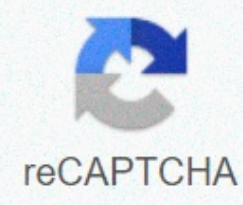




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Kelly wrote a popular history based on the best scholarship available, and wrote it very very indeed.â€ (Detroit Free Press (\*\*\*\* 4 out of 4 stars))A fascinating account of the plague that swept Europe and Asia in the 14th century, killing about half the population. It's a frightening reminder of what might happen today. (Nelson Demille, The Birmingham News) Amazing... Kelly combines a distinguished scholarship in European science, medicine and history [and] meets some of the darkest days of the world as a criminal sleuth who must first recreate the ambience of the world of victims before pursuing his death. He endows the Great Mortality with the ancient imer history yields only to a few. (Houston Chronicle) John Kelly combines the skills of a medical writer with those of a historian..... [he] offers an insightful and rather frightening exploration of medieval medicine. Exhaustively researched and based largely on the accounts of those who lived through The Black Death, Kelly's narrative gives us an intimate exploration of a world that is falling apart. (San Francisco Chronicle) Timely and welcome. . . . conveys in excruciating but necessary detail a strong feeling about how terrible Europe has suffered and how resilient it has been to what appeared to be a certain extinction. (Jonathan Yardley, Washington Post Book World) It's almost unethical to write a book about human cataclysm as fun as Great Mortality. Strange that a book about the worst natural disaster in the history of Europe should be so lively. This book can be written in Barbara Tuchman's tradition, but there is a living vitality when it is Kelly's alone. (Minneapolis Star Tribune) Black Death is the most famous pandemic in history, but so far its full history has not been written. In Great Mortality John Kelly gives a human face to the 14th-century disaster that made 75 million lives, a third of the world's population. (Oakland Tribune) Great Mortality skillfully relies on eyewitness accounts to build a diary of the plague years. (New York Times Book Review) A compelling and bone-chilling account. (Tampa Tribune) La moria grandissima began its terrible journey to the European and Asian continents in 1347, leaving the devastation unimaginable in its wake. Five years later, 25 million people died, cut off by the scourge that was to be called the Black Death. The Great Mortality is the extraordinary epic account of the greatest natural disaster in European history -- a drama of courage, cowardice, misery, madness and sacrifice that brilliantly illuminates the darkest days of mankind when an ancient world ended and a new world was born.--The Journal of the Library La moria grandissima began its terrible journey to The European and Asian continents in 1347, leaving the unimaginable devastation behind it. Five more years twenty-five million people were brought down by the scourge that will come to be called the Black Death. The Great Mortality is the extraordinary epic account of the greatest natural disaster in European history -- a drama of courage, cowardice, misery, madness and sacrifice that brilliantly illuminates the darkest days of mankind when an old world ended and a new world was born. John Kelly, who holds a bachelor's degree in European history, is the author and co-author of ten books on science, medicine and human behavior, including Three on the Edge, which Publishers Weekly named the work of an expert storyteller. He lives in New York. A chronicle book one of the worst human disasters in recorded history really has no business being entertainment. But John Kelly's The Great Mortality is a page-turner despite its bleak subject matter and graphic detail. Credit Kelly's animated prose and the strange ability to throw his reader in the mid-14th century as a threat unknown until now follows Eurasia from the China Sea to the sleepy fishing villages of Portugal [causing] suffering and death on a scale that, even after two world wars and twenty-seven million AIDS deaths worldwide. . . remains amazing. Take Kelly's description live in London in the autumn of 1348: A night walk through medieval London would probably take only twenty minutes or so, but crossing the city during the day was a different matter.... Imagine a mall where everyone shouts, no one washes, the front teeth are uncommon and the shopping music is provided by the slaughterhouse on the way. Yikes, and that's before almost everything with a pulse begins to die and gather on the streets, reducing Europe's population by one-third to 60 percent in a few years. In addition to taking readers on a walking tour through the plague-ravaged Europe, Kelly heaps on auxiliary information and every last bit of it is captivating. We have a thorough breakdown of the three types of plagues that prey on humans; a detailed overview of how the plague traveled from one nation to another (originally by boat through flea-infested rats); how the floods (and the appalling hygiene of medieval people) made Europe so susceptible to disease; the plague triggered a new social hierarchy that favoured women and the proletariat, but also triggered vicious anti-Semitism; and above all, the plague changed forever the way people looked at the church. Captivating, accessible, and full of first-rate accounts drawn from the Middle Ages, the Great Mortality illuminates and inspires. History can't get any better than that. --Kim Hughes --This text refers to an unprinted or unavailable edition of this title. A compelling and harrowing history of The Black Dead that swept Europe in the mid-14th century killing 25 million people. It was one of the most devastating human disasters in The bodies were poorly covered as the dogs dragged them on and devoured them. And believing it was the end of the world, no one cried for the dead, because they all expected to die. Agnolo di Turo, Siena, 1348 In just over 1000 days from 1347 to 1351 Black Death swept across medieval Europe killing 30% of its population. It was a catastrophe that touched the lives of every individual on the continent. The deadly virus Y. Pestis entered Europe by Genoese cuisine in Messina, Sicily, in October 1347. By the spring of 1348 it had devastated the cities of central Italy, by June 1348 it had swept into France and Spain, and by August it had reached England. A graphic testimony can be found at St