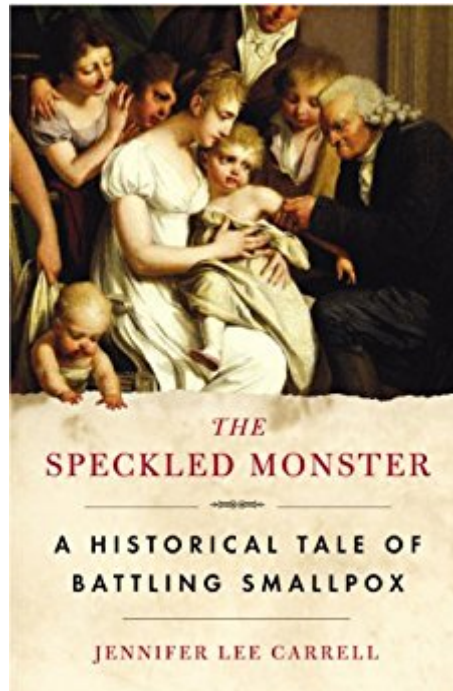




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The Speckled Monster



Synopsis

The Speckled Monster tells the dramatic story of two parents who dared to fight back against smallpox. After barely surviving the agony of smallpox themselves, they flouted eighteenth-century medicine by borrowing folk knowledge from African slaves and Eastern women in frantic bids to protect their children. From their heroic struggles stems the modern science of immunology as well as the vaccinations that remain our only hope should the disease ever be unleashed again. Jennifer Lee Carrell transports readers back to the early eighteenth century to tell the tales of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Dr. Zabdiel Boylston, two iconoclastic figures who helped save London and Boston from the deadliest disease mankind has known.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was a fascinating read. At first I thought "how am I going to get through this old English style language?" But very quickly I adapted to it. After all it IS English! The history of the inoculation for Smallpox is extremely interesting. It's hard to believe people were so resistant to something that could spare them misery and death, but that's the way it was, and I guess it might be that way today

with another kind of disease. The writing is at times hard to understand. The author uses colons so frequently that I got lost among them. But nevertheless she tells a good story and gives one plenty of food for thought. I recommend it to lovers of historical fiction, although little of it was actually fiction. I would have given it five stars except for the writer's tendency to go on a bit much. Very good just the same!

The combined biographies of a male physician in Boston and a female aristocrat in London result in an exciting race against death by smallpox. Carrell's substantial work (500+ pages) of fictionalized history, obviously well-researched, is readable and informative. Many of the names we know from the American Colonial period turn up in the narrative of medical daring and desperation. That alone is worth the price of the download, a bit more than you would pay for sheer fiction these days. The humble Zabdiel Boylston contrasts nicely with the audacious Lady Mary Wortle, member of royal society at a time when the king was stubborn and the influence of Sir Hans Sloane, whose collections inspired the founding of the British Museum, was at its zenith. Both hero and heroine are persecuted for believing in inoculation, a risky means of addressing the horrible "plague" of the 18th century. The fact that they each learned about the technique of inserting matter from diseased patients' sores under the skin of as yet unaffected citizens is particularly interesting because Boylston learned about it from his African slaves, and Lady Mary learned from her observations in exotic Turkey, the culture of which she embraced. Ostracized by the medical "experts" and demonized by frightened contemporaries, they prevailed in promoting a folk remedy as the most efficient means of protecting the population. In London, it took experimenting with prisoners before the aristocracy were won over. In Boston, the motivation was mainly to survive. Carrell has Boylston meeting Lady Mary in London, a fact not substantiated, but interesting to give the account an aura of romance. On a Kindle, it is a long read. The notes take up the last 20% of the space. In sum, it is more history than science, but this approach to further understanding of medical practice is painless.

Mauve: How One Man Invented a Color That Changed the World

I've read this book before and it was so good I had to own it! I can't wait to read it again! It's a easy to read story (personalized by characters that you follow throughout the book) on how the small pox vaccine was discovered. It's not dry or boring. Jennifer Lee Carrell does an amazing job of telling the story in a way that keeps your attention and the pages turning! Such a great read for anyone who enjoys reading books about medical conditions.

Absolutely one of my favorite medical histories. The story reads almost like a novel, but is historically factual based on real events surrounding the discovery of small pox inoculation in the West. Many footnotes document the original sources. It's a book I like to reread periodically and give as a gift to my friend who enjoy this genre.

Just the title had me hooked. This is a well-written history of small pox, and the surprising origins of inoculation and vaccination. It's been a while since I've read this, but I found the book really worthwhile when I was researching smallpox for a book I was writing. Plus, it's a real good read.

This is a fictionalized account of smallpox in England and in Boston in the early 18th century. While many people are familiar with the story of Jenner and vaccination against smallpox using the cowpox virus, fewer people are aware of the process of variolation, which used small amount of smallpox to give the recipients a milder case which protected them from the disease. This was practiced in Africa, Turkey and the far east and was "rediscovered" and brought into practice by two brave people, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, a survivor of this terrible disease. and Zabdiel Boylston, a doctor in Boston. Each took much risk to spearhead the use of this practice, and in some ways, suffered for their beliefs. The author has done an enormous amount of research into smallpox and the history of variolation and does a nice job of building a full story about each side rather than just a recitation of the facts.

Great story that is well told(I'm sure with some literary license).As an MD myself ,it was wonderful to see the medical world as it really existed in the early 1700's and how they struggled with this killer disease from a very personal level.Lots of personal/medical and political intrigue.

I found this book to be informative and engaging from the beginning. I had to keep asking myself if it was fiction or not, and in many instances the writing just pulled me into the scenery. I enjoyed the archaic letters and the use of documentation to add verisimilitude to the story. Whether all the events occurred as written here is immaterial to enjoying the text, because we'll never know and what remains is that they could have happened more or less along the lines of Dr. Carrell's story. Some scenes were particularly riveting - especially after Boylston is ordered to cease the inoculations and his family is endangered. Equally catching is the tense and tight prose that follows Lady Mary on her secret missions to fight smallpox. This book seems to cross the boundaries between fiction and creative non-fiction, but to me it was very satisfying and difficult to put down.

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