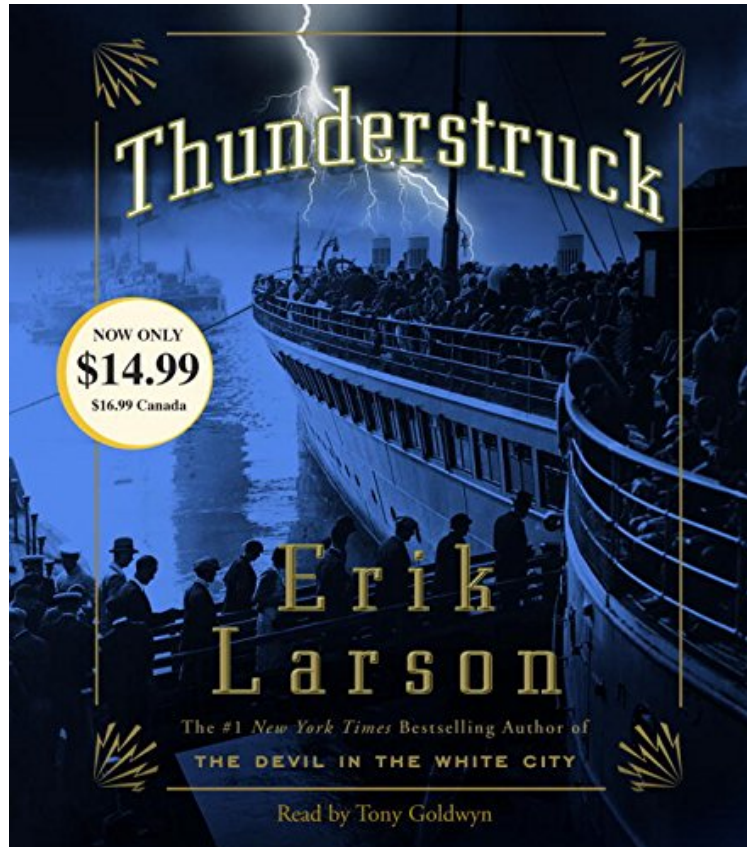


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Thunderstruck

Erik Larson

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Erik Larson : Thunderstruck before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thunderstruck:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. SUPERBLY RESEARCHED AND FASCINATING By SD 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! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Notes and Sources By Rob Sommers 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! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful wonderful read! By Milagros Arroyo 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 want 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.

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.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . [Signature] ed by James L. Swanson In this splendid, beautifully written followup to his blockbuster thriller, *Devil in the White City*, Erik Larson again unites the dual stories of two disparate men, one a genius and the other a killer. The genius is Guglielmo Marconi, inventor of wireless communication. The murderer is the notorious Englishman Dr. H.H. Crippen. Scientists had dreamed for centuries of capturing the power of lightning and sending electrical currents through the ether. Yes, the great cable strung across the floor of the Atlantic Ocean could send messages thousands of miles, but the holy grail was a device that could send wireless messages anywhere in the world. Late in the 19th century, Europe's most brilliant theoretical scientists raced to unlock the secret of wireless communication. Guglielmo Marconi, impatient, brash, relentless and in his early 20s, achieved the astonishing breakthrough in September 1895. His English detractors were incredulous. He was a foreigner and, even worse, an Italian! Marconi himself admitted that he was not a great scientist or theorist. Instead, he exemplified the Edisonian model of tedious, endless trial and error. Despite Marconi's achievements, it took a sensational murder to bring unprecedented worldwide attention to his invention. Dr. Hawley Harvey Crippen, a proper, unattractive little man with bulging, bespectacled eyes, possessed an impassioned, love-starved heart. An alchemist and peddler of preposterous patent medicines, he killed his wife, a woman Larson portrays lavishly as a gold-digging, selfish, stage-struck, flirtatious, inattentive, unfaithful clotheshorse. The hapless Crippen endured it all until he found the sympathetic Other Woman and true love. The "North London Cellar Murder" so captured the popular imagination in 1910 that people wrote plays and composed sheet music about it. It wasn't just what Crippen did, but how. How did he obtain the poison crystals, skin her and dispose of all those bones so neatly? The manhunt climaxed with a fantastic sea chase from Europe to Canada, not just by a pursuing vessel but also by invisible waves racing lightning-fast above the ocean. It seemed that all the world knew except for the doctor and his lover, the prey of dozens of frenetic Marconi wireless transmissions. In addition to writing stylish portraits of all of his main characters, Larson populates his narrative with an irresistible supporting cast. He remains a master of the fact-filled vignette and humorous aside that propel the story forward. *Thunderstruck* triumphantly resurrects the spirit of another age, when one man's public genius linked the world, while another's private turmoil made him a symbol of the end of "the great hush" and the first victim of a new era when instant communication, now inescapable, conquered the world. 14-city tour. (Oct.) James L. Swanson's most recent book, *Manhunt: The 12-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killer*, was published by Morrow in February. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From School Library Journal Adult/High School Larson's page-turner juxtaposes scientific intrigue with a notorious murder in London at the turn of the 20th century. It alternates the story of Marconi's quest for the first wireless transatlantic communication amid scientific jealousies and controversies with the tale of a mild-mannered murderer caught as a result of the invention. The

eccentric figures include the secretive Marconi and one of his rivals, physicist Oliver Lodge, who believed that he was first to make the discovery, but also insisted that the electromagnetic waves he studied were evidence of the paranormal. The parallel tale recounts the story of Dr. Hawley Harvey Crippen, accused of murdering his volatile, shrewish wife. As he and his unsuspecting lover attempted to escape in disguise to Quebec on a luxury ocean liner, a Scotland Yard detective chased them on a faster boat. Unbeknownst to the couple, the world followed the pursuit through wireless transmissions to newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic. A public that had been skeptical of this technology suddenly grasped its power. In an era when wireless has a whole new connotation, young adults interested in the history of scientific discovery will be enthralled with this fascinating account of Marconi and his colleagues' attempts to harness a new technology. And those who enjoy a good mystery will find the unraveling of Dr. Crippen's crime, complete with turn-of-the-century forensics, appealing to the CSI crowd. A thrilling read. Pat Bangs, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Bookmarks Magazine As with Erik Larson's previous book, *The Devil in the White City* (*** May/June 2003), *Thunderstruck* alternates between the perspectives of two historical figures, one a scientist and one a killer. Opinions vary as to whether *Thunderstruck* is as successful as its predecessor. The murderer's story is deeply compelling, but the recounting of Marconi's tribulations and triumphs as an inventor occasionally fails to hold some readers' interest. Moreover, the two stories take place in different years, which creates perspective shifts that some critics found disorienting. ers uniformly praised the pacing and language, however, and admired Larson's choice of main characters, both of whom are as fascinating as they were a hundred years ago. Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc.