



Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge: The Dirty Secrets Behind Early American Medicine

J. Marin Younker

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Riots over the medical use of cadavers. Public access to institutions for the insane. And full-blown surgeries without the aid of anesthetics or painkillers. Welcome to the middle ages of American medicine. *Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge* exposes the extraordinary practices and major players of American medical history, from the colonial era to the late 1800s. It's hard to believe that today's cutting-edge medicine originated from such crude beginnings, but this book reminds us to be grateful for today's medical care, while also raising the question: what current medical practices will be the horrors of tomorrow?

Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge: The Dirty Secrets Behind Early American Medicine Details

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From Reader Review Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge: The Dirty Secrets Behind Early American Medicine for online ebook

Melki says

For most of its history - until well into the twentieth century, in fact - American medicine has been a foul and dirty business.

Medicine, as we know it today, is a relatively young science. It was not that long ago that treatments for most ailments consisted of **well-intentioned but undereducated** physicians using the title's methods in an attempted cure. As you might guess, these techniques were rarely successful, and in the case of President Garfield, they were downright deadly.

The author provides some fascinating tidbits; he manages to be both brief and comprehensive. He covers a lot of ground. You'll learn about how germs were discovered, AND how ambulances were developed. Here's a fun anecdote from the Civil War that I'd never heard before:

General Howard's right arm was shattered by a ball, so that it had to be amputated above the elbow. Waving the mutilated arm aloft, he cheered on his men, and was borne from the field. While being carried on a litter, he passed General Kearney, who had lost his left arm . . . Rising on the litter, he called out gaily, "I want to make a bargain with you, General. Hereafter let's buy our gloves together."

I see that some readers have listed this book as being for middle-grade readers. Well . . . I guess it could be, if your middle-grade readers are interested in venereal disease and testicles. In other words - adult themes - use your own discretion.

I've read a lot about medical history in other books - *An Underground Education: The Unauthorized and Outrageous Supplement to Everything You Thought You Knew About Art, Sex, Business, Crime, Science, Medicine, and Other Fields of Human Knowledge and One-Night Stands with American History* - spring to mind, so this wasn't much more than a review for me. Personally, I'd rate this only three stars, but I'm guessing someone who's unfamiliar with the facts presented will find it more engrossing, so I'll pop on another germ-free star.

Now, get those leeches away from me!

Henry Chase says

A gross and gruesome and detailed book about old school medicine. It was so interesting to read it because medicine is so different now, and from a modern perspective the people who were practicing medicine (because basically anyone could be a doctor!) were crazy.

I rated this book four stars because I have never seen a book on this topic and I learned a lot. If you get easily grossed out it may not be a good idea to read the book, but kids 10 and up should like it.

April says

In very short but interesting chapters and "Did-you-know" call-out boxes; this thin volume details some of the more intriguing aspects of medical history in the United States, with particular focus on the disaster that was "heroic medicine". The tone is a bit "Buzzfeed List: 'can you believe this sort of thing happened?'" post in style and presentation which makes it nicely readable and amusing in parts but mostly it just gives you a taste of some of the history going on in medicine in the "old world". This isn't something to use as a research resource but could definitely give you a great bit of insight into something you'd want to dig into more deeply.

Anything you didn't like about it? Despite the intriguing cover, the inside held nearly no pictures so may not hold the interest of folks looking for more than just stories of gory and backwards historical medical practices in the United States. The index is also incredibly short and the references are not footnotes or endnotes linking back to each idea; rather they are just listed at the end of the book as main references and then by chapter (with no notes so you'd really have to read each reference to know where any particular idea in each chapter was coming from).

To whom would you recommend this book? Reluctant readers who want something easy to "digest" with small chapters on gruesome true-life history.

FTC Disclosure: The Publisher provided me with a copy of this book to provide an honest review. No goody bags, sponsorship, "material connections," or bribes were exchanged for my review.

Ronda says

To be fair, if the book were listed as YA nonfiction by NetGalley, instead of "children's nonfiction" I would bump the rating up to a 3. Because of the time frame covered and the "gross factor" of the title, I requested this title thinking it might be a nice addition to my 5th grade Civil War units. Frankly, I would not be able to recommend this title for younger than high school due to the multiple references to STDs. Title would be more accurately listed as YA nonfiction.

