titles in the series.

AMANDA MCCORQUODALE (July 21, 2014)

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