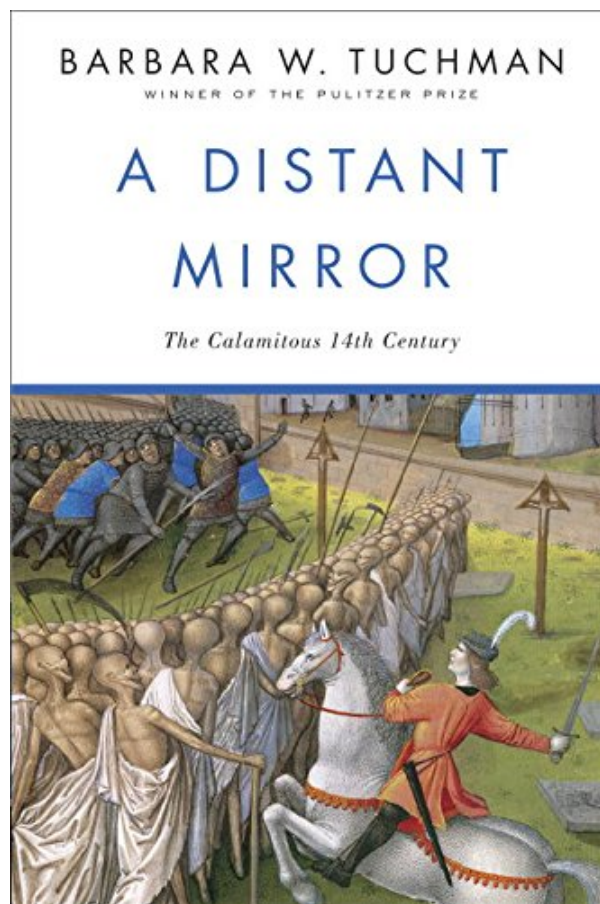


A DISTANT MIRROR: THE CALAMITOUS 14TH CENTURY BY BARBARA W. TUCHMAN



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BARBARA W. TUCHMAN

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A DISTANT MIRROR

The Calamitous 14th Century



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In this sweeping historical narrative, Barbara Tuchman writes of the cataclysmic 14th century, when the energies of medieval Europe were devoted to fighting internecine wars and warding off the plague. Some medieval thinkers viewed these disasters as divine punishment for mortal wrongs; others, more practically, viewed them as opportunities to accumulate wealth and power. One of the latter, whose life informs much of Tuchman's book, was the French nobleman Enguerrand de Coucy, who enjoyed the opulence and elegance of the courtly tradition while ruthlessly exploiting the peasants under his thrall. Tuchman looks into such events as the Hundred Years War, the collapse of the medieval church, and the rise of various heresies, pogroms, and other events that caused medieval Europeans to wonder what they had done to deserve such horrors.

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In *A DISTANT MIRROR*, Barbara Tuchman illuminates the Dark Ages. Her description of medieval daily life, the role of the church, the influence of the Great Plagues, and the social and political conventions that make this period of history so engrossing, are carefully woven into an integrated narrative that sweeps the reader along.

I am a particular devotee of medieval and pre Renaissance music, so Barbara Tuchman's brilliant analysis of this period has special meaning for me - and I hope for many others.

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A DISTANT MIRROR: THE CALAMITOUS 14TH CENTURY

BY BARBARA W. TUCHMAN PDF

Barbara W. Tuchman—the acclaimed author of the Pulitzer Prize–winning classic *The Guns of August*—once again marshals her gift for character, history, and sparkling prose to compose an astonishing portrait of medieval Europe.

The fourteenth century reflects two contradictory images: on the one hand, a glittering age of crusades, cathedrals, and chivalry; on the other, a world plunged into chaos and spiritual agony. In this revelatory work, Barbara W. Tuchman examines not only the great rhythms of history but the grain and texture of domestic life: what childhood was like; what marriage meant; how money, taxes, and war dominated the lives of serf, noble, and clergy alike. Granting her subjects their loyalties, treacheries, and guilty passions, Tuchman re-creates the lives of proud cardinals, university scholars, grocers and clerks, saints and mystics, lawyers and mercenaries, and, dominating all, the knight—in all his valor and “furious follies,” a “terrible worm in an iron cocoon.”

Praise for *A Distant Mirror*

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- Europe
- History
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- Modern World

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George Davidson, Director of Production, The Ballantine Publishing Group

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Excellent book. I have read books on this very ...

By Gary Mandel

Excellent book. I have read books on this very strange century and this is with out doubt one of the best. You do have to like history which by nature can be dry at times. She does a very good job keeping it alive and interesting.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

Warts 'n all history lesson!

By Bob Jarvis

This book is long, detailed, with a host of characters who's names are almost impossible to remember. It was a tough read & I have to admit that I had to intersperse the reading of it, with a couple of "lighter" books on

the side. Worthwhile though? I'll say! Tuchman has a style that brings one intimately into the world she is describing. I felt chastened by the suffering of the Black death victims, exhausted by the toil of the peasants & angered by the corruption of just about everyone else. Churchmen who sold the services that should have been freely given, many of whom shamefully refused to give plague victims last rites for fear of contagion. Nobles & knights oppressed the people they were supposed to protect. Kings & princes made pacts with each other that were never intended to be honoured. Honour, indeed, is a quality almost non-existent in these troubled times. The book describes all the trials & tribulations of 14th. century life. It's proper "warts 'n all stuff! The battles, revolutions, intrigues, tortures & the daily struggle just to get through to the next day. I particularly enjoyed learning of the main "pillars of Chivalry." Whilst one might expect to assume "valour" as a quality, try "knightly love," which was pretty much a license to go off & indulge in loose living. Marvelous! It's a demanding read but absolutely worth the effort.

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All it was expected to be

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Everything it was described. Extremely well researched and written in a comfortable style. It will be one of the best scholarly books in my collection.

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