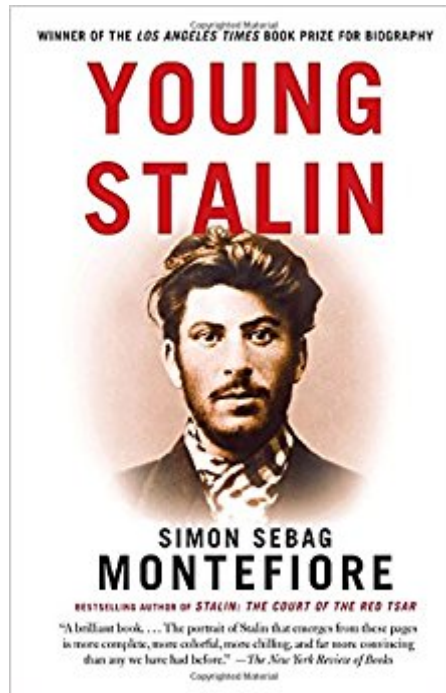




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# Young Stalin



## Synopsis

This revelatory account unveils how Stalin became Stalin, examining his shadowy journey from obscurity to powerâfrom master historian Simon Sebag Montefiore. ÂBased on ten years of research, *Young Stalin*âa companion to the prizewinning *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*âis a brilliant prehistory of the USSR, a chronicle of the Revolution, and an intimate biography.ÂMontefiore tells the story of a charismatic, darkly turbulent boy born into poverty, scarred by his upbringing but possessed of unusual talents. Admired as a romantic poet and trained as a priest, he found his true mission as a murderous revolutionary. Here is the dramatic story of his friendships and hatreds, his many love affairs, his complicated relationship with the Tsarist secret police, and how he became the merciless politician who shaped the Soviet Empire in his own brutal image. Described by *The New York Times* as "a meticulously researched, authoritative biography," *Young Stalin* is essential reading for anyone interested in Russian history. Winner of the Costa Book Award for Biography, *A Christian Science Monitor* and *Seattle Times* Best Book of the Year

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Russian historian and author Montefiore presents an exciting, exemplary biography of the nondescript peasant boy who would become the most ruthless leader in Soviet history, a prequel of sorts to his *Stalin: The Court of the Red Tsar*. Born in 1878 in the Caucasus of Georgia to an overprotective mother (who had already lost two sons) and a father opposed to education ("I'm a shoemaker and my son will be one too"), Stalin possessed a talent for poetry and mischief. Amidst

his mom's trysts (with men she hoped would further Stalin's education), his father's alcohol-fueled violence and the powder-keg environment of the Caucasus, Stalin turned from priesthood training to gang life and petty crime. As he grew, so did his hatred of Tsarist Russia, leading him to meet the initial Bolsheviks, and to more spectacular and violent capers. From the start, Stalin proved a remarkable talent for meticulous planning, a skill that would become vital to the revolutionaries and, later, to his iron-fisted reign. Using recently opened records, Montefiore turns up intriguing new information (like the "Fagin-like" role he played among "a prepubescent revolutionary street intelligence" network), Montefiore captures in an absorbing narrative both Stalin's conflicted character-marked by powerful charisma and deep paranoia-and the revolution's early years with stunning clarity. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

• Brilliantly researched. . . . The portrait of Stalin that emerges from these pages is more complete, more colorful, more chilling, and far more convincing than any we have had before. • "The New York Review of Books" • Young Stalin is brilliantly readable, as intricately plotted and full of detail as a good novel, scrupulously researched, and full of hitherto unknown (or unreported) facts about Stalin's life. • "Men's Vogue" • A meticulously researched, authoritative biography. . . . Mr. Montefiore has found the devil in the details, working his way with a fine-tooth comb through previously unread archival material. • "The New York Times" • The most complete, accurate account of the tyrant's early years-a fascinating tale of life in the revolutionary underground, drenched in violence, fear and deceit, filled with a rogue's gallery of bandits, double-agents and terrorists. • "The Seattle Times"

