



## **America Pacifica**

*Anna North*

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America Pacifica is an island hundreds of miles off the coast of California, the only warm place left in a world in the grip of a new ice age. Darcy Pern is seventeen; her mother has gone missing, and she must uncover the truth about her disappearance--a quest that soon becomes an investigation into the disturbing origins of America Pacifica itself and its sinister and reclusive leader, a man known only as Tyson. *America Pacifica* invites comparison to the work of Margaret Atwood and China Mieville, to Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* for its the touching child-parent relationship, and to Stieg Larsson's Millenium trilogy for its implacable, determined central character.

## **America Pacifica Details**

Date : Published May 1st 2011 by Little Brown and Company (first published January 1st 2011)

ISBN :

Author : Anna North

Format : Hardcover 294 pages

Genre : Fiction, Science Fiction, Dystopia, Apocalyptic, Post Apocalyptic, Young Adult

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## From Reader Review *America Pacifica* for online ebook

### Meg says

Anna North's *America Pacifica* is a grim, imaginative but ultimately sad novel set in a dystopian world in which the United States has been reduced to an island teeming with filth, waste and suffering. The past -- the happy American land of plenty we know -- is nothing but a tattered memory in the minds of the elderly. Though Darcy is resourceful, she's decimated after her mother's disappearance -- and I could feel the panic, bewilderment and fear seeping through the pages.

In fact, that's how I felt about this one: panicky, bewildered and fearful.

The bleak tone of the novel never picks up, never gets better, never changes pitch. Everything is gritty, grisly and grim. The warm, tropical setting of the island is in sharp contrast to the mountainous icebergs we're told cover most of the U.S. these days, but even the heat can't save its inhabitants from misery. Poverty is the norm; food is scarce, disgusting and strange. When *America Pacifica*'s residents aren't getting high on solvent, a concoction made from seawater to power the island, they're hurting one another or desperately trying not to be hurt.

It's a bleak place.

But you know, this book was compelling. It tied my stomach up in knots and left me feeling achy and tired and I didn't want to read it before bed -- that's for sure -- but North's imagery, world-building and command of tone is to be admired. Her prose is beautiful. Through her vivid and often disturbing descriptions, I could taste the briny air and feel the itchy fabric of Seafiber shirts. The omnipresent danger of Little Los Angeles encompassed me like a cloak. A sense of foreboding -- from start to finish -- never left me in *America Pacifica*, and I'd say that's an accomplishment.

But at the end of the day, did I *like* this book? No, I don't think I did. It was too seedy -- too bothersome, too sad -- for me to enjoy. Though I read quickly and worried for Darcy, I didn't find myself emotionally invested in the plot. And the ending? Well, many have discussed its ambiguous nature . . . but as I was discussing with Meg, I'm starting to see it as concrete. Final. Not all together unexpected, but most definitely depressing.

Readers interested in dystopian fiction might be intrigued by North's interpretation of an America gone cold and rebuilt in a tropical locale, but I struggled to stick with a book that felt like a slog because of the bleak subject matter. North's lovely writing kept me reading and interested in her fast-paced story, but the novel itself was disheartening. Be prepared for a vivid -- but grisly -- read.

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### Christina says

Maybe the problem with this book is that I read it too soon after *Catching Fire*, which shone a light on how poorly drawn the protagonist was and how little I cared for her compared to my feelings for Ms. Katniss Everdeen. Overall, I think the premise of this book was good, and I thought many of the details of what it was like in *America Pacifica* were well done, but I never felt like Darcy was fully developed as a character, and **\*\*SPOILER\*\*** I didn't understand how she suddenly became a hero to everyone on the island. She didn't

even do anything! It just didn't come together for me.

My other problem was the the writing, which improved through the course of the book, but was pretty terrible to start. The first chapter, especially the first few pages, were full of really cringe-worthy sentences, so if you can get through that there is a decent story to follow. If you cannot abide cutesy prose like "her hands shook like dreaming dogs" (it makes my brain hurt just to type that), then this book is not for you.

