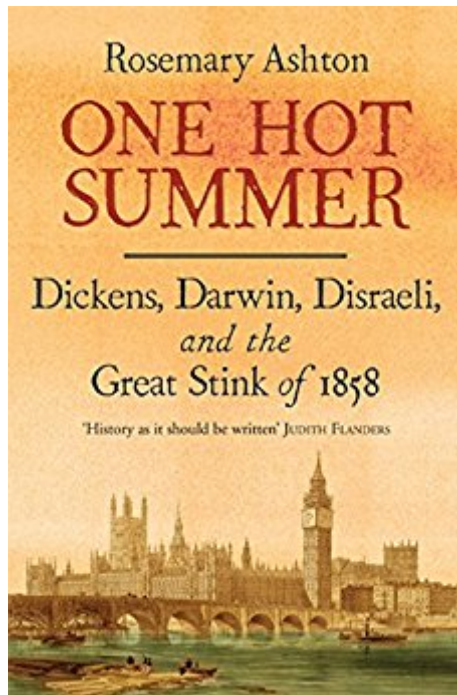


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One Hot Summer: Dickens, Darwin, Disraeli, And The Great Stink Of 1858



Synopsis

A unique, in-depth view of Victorian London during the record-breaking summer of 1858, when residents both famous and now-forgotten endured "The Great Stink" together. While 1858 in London may have been noteworthy for its broiling summer months and the related stench of the sewage-filled Thames River, the year is otherwise little remembered. And yet, historian Rosemary Ashton reveals in this compelling microhistory, 1858 was marked by significant, if unrecognized, turning points. For ordinary people, and also for the rich, famous, and powerful, the months from May to August turned out to be a summer of consequence. Ashton mines Victorian letters and gossip, diaries, court records, newspapers, and other contemporary sources to uncover historically crucial moments in the lives of three protagonists—Charles Dickens, Charles Darwin, and Benjamin Disraeli. She also introduces others who gained renown in the headlines of the day, among them George Eliot, Karl Marx, William Thackeray, and Edward Bulwer Lytton. Ashton reveals invisible threads of connection among Londoners at every social level in 1858, bringing the celebrated city and its citizens vibrantly to life.

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Customer Reviews

A very entertaining book, it brings the reader right into the life of mid-Victorian London, and England, with the crux of the story an intertwining of the lives of Dickens, Darwin & Disraeli. Each faced a significant crisis, or more than one (especially in the case of Dickens) in this period. Dickens separated & divorcing from his wife, and acted scandalously and created a scandal (not a heroic guy, sorry). Dickens was also fighting with other family members, having an affair with a 19 year old actress, and involved in a London-club tempest in a teapot. Darwin, who did not personally know Disraeli or Dickens, was stimulated (finally) to action to finish writing Origin of Species in this period. And Disraeli finally came into his own as a powerful & at least semi-respected political leader via, in part, getting the funding going for fixing the Great Stink of the Thames. Disraeli, already close confidant of Queen Victoria, also succeeded with a budget bill, a bill allowing Jews to sit in the House of Commons, the legalization of divorce. Very well written.

We think we have problems now in government, the Britts had their hands full that hot summer in London. They had to literally drain their swamp to exist. Great history book.

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