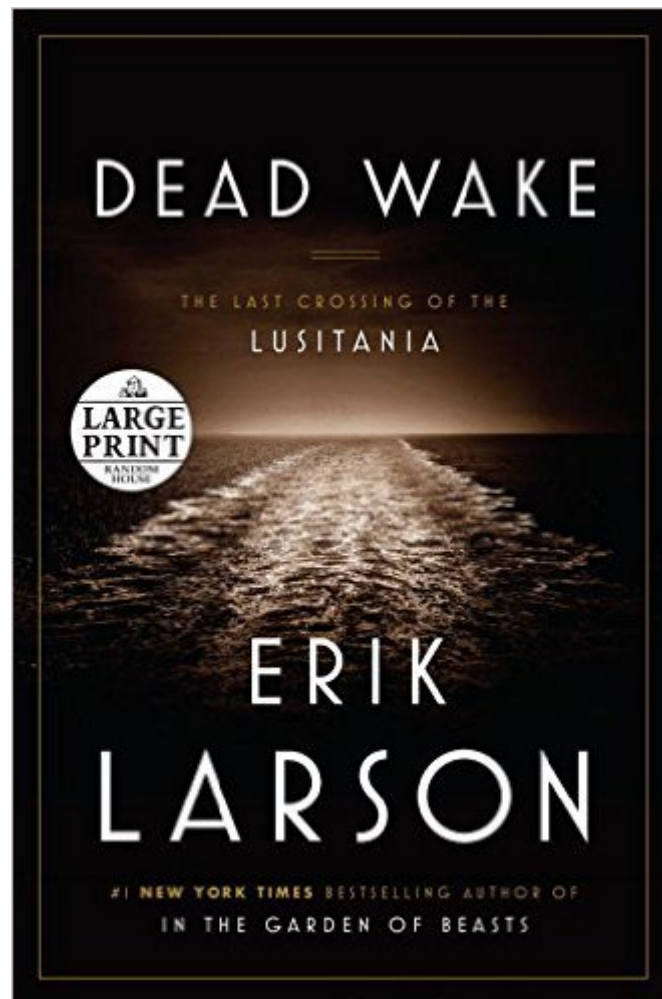


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Dead Wake: The Last Crossing Of The Lusitania (Random House Large Print)



Synopsis

#1 New York Times Bestseller From the #1 bestselling author and master of narrative nonfiction comes the enthralling story of the sinking of the Lusitania On May 1, 1915, with WWI entering its tenth month, a luxury ocean liner as richly appointed as an English country house sailed out of New York, bound for Liverpool, carrying a record number of children and infants. The passengers were surprisingly at ease, even though Germany had declared the seas around Britain to be a war zone. For months, German U-boats had brought terror to the North Atlantic. But the Lusitania was one of the era's great transatlantic "Greyhounds" "the fastest liner then in service" and her captain, William Thomas Turner, placed tremendous faith in the gentlemanly strictures of warfare that for a century had kept civilian ships safe from attack. Germany, however, was determined to change the rules of the game, and Walther Schwieger, the captain of Unterseeboot-20, was happy to oblige. Meanwhile, an ultra-secret British intelligence unit tracked Schwieger's U-boat, but told no one. As U-20 and the Lusitania made their way toward Liverpool, an array of forces both grand and achingly small "hubris, a chance fog, a closely guarded secret, and more" all converged to produce one of the great disasters of history. It is a story that many of us think we know but don't, and Erik Larson tells it thrillingly, switching between hunter and hunted while painting a larger portrait of America at the height of the Progressive Era. Full of glamour and suspense, *Dead Wake* brings to life a cast of evocative characters, from famed Boston bookseller Charles Lauriat to pioneering female architect Theodate Pope to President Woodrow Wilson, a man lost to grief, dreading the widening war but also captivated by the prospect of new love. Gripping and important, *Dead Wake* captures the sheer drama and emotional power of a disaster whose intimate details and true meaning have long been obscured by history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Erik Larson is not capable of writing anything less than a gripping account of history. All of his previous books have been spellbinding accounts of storms, cities, crimes, inventions, ships and/or war. In *DEAD WAKE: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*, Larson returns to the subjects of war and ships and stirs in a potent mixture of international politics as well as a little romance to once again seduce his readers with a contemporary view of an historical situation. Written to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the sinking of the *Lusitania*, a Cunard passenger liner sunk by a German U-Boat, Larson's account differs in several ways from other well-known books produced on the subject. Diana Preston's *LUSITANIA: An Epic Tragedy*, published in 2002, is one of the best-written accounts of the disaster. The difference between Preston's work and Larson's might be found in the subtitle of the Larson book which emphasizes the crossing while Preston's book is most memorable for its account of the sinking and its aftermath, particularly accounts of survival. No one can read Preston's book without feeling as if he/she is clinging to a piece of wreckage in a cold, spring sea awaiting rescue. No one can read Larson's book and not feel like the proverbial fly on the wall in the infamous Room 40 of the British Admiralty. While Preston addressed Room 40, in Larson's writing, the room takes on a role and becomes a character (albeit not a very appealing one) in its own right. Larson skillfully gets into the mindset of Winston Churchill and how determined he was to see America enter the war. In the States, Larson goes back in time and brings President Woodrow Wilson to life through a love affair that seemed to take up more of his time than thinking about the suitability of America's neutrality.

DEAD WAKE: THE LAST CROSSING OF THE LUSITANIA is the story of a horrific event that ended the lives of over 1,000 people. The sinking also played a key role in changing America's view toward Germany, and helped change America's "neutral" position in World War I. It was two years after this sinking that the United States declared war on Germany. Recall that at this time America was not yet in the war against Germany; America was neutral. Over in England, Churchill hoped this would change: "For our part, we want the traffic--the more the better; and if some of it gets into trouble, better still." Britain had hopes that somehow, the U.S would "feel moved to join the Allies, and in so doing tip the balance irrevocably in their favor." The *Lusitania*

was a gigantic ship. To give you an idea of the size of the ship, there were 192 furnaces on board powering the gigantic turbines. Just to keep the ship running, there were a hundred stokers working each shift, shoveling a thousand tons of coal a day. At the helm of the ship was the experienced Captain Turner. The author notes that the captain was "the most seasoned captain at Canard Lines--the Commodore of the line. He had confronted all manner of shipboard crises, including mechanical mishaps, fires, cracked furnaces, open sea rescues, and extreme weather of all kinds. He was said to be fearless." To set the stage for the U-boat attack, the author gives a background on submarine warfare: "The submarine as a weapon had come a long way by this time, certainly to the point where it killed its own crews only rarely." • Life aboard a German U-boat was not very comfortable--hot, humid, and cramped: "When deep underwater the boat developed an interior atmospheric like unto that of a tropical swamp..."

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