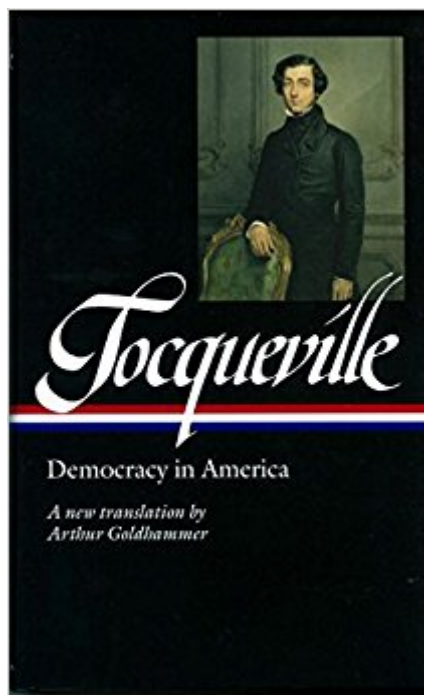




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Alexis De Tocqueville: Democracy In America: A New Translation By Arthur Goldhammer (Library Of America)



Synopsis

Alexis de Tocqueville, a young aristocratic French lawyer, came to the United States in 1831 to study its penitentiary systems. His nine-month visit and subsequent reading and reflection resulted in *Democracy in America* (1835–40), a landmark masterpiece of political observation and analysis. Tocqueville vividly describes the unprecedented social equality he found in America and explores its implications for European society in the emerging modern era. His book provides enduring insight into the political consequences of widespread property ownership, the potential dangers to liberty inherent in majority rule, the importance of civil institutions in an individualistic culture dominated by the pursuit of material self-interest, and the vital role of religion in American life, while prophetically probing the deep differences between the free and slave states. The clear, fluid, and vigorous translation by Arthur Goldhammer is the first to fully capture Tocqueville's achievements both as an accomplished literary stylist and as a profound political thinker.

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Customer Reviews

It's hard to think of a work that has so influenced our understanding of the United States as this; still the most authoritative, reflective set of observations about American institutions and the American character ever written. That its author was a Frenchman, and an aristocrat at that, and that he was balanced and penetrating has often occasioned rueful surprise. However, de Tocqueville's distance from his subject is precisely what lends his observations such continuing

currency. A few decades ago, for instance, we read Tocqueville for his prediction that Russia and the United States would one day contest for pre-eminence. Now, we ought to read him (Iraqis and Afghans should, too) for his classic analyses of the link between political parties and free associations and for his reflections on such matters as religion and public life, and "self-interest properly understood." But many solid translations exist. Why another? Because the Library of America would be incomplete without this canonical work of history and sociology. And this translation by Goldhammer, the dean of American translators from the French, accomplishes what it's hard to believe possible: it lends to this unalterably grave work some zest. Never slipping into slang, it gives a colloquial cast, fitting for our time, to a work normally rendered only with high solemnity. The Library of America claims that its editions will stay in print forever. This one's likely to stand that test. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"Tocqueville enjoys a unique position in the history of literature and thought: a philosopher also notable as a literary stylist, he is the only Frenchman who can claim to be part of the American canon as well as the French."Tocqueville enjoys a unique position in the history of literature and thought: a philosopher also notable as a literary stylist, he is the only Frenchman who can claim to be part of the American canon as well as the French. (Arthur Goldhammer, translator)aTocqueville enjoys a unique position in the history of literature and thought: a philosopher also notable as a literary stylist, he is the only Frenchman who can claim to be part of the American canon as well as the French.a (Arthur Goldhammer, translator)?Tocqueville enjoys a unique position in the history of literature and thought: a philosopher also notable as a literary stylist, he is the only Frenchman who can claim to be part of the American canon as well as the French.? (Arthur Goldhammer, translator)

Library of America: Alexis de TocquevilleAlexis De Toqueville was a Frenchman who became enchanted with American ideals and it's Constitution. His writings start off not with the political, but in an entirely different context; his descriptions of the flora, fauna and terrain of the Great Mississippi valley read as though it flowed from the pen of one of the Bartrams. At that point, it becomes apparent that it was more than political ideals that intrigued him - it was the entire concept of America from sea to sea.>> pg 45Regarding Plymouth Rock:

This is a must read for anyone who truly wants an honest look at our nation when it was still young, as it was being evaluated by a not-unsympathetic outsider as he tried to understand the direction we

might trend politically, socially, economically, and spiritually if we weren't careful, and why this political experiment in a Constitutional Republic would work here, in The United States of America, when it didn't seem to work anywhere else in the world. He explores the blessings and shortfalls of a democracy, who we were as a people when he visited our nation, and why we were as we were. His only mistake? He called us a "democracy." Our only mistake? We have forgotten that we are a Constitutional Republic, not a democracy. He was almost prophetic in his warnings because of his and our "mistakes."

This is a review of the Library of America 2004 edition of *Democracy in America* translated by Arthur Goldhammer, found here: [Alexis de Tocqueville: Democracy in America: A new translation by Arthur Goldhammer \(Library of America\)](#). Unfortunately it lumps together reviews of several different editions from several publishers, so it is difficult to know which edition is being reviewed. For this reason, and because many others have reviewed the content of Tocqueville's amazingly insightful work, I will focus solely on the physical aspects of the Library of America edition. In my opinion, the Library of America edition is excellent. It is not the least expensive edition, but I believe it is worth the extra dollars, and is really quite reasonably priced given the quality. Considering it contains over 900 pages covering both volumes 1 and 2 of *Democracy in America*, the book is remarkably compact at 5 inches wide by 8 inches tall by 1.25 inches thick. This is made possible by using thin paper which still appears to be quite durable. The hardbound binding also appears to be very durable, and even contains a built-in ribbon marker. Even the dust jacket is made from heavier than usual stuff. The font used for the text is large and very clear. The 2004 translation by Goldhammer is in what I would call a modern style of English that I found easy to understand. In other words, I didn't have to fight the translation in order to follow and think about what Tocqueville was actually saying. There are several helps included. The frontispiece contains a map from the original 1835 edition that describes North America as it was when Missouri and Arkansas were the westernmost states. Translated from the French, it proved to be quite helpful at times. The end of the volume contains a chronology that is a pretty thorough biography of Tocqueville himself. There is also an extensive index, along with notes on the text and translation. All in all, I found this to be an understandable and durable edition that does justice to Tocqueville's timeless work. I recommend it.

the Real Democracy in America.. all of it.. nothing has been taken out of these books written in 1862.. just compare these books with the Democracy in America that is on the bookstore shelves these days.. condensed down to one little paperback volume.. completely omitting any mention of

what really made America exceptional and great. If you ever have to read Democracy in America.. get the real thing. These old editions can be had and will tell you a completely different story than what is being touted out in the market place today..

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