Mary's, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, where an anonymous hand carved a harrowing inscription for 1349: Miserable, terrible, destructive year, people's remains remain alone. According to the Foster scale, a kind of Richter scale of human disaster, the plague of 1347-1351 is the second worst catastrophe in history. Only World War II caused more death, physical damage and emotional suffering. It is also the closest thing defense analysts compare to a thermonuclear war to - geographically, steepness and casualties. In great Mortality John Kelly remakes the Journey of the Black Death using original source material – fragments of diaries, letters, manuscripts – as he travels through Europe. It's a harrowing portrait of a continent gripped by an epidemic, but also a very personal story told by individuals whose lives have been touched by it. --This text refers to an unprinted or unavailable edition of this title. \*Starred Review\* Later called Black Death, the plague epidemic of the mid-14th century was known as the Great Mortality by its European survivors. It killed 60% in many places, even more in autonomous communities, would be monasteries - in total, a third of Europe's people. Western Europe is the main objective of Kelly's compact history, which is intimate in that it highlights the passages of many people over the years of the crucible, 1348-1349. Some of these are famous (e.g. Petrarch, Boccaccio), others long-forgotten heavy figures during their time (e.g. Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury), a scandalous celebrity (Queen Joanna of Naples and Sicily, whose prosecution, finally before the pope, for the murder of her husband, a son of the King of Hungary, foreshadowed O. J. Simpson as a simple diversitricious) , and ordinary people like John Onnewy, reeve, or manager, of a large English farm, whose character Kelly extrapolates from business records. Kelly continues chronologically, starting with the prehistory of the plague in northern Central Asia and its spread through China before the Mongols empire to bring it west. He observes the maturity for the overpopulated, resource-exhausted, ecologically stressed disaster The Europe on which the plague has descended, and in the most riveting chapter takes into account the outbursts of anti-Jewish violence by the panicked plague nations, which the church has rarely tried successfully to stop, and in which modern, racist anti-Semitism has been forged. This sweeping, viscerally exciting book contributes to a perpetually fascinating literature: the chronicles of pestilence. For more information, see the Adjacent Read-alikes column. Ray OlsonCopyright © American Libraries Association. All Rights Reserved --This text refers to an unprinted or unavailable edition of this title. There is immense literature about Black Death, the catastrophic plague that swept Europe in the mid-14th century, but the subject of widespread death has taken on an increased urgency in recent years due to AIDS, genocide and various threats posed by terrorism. For this reason, John Kelly's Great Mortality is timely and -- while the world may seem odd given the context -- is welcome. Written for the laic reader, rather than scholarly, it conveys in excruciating detail, but needed a strong sense of how terrible Europe has suffered, and just how resilient it was in the face of what seemed to many certain extinction. This is, according to Kelly's subtitle, an intimate history of the plague. Although the story is set in complete historical context and although a panoply full of gruesome statistics is presented, its focus is on ordinary (and some not so ordinary) men, women and children who have fallen victim to the plague, and those who have survived. Thus, for example, there is his account, extracted largely from a Franciscan monk named Michele da Piazza, about the arrival of the plague in Sicily, in the city of Messina: Soon Messina began to empty. Friar Michele talks of crazy dogs running wild in deserted streets, of nightfires blinking from crowded fields and vineyards around the city, of dust, sun-soaked roads filled with sweaty, frightened refugees, of bewildered sick wandering around nearby forests and huts to die. He also describes several incidents of what sound, to a modern sensibility, would be magical realism, but there were probably incidents of panic-induced hysteria. In one, a black dog with an empty sword in his paw rushes into a church and smashes silver vessels, lamps, and candlesticks on the altar. In another, a statue of Our Lady comes to life on its way to Messina and, terrified of the sins of the city, refuses to enter. The earth was wide-cended, says monk Michele, and the donkey on which the statue of Our Lady was worn became as fixed and unflinching as a stone. It is tempting to say that the horrors of Black Death are beyond the comprehension of readers 21, but in fact a contemporary comparison is too painful at hand: World War II, whose effects were felt almost everywhere that that lived and the human tax of which ran away in tens of millions. According to Kelly, the plague bacillus, Yersinia pestis, swallowed Eurasia so a snake swallows a rabbit -- whole, basically in one sitting. From China to the east to Greenland, to the west, from Siberia in the north to India, to the south, the plague lives everywhere, including in ancient societies in the Middle East: Syria, Egypt, Iran and Iraq. How many people perished in the Black Death is unknown; for Europe, the most widely accepted mortality rate is 33%. In rough figures, this means that between 1347, when the plague arrived in Sicily, and 1352, when it appeared in the plains of The Muscovites, the continent lost twenty-five million of its seventy-five million inhabitants. It was a terrible way to die. People's physique was extremely dilated, unbearable pain rushed through them, screamed and cried as they died. Although previous and subsequent epidemics moved relatively slowly, it marched from one place to another at such a high speed that several medieval medical authorities were convinced that the disease was spreading through the eyes. So wrote one: Instant death occurs when the aerial spirit escaping from the eyes of the sick man hits the sane person standing close and looks at the sick. The more banal truth is that it was first spread by rats -- especially one then known as the pharaoh's rat, now called tarabagan -- and then by the breathing and touching of the affected