There were also several copyediting issues that should be addressed.

That all aside, the book was filled with some fascinating information and written in an engaging, often pithy with asides, manner. With further editing, I would be happy to recommend the book. If the many references to STDs were removed, with the focus more squarely on Civil War era and the battlefield medicine, I would even recommend it for my 5th graders when they study Civil War. Some of them would be morbidly fascinated with some of the details. As it stands, based on the ARC I read, I would not recommend this for any younger than high school.

Montzalee Wittmann says

Being a nurse, I found *Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge: The Dirty Secrets Behind Early American Medicine*

by J. Marin Younker fascinating! I knew some of the things that is brought up in here because I love history but there was so much I also did learn from this amazing book. This book covers medicine in the New World, in the Civil War - chop em up fast and the strange anesthesia or lack there of they used, piss tasting, ear wax nibbling to diagnosing, grave robbing, leech therapy (I did work in a hospital 30 yrs ago that did use this for microsurgery but not for what they were using leeches in the book for), blistering the patient, purging and diarrhea, and bleeding the patient. Giving the patient mercury, yep, I said mercury. Surgery as a theater event, just sell tickets. The book goes into quacks and the "cures" and other interesting aspects of medicine. I found I like Barnum, from Barnum Circus, even less than I did before after reading this and I know you will too when you read his entry. A very interesting book! Not one page is boring!

Kayla says

I first heard about Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge thanks to one of my local bookstores. They had the author J. Marin Younker out for a signing, and the title of the book, along with cover, sort of grabbed my attention. Can't imagine why that would be... Anyway, I clicked on the book to see what is about and was immediately bummed I'd missed the author event due to work. However, I was quick to snag a copy from the library.

Despite the what the title might make people think, I really did enjoy this book. Without a doubt there was some super gross moments, and I smart enough to not snack and read this book at the same time. Cause yeah, the start of the medical profession was not something to learn about while eating. It's kind of like the Saw movies, only we thought we were helping each other.

Anyway!

My favorite part of about Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge is that it is in fact not written like a text book. The chapters themselves flow very well and the information is told in a way that isn't dry, but it managed to keep my attention. Also, I really enjoyed the little side comments that J. Marin Younker added from time to time. It almost made it feel like you were sitting there listening to the her talk about this in person.

The book itself was much smaller than I thought it would be, which was fine. But, for some reason I had expected it to be a thicker book. Instead it's bound a bit like a graphic novel. Which for me personal was nice. It meant each chapter, and section, flowed very quickly and there wasn't a lot of repetitive facts thrown at me. I never once set this book down and had to make myself pick it back. The sort of gross aspect is what had me going back. Not because it was gore, but because at the time we thought this was right way to heal people. That by bleeding, blistering, puking, and purging the sickness, or evil, was being expelled.

It's honestly a wonder any survived in the "Good Ole' Days" to be honest.

As for the book, I felt like J. Marin Younker did an amazing about a research, and that was apparent throughout the book. Despite it's size, there is quite a bit of information spread throughout the books. However, I never felt like I was overloaded with information. Younker did a great job with keeping the timeline moving and expanding from one idea to the next. On several occasion I fell asleep reading, which is a good thing in my world. Means I was so fascinated I was forgoing sleep.

While, not the most traditional read around Christmas, it was good read for my packed schedule with work. It wasn't overly large, was a fun and gory read (which I do like), and was easy to read in the few hours each day I had set aside.

I definitely enjoyed Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge. It was an interesting read and I would definitely read another book by this author. I've already recommended this book to a couple of my friend who I think would find it fascinating. I do want to warn, it has some visceral moments. Not for the faint of heart.

Emily says

Ooo, gross! Believe the title! While the cover of the book looks basic and scientific, don't be fooled. Disgusting stories and graphic descriptions of pus, historical medical procedures and malpractice await you! This is one nonfiction book that ISN'T boring.

Teenage boys, future medical professionals and reluctant readers will adore Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge. I'm not a big gross-out person, but I found Younker's book delightfully disgusting. I had a great time retelling my favorite stories to my friends. It'll definitely make you thankful for modern medicine!

