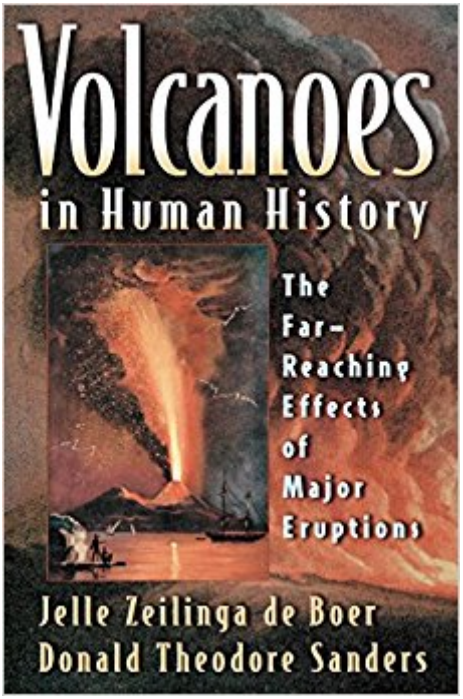
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Volcanoes In Human History: The Far-Reaching Effects Of Major Eruptions



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Synopsis

When the volcano Tambora erupted in Indonesia in 1815, as many as 100,000 people perished as a result of the blast and an ensuing famine caused by the destruction of rice fields on Sumbawa and neighboring islands. Gases and dust particles ejected into the atmosphere changed weather patterns around the world, resulting in the infamous ''year without a summer'' in North America, food riots in Europe, and a widespread cholera epidemic. And the gloomy weather inspired Mary Shelley to write the gothic novel Frankenstein. This book tells the story of nine such epic volcanic events, explaining the related geology for the general reader and exploring the myriad ways in which the earth's volcanism has affected human history. Zeilinga de Boer and Sanders describe in depth how volcanic activity has had long-lasting effects on societies, cultures, and the environment. After introducing the origins and mechanisms of volcanism, the authors draw on ancient as well as modern accounts--from folklore to poetry and from philosophy to literature. Beginning with the Bronze Age eruption that caused the demise of Minoan Crete, the book tells the human and geological stories of eruptions of such volcanoes as Vesuvius, Krakatau, Mount PelÃƒÂ©e, and Tristan da Cunha. Along the way, it shows how volcanism shaped religion in Hawaii, permeated Icelandic mythology and literature, caused widespread population migrations, and spurred scientific discovery. From the prodigious eruption of Thera more than 3,600 years ago to the relative burp of Mount St. Helens in 1980, the results of volcanism attest to the enduring connections between geology and human destiny.

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Customer Reviews

In 1815, Napoleon’s armies fell to defeat at Waterloo, a clash that would change the course of world events. Far more Europeans died that year, though, as a result of a volcanic explosion in Indonesia--one cataclysmic eruption among the many that figure in this sidelong view of the Earth’s history. The explosion of Tambora in April 1815, geologists de Boer and Sanders write, sent a plume of volcanic ash high into the planet’s atmosphere, bringing on a "nuclear winter" that devastated crops in the northern hemisphere, yielding famine and plague. Moreover, they add, the explosion cast a hazy pall over much of Europe, a gloom that inspired Mary Shelley to write her famed novel, Frankenstein. Another explosion, more than 3,000 years earlier, pulverized the Mediterranean island of Thera, giving rise to the legend of Atlantis and causing whole civilizations to collapse. Still another eruption on the island of Tristan da Cunha, in 1961, "brought [the 20th century] to this most isolated of the earth’s inhabited places." The authors’ overview of nature’s ability to thwart human intentions makes for fascinating reading, sure to appeal to fans of Perils of a Restless Planet, Surviving Galeras, and other chronicles of the trembling earth. --Gregory McNamee --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

After an introductory chapter on volcanism, this volume by geologists Zeilinga de Boer and Sanders shifts its focus to particular volcanic events (e.g., Vesuvius, Mt. Pel‚e, Krakatau) and areas of volcanic activity (e.g., the Hawaiian Islands and Iceland). The events themselves are described, but the emphasis is on the long-term effects of volcanic activity. The authors make it clear that those effects extend beyond the location of the volcano; there are widespread repercussions that influence everything from literature and religion to population migrations and global weather patterns. The authors have applied their geologic knowledge and experience, along with solid research, to produce an accessible book on volcanoes. It is more readable than either Alwyn Scarth’s Vulcan’s Fury (LJ 9/1/99) or Haraldur Sigurdsson’s Melting the Earth (LJ 5/1/99), both of which are referenced. The authors also make good use of historical sources, such as Charles Morris’s Volcano’s Deadly Work (1902) and Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s Last Days of Pompeii (1834). Recommended for academic and larger public libraries. Jean E. Crampon, Science & Engineering Lib., Univ. of Southern California, Los AngelesCopyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was interesting and had more information than I could ever expect to remember. I would have given this book a higher rating if there had been more information how it was determined that

some mountain had erupted in 75000 ECE. I have no doubt that the date was good but I do not know how this number was determined. I doubt it was just made up.

Perfectly documented and very well written.It makes us realize we live above a thin and fragile crust moving on top of a furnace, which regularly breaks with sometimes huge consequences on our environment and even mankind history.

I do quite a bit of research in nonfiction, and find so many science texts that may be full of wonderful information, but are like trying to wade through oatmeal. This book is wonderful! Informative, fascinating--but also a wonderful book to read, even for a lay person. It covered so many dimensions to these disasters--political, social, even literary--that it made me rethink about how we've historically formed our religious and social views. The science/geology is equally well done, but it's 'bigger'than just a science book, and I would think, interesting to everyone.

Great book. Gave as a Christmas present for my wife who is a volcanologist and she loved it!

I am not a scientist by any stretch of the imagination but I found this book to be highly interesting. The figures complement the text so if the descriptions of what is going on is not enough, one is able to visualize. If you are interested in science, volcanoes, and history, read this book.

As a reader of history an enjoyable and interesting read on how volcanos have influenced history. I especialy like the section on Hawaii. I've lived in Hawaii in and off since 1984.

The afterword of this book says: In this book we have tried to bring volcanoes to life..give them a human dimension...how their aftereffects can resonate in human affairs.....why volcanism exists and how selected volcanoes came to be. The authors did a excellent job.

Well written and easy to follow for someone without a scientific background. Clarified the dynamics of many areas such as plate tectonics, rim of fire, island formation.

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