

From the Author's Desk:

Hello Parents and Teachers! Thank you for sharing "Catherine: The Great Journey, Russia 1743" with your readers. I hope this discussion guide will help them reflect on the novel and enjoy it on a deeper level. I've added a recipe and some activities that might be fun for them.

Best regards,
Kristi

Catherine: The Great Journey, Russia 1743

About this book: The diary of Princess Sophie, later re-named Catherine, from 1743 until 1745, when at age 15 she is married to her second cousin, Peter, Grand Duke of Russia. He would one day be crowned emperor. Includes historical notes on her later life.

For readers 8 to 12.
ISBN 9781533664228

Discussion ideas:

<> Part I

1. When Figchen leaves for Berlin and says, "I did not look back," what does she mean?
2. What are some of the subjects Catherine studies with her tutor?
3. Tell what it means to be banished to Siberia.
4. Why do you think the empress forbade Catherine's father to "set foot in Russia?"

<> Part II

1. When Empress Elizabeth travels on a pilgrimage, what and who must accompany her?
2. Why was French considered the language of diplomacy?
3. Describe a portrait pin and its purpose.
4. What do you think about Catherine's arranged marriage with her second-cousin Peter?

Activity suggestions:

<> Write -- These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I needed to learn a foreign language quickly I would ..."
2. Explain a language you would like to learn fluently, and why.
3. Describe a trip or vacation where you learned something amazing.

<> Draw

1. A royal sledge
2. The palace courtyard in Stettin
3. A map of your neighborhood

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of a castle on a rocky bluff
2. A toy from a stick or twig

<> **Read** -- Eleanor: Crown Jewel of Aquitaine, France 1136.
ISBN 9781533664532

<> **Cook**

Pfeffernusse Cookies: This tiny spice cookie is popular as a holiday treat in Germany, and would have been a favorite of young Figchen and her brother. Frankly, once I start eating these I can't stop!

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup molasses
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 eggs
- 4 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup white sugar
- 1/2 cup brown sugar
- 1 1/2 teaspoons cardamom
- 1 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon cloves
- 1 teaspoon ginger
- 2 teaspoons cinnamon
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
- 1 teaspoon pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 teaspoons anise extract
- [1 cup powdered sugar for dusting]

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1. Stir together the molasses, honey, and butter in a saucepan over medium heat until creamy. Remove from heat. After this has cooled to room temperature, stir in the eggs.
2. Combine the flour, sugars and spices in a large bowl. Now add the molasses mixture and stir it all together until nice and smooth. Refrigerate at least 2 hours.
3. Preheat oven to 325 degrees F. Roll the dough into acorn-sized balls then arrange on baking sheets at least 1 inch apart.
4. Bake 10 to 15 minutes. Set on a rack to cool. Dust cooled cookies with powdered sugar.

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

Catherine wrote her autobiography in French. I found an English translation and used many of the details she describes, such as her little dog Ivan Ivanovich wearing a sailor outfit sewn by her maids and prancing on the dinner table.

**A secret about the author:**

In the story Catherine is unhappy to see magnificent animals like elephants in costumes. This reflects my view, which is why I don't go to circuses. I dearly love animals. When Catherine says, "Oh, what a loyal friend is a dog who loves you," she is expressing the bond I've had with our golden retrievers: Russell, Daisy, and Poppy.

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I'll answer you!