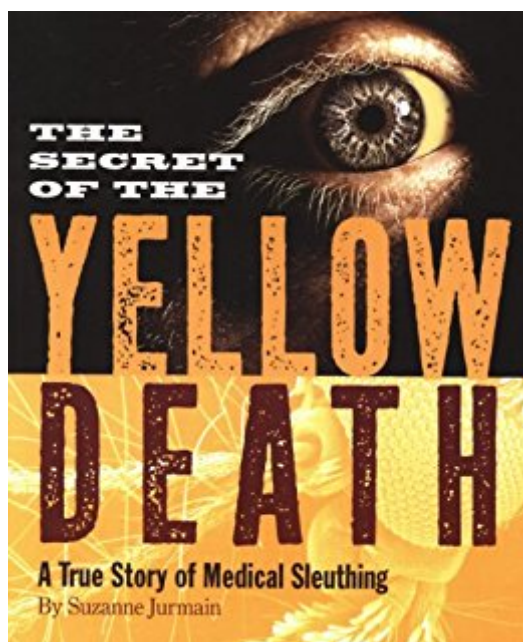


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The Secret Of The Yellow Death: A True Story Of Medical Sleuthing



Synopsis

Red oozes from the patient's gums. He has a rushing headache and the whites of his eyes look like lemons. He will likely die within days. Here is the true story of how four Americans and one Cuban tracked down a killer, one of the world's most vicious plagues: yellow fever. Set in fever-stricken Cuba, the reader feels the heavy air, smell the stench of disease, hear the whine of mosquitoes biting human volunteers during the surreal experiments. Exploring themes of courage, cooperation, and the ethics of human experimentation, this gripping account is ultimately a story of the triumph of science.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As book required for school reading, I expected "The Secret of the Yellow Death" to be monotonous and unnecessarily long-winded. Instead, I was pleasantly surprised, this book is actually a quick read and contains plenty of genuinely interesting facts. I would recommend it to other readers, even those such as me who generally prefer fantasy to non-fiction.

Wonderful book. My boys have enjoyed it. My Grandpa Bob even liked reading the book. I learned a great deal about Walter Reed and Yellow Fever.

Well written book! Even though it's a young adult book, this adult learned so much about Yellow Fever. Sometimes I don't want to read a long, drawn out book to learn something. This was perfect.

I read a boat load of MG/Kidlit non-fiction, and I have to say that this is some of the best writing and story telling that I've run across in that category. I picked this book up at the library because I was preparing to read Laurie Andersen's *FEVER, 1793*. Both of my teens have read that book and it's been on my TBR forever. And I guess part of my motivation in adding *THE SECRET OF THE YELLOW DEATH* to my reading list was to learn more about the disease so I could determine for myself how realistic Andersen's book was. *THE SECRET OF THE YELLOW DEATH* turned out to be very readable. The author, Suzanne Jurmain, tells the story of Dr. Walter Reed and his compatriots and their search in Cuba for the cause of Yellow Jack, or Yellow Fever. She makes a mystery out of the pursuit of the cause of the disease. And she exposes the heroic efforts of the doctors and the others who volunteered to be part of the experiments. Can you imagine laying in a bed in clothes and on the sheets of people who had just died of this horrendous disease? Unwashed, the clothes stunk of the sweat and vomit of the victims but you needed to lay in them for a few days... to make sure you did or didn't get sick. How about letting a mosquito bite you who had recently bitten a patient laying in the hospital ward who you knew had the disease? There is real heroism in this story and the author brings life to the tale. Good artwork and photos. ~library find
Accelerated Reader: 7.1 / points: 3.0
Lexile: 1010L

Fantastic book, with an attention grabbing first paragraph describing in detail, the horrible symptoms of yellow fever. The author, Suzanne Jurmain, did an awesome job describing how doctors from the United States & Cuba worked together to solve the mystery of yellow fever. This disease caused deaths for centuries in Africa and the Americas. I learned that it wasn't only limited to tropical areas, but caused deaths in Memphis, Tennessee, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, too. As I was reading her book, all I could think of was how this story of medical sleuthing could help a young science student understand what goes into medical research. Suzanne Jurmain explains, in a writing style that kept my interest, the process of medical sleuthing: the dedication it takes, frustration that needs to be kept under control, questions that need to be asked, the importance of detailed notes,

controlled experiments, & record keeping. She has shown the systematic process a researcher must go through to solve a problem. Not only is the scourge of yellow fever detailed in this book, it also contains some great life lessons. Cuban Dr. Carlos Finlay, presents a great lesson in this book. For 20 years he tried unsuccessfully to prove his theory that mosquitoes carried yellow fever. He was called 'crazy' and 'touched,' his ideas 'lunatic.' It didn't matter how much he was ridiculed, Dr. Finlay never quit. He continued to work tirelessly trying to prove his theory. Perseverance, believing in yourself...both are great lessons for a budding scientist or inventor, etc. to learn. Although Dr. Finlay is not the book's focus, he was instrumental in helping solve the yellow fever mystery. After enduring decades of ridicule, I can only imagine how he must have felt as he was honored in several different ways during his lifetime & nominated three times for a Nobel prize. A young soldier, Private Dean, provides a lesson in honesty. He could have easily earned \$10 & lied about his whereabouts during the week yellow fever was incubating inside him. Instead he answered honestly. I see so much of the 'what's in it for me' mentality these days. It's refreshing to me that this soldier's story was included in Suzanne Jurmain's book. She stresses the the soldier's honesty by saying,... "but he apparently wasn't interested in telling lies." I'm sure the photos in this book will perk a young person's interest. They certainly caught my attention. Photos of a fever chart, magnified photos showing the difference between a male and female mosquito, patients in a Havana yellow fever hospital in 1899, photos & drawings of medical instruments used in the 1900's, a photo of a ladle of water containing mosquito eggs and larva, etc. Nearly every page has a photo or drawing. The appendix gives credit to the many volunteers who willingly participated in the yellow fever experiments. There's also a useful glossary of scientific terms included. This is an easy-to-read, informative, well-researched book that never lost my interest. "The Secret of the Yellow Death" is a great read for anyone interested in yellow fever and/or medical research (some of the steps in their process are illegal today), as well as, an inquisitive, science-minded student. It could even be used in a classroom.

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