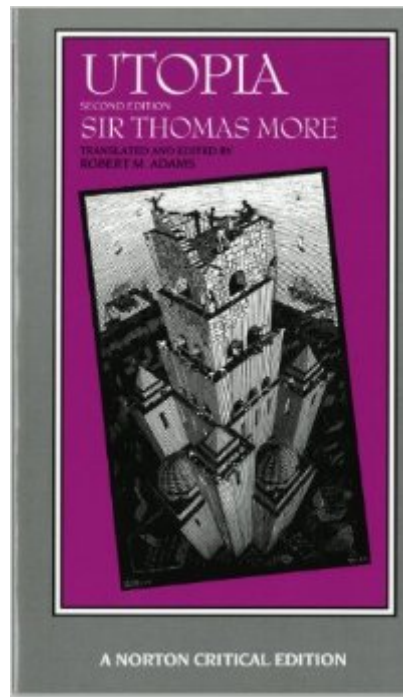


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# Utopia (Norton Critical Editions)



## Synopsis

Robert M. Adams's celebrated translation of *Utopia* has been meticulously revised for the Second Edition of this Norton Critical Edition as have the accompanying annotations.

"Backgrounds" is designed to assist student readers in an appreciation of *Utopia* by shedding light on the different points of view contemporary with More's work. Included are new selections from Saint Benedict and Tasso, as well as a medieval satire on the land of Cockayne. "The Humanist Circle", a carefully chosen selection of letters, includes another important contribution by Erasmus. "Criticism" includes five new thought-provoking essays by Alistair Fox, Edward L. Surtz, G. R. Elton, Northrop Frye, and Robert M. Adams. Also new are selections from two modern anti-utopias or quasi-utopias—Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two*—plus a selection from Edward Bellamy's once futuristic but now almost contemporary *Looking Backward*, which may be compared and contrasted with More's masterpiece. An updated Selected Bibliography is also included.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This edition of Thomas More's *Utopia* is expertly translated by Adams from the Latin and easy to read. Adams' footnotes are informative and often times a hilarious addition to More's work. Taking a more modern approach to More, Adams' footnotes suggest that perhaps More does not take his perfect society literally, and expects the reader to read between the lines and see that such a society is obviously not possible. This is a theory of More's thought processes that I agree with, so I

found this translation and Adam's thoughts quite welcome and agreeable. However, there are many schools of thought on the issue as to whether More was completely serious about the suggested society in Utopia, although a knowledge of More as a person would suggest that he employed a subtle sarcasm throughout his life, and therefore it is not a stretch to suggest that Utopia was laced with this same humor and etched with ironic impossibilities that More hoped an educated person would be able to see. Additionally, the fact that More places himself as a character in the book, and narrates through the use of a man whose name literally translated means "nonsense-peddler" leaves little doubt in my mind that to take More's Utopia at face-value is to do a disservice to More, the intellectual scholar that he was, and Utopia itself.

One of the great works of the late Renaissance. Originally written in Latin. Ostensibly written as a travel journal, a bit similarly to Voltaire's *Candide*. A subtle book, subtler than the later works *Candide* and *Don Quijote*. If you're reading it as a promotion or refutation of certain ideas, you may be reading it too superficially. More, like his contemporary and good friend Erasmus of Rotterdam, was a genius at making his readers wonder what position he was trying to get across. Like most great works of literature, it can be read different ways. Sir Thomas More was Chancellor under King Henry VIII. The pope denied Henry a divorce from his Spanish wife, who did not produce him a son (probably Henry's fault biologically). More sided with the church and lost his head as a result. He was later canonized. More is the patron saint of lawyers.

Thomas More's incredible, influential work, has one foot in the Middle Ages and the other in the Renaissance. More reflects on the Middle Ages, but was not yet ready for the Lutheran reformation. More offers both humor (for example, using gold as chamber pots), and political thinking on capitalism. I however think his Utopia is a reflection of the monastic system (without severe asceticism) rather than communism. I'm sure it is no accident that geographic the island of Utopia is similar to England. It is ironic that More did not heed Raphael's advice about servitude to the king. The inclusion of the humanist letters adds further to the humor. This fine edition includes important predecessor such as Plato's republic and the Acts of the Apostles. Description from Amerigo Vespucci's first voyage, calls to mind Rousseau's "Noble Savage". With the inclusion of selections from Ovid to *Brave New World* this book includes almost two millennium of utopian thinking.

This volume, like so many others, lays out the guidelines for a theoretical utopia. It's more a brain exercise, less an actual guidebook, and is meant for the purpose of Socratic dialogue. What IS a

perfect society? Should it look like this? What do you think? A word of caution though: you'll need a bit of lighter fare lined up after tackling this behemoth. Have your comic relief and/or silly lit. ready.

The content of the book I loved, and is what I expected. The book arrived filthy, with stains that where like raisin, or juice marks on it. I had to wash it outside from both sides thoroughly because I was afraid to touch it. The condition of it was described as good, but was far from that. I understand that it was a used book, but at least it should be sold CLEAN.

While I am glad I read this, I couldn't help comparing it with today's society-building or world-building Speculative Fiction. With that in mind, More's invented society is lacking in depth and completeness. Perhaps my making the comparison is unfair since we're talking 500 years difference (and today's writers have More to look back to). I just added a 4th star for that. It is a required read for anyone wanting to write a similar story or book.

Generally, this is a very good edition of utopia. The translation from Latin is clear and very readable. Furthermore, the critical texts are a great help to the student. Now I don't have to run off to collect them from various magazines. In principle the inclusion of other utopias is a good idea as well. However, I was somewhat disturbed by the editorial notes on "Looking backward". It does not seem to me as if Mr. Adams has read very much of the novel. For instance, I found his comments on the role of women in the book misleading.

Must read

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