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## **karen says**

this is a new slant on the old dystopia.

so, north america has been consumed by a second ice age, and all that's left is this one island off the coast, reinforced by heaps of garbage that is gradually crumbling into the sea. whatever survivors were able to escape from the cold remains of the mainland struggle for survival under a system that is blatantly unfair and led by some egomaniacal lunatic who ignores the suffering and makes wild promises and plans that cannot be fulfilled. however, there is still an elite class enjoying their vast wealth who can afford luxuries such as meat and strawberries while the majority suffer and sweat and eat jellyfish.

ariel would not last one day here.

this is a different kind of "after" novel than *world made by hand*, where the land is still arable and the citizens simply revert to a pre-industrial society and the struggle is re-learning everything that was lost when technology made everything easier. this book describes a far more unstable landmass where the fallacy is to still cling to the old ways of doing things in an unforgiving environment that cannot sustain itself, instead of figuring out how to best adapt to the new environment, so there is a constant sense of approaching doom that makes the situation that much more intense.

and yet, life goes on...

darcy was born on the island, so she has no means of comparison, but she recognizes the reality of her situation, and the kinds of things she has to do to survive, and when her mother goes missing, she sets out to find her because without her, she has nothing.

a lot of this reminded me of *the room* - where a mother takes a horrible place to raise a child and tries to salvage the situation by making herself her child's whole world. which is probably therapeutic for a while, but when that center is removed - what does the child have left? in this case - a whole lot of terror ahead of her and a dangerous journey where she will learn all sorts of secrets and truths and become involved in a revolution, all before she turns eighteen.

this is not YA fiction, but it could probably be enjoyed by that audience. it is dark enough to be titillating to those kids who feed on the misfortunes of their literary friends. many bad things happen to poor darcy and the people she encounters along the way, but it seems plausible to the situation, it is never just violence for violence's sake.

i feel like the author intends to write a follow-up to this book, which i will gladly read. this one was a fun diversion but not the most compelling dystopian novel i have read. i feel like there was not enough character

development; as sheltered as darcy was in so many ways, she seemed psychologically precocious in a way that didn't ring true. but it's definitely worth checking out and a good addition to the stack of post-event fiction out there. keep writing them, and i will keep reading them...

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### **Meg - A Bookish Affair says**

Oh boy, where to start? I had originally picked up this book because it seemed like a really interesting premise. Darcy, a young woman, is faced with the mystery of her mother's disappearance on an island that many from America flee too after a sort of Ice Age takes over the mainland making it uninhabitable. And the premise was but it wasn't particularly well executed. This book is gritty, very gritty. Some parts of the book are almost stomach turning, which I don't usually have an issue with when a story calls for something gritty or hard to read but at some parts, the book seemed to be gritty and icky for the sake of being gritty and icky without any higher purpose.

Also, I had seen this book advertised in several places as a Young Adult book. I have a feeling that whoever gave it that grouping did not read the book. This is most definitely not a Young Adult book. While Darcy is an 18 year old, some scenes in the book definitely push this book into the Adult threshold.

Good thing: The world building in the book is wonderful. America Pacifica is an interesting place. Many of the neighborhoods on the island are throwbacks to the cities of the United States, something that I could realistically see happening if we were ever forced to colonize a new place.

The end of the book is what really pushed me to give this book such a low rating. The ending was not satisfying at all. It was also terribly abrupt and really made me wonder why I had put up with the rest of the book. This book was not for me.

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### **Jessica says**

After a second ice age overtakes North America, America Pacifica is one of the few habitable places in the world, a volcanic island. Darcy lives on America Pacifica with her mother, poor but relatively content. Until the day her mother doesn't return home from work. As Darcy sets out to find her, she learns more about her mother's mysterious past and the disturbing truth and circumstances surrounding the founding of America Pacifica.

*America Pacifica* was fairly enjoyable. It suffered a little bit from some uneven storytelling -- some parts of the book inspired some serious page turning, while other parts were slow and at times laborious to get through. Darcy is the only character who is really developed at all, and at times she can be hard to connect with. The story idea is really fascinating though, and the world building is well-done. While it did take me a bit to get into the story at first, I did find myself turning pages and frantically trying to figure out what was going to happen next by the end. I've definitely read more compelling dystopian novels than this one, but I think *America Pacifica* is a good one to add to the bunch, and I'd recommend it for those who enjoy the genre like I do.

