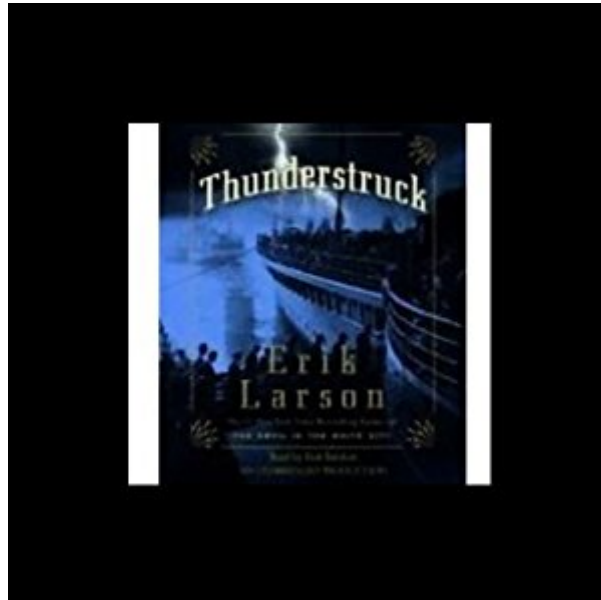




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Thunderstruck



Synopsis

A true story of love, murder, and the end of the world—“a great hush”—In *Thunderstruck*, Erik Larson tells the interwoven stories of two men—Hawley Crippen, a very unlikely murderer, and Guglielmo Marconi, the obsessive creator of a seemingly supernatural means of communication—whose lives intersect during one of the greatest criminal chases of all time. Set in Edwardian London and on the stormy coasts of Cornwall, Cape Cod, and Nova Scotia, *Thunderstruck* evokes the dynamism of those years when great shipping companies competed to build the biggest, fastest ocean liners, scientific advances dazzled the public with visions of a world transformed, and the rich outdid one another with ostentatious displays of wealth. Against this background, Marconi races against incredible odds and relentless skepticism to perfect his invention: the wireless, a prime catalyst for the emergence of the world we know today. Meanwhile, Crippen, “the kindest of men,” nearly commits the perfect crime. With his superb narrative skills, Erik Larson guides these parallel narratives toward a relentlessly suspenseful meeting on the waters of the North Atlantic. Along the way, he tells of a sad and tragic love affair that was described on the front pages of newspapers around the world, a chief inspector who found himself strangely sympathetic to the killer and his lover, and a driven and compelling inventor who transformed the way we communicate. *Thunderstruck* presents a vibrant portrait of an era of science, science, and fog, inhabited by inventors, magicians, and Scotland Yard detectives, all presided over by the amiable and fun-loving Edward VII as the world slid inevitably toward the first great war of the twentieth century. Gripping from the first page, and rich with fascinating detail about the time, the people, and the new inventions that connect and divide us, *Thunderstruck* is splendid narrative history from a master of the form. From the Hardcover edition.

--This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Erik Larson's ability to pull together massive quantities of information about, around, beneath, and above any topic shines in this book ... maybe a little bit too much. Marconi and his wireless magic are interesting, if a bit difficult for the average reader (read: me, an English major) to understand. But the connection to Hawley Crippen and the murder mystery surrounding him is tenuous, and it takes a long time for the payoff. I enjoyed the book, but some members of my book club felt misled.

This is another superbly researched and fascinating book by Erik Larson. Mr. Larson has again proved to be one of our foremost historical authors, bringing the famous and little-known, albeit enthralling, events of the past to life in a way that mesmerizes the reader. I'm a huge fan!

Thunderstruck is a historical story in the tradition of *Devil in the White City*, Larson's best book. It tells two parallel stories-- Marconi's development of wireless communication and a London murder. The two stories become related tangentially, but largely proceed separately. The development of wireless is described in real time, with its scientific arguments and competition. The murder is a particularly gruesome one, where wireless communication leads to the apprehension. The book is well written and the stories are compelling. The weaknesses were the fact that the timelines for the two stories are told in parallel but don't actually occur at the same time. Also, it might have been useful to explain the science and engineering of wireless to give some understanding of how it actually works today.

This is a good story - but it drags a bit at times - if you are expecting another gripping read like Larson's *"Devil in the White City"* (a true masterpiece) - this is not it. This is a well researched story - and it is true - but I think it drags a bit because the story alternates its chapters between inventor Guglielmo Marconi developing his wireless - and the difficulties he encounters and the true story of a murder which rocked London, and which Marconi's fledgeling invention ultimately helped to solve. The alternating chapters are concerned with the development of the character of Dr. Hawley

Harvey Crippen - the protagonist in the gruesome murder of his wife, Bell Elmore. Maybe if I were more in tune with Marconi I would have enjoyed this more - as it was I read it and was glad when I finished the book...but I will readily admit - another more technical mind should find it far more engrossing and stimulating. I was also reading this while recuperating from major surgery - so maybe my frame of mind was not the best!

Larson's books are incredibly detailed which I love because you learn so much about real people, places and things. However, in this book he got terribly bogged down in Marconi's story and I ended up skipping over about 100 pages. I really don't think it hurt my understanding or appreciation of the true story. When we discussed the book at my book club everyone concurred--you can skip a bunch of Marconi pages starting at around page 200.

With non fiction, when everything is documented at the end, I tend to trust the author. I am not qualified to challenge the intensive research completed to create this story. As a result, I usually just take for granted that others, the publisher I assume, has performed the review and verified the facts. With that in mind....I tell myself I'm finished with the book. This time, however, I wanted to see if I was missing anything by skipping this section...I was! There is a description, in Notes I think, where Erik Larson describes his travels and experiences during research for the book. This was terrific! There is one statement, where he is trying to gain access to a library where not just anyone is allowed in, where he says he had to assure the gatekeeper that he had nothing that would produce fire or flame, and he says he regretfully had to leave his blowtorch at the desk. This is the third book of his I have read. If you have read any of them, you'll like this one. If you've read none of them you should check it out. I'm certainly glad I did!

I loved it. I had no problems with the detail involved in the Marconi part of the story, and I didn't have any problems with him switching back and forth between Marconi and Crippen, and in fact, I think he made the changes at exactly the right spots. He kept you involved and interested in both stories and didn't make you wait too long to get back to the "other" story. His "digressions" as he and some readers call them, don't bother me. I enjoyed this as much as his "The Devil in the White City" and have already pre-ordered "Dead Wake" on the final voyage of the Lusitania-didn't even finish reading the excerpt.I thought it was well-written and researched, and the formatting was better than usual-not error-free, but better than a lot of the Kindle books that I've been reading.I really only have 3 criticisms: 1.) not enough illustrations 2.) didn't really cover Crippen's trial, although he never said

he was going to, and it wasn't the main subject of the book, still. . . . 3.) the ending was rather abrupt. For me, it could have been a much longer book because I wasn't ready to have it end. I can recommend it highly.

Wow! What a wonderful read! I have to admit I read this, sort of by mistake as I thought I was reading a fiction book. I am a doctor and I found every aspect of the murder fascinating. As opposed to other readers I did not find the story of the invention of the wireless telegraph boring. On the contrary, not only did I wanted to learn more; I also found it fascinating how the author told both stories in parallel and then made the connection. And then when you think it's over, the rest that follows left me wanting more. As I reached the end of the story I asked my mother again on what year she was born so I could put this story in the context of her life and mine. I loved this book would read it again and can't wait to read other books by this author.

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