Young Stalin describes the life of this Communist Russian leader from birth through the Russian Revolution that led to the establishment of Communism in Russia. For Stalin, the book represents the first 38-40 years of his life. Stalin grew up in an area where violence was common. Physical fighting was a sign of personal strength. Due to illness and injuries, Stalin was more frail. He compensated for this by using his brilliant mind to manipulate others to do his bidding. Stalin was a voracious reader, a man committed to socialism, and a ruthless individual. The book recounts, probably with more detail than necessary, the various women whom he used for sex. He left several emotionally hurt women and illegitimate children behind. While he probably killed few, if any, individuals personally, he is responsible for decisions that led to an estimated 25 million Russians dying. His brutality made the book difficult to read. I believe that the author did an excellent job

portraying how young Stalin became Stalin the leader. There were many portions that I thought were superfluous or too long-- the story could have been told in 75% of the length.

Having read and re-read Montefiore's "Stalin: The Court of the Red Czar" I couldn't resist this one. I wouldn't have thought he could have outdone his research successes in the latter book but I was wrong. This is one of the most important books to be written on the Russian Revolution, not just about Stalin but about the society and environment in which he grew up and operated. One of the major points made here is that much of what we know or thought we knew about Stalin comes from Trotsky's 1940 biography. In fact Stalin was not the unlettered bureaucrat that Trotsky would have us believe but a much more interesting and complex figure, and also far better educated (although self-educated). None of this can excuse the horrors of his rule, but that lies in the future of this book. (Trotsky probably would have been just as bloodthirsty had he succeeded to Lenin's rule, but that is just a personal opinion here). In "Young Stalin" you get a vivid picture of Georgia and Russia in the pre-revolutionary period, right down to the village level (and also the level of prisons and exile). A major triumph of historiography!

Montefiore's biography of the young Stalin is both humanizing and surprisingly fair-minded. Montefiore is not inclined to like Stalin and is fairly anti-Bolshevik overall, and yet, Montefiore does not continue every conspiracy theory about Stalin's early life nor reveal only in the seedy details--although there are plenty. Montefiore is accessible, writing in short chapters, and explaining context without becoming exhaustive. This is one book, however, where it does really pay to read the chapter foot notes. Starting the book with his bank heist to fund the Bolsheviks in the early 1900s but almost cost him his relationship to either form of the SDs, and working to in the center was a brilliant structure to the book. This puts the wildness of Stalin's early years in perspective. There are a lot of names to keep up with--particularly since everyone goes by several aliases--but Montefiore does his best to keep all in perspective. Montefiore also does use a lot of secret archive memoirs and letters to construct a much more viable narrative that had be available on this period prior. An excellent introduction to not only Stalin but the tense political situation in the caucuses during the turn of the last century as well.

This is an awesome book a never been told story of Stalin was he was young....a smart handsome revolutionary who was always on the go and always had a girl. He lived a romantic nomadic life and had many friends and lovers to hide him from the law. He was always on the go to complete more

missions...and his young life was full and interesting. If I would have lived back in that time I would have fallen in love with him too....the handsome wild bad boy....the book was easy reading except for all the different names of people to remember...that is why I would recommend this book in print as opposed to Kindle because one could go back to the names and footnotes much more easily....This book gives you more information on Stalin's past and what made him what he was.

In high school or even college how much did we learn about Stalin? Purges, psycho, leader, Red, and madman....he is these things, but the book lends incredible insight into the complexities of a personality that became a cult of personality. How else can we understand someone or a part of history if we only take in the mainstream narrow view of those who write for reasons of persuasion. For one thing this book reminds of us is how critical parenting is. His mother and father had issues but also strengths. Seems the issues trumped the strengths in many ways. Stalin could have been one who contributed in good ways to the world but seems his track in life brought him to act without humanity or conscience. His genius was tilted in favor of paranoia and tyranny leaving us with the horror stories of history. I would think those who do historical psycho analysis would be hard pressed to find one so interesting and terrifying as this man who seems to have had more than 9 lives under his belt. Where is the next socio-path going to arise from....it might be from amongst our own tribes....teach your children well....and hopefully their father's hell will slowly go by....unfortunately it didn't for Mr. J Stalin. One note....I think the author good have edited the starting chapters on Stalin's boyhood....kind of repetitive and cycling back and forth....a bit jarring....but still a great read.

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