

A Peasant Reading (1757)

Abstract

While this etching contains elements of caricature (i.e., the country folk as seen by the urban educated classes), it also offers a sympathetic portrayal of villagers' entry into the public discourse on matters of common concern. The publication shown here – entitled “Earnest and Confidential Conversation among Peasant Farmers” – propagandized the cause of Prussian King Friedrich II (r. 1740-1786) during the Seven Years' War. At the time, it was not unusual for male and female Protestant villagers to be able to read, since they were expected to study Holy Scripture and follow the texts of religious services. But the ability to write was much rarer. Copperplate engraving by Daniel Chodowiecki (1726-1801), 1757.

Source



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