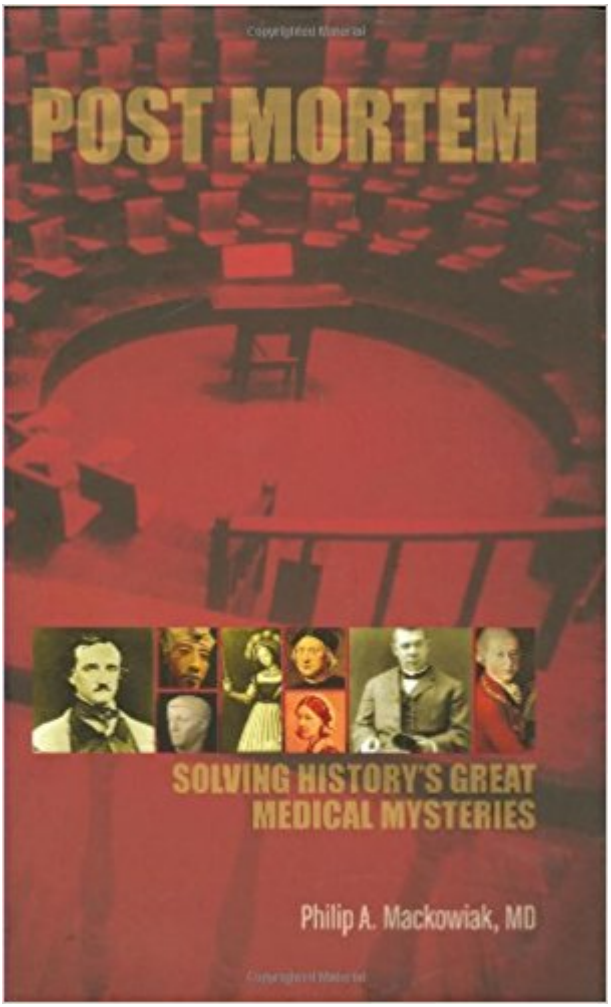
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Post-Mortem: Solving History's Great Medical Mysteries



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Synopsis

Their lives changed history. Their deaths were mysteries, until now! Post-Mortem: Solving History's Great Medical Mysteries by Philip A. Mackowiak, MD, FACP, examines the controversial lives and deaths of 12 famous men and women. Post-Mortem answers vexing questions such as: Was Alexander the Great a victim of West Nile virus? What caused the gruesome final illness of King Herod? Was Joan of Arc mentally ill during her heresy trial? Could syphillis have made Beethoven deaf? Did Edgar Allan Poe drink himself to death? This new book also investigates the mysterious deaths of the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten, the Greek statesman and general Pericles, the Roman Emperor Claudius, Christopher Columbus, Mozart, Florence Nightingale, and Booker T. Washington. Post-Mortem traces 3,500 years of medical history from the perspective of what contemporary physicians thought about the diseases of their renowned patients and how they might have treated them. It follows the case history format of today's clinical pathologic conferences, describing the characteristics of the illnesses in question, and bringing to life the medical history, social history, family history, and physical examination of their famous victims. Post-Mortem then sifts through the medical evidence, testing a wide range of diagnostic theories against the known facts and today's best scientific research, to arrive at the diagnosis most consistent with the illness described in the historic record.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Fascinating... An enjoyable read. --New England Journal of MedicineRarely does a compilations of well written cases such as this surface. This is a gem! --5 stars - Doody’s

Dr. Philip A. Mackowiak is director of medical care at the VA Maryland Health Care System and professor and vice chairman of the Department of Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. He has taught the art of clinical diagnosis to medical students and graduate physicians for over three decades. Post Mortem was inspired by the annual Historical Clinicopathological Conference hosted by Dr. Mackowiak since 1995 for the VA Maryland Health Care System and the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

I have always been fascinated by the health issues affecting great men and women throughout the ages, not only because I am a doctor myself, but oftentimes illnesses can dominate someone’s life and alter the course of events. For example, how much did Beethoven’s deafness affect his music ? It can be argued that he was able to break the mold of the classical tradition and bring in the Romantic period because he could no longer hear and had to compose in his head, thus freeing him from the restrictions of the physical world. Others could achieve greatness due to sheer quirks of their birth (it can be argued that great athletes are born, not created through training, especially for endurance sports) or other factors to do with their health. Somebody speculated that Monet painted the way he did later in life due to his failing eyesight, and was not a deliberate attempt to achieve an "impressionistic" effect. Renoir’s rheumatoid arthritis probably also affected the way he painted.Prof. Mackowiak did a great job collecting historical evidence to back up his conjectures when he attempted to diagnose the health problems affecting these illustrious men and women. He gave riveting accounts of the suffering they went through, and very detailed analyses of the signs and symptoms culminating in the most probable diagnosis. The author had a gift for story-telling, but he was equally at home in explaining complex medical and scientific matters in ways that lay people can easily understand.For me, this book (and the later volume) was a great review of areas of general medicine that I no longer involve with day-to-day, and would otherwise have little reason to read up on (especially in the form of dry academic review papers or book chapters).It is a must-read for students of medicine and history buffs.

I ordered this book hoping for the kind of in-depth medical research and analysis that I enjoy reading. I was not disappointed. Each chapter is very thorough and detailed in its description and analysis of the "patient" and their condition. I can’t state that the author has solved all these

mysteries, but that’s not what made this book enjoyable. It was the quality of medical information and the very scientific look at the lives of these historical figures. The details of their illnesses bring them to light as human beings rather than just figures of history.

Young people considering the medical arts should read this book.Not recommended for those who are a bit squeamish.Ok

This is a great read, but not worth the almost $19 for the Kindle version. There are a lot of tables and footnotes which are probably easier to read and less confusing in physical book form.

This book is ok. Does get a bit to technical but very informing. Let’s you read the differing opinions and form your own conclusions. Once you get into the different theories you have multiply sources to draw from, as you read the author’ opinion, you can agree or form your own conclusions. Very interesting read.

Fabulous book! Extremely interesting and easy for a lay person to follow!!! Anyone who enjoys bring a "disease detective" will live this book.

Really held my interest and I learned a lot too. If you like historical biography, you will love this book!

I’m a nurse and I love mysteries. It’s very interesting!

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