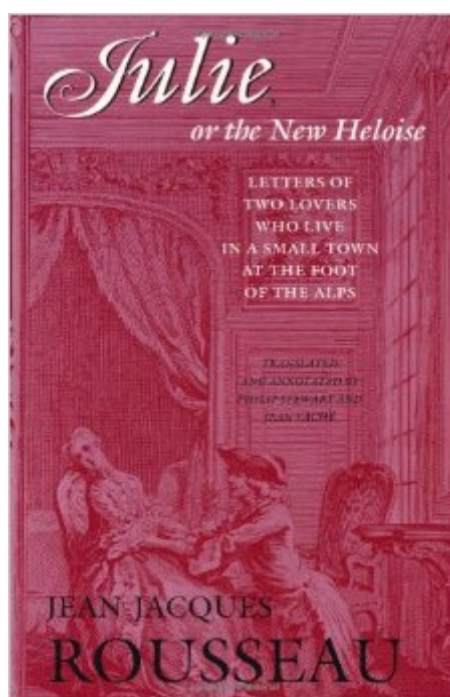


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# Julie, Or The New Heloise: Letters Of Two Lovers Who Live In A Small Town At The Foot Of The Alps (Collected Writings Of Rousseau)



## Synopsis

An elegant translation of one of the most popular novels of its time. Rousseau's great epistolary novel, *Julie, or the New Heloise*, has been virtually unavailable in English since 1810. In it, Rousseau reconceptualized the relationship of the individual to the collective and articulated a new moral paradigm. The story follows the fates and smoldering passions of Julie d'Étange and St. Preux, a one-time lover who re-enters Julie's life at the invitation of her unsuspecting husband, M. de Wolmar. The complex tones of this work made it a commercial success and a continental sensation when it first appeared in 1761, and its embodiment of Rousseau's system of thought, in which feelings and intellect are intertwined, redefined the function and form of fiction for decades. As the characters negotiate a complex maze of passion and virtue, their purity of soul and honest morality reveal, as Rousseau writes in his preface, "the subtleties of heart of which this work is full." A comprehensive introduction and careful annotations make this novel accessible to contemporary readers, both as an embodiment of Rousseau's philosophy and as a portrayal of the tension and power inherent in domestic life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

It is a pity that *Julie, or the New Heloise* is neither better known nor more widely read. It is one of the great novels. Rousseau may be most famous as a philosopher and *Julie* includes many philosophical passages, discussing issues such as education, virtue and religion, but he shows in

this novel that he was both a fine writer and an able storyteller. The ideas he puts into the mouths of his characters are interesting, the debates they engage in are continually fascinating, but it is the story he tells which is truly memorable for it is deeply moving. The novel consists of a series of letters some quite short, some extending to many pages. The main characters are Julie d'Étange, a young Swiss girl of noble birth and her tutor who has the pseudonym St. Preux. They begin an affair and fall deeply in love. It is this initial relationship of pupil to teacher, developing into passion, which is supposed to remind the reader of the medieval lovers Abelard and Heloise. Moreover both pairs of lovers face difficulties and opposition from family. They experience the joys of love and suffer because of it. These parallels however, should not be overestimated, Rousseau is not retelling an old story and Julie's life is quite different from that of Heloise. The story has numerous twists and turns and many surprises along the way. Other characters interact with the young lovers write letters to them and to each other. Gradually over the course of a long novel one begins to care about these people. It is here that Rousseau's skill as a writer is most evident. I found myself emotionally involved in the story of Julie and St. Preux in a way which was quite unexpected. By the end I had felt much joy and not a little sorrow and had been touched by a novel that can bring forth tears.

Julie; or, The New Heloise is an epistolary novel of forbidden love and seduction that serves as vehicle for many of Rousseau's ideas on morality, religion, and social justice. The subtitle refers to the medieval lovers Abelard and Héloïse, whose published letters tell a similar tale. The story takes place in the 18th century in western Switzerland in various locations around Lake Geneva. Julie d'Étange is the beautiful and well-mannered daughter of a baron. The Baron d'Étange hires a tutor to complete her daughter's education, but the two fall hopelessly in love. The tutor's name is eventually given as St. Preux, but we are told this is an assumed name to conceal his identity in their secret correspondence. Julie's saucy cousin and best friend Claire is her confidante and the lovers' go-between. Eventually, after St. Preux has seduced Julie, the two make their passion known to Julie's father. In a rage, he banishes St. Preux from his house, declaring that Julie will marry a man of his choosing who is suitable to her station in society. The novel continues for some dozen years with correspondence between Julie, St. Preux, Claire, and a friend of St. Preux's. Among the subjects addressed are the decadence of Parisian society, the contrast between Catholicism and Calvinism, and Rousseau's ideas on such diverse topics as aristocracy, household management, education and gardening. The author uses footnotes to make sure we know when one of his characters is expressing an opinion with which he agrees or disagrees. The principal

theme of the novel is of a morality of conscience rather than one of convention, and Julie is its exemplar. Rousseau was at this time a Calvinist, but an unconventional one.

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