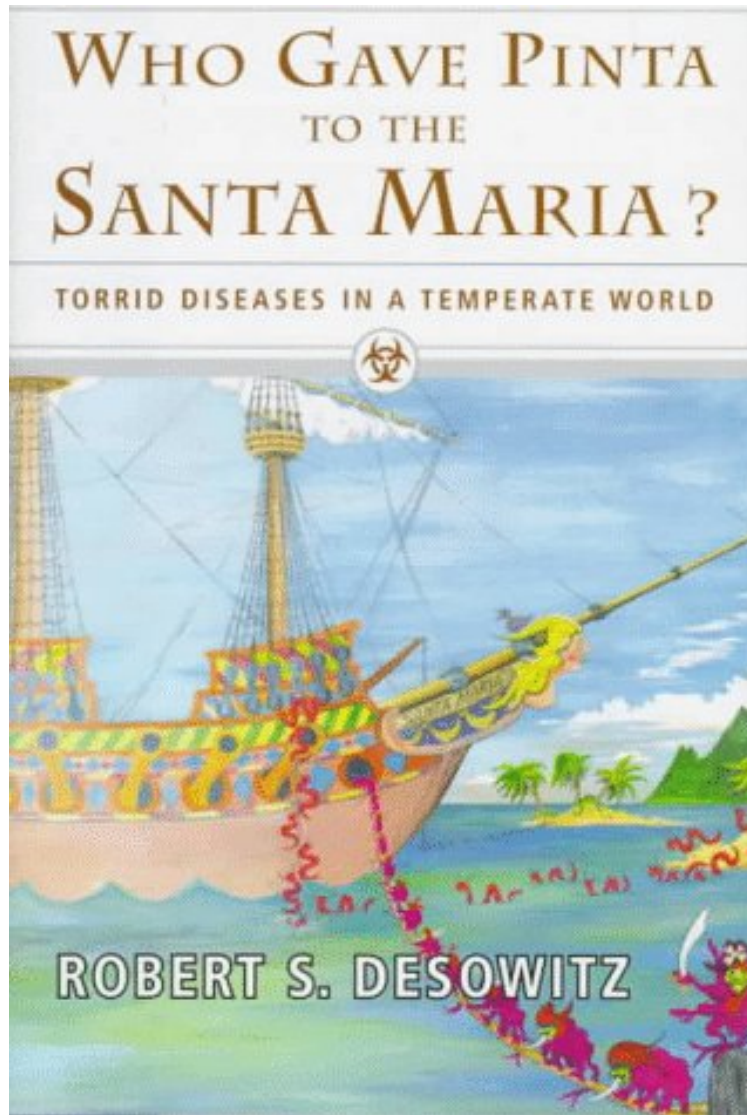


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Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria?: Torrid Diseases in a Temperate World

Robert S. Desowitz

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The particulars of parasites By James Davison Human parasites have been our close companions throughout evolutionary journey. Their complex life cycles are enough to make anybody

squeamish. Hookworm larvae, for example, burrow through the skin of bare feet, and chew their way into a blood vessel. They wash through the heart, and lodge inside the delicate capillaries of the lung. The hookworms then crawl up the airways until they are coughed up and swallowed into the digestive tract, forming a blood-sucking worm burden that lays eggs to complete the life cycle through infected human feces. Hard to believe that in areas of the American South up to 12 % of the inhabitants (particularly children) were infected with hookworm less than a hundred years ago. Such subjects become fascinating in the hands of Dr. Desowitz, who never fails to lighten his dark topic with a bit of wry humor. Reading this book is like sitting in on a great medical school lecture that you'll want to remember all your life -- but watch out! You may never want to leave home again!-- Auralgo2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Disjointed but entertaining discussion of diseaseBy KW from DCWHO GAVE PINTA is a disjointed but entertaining discussion of how several diseases were conquered. The book's disjointedness, however, makes it somewhat difficult to follow and leaves more questions open than it closes. For example, the author introduces yellow fever, degenerates to other diseases and microbes, then returns several times to add more to the yellow fever story. It is easy to get confused between microbes, diseases and disease conquerors. Perhaps that's the price of Desowitz' attempt to portray his accounts chronologically rather than by disease or microbe. Desowitz also touches on various diseases' effects on culture, history and future events without exploring any topic in any depth, which is more tantalizing and frustrating than it is enjoyable. I don't think this book is as good as many other recent books of its genre, but is worth the price1 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A definite read for those interested in epidemiologyBy A CustomerThis is one of the most captivating books on disease written. The facts in this book are far more interesting than any fiction written on the same subjects. Robert S. Desowitz does an excellent job of explaining these topics for those unfamiliar with tropical disease and epidemiology, but doesn't make the book boring for those with a vast knowledge in this area. This is a must read for anyone interested in parasitic diseases.

An instructive, often humorous, chronicle of how the worms and germs of the tropical world have made and are making their way north. We live in a fool's paradise, comforted, despite all evidence to the contrary, that we are insulated from the scourging microbial and parasitic diseases of the tropics. Yet past and present history reveals that many of the "classic" tropical diseases are, in reality, temperate too yellow fever in Philadelphia, the Ebola virus in Maryland and Virginia, and the Mexican pig tapeworm in Brooklyn. Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria? traces the origin of these extraordinary, but by no means isolated, cases. Did the crew of the Santa Maria bring syphilis (Pinta) back from the New World? Did Charles Darwin suffer a protracted illness and eventually die from the bite of an assassin bug while traveling through Argentina? Writing with enthusiasm and from wide medical experience, Dr. Robert Desowitz is a veritable Sherlock Holmes of parasites and pathogens. Spanning a human history of over 50,000 years, Who Gave Pinta to the Santa Maria? also looks ahead to the constant dangers of microbial diseases of unprecedented savagery "Doomsday bugs" creeping into the industrialized world.