Kathy says

Not for the squeamish. Lots of nuggets of information to make you feel grateful for today's medicine: did you know that "heroic measures" meant to bleed a sick person out, give them blisters with caustic chemicals/heat AND make them vomit/have diarrhea? Unsurprisingly, people were usually better off NOT calling a doctor. These "heroic measures" lasted (despite challenges by quacks, homeopathy, Lister's theory of sterilization and the despised female midwives) until President Garfield was shot in 1881, and died not because the wound was fatal, but because doctors kept sticking dirty fingers in to try and get the ball out (making it infected). Doctors were surprised that yellow pus wasn't a good sign, but a sign of infection!

Laurie Thompson says

A very informative AND entertaining look at early American medicine... if you can really call it "medicine" in the sense we mean today. The book contains specific anecdotes that bring the material to life, as well as the background, history, and context necessary to understand the details on a grander scale. Honest and raw, definitely not for the faint of heart, but otherwise perfect for older reluctant readers. I'd like to see this one on YALSA's Quick Picks for Reluctant Readers list.

Lydia Wednesday says

Funny, gross, bizarre, informative. Check. Check. Check. And check.

Sarah says

Lots of cool information! Definitely interesting, and easy to get through!

My one complaint is that the author kind of got a little preachy at times - not that I disagreed with the sentiments, but it seems to me that your opinion on so-and-so doctor or your input on beliefs of the time shouldn't really be in a factual book. It just seems tacky and instantly makes the information biased.

That's my only complaint, though. An interesting read!

Raina says

Cool cover on a slim and slick package covering many fascinating factoids from early (white) American medicine. The subtitle doesn't lie.

I love the cover. I love the concept. I learned things and talk about the things I learned at dinner parties. BUT...

I took many more notes about this book than I often do. And most of them are negative in nature.

First of all, there are several typos. The worst/most annoying being the grammatically incorrect title of the twelfth chapter.

But I would totally (ok, maybe not *totally*) look beyond mere issues of editing if there wasn't more to make me complain.

The biggest thing that makes me yell about this book is the fact that *germ theory is never explained*. Yes, the text addresses the fact that there were some pretty screwed up ideas about medicine before the modern era (Cuz we've got EVERYTHING about the human body figured out now. /sarcasm). But for a book targeting teens, I expect at least a cursory explanation of WHY everything changed and we're "right" now.

The reader is also assumed to have an odd mix of prior knowledge. There's one page where the terms "cleft palate" and "clubfoot" are defined, but no where is the medical process of compounding explained (though the word is used more than once). The writing is often confusing, all round.

All of that said, like I said before, I learned a lot. I googled many things while I read, and learned even more. And think that teens will learn a lot, too. I won't be bringing this to my middle school outreach visits (there's a pretty major sidebar on STDs in the first 20 pages), but I will take it to the high schools.

This would be an easy 4 star book if the execution hadn't faltered.

And it wouldn't have taken very much to get it up to 5 either. There aren't enough books on this topic, written engagingly, with great graphic design, for teens.

But le sigh.

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It was really fun to booktalk, btw.

Evalina says

I liked the tone and the overall format of how the book was written. There are interesting sidebars in each chapter that coincide with the topic of the chapter. The book itself was a small collection of interesting facts about American medicine and it's progression to the present; however, I would have liked to had read a more

detailed history of the tools and procedures used throughout America's history. Overall, an interesting read!

Heather Brown says

This book is absolutely aimed at older teenage boys, as they are probably the only ones with a strong enough stomach to read the perfect descriptions of diseases, injuries, and their 'cures.' Bleed, Blister, Puke, and Purge is a thorough history of medicine in the US. As much as it pains me to say this, I do think the book could use more pictures.

Kelsey McLane says

This gruesome book is fantastic at really getting the message across that the medical field has struggled. It also discusses how a population can get caught up in scare tactics and how misinformation can lead to a "cure," but really be more detrimental to a person, even deadly. This is a very graphic book, BUT it's perfect for giving accurate information about a topic that doesn't get a lot of promotion among teens and tweens.
