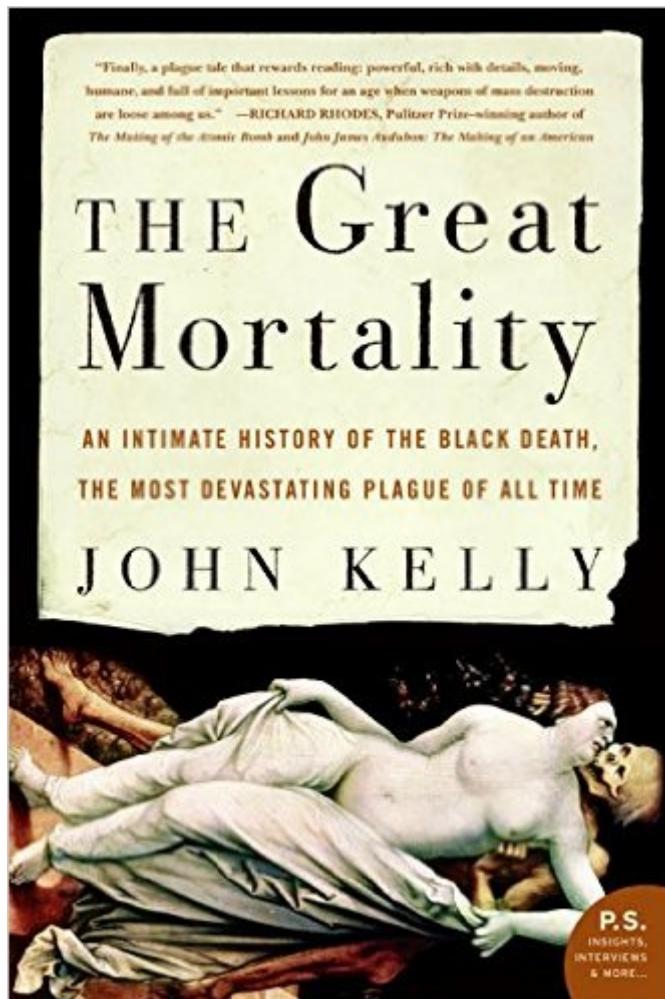


The book was found

# The Great Mortality: An Intimate History Of The Black Death, The Most Devastating Plague Of All Time



## Synopsis

La moria grandissima began its terrible journey across the European and Asian continents in 1347, leaving unimaginable devastation in its wake. Five years later, twenty-five million people were dead, felled by the scourge that would come to be called the Black Death. The Great Mortality is the extraordinary epic account of the worst natural disaster in European history -- a drama of courage, cowardice, misery, madness, and sacrifice that brilliantly illuminates humankind's darkest days when an old world ended and a new world was born.

## Book Information

Paperback: 364 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (January 31, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060006935

ISBN-13: 978-0060006938

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (174 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #104,635 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 inÂ  Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Forensic Medicine #43 inÂ  Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Pathology > Forensic Medicine #54 inÂ  Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Infectious Diseases

## Customer Reviews

In this book exploring the times and the details of the Black Plague, John Kelly introduces the lay reader to the pestilence that wiped out up to sixty percent of some of Europe's most bustling cities. From Messina to Florence to Paris to London - and all the cities and towns between and around them, the populace could not stop the spread of this particularly virulent form of *Yersinia pestis*, whether they sought laws to restrict it or simply chose to ignore it. The book provides insights into some of the potential causes of why this bout of plague is unequaled in history: sanitation, specific rodent populations (including that of the tarabagan of the Russian steppes), societal traditions, a burgeoning "global" economy, warfare, bacteriology, and other theories. The epidemiology of the disease and the forms it takes, from the "gurgling" bubos of bubonic plague to the respiratory infection that sounds frighteningly close to the hemorrhagic fevers, make for fascinating, if gruesome, reading. The author recreates the events of individuals who succumbed to *Y. pestis*

through written documentation and his own imagination. For an example, he writes "The headstone tells us only enough to suggest the following scenario . . ." He then continues for a page and a half to describe in detail the final days of a husband and wife. I found the method to make the plague more "intimate" through invented details somewhat troubling, although readers will find these passages the most compelling because of their focus on the individual. The book can occasionally be repetitive, stating in one chapter what was stated earlier.

At its best, John Kelly's "The Great Mortality" is a gripping, in your face look at the Black Death that began in 1348. Using a host of primary sources he draws the reader into what feels like a firsthand account of those grim days, all while remaining grounded in modern science and history. Unfortunately, at its worst it is a meandering account full of poorly identified speculation that fails to effectively straddle history and science. The result is an engaging, but ultimately uneven account that while worth reading fails to live up to its potential. Kelly's introduction immediately reveals some of these flaws. He offers an overview of how the plague arose in nature, how it burst out of its generally isolated ecological niche, and its impact on society and history. There is much to commend this introduction, as it quite nicely captures the evolution of a pseudo-global economy, and its impact on the spread of the disease. He also offers some interesting insight into where plague fits in the natural order, and how it made the jump from rodents to humans. However, Kelly also tends to pass off assumptions of human behavior as fact, and frequently takes contemporary sources at face value, a cardinal sin in a history, but particularly when dealing with an era as steeped in superstition as the Middle Ages. Moreover, a problem that plagues (no pun intended) "The Great Mortality" is that Kelly never seems quite sure if he wants to be primarily a historian or a scientist. The result is a flirting with scientific theory that never quite meets expectations, and leaves the reader frustrated.

[Download to continue reading...](#)

The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death, the Most Devastating Plague of All Time  
The Black Death: The Great Mortality of 1348-1350: A Brief History with Documents (Bedford Cultural Editions Series)  
Mao's Great Famine: The History of China's Most Devastating Catastrophe, 1958-1962  
Plague: Zombie Monks, The Black Death, and Other Signs of the Apocalypse  
When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS  
Black Tide: The Devastating Impact of the Gulf Oil Spill  
Mortality Effects of Infant and Child Mortality on Fertility  
How Men Age: What Evolution Reveals about Male Health and Mortality  
How to Protect Your Family's Assets from Devastating Nursing Home Costs: Medicaid Secrets (7th Edition)  
How to Protect Your Family's

Assets From Devastating Nursing Home Costs: Medicaid Secrets (8th ed.) Denial of the Soul: Spiritual and Medical Perspectives on Euthanasia and Mortality Aftermath: The Remnants of War: From Landmines to Chemical Warfare--The Devastating Effects of Modern Combat "How to Protect Your Family's Assets from Devastating Nursing Home Costs: Medicaid Secrets (6th edition)" Brain Surgeon: A Doctor's Inspiring Encounters with Mortality and Miracles The Doctors' Plague: Germs, Childbed Fever, and the Strange Story of Ignac Semmelweis (Great Discoveries) DYING TO REALLY LIVE: Finally, an After Death Survivor returns from deeply into life after death (NDEs - Life After Death? Series Book 1) Intimate Death: How the dying teach us how to live All Creatures Great and Small, All Things Bright and Beautiful, and All Things Wise and Wonderful: Three James Herriot Classics Black Magic Spells: Black Magic Spells for Beginners (Black Magick)

[Dmca](#)