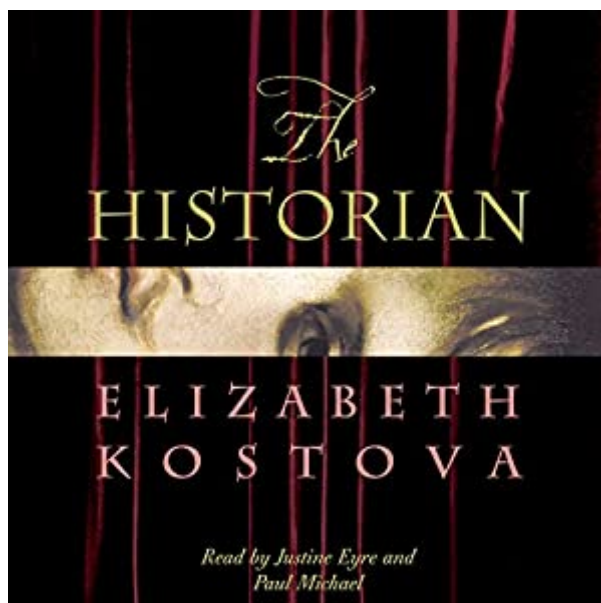


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The Historian



Synopsis

Late one night, exploring her father's library, a young woman finds an ancient book and a cache of yellowing letters. The letters are all addressed to "My dear and unfortunate successor", and they plunge her into a world she never dreamed of - a labyrinth where the secrets of her father's past and her mother's mysterious fate connect to an inconceivable evil hidden in the depths of history. The letters provide links to one of the darkest powers that humanity has ever known - and to a centuries-long quest to find the source of that darkness and wipe it out. It is a quest for the truth about Vlad the Impaler, the medieval ruler whose barbarous reign formed the basis of the legend of Dracula. Generations of historians have risked their reputations, their sanity, and even their lives to learn the truth about Vlad the Impaler and Dracula. Now one young woman must decide whether to take up this quest herself - to follow her father in a hunt that nearly brought him to ruin years ago, when he was a vibrant young scholar and her mother was still alive. What does the legend of Vlad the Impaler have to do with the modern world? Is it possible that the Dracula of myth truly existed - and that he has lived on, century after century, pursuing his own unknowable ends? The answers to these questions cross time and borders, as first the father and then the daughter search for clues, from dusty Ivy League libraries to Istanbul, Budapest, and the depths of Eastern Europe. In city after city, in monasteries and archives, in letters and in secret conversations, the horrible truth emerges about Vlad the Impaler's dark reign - and about a time-defying pact that may have kept his awful work alive down through the ages. Parsing obscure signs and hidden texts, reading codes worked into the fabric of medieval monastic traditions - and evading the unknown adversaries who will go to any lengths to conceal and protect Vlad's ancient powers - one woman comes ever closer to the secret of her own past and a confrontation with the very definition of evil. Elizabeth Kostova's debut novel is an adventure of monumental proportions, a relentless tale that blends fact and fantasy, history and the present, with an assurance that is almost unbearably suspenseful - and utterly unforgettable.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This was the first "adult" novel I read as a child, and it's still a book I come back to over and over as one of my favorites. I absolutely love fantasy novels that are heavily grounded in history and this book covers such a unique area of history, and accurately. The writing is superb and manages to stitch together multiple timelines seamlessly. It covers bits of history from Vlad the Impaler (the original inspiration for Dracula), the history of vampire lore, and some history of the USSR. It also doesn't put vampires in a romantic light like so many books do nowadays but makes them genuinely scary.

Now, if you are into the undead and a tour of Eastern Europe this is the book for you! This is the second time I have read this book, I enjoyed it just as much the second time. The story takes the reader on several adventures from England to Turkey to Hungary and Bulgaria. The book is full of folklore from these countries regarding Dracula and how his servants still walk among us. The cast of characters is vast and diverse, great for a book this size, yet, you are not bogged down with too many individuals to know how they fit into the story. Give it a try.