people. The plague would have been devastating under any circumstances, but those in Europe in the mid-14th century were particularly hospitable to her. At the turn of the century, many things began to go terribly wrong on the continent. These included the terrible weather -- earthquakes, floods, tidal waves, heavy rains and winds -- which left crops attenuated and soaked with water and brought thousands of countless people to the brink of famine; ubiquitous waste and dirt, rich breeding grounds for rats; Endless and increasingly savage war, which made the medieval battlefield and medieval soldier more effective agents of disease. Europe was a disaster waiting to happen. The wait was exactly what Europe did. As the plague pressed its relentless advance and, as the news preceded it from place to place, people were paralyzed with horror: Although the plague moved very quickly, often advancing a few kilometers in a single day, the feeling of shock had evaporated. Most localities had several days to a few weeks in advance of arrival. Enough time to think and wonder and worry. People couldn't do much. Medieval medicine was a mixture of folk wisdom, magic, superstition and crafts. Important changes were underway in the hands of Arab master doctors, who were turning medicine into a sophisticated intellectual discipline, but little of what learned was widely known and practiced. In an attempt to devise preventive schemes, the authorities had few useful suggestions. It was agreed that the best defense against the plague was to remain healthy, and above all, this meant avoiding infected air, but it was hard to be healthy when food was so limited and nutritionally inadequate and when the air smelled with the smoke of dirt and human waste and animals. There was simply no choice: the plague had to take its course. In a few places, it would be England, where constant leadership may have helped to uphold order, self-discipline, and legality, the tax was brought somewhat under control. In Florence and Venice, rudimentary public health systems were established to oversee the sanitation and burial of the dead, which was undoubtedly of great benefit to future generations than to the victims of 1348. Indeed, in many places there has been evidence of human capacity to overcome adversity: The strong Venetian response to Black Death proves the point of disaster and recovery, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission studying thermonuclear warfare. In the worst years of death, Europeans witnessed horrors comparable to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but even when death was everywhere and only a fool dared to hope, the thin fabric of civilization held -- sometimes by the skin of teeth, but he held it. Enough notaries, municipal and church authorities, doctors and traders have taken a step forward to keep governments, courts, churches and financial houses running -- albeit at a much reduced level. The report is right about human resilience: even in the most extreme and horrible circumstances, people continue. Beyond that, Europe has emerged from the plague in a better place than before. According to the distinguished plague scholar David Herlihy in The Black Death and the Transformation of the West (1997), the great population reduction created opportunities for survivors and those who came after them; fewer people, more jobs and a higher standard of living. According to Kelly, before the Black Death, the continent was caught in a Malthusian impasse in which the balance between people and resources became very tight. After the plague, the smaller population meant a greater share of resources for survivors -- and often also a wiser use of resources. Not that the tens of millions that died during the plague were helpful, but Europe came out of the house of fish and epidemic cleansed and renewed -- like the sun after the rain. Great Mortality is an admirable work of popular history, a genre too often ridiculed by scholars. Kelly summarizes and interprets the previous scholarship completely accessible, and his research into primary sources gives the book its powerful human element. He has a slightly irritating tendency to repeat bits and pieces of useless, but that is a minor complaint about a good book. Copyright 2005, The Washington Post Co. All Rights Reserved. --This text refers to an unprinted or unavailable edition of this title. The Black Death crossed Europe from 1340 to the early 1350s, killing a third of the population. Building on recent research, as well as first-hand accounts, veteran author Kelly (Three on the Edge, etc.) describes how infected rats, brought by genoese commercial ships returning from the East and docked in Sicily, transported fleas that spread the disease when they bit people. Two types of plague seem to have prevailed: bubonic plague, characterized by swelling of the lymph nodes and bubo, a type of boiling; and pneumonic plague, characterized by lung infections and spitting blood. Those hit by the plague died quickly. Survivors often tried to flee, but the plague was so widespread that there was virtually no escape from infection. Kelly recounts various reactions to the plague. The citizens of Venice, for example, created a civic response to the crisis, while Avignon fell apart. The author details the appearance of flagellants, unruly gangs who believed that the plague was a punishment from God and roamed the country biling as penance. Gathering and burning Jews, whom they blamed for the plague, the floggings also sparked widespread anti-Semitism. This is an excellent, accessible and captivating overview. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All Rights Reserved. --This text refers to an unprinted or unavailable edition of this title. John Kelly is an independent scientist specializing in the intersection of European history with health, human behavior and science. His books include The Graves Are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People; The most devastating plague of all time; and Three on the Edge.Matthew Lloyd Davies is a veteran actor, audiobook narrator, and director. Throughout his acting career, he has made regular appearances at the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal National Theatre, in the West End, on international tours and in award-winning television shows and films. -This text refers to the audioCD edition. Edition.

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