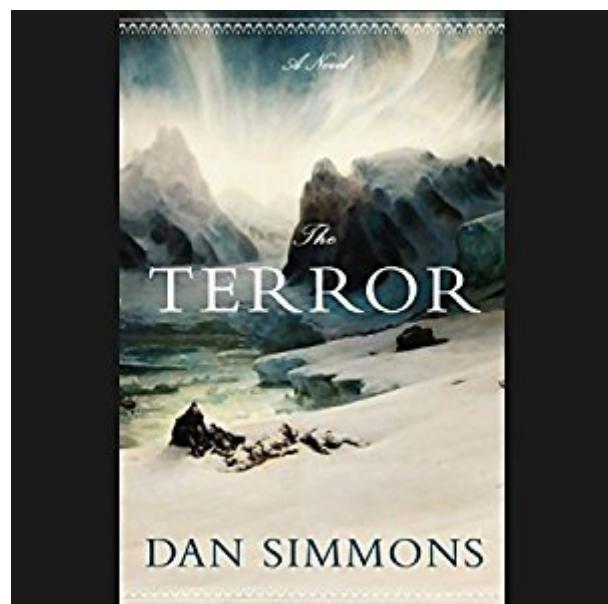


The book was found

The Terror



Synopsis

The men on board HMS Terror have every expectation of triumph. As part of the 1845 Franklin Expedition, the first steam-powered vessels ever to search for the legendary Northwest Passage, they are as scientifically supported an enterprise as has ever set forth. As they enter a second summer in the Arctic Circle without a thaw, though, they are stranded in a nightmarish landscape of encroaching ice and darkness. Endlessly cold, with diminishing rations, 126 men fight to survive with poisonous food, a dwindling supply of coal, and ships buckling in the grip of crushing ice. But their real enemy is far more terrifying. There is something out there in the frigid darkness: an unseen predator stalking their ship, a monstrous terror constantly clawing to get in. When the expedition's leader, Sir John Franklin, meets a terrible death, Captain Francis Crozier takes command and leads his surviving crewmen on a last, desperate attempt to flee south across the ice. With them travels an Inuit woman who cannot speak and who may be the key to survival, or the harbinger of their deaths. But as another winter approaches, as scurvy and starvation grow more terrible, and as the terror on the ice stalks them southward, Crozier and his men begin to fear that there is no escape. The Terror swells with the heart-stopping suspense and heroic adventure that have won Dan Simmons praise as "a writer who not only makes big promises but keeps them" (Seattle Post-Intelligencer). With a haunting and constantly surprising story based on actual historical events, The Terror is a novel that will chill you to your core. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wow! That's about the only word that comes to mind with regards to Dan Simmons' newest novel, The Terror. Call it a coincidence, but on the day I got the book in the mail from back around the middle of January, the science show on PBS, Nova, had an hour special on the 1845 Franklin Expedition. I watched it with great interest, wondering how Mr. Simmons was going to add to the tragic story with his novel. When I was able to start the book a few days later (766 pages of small print), it surprisingly took me almost two weeks to finish it, and I'm a fairly fast reader. I'd read each night before going to bed for a couple of hours and end up having bloody nightmares about the Arctic, the cold, the sounds inside the ships, and the strange creature lurking out on the ice, patiently waiting for each of the crew members to make a careless mistake so that it could kill them. I don't generally have nightmares, but I did with this book, which shows the utter craftsmanship that was used in its writing. I can happily blame Mr. Simmons for two weeks of restless sleep! Before I move on to a brief synopsis about the story, let me just say that I've been reading the novels of Dan Simmons since the late eighties and the publication of The Song of Kali. Mr. Simmons is one of those unique authors who can write with true excellence in any genre that he chooses--science fiction, horror, suspense, hard-boiled crime, mainstream, and now historical/horror. I've never been disappointed with a novel by Mr. Simmons, and when he sets his mind to it, he can literally scare the living daylights out of you with the written word. Few writers today are capable of doing that to a reader.

Normally, when 250+ reviewers have had their say, I'd opt out of commenting on the book in question. However, since I doggedly stuck it out through all 769 pages of THE TERROR, I guess I earned the right to add my two cents. First off, you have to give Dan Simmons high marks for imagination and for research. By the time you've read THE TERROR, you know more about polar exploration, ice physics, the short- and long-term effects of extremely low temperatures on homo sapiens, food canning, 19th century English social mores, Inuit culture, etc. than any 1,000 people picked at random. And, at first glance, the marvelous twist he supplies to his re-imagining of the fate of the 1845 Franklin expedition - there's a wee beastie out there as well - promises chills galore. Though I enjoyed much of THE TERROR, ultimately I was disappointed. The book bogs down with endless descriptions of the god-awful conditions the men had to endure, way too much verbage which ultimately dilutes the book's punch. Somewhere around page 400, I stopped enjoying the tale, lost that suspension of disbelief novels need to capture to be successful and began questioning plot elements. The book's erratic narrative style was another bump in the road. Simmons started out having characters relating events in succeeding chapters, which initially jump

back and forth chronologically. Then he jettisoned that device, switching to a straight-ahead timeline before ending the book in time-out-of-space native culture mumbo-jumbo. Likewise, about halfway through, he began featuring other characters as narrators who seemed to be introduced mainly to set up a later plot development. To his credit, many of the characters were well drawn. Crozier, Franklin, Irving, Fitzjames, the monstrous Hickey, etc.

One of the things I love most about historical fiction, and history, is creation myths and the impact they have upon their culture's religion and social ideas policies. Knowing a creation myth can give you the outlook on life for an entire culture. For instance, Greeks believe that first there was chaos and out of it came love and then the world, the sky, the gods and finally animals and people. Eskimos believe something entirely different and it says much about their culture and way of life. Now you may be asking what Eskimo creation myths have to do with a historical novel about an expedition to find the Northwest Passage which was never seen from again. The answer is quite a lot really. I won't give it away but keep in mind that the author of this novel, Dan Simmons is known mostly for his science fiction and fantasy work. Keeping with that genera, though this book is definitely historical fiction, it has heavy mystical influences and a great deal to do with the creation myths of the people who habitat the cold land near the article circle. "The Terror" is based on real people and real events-to an extent. There was an exploratory expedition headed up by Sir John Franklin to find the Northwest Passage and the two ships were named "The Erebus" and "The Terror" and they did disappear never to be seen from again. However the events of this book are all fiction. When we begin the story the two ships have been trapped in the ice, immobile for two years. Their food supplies are running down, and their coal, and their moral. A mysterious Eskimo woman with no speech is living with them, feared by many of the men as a witch.

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