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## **Pearl says**

This book is actually entitled, "America Pacifica" by Anna North. The cover is correct (stating Anna North) and the ISBN number goes to "America Pacifica," NOT "Teaching Children Tennis the Vic Braden Way." This book is amazing (America Pacifica), so when Goodreads fixes this error I will rate the book as such. Sadly I've never read a book by Vic Braden, but Ms. North's book is about a near future where the world is in a second ice age. Everyone seems to live on a small island that still retains heat but is run by a small, uncaring faction and loveless dictator. Throughout, one young woman goes searching for her missing mother only to discover that braving the cold might be worth leaving the island. Better than "Teaching Children Tennis the Vic Braden Way" right?

Addendum: someone has graciously fixed the previously mentioned error, so now I want to further discuss the great book that is "America Pacifica." The story is bracing (pun intended) and well-written dystopian fiction. Really the only negatives I have are minor ones dealing with how a majority of the inhabitants can survive only eating jellyfish and cheese-like products, and how a starving girl can live for a week practically naked when heading toward sub-zero climates. You just have to accept these conceits as part of the larger story. Many of the characters in the book are rendered less than 3-D as well, but mainly for the sake of pacing and to further feed into that dystopian feel. Ever present is the threat weather imposes. Without global warming the idea behind this story could never have existed, and Ms. North uses the fear of a frozen future for an amazingly scary story. Just reading this book during a snow storm has left me with chills!

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## **Alex says**

Working through how I feel about this book. The writing was good, detailed, and vivid. I felt like I was there, which is a little unfortunate given that it's not a pleasant future that North has painted. In the year 2043, a teenaged girl named Darcy lives on an island in the Pacific after North America has succumbed to the Ice Age's second coming. Her mother goes missing one day and that disappearance unravels Darcy's whole life as she embarks on a search for her.

The novel is dark and gritty, leaving uncomfortable grains behind. But behind that I found the story to be rather predictable. We all know by now that dystopian novels don't work out and government control is scary and the face behind it all is usually more terrified than anyone. I liked Darcy fine, but I disliked Sarah. I couldn't help but feel that Darcy was better off without her. I wanted to be more sympathetic to Darcy's plight, but I don't think her mom did her any favors.

North seems to have set the ending up for a sequel. I'm intrigued to know how that comes to be.

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## **Parajunkee says**

America Pacifica by Anna North

The growing trend in dystopian fiction has sucked me in hook, line and sinker. I thought I was getting another gem with AMERICA PACIFICA, the concept seemed so very original. Yet, unfortunately the tone and descriptions of the world ruined it for within the first few pages. The novel was just too gritty, the descriptions left a terrible taste in my mouth and I felt like I was swallowing back bile as I read through these

pages. This, I guess is a remarkable testament to the the writers abilities, but I think Ms. North took it too far, for me anyway. I was so busy entrenched in the smell of seaweed, the thought of communal bathrooms, public masturbating, unwashed armpits and greasy hair that I couldn't attach myself to the character of Darcy. I wanted to wear gloves as I read this book, I didn't want to bond with the story.

The dystopian tale of AMERICA PACIFICA takes place on the island of the same name. The main character is Darcy, whom has just turned 18. A generation ago the inhabitants fled North America as it was overrun by glaciers from an impending ice age. The island is a horrendous place to live if you are poor. The poor basically live in shantytowns that are being sucked back into the sea. Darcy is among those poor, her only respite and friend, her mother. Yet, that is taken away from her when her mother disappears and Darcy is forced to search the island for her, finding out more and more about her mother's past and her role in the creation of AMERICA PACIFICA.

I don't want to go into specifics, but this novel left me with a bad taste in my mouth. I felt disgusted reading this one. The novel had the tone of a Steinbeck novel, that gritty, in-your-face, depressing quality that takes a certain mind-set to get through. Yet, Steinbeck wrote about real issues, real world depression and this was all a fantasy. I felt no hope while reading this novel, only a disturbing obsession that I needed a bath.

#### Recommendations

This is not for the feint of heart. Adults only, sex and violence.

