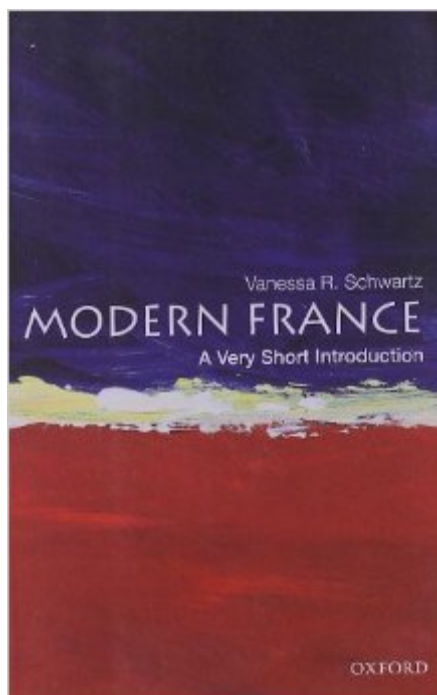


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Modern France: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

In this Very Short Introduction, Vanessa Schwartz argues that modern France, as both a world stage and a global crossroads, is an essential actor in the development of contemporary culture. Indeed, French is the only language other than English spoken on five continents, and more people still visit France than anywhere else in the world. French fashion continues to dominate haute couture and, at the same time, French people are at the forefront of international "style," which was as true in the first half of the twentieth century as it is today. This tension between "Frenchness" as both particular and transnational remains one of the most compelling qualities of the culture. If French culture and culture producers are working around the globe, if Paris is an international capital, the marvel is that France still manages to attract visitors from all over the world seeking out the drama of its historic castles and significant battlefields, its more than 300 cheeses and the renowned wines grown in its rich soil. About the Series: Combining authority with wit, accessibility, and style, Very Short Introductions offer an introduction to some of life's most interesting topics. Written by experts for the newcomer, they demonstrate the finest contemporary thinking about the central problems and issues in hundreds of key topics, from philosophy to Freud, quantum theory to Islam

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Customer Reviews

If someone were to ask me to write a summary of modern France that was only about 140 moderate-to-small sized pages, I'm not sure how I would handle the task. I've spent enough time in France and read enough books about the country and its history that I would probably spend as

much time just trying to select topics as I would actually writing. The history of France itself is an incredibly detailed and interesting one, but how would I describe modern France itself in such a short space? I fear I would not be able to, easily becoming caught up in all the topics, themes, currents, events, and movements that have added up to making France what it is today. So, when I saw a new book that purports to summarize Modern France in such a format, I was a tiny bit skeptical. Interested, but skeptical. The advantage of short, summarized works, of course, is that the author does the hard work of slicing out, selecting, and summarizing from vast swaths of source material to develop something that is easily digestible. The drawback, also of course, is that such summaries rarely can convey "essence" without throwing away all the details that are essential components of that very essence." But, to my delight, Vanessa Schwartz has done a very good job with this challenging task in her new book, which is part of Oxford's already truly outstanding "Very Short Introduction" series. Schwartz's book, though a delight for anyone interested in France, is also very well suited for those new to the topic and wishing to be introduced to this fascinating country.

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