Excellent take on a well-worn theme. Elizabeth Kostova has written a compelling historical novel which intertwines a fictional and decidedly disturbing tale spanning centuries with the actual history of Europe. This merging of fact and fiction is done so well, in my opinion, that one often feels the need to look into the actual historical events to validate their possible connection with the imaginary ones and to check whether the imagined tales might in fact be true. Kostova does get a little carried away with details at times and the excitement of her story-telling gets diluted with what appears to be her obsession with "proving" the veracity of the implied historical research. But, a great story, skillfully told and one that might keep you awake for all the wrong reasons.

The Historian is one of the best books I have ever read. It is a beautiful, dark, mystery that unravels in surprising ways. Not at all an ordinary vampire story, but a stupendous mystery shrouded by time

and made clear by modern historians and scientists. For all those readers who love a true and engaging read, this book is for you. Elizabeth Kostova is a remarkable Writer who knows how to tell a marvelous story. Enjoy!

I enjoyed the book *The Historian*, then I discovered that the book actually had three parts so that it was like buying a series of books. I read them over a week of relaxing by the pool. The story line was engaging, though it moves back and forth through time so if you're one of those people who don't like that you may find it a little difficult to follow. I feel it was a really good read as it called to me every time I took a break to cool off in the pool. I would find myself wondering what the characters were up to next. The information about Europe and the lovely cities there the descriptions of the mountains and forests was a real treat. That is a part of good stories that brings you in to the action and you can almost feel the cool mountain breezes and smell the old growth pine forests. Thank you Elizabeth for what must have been years of work to bring this work to fruition, I promise the story shall live on in my mind for years to come.

For me more than the first half of the book was background and description that could have been easily condensed without hurting anything. Should at least say that while I did not enjoy all the description it was well written. The last quarter was very good.

The Historian is the tale of a father and daughter drawn together, not so much by love but by fear. It's the tale of a hidden secret, not one but two secret societies, and the danger that comes from learning about them. And the book is about Dracula, so the heroes of this book had better learn about that hidden secret before it's too late. The Dracula of this book is the Walachian despot, Vlad III, known as the Impaler. But like the Dracula of Bram Stoker's novel, he's a vampire. The story is told primarily at three points of time: 1972-74, 1954, and 1930. These are the stories of the daughter, her father, and the father's professor. As the book unfolds, we see exactly how these characters are intertwined and how they become destined to play the roles they do. As a horror fan, I'm of course intrigued by anything relating to Dracula. However, perhaps the greatest appeal of *The Historian* is as a travelogue. The reader gets to experience many interesting sights in Europe, from London and Istanbul, to Budapest and Sofia, along with locations connected with Vlad the Impaler: Poenari Castle (Vlad's castle) and Snagov Monastery (Vlad's tomb). Kostova's descriptions of various libraries and monasteries makes them come alive. But it's not just a travelogue. There are mysteries to be solved and plot

twists and constant danger. The Cold War and the paranoia it created are captured perfectly. The heroes can't just hop on a plane and go wherever they like to stop Dracula's schemes. Indeed, the rivalry between the two regimes play into Dracula's hands. There seems to be at least one annoying coincidence, or oversight, built into the story. Dracula and his evil society that seeks to protect his secrets has left several clues laying around, even after having five hundred years to eliminate those clues. And it's not like they are unaware of the clues. In fact, they have the curious habit of delivering a certain book into the hands of the heroes, impelling them to start looking into Dracula's secret! This book has been criticized for being slow, and it does unfold at a leisurely pace. But that is one of the charms of "The Historian", not a detriment. It's just not for the ADD crowd. Having said that, I would also say that the action ping-pongs between the three time periods just a little more often than I like. It's a trifle annoying and potentially confusing but not enough that anyone should not read the book. Still, if "The Historian" is ever made into a movie, I'm sure the producers will cut back on so many scene-shifts. I love the book, but the ending could have been more dramatic and more horrifying. SPOILER: If the heroine's mother had been turned into a vampire, that makes a much better motivation for faking her death since a vampire's first victims are her close family members. Yet this is the book's only shortcoming. Even with that ending, "The Historian" leaves the reader with a confirmation of the immortality of Dracula.

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