



The Secret of the Yellow Death: A True Story of Medical Sleuthing

By Suzanne Jurmain

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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.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 6–10—This medical mystery is extremely interesting, easy to read, and well illustrated with period photos. It's the story of Walter Reed and his team of U.S. Army doctors who went to Cuba in 1900 to study yellow fever and determine how it was spread. It was important in light of the United States's involvement in a war with Spain for Cuba's freedom and for future developments in South America. Yellow fever outbreaks, such as the one in Philadelphia in 1793, had long plagued America and her neighbors to the south, but despite advances in bacteriology, no progress had been made in discovering how the disease was spread. Jurmain explains Reed's approach to the scientific problem and how it changed over time as more was learned. The individual doctors and volunteers involved are brought to life by the author's use of primary sources such as letters, reports, etc. How the team eventually discovered and then verified that yellow fever was spread by mosquitoes was a combination of luck, good scientific practices, and careful note keeping. Young people interested in medicine or scientific discovery will find this book engrossing, as will history students. End matter includes short biographical sketches of all the volunteers who took part in the experiments, at great risk to their own lives. Exemplary nonfiction.—*Robin Henry, Wakeland High School, Frisco, TX* END

Review

"With plenty of gory details . . . Even reluctant readers will respond to the gruesome descriptions of the disease and of brave volunteers . . . Quotations from the doctors' letters and later accounts by other participants gives the story an immediacy heightened by conversational writing full of questions and cliffhangers . . . powerful exploration of a disease that killed 100,000 U.S. citizens in the 1800s."--*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

Suzanne Tripp Jurmain was born into a theatrical family, making her acting debut at age four and appearing in a number of television programs during her childhood and teen years. After earning an honors degree in English at UCLA, she worked at UCLA's Fowler Museum before becoming a freelance writer. She has published several award-winning books for children on historical subjects, including *The Secret of the Yellow Death*, and the picture books *Worst of Friends: Thomas Jefferson, John Adams and the True Story of an American Feud*, *George Did It*, and *Nice Work, Franklin!*, all illustrated by Larry Day. Suzanne Jurmain lives with her husband in Los Angeles. Visit her website at www.suzannejurmain.com.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Timothy Rowe:

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Robert Burke:

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