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### Jessica Oban says

**TL:DR Skip it. Wimpy, whiny, and undeserving hero who doesn't do anything the rebels could have lived without. Overuse of the words "sea" and "sweat".**

How is this girl a hero? The only thing that she does that is the least bit heroic is in the final pages, after the battle and after she's been declared a hero. Everything that happens to Darcy is because time/place, not because she actually made decisions to affect something. Even then she does everything grudgingly while pouting.

It's not like she stood up for what she believed in, she just wanted to find her mom. She didn't care that the elections were rigged and that the government was set up in a way that no one could ever climb higher in the social ladder which is determined by which boat one arrived in on the way to the island. People were freely admitting how messed up their society was and all she could think was, "meh. I miss my mom. Ooh, that roast looks good. WTH, she *forgot* the roast was there?! Who forgets about real meat?! Can I have some? I miss my mom."

Nominees for most overused words:

>Sea

>Sweat

And holy crap were they used! Seafoam, Seaboard, Seafiber, Seaguard, seaweed... It goes on. "Hmm, I need to add some setting here, what word do I used... I know! I'll use *our* word and just add "sea" in front.

Genius!" thinks Anna North.

Smelled like sweat, tasted like seat, sweaty seafiber, cuddled into the sweat, dried sweat, sweaty sweaty sweat-sweat. "Sweat" was particularly harrowing because I swear Anna North used it in rapid fire. I know it's a little hard to use synonyms for the word, but, ugh. It was too much.

I did never see "Seasweat" but maybe it didn't cross her mind. Either way, no one tell her, it'll end up in a sequel.

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### **Anne Marsh says**

'm not sure what to do with AMERICA PACIFICA. The book has one of the most gorgeous covers I've seen recently and some absolutely riveting world-building, but it wasn't what I expected, which left me disappointed.

I was looking for a more traditional, fast-paced post-apocalyptic story, where much of the book focuses on the journey and the characters' struggles to survive in their changed world. This is a much more established world-- the characters already have their places and the story's emphasis is much more on the disappearance of the heroine's mother and the heroine's attempts to find her. Other than the mother's potential death, the book lacks the life-and-death urgency and the fast pacing of much post-apocalyptic fiction-- it's lush, slower-paced, and filled with beautiful, gritty details of a world literally at sea. The natural disasters that have brought this world to the brink occur largely offstage. Despite the lush prose, I found the pacing too slow. I wanted the story to focus on the apocalypse and the characters' struggles to respond to that... so, for me, I suspect I actually wanted the book to start with its backstory-- when the First Boaters and Second Boaters left the freezing mainland.

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### **rachel says**

Think *Winter's Bone* crossed with *Ship Breaker*, spiked with a little bit of *The Hunger Games*, and you have a good idea of what is excellent and maybe not so excellent about *America Pacifica*. The not so excellent thing is that because the market is so heavily saturated with dystopian worlds and headstrong girls in search of justice and/or their family members, this will seem like so many things you've already read and loved before. Perhaps in contrast it will fall short. You might be tempted to put it down within the first 100 pages.

But if you give Darcy's story time to grow on you, it will. If you have doubts that she is as indomitable as Ree Dolly, you must read to the ending. Anna North's prose seems almost styleless and confusing at first, as the post-apocalyptic world is being introduced, but given time to grow it takes on a crisp, understated beauty (again you must read to the ending).

Perhaps the best thing about the book is that its revolutionaries are vulnerable, very human, a balm to the flat characters of *Ship Breaker*. It's rare to read about revolutionaries that are defined as much by their susceptibility to being squashed as they are by their noble ideals. In fact, this is why I usually don't like reading political stories. But *America Pacifica* manages to be as much about people as it is about politics.



Fans of any of the books mentioned above should enjoy it. I really did.

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### **Beth says**

I received this book from the Goodreads Giveaway. I really wanted to like it, but couldn't even bring myself to finish it. I found myself wanting to grab a red pen and start editing away. I was confused by the writing within the first page (2 nameless female characters were introduced in addition to the narrator in the first paragraph. The second paragraph refers to one of them as Sarah - I thought it was the first character mentioned, or a new fourth character, but it turned out to be the second character introduced). I thought maybe it was just me so I gave the book to my husband to read - he was equally confused. This could have been so easily fixed with a couple of well placed words. I had originally hoped to pass the book on to my 12 year old daughter who reads voraciously, but after reading at least one oddly detailed sex scene, decided against that idea. I can't comment on the plot due to the fact that I couldn't/wouldn't finish the book. Perhaps my negative reaction is due to the fact that I've been reading Ian McEwan just prior to picking this book up - almost anyone's prose would pale in comparison to his. Maybe the next freebie I receive will be more promising.....

