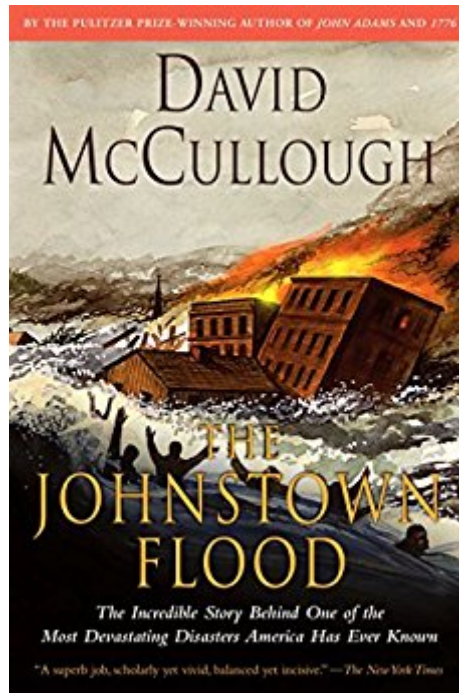




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Johnstown Flood



Synopsis

The stunning story of one of America's great disasters, a preventable tragedy of Gilded Age America, brilliantly told by master historian David McCullough. At the end of the nineteenth century, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, was a booming coal-and-steel town filled with hardworking families striving for a piece of the nation's burgeoning industrial prosperity. In the mountains above Johnstown, an old earth dam had been hastily rebuilt to create a lake for an exclusive summer resort patronized by the tycoons of that same industrial prosperity, among them Andrew Carnegie, Henry Clay Frick, and Andrew Mellon. Despite repeated warnings of possible danger, nothing was done about the dam. Then came May 31, 1889, when the dam burst, sending a wall of water thundering down the mountain, smashing through Johnstown, and killing more than 2,000 people. It was a tragedy that became a national scandal. Graced by David McCullough's remarkable gift for writing richly textured, sympathetic social history, *The Johnstown Flood* is an absorbing, classic portrait of life in nineteenth-century America, of overweening confidence, of energy, and of tragedy. It also offers a powerful historical lesson for our century and all times: the danger of assuming that because people are in positions of responsibility they are necessarily behaving responsibly.

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Customer Reviews

This was a book written on one of the worst disaster in the history of the United States and it could have been prevented if the hunt club had of heeded the warnings but they didn't want to put money and labor into the dam , heavy rains came wiped out the damn and the town of Johnstown Pa. and several other smaller towns leaving several hundred dead or missing. In it all the hunt club really got away with murder .

Can't say I "like" reading about a devastating flood, but I love the way David McCullough wrote it. It opened my eyes about big industry at that time and how they allowed this flood to happen because of an elite club founded by rich industrial magnates. I live in PA since 1992, and never knew anything about this horrific flood. Now I'm more interested in the history of this state.

Super book, this gave me much greater insight on a topic I hadn't known much about before. One's feet feel a bit damp after a chapter or two. I could hardly put this book down. Great writing about what took place in Johnstown about a century ago. One is awed by the terribly, disturbing, yet aptly descriptive McCullough language. The disaster truly comes alive for folks like me, who'd heard of the event but never really understood it's terrible consequences. McCullough makes this story read like a novel except that the facts there. Until I'd read this book I never known that the wealthy REALLY took on none of the of the blame, it seems utterly monstrous that none of the blame fell upon "club members" who'd built the lake, and the spillway.

This year, I have begun reading Mr. McCullough's books, including Truman and the Wright Brothers. I bought this selection for my Kindle, and read it with zest during an airplane flight. Mr. McCullough's writing style is distinctive, and his ability to weave a narrative jammed with facts and figures, and not be tiresome, is simply amazing. No wonder he has garnered so many Pulitzer prizes! The story of the flood was compelling, and once again, indicates that the pleasures and outright negligence of a few wealthy individuals came into conflict with the safety of the general populace of Johnstown and neighboring communities, and as a consequence, they experienced a catastrophe of biblical proportions. The only criticism I have is that when using the little Kindle, I had great difficulty in deciphering the maps of the area that were in the original book. If I had been able to read those maps more easily, and refer to them repeatedly, as one often does when reading the

paper version, it would have clarified my understanding of the geographical dynamics that made this event so devastating. That said, the little Kindle is my "go-to" device when flying, and it didn't disappoint me. All in all, a tale worth reading, and written by a true master of the historical narrative.

The more you read about the Johnstown Flood that happened May 31, 1889; all the more profound sadness descends on the events and aftermath of the tragedy. To this day steeped in controversy, the Great Flood of 1889 (or the Johnstown Flood) is widely known if not recognized as the most significant disaster of the 19th century that involved an industrious valley in Pennsylvania that was decimated in under an hour after the collapse of a dam that was at that time serving as a sportsman's lake for the elite and powerful. Immediately many questions and issues jump forward regarding that ill-fated Friday afternoon especially who was wholly responsible for the loss and devastation of so many lives? Were these horrific series of events preventable in anyway? Were there any warning signs before the dam collapsed? With these and other questions in mind, Johnstown Flood by David McCullough takes the reader right back to before and after the disaster and presents both sides of events, letting his audience come to their own conclusions. Alternating between views from on top of the mountain and down below in the valley, the facts flow thick as the author introduces names that are forever attached to that May afternoon. Details concerning weather conditions, social lives, economy, geography etc. are also shared in a paced voice that goes over basically every aspect and topic above and below the South Fork Dam. It may take a little more patience than some are willing to give, but please don't give up on this book because once the foundation of meticulous research is set down then this title can read at times as a riveting novel and finishes quite fascinating and thought-provoking. It certainly felt that way for this reader but I will be the first to admit the leaping forward and back of time, subjects and minute facts became a little monotonous and at a few times frustrating but it was well worth slowing down and understanding all sides of arguments by the final page. I will also admit the small collection of maps and pictures placed at the end were somewhat disappointing in this book, but somehow that negative oddly appealed to my love of personal research and I found some amazing photographs and maps in my own search. On that line, it may help those interested to print out a larger period map of Pennsylvania to follow along with the vivid portions of this narrative. The reality of events and magnitude of loss will also become apparent for the reader with the closing pages that many may agree pays an appropriate somber tribute and lists the 2,209 reasons the Johnstown Flood should never be forgotten.

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