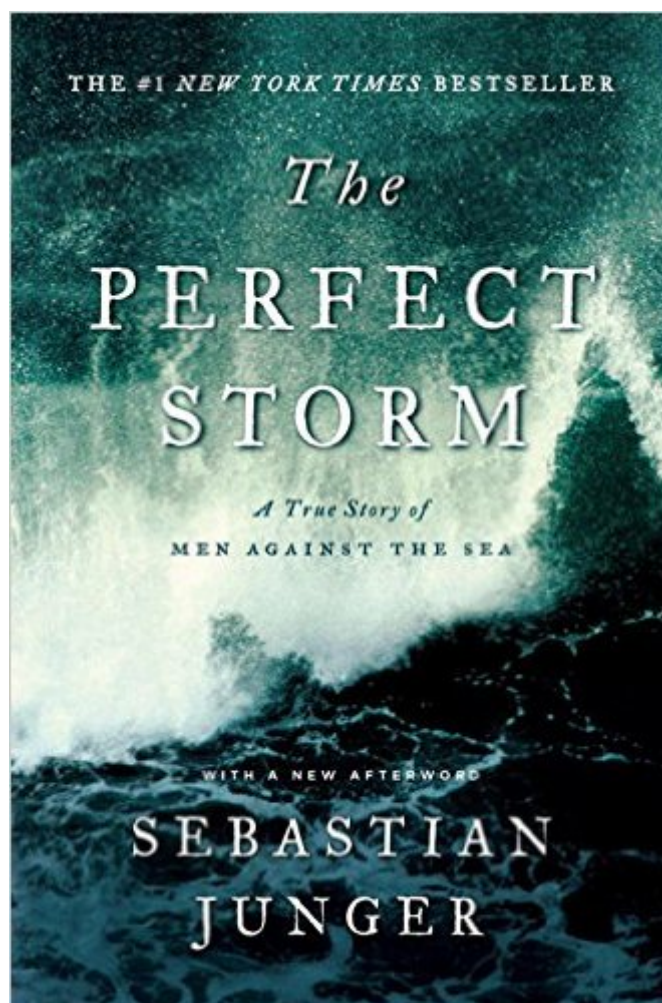


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The Perfect Storm: A True Story Of Men Against The Sea



Synopsis

There is nothing imaginary about Junger's book; it is all terrifyingly, awesomely real.--Los Angeles Times It was the storm of the century, boasting waves over one hundred feet high—a tempest created by so rare a combination of factors that meteorologists deemed it "the perfect storm." In a book that has become a classic, Sebastian Junger explores the history of the fishing industry, the science of storms, and the candid accounts of the people whose lives the storm touched. The Perfect Storm is a real-life thriller that makes us feel like we've been caught, helpless, in the grip of a force of nature beyond our understanding or control. 8 pages of illustrations

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book had been languishing on my library shelf for some time and I wanted to get it read before the movie came out, invariably altering its impact. It did not disappoint. It must have been difficult writing a speculative account of the last few days of 6 men's lives, but Junger does makes an admirable attempt. Using what direct quotes he can, the story still comes off as rather detached, which I suppose can't be helped. The novel chronicles the final journey of the fishing vessel Andrea Gail, as it returns home on October 1991 hitting one of the worst storms of the century off the East Coast. The six crewmembers are adequately fleshed out in exposition early on, and their stories will intertwine with those of their searchers and fellow fisherman during their terrifying ordeal. I did find the numerous technical discussions of weather, sea-faring, rescue ops, etc. very interesting. Having just finished Isaac's Storm, another death and destruction by sea/hurricane historical novel I was

particularly fascinated and frightened by Junger's clinical and emotionless description of the act of drowning. Considering how that description applied to the crew of the Andrea Gail as well as all those victims in the earlier novel, allowed for moments of morbid personal reflection. The novel really picks up, and is helped by the factual / eyewitness accounts of the other survivors of the Halloween Gale. The latter part of the novel dealing with the various rescues of other foundering ships makes for a quick and intense reading experience. It reads like an adventure story, but it is very sobering to stop and remember that these were real people with families and whose lives were cut so short. I can't imagine the upcoming movie will provide the experience and response the book did, I'm glad I got to it first. Recommended.

I usually don't read this type of book. With that said, let me also say that I picked up this book and didn't put it down until I finished the last word. This is not a fictionalized account of what the last moments on the Andrea Gail were like during that horrible 1991 storm. Don't read this expecting huge dramatic moments, overblown sensationalized heroics or a tragic love story. Granted, heroism, romance and drama are certainly involved in this tragic tale of real people facing real events. But what Junger manages to do is educate those of us who are bound to the land about the rigors, dangers and pleasures of those who work in the fishing industry. He weaves in some history of the industry, the fishing waters and of the crew of the A.G. themselves. He also provides some very detailed meteorological information along with specifics about marine behavior and tidal patterns. While reading this book, I would often close my eyes and try to imagine what it would be like to stand onboard facing a sheer wall of deadly water. Or to make the decision to risk my life to save someone else. The disappearance of the Andrea Gail is the focal point of the novel, but Junger also writes about the various rescue efforts taking place at sea during the worst storm in recorded history. Many people lost their lives, many others barely escaped death. This book brings all that to life. I give this book 5 stars because it is very rare for a true-to-life account to touch me and hold my attention for so long. Knowing the grim outcome of these events did not diminish the book's impact.

I'll admit, I had doubts. I was expecting an exciting, fictionalized version of the actual facts. I was disappointed at first, because the book is written more like a history textbook in present tense. "Billy keeps talking with the other captains, studying surface temperature charts . . ." But after I forced my way past the first couple of chapters, I was hooked. I learned more than I ever wanted to know about fishermen, but that certainly made the crew of the Andrea Gail human to me, and I felt a teeny portion of what those men must have gone through in their last moments. I also have a brand new

appreciation for the Coast Guard and the Air Nat'l Guard. My husband is one of those USCG men who spends months on his patrol boat in bad weather to rescue those who find themselves in trouble--whether out of stupidity or bad luck. I now understand his job a little better, and I wouldn't trade places with him for the world. Sebastian Junger does an excellent job leading us into the world of the rescuer, the fishermen, and even the National Weather Service. Some of the bits of historical description can be a bit long-winded and jarring as they shake you out of the story, but they're still interesting. An excellent book that'll make you glad that SOMEONE ELSE is catching your fish and rescuing people. Just don't expect a typical novel-ish style of writing. This is different, but once you get used to it, you might find that the book is hard to put down.

The strength for me of this book is that for once the sea isn't disguised as a person with human-like "emotions." This is not "The Cruel Sea". Junger sets his story in the impacable worlds of physics and economics. Want to know HOW the sea can rise to heights no vessel can endure? Junger will tell you. Want to know WHY men and women risk the graveyard shoals of the Grand Banks - Junger will explain the economics of fish. It gives an inexorable inevitability to the tragedy that follows. Junger has been described as writing like "a poet who went to meteorology school." He is not a poet. His style, for the most part, is workmanlike. But he tells his tale without undue dramatics, letting the events speak for themselves - while the main character, the sea, sits massively at the outer limit of our human comprehension. Start this book and it is like running downhill at the edge of control; you know the ending is not going to be pretty, but it isn't that easy to stop.

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