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### **Anastasia says**

This was a pretty disappointing read. The protagonist was . . . difficult to like or empathize with. I also didn't really believe in the world the author had created. Set maybe 50-60 years in the future, after climate change created an ice age all over the US, 20,000 people made it to a far off and uninhabited island that they proceeded to completely trash. Somehow, they were still able to have beef and tobacco and cheese [food], and young people understood tons of references to things that are happening now and in the recent past. The protagonist ends up as a heroine though it's completely unclear to me how's she has become one or what she's done that's any different from what anyone else has done. Unsatisfying.

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### **Debra says**

For my written post, please check out the link below:

Debra's Book Cafe

Debs :-)

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### **Pamela says**

I had to chew on this book a while before I could write this review. It is without question very well-written, a literary dystopian novel with an intriguing setting and a strong protagonist. However, the plot seems to stumble a bit right when it should be cresting.

We do not see many characters in great depth. The reader lives in Darcy's head, and Darcy doesn't let herself

get close to anyone. People you think you should trust turn out to be less than trustworthy, and really, it's a good thing that Darcy doesn't let anyone close. Despite the fact that we never learn much about the supporting characters, Darcy proves to be an unusually perceptive character. Through her point of view, we see portraits of these characters that are roughly painted, but are at the same time strangely realistic. Ansel's fanaticism, Nathaniel's bitterness, Marie's complexity... we see hints of all of this, but we can never really trust that Darcy's perception of these people is true.

Darcy is also revealed to us in sketches. She thinks of herself and her life in interludes, and we learn how she and her mother had built their own world populated only by themselves, and we see how Darcy's world falls apart when her mother disappears, and how she has to learn to navigate the corrupt streets of the island to try to find the one person who matters. By the end, Darcy is still searching for something. The book doesn't feel so much like a journey of discovery for the character, though she does learn about herself. It feels more like a passing glimpse at Darcy's life, from the past her mother always told her to forget into the unknowable future.

The dystopia itself--the island nation created when North America collapsed under the weight of a new ice age--is pretty standard as dystopias go. The elite and the non-elite are sharply defined in a created world that balances on apathy. Most of the people don't care enough to really look at their world, and so the rich go on eating real meat while the poor scrape by on jellyfish, cheese food, and drugs. What makes this dystopia stand out, though, are North's rich descriptions of the island. Most of the book takes place within the poor areas: Little Los Angeles, Hell City, the sad facsimile of the Vegas strip, and the utter desperation of the people in these areas is almost palpable, it's so well-described. The nicer areas that Darcy ventures into seem almost surreal; Darcy is shocked by the smell of cleanness, by the oblivious wastefulness of the privileged. North's descriptions and world-building are very effective.

The plot itself starts out simply and grows in complexity. Darcy's mother goes missing, and Darcy tries to find her. Along the way, she finds herself in the middle of a conspiracy that goes back to before the island, before she was even born, when the mainland was icing over. It's an intriguing plot, but I couldn't help feeling a little let down when everything finally came to a head. As I said earlier, the plot stumbles a little bit, and the climax felt a bit like it came out of left field. The denouement trails off into a very ambiguous ending. I liked the ending--IMO, we American readers could use a little ambiguity every once in a while in the face of all these decisive endings we demand, hehe. But if you are someone who can't handle an ambiguous ending, this book will frustrate you.

Overall, I would recommend *America Pacifica* to someone looking for a grown-up dystopia. The writing is excellent, and the portrayal of the poor underbelly of the dystopian society is very strong. It is definitely an engrossing story; I caught myself feeling extremely anxious a few times while reading, as the book had really sucked me in. I had to put it down and go hug my fiancé just to get my head out of the world a couple of times.

(Review originally published at [The Discriminating Fangirl](#).)

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