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“An excruciating report on the global disaster...Absorbing...Magisterial.”—THE OBSERVER

“This riveting study plots the course of the deadliest pandemic in history.”—THE SUNDAY TIMES

PALE RIDER

THE SPANISH FLU OF 1918
& HOW IT CHANGED THE WORLD

LAURA SPINNEY

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The twentieth century's greatest killer was not Hitler or Stalin but a common virus, spread as a deadly strain through an unprotected and unsuspecting world.

The Spanish Flu of 1918—1920 was one of the greatest human disasters of all time. It infected a third of the people on Earth—from the untouchables of India to the King of Spain, Franz Kafka, and Woodrow Wilson. But despite a death toll of between fifty and one hundred million people across the globe, it exists in our memory as a mere footnote to World War I.

In **PALE RIDER**, Laura Spinney presents a gripping narrative history of this overlooked pandemic. Tracing it from Alaska to Brazil, Persia to Western Samoa, she reveals how the virus travelled across the globe, exposing mankind's vulnerability and putting our ingenuity to the test.

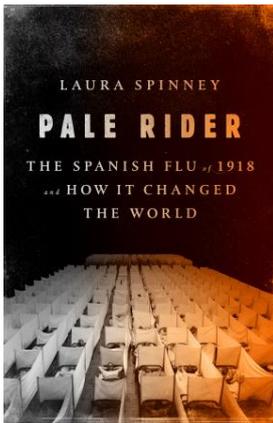
As culturally significant as both world wars, the Spanish flu dramatically disrupted—and often permanently altered—global politics, race relations, and family structures, while spurring innovation in medicine, religion, and the arts. It was partly responsible, Spinney argues, for pushing India to independence, South Africa to apartheid, and Switzerland to the brink of civil war. It also created the true “lost generation.”

The time is right to revisit this catastrophe: On the centenary of the epidemic, we finally have available to us data and oral histories not just from North America and Europe, but also from South America, the Middle East, Russia, South East Asia and inland China—regions where the impact of the flu was unknown until recently. This is significant for two reasons: First, North America and Europe reported the lowest death rates, on average, so their experiences were atypical. And second, by 1918 they were both heavily implicated in a war that would devastate Europe. But on *every other continent*—with the exception of Antarctica—more died of flu than war. It is finally possible to begin to reconstruct what happened in those other parts of the world.

Drawing on the latest research in history, virology, epidemiology, psychology, and economics, Spinney pens a biography of the flu—a story that traces humanity's interaction with the flu virus from prehistory to 1918. Weaving these diverse strands into a coherent picture of the pandemic in all its multifaceted glory—or horror—**PALE RIDER** is the masterful account of the little-known catastrophe that forever changed humanity.



Laura Spinney is a science journalist and novelist. She has published two novels and one oral history in English, and her writing on science has appeared in *National Geographic*, *Nature*, the *Economist*, and the *Telegraph*, among others.



PRAISE FOR

PALE RIDER

“A book about the Spanish flu could so easily be dreary—complex pathology interwoven with pervasive tragedy. Not so *Pale Rider*. I’ve seldom had so much fun reading about people dying. Spinney is adept at explaining arcane scientific research in an entertaining, comprehensible way. ...With superb investigative skill and a delightfully light-hearted writing style, she extends her analysis far beyond the relatively short duration of the plague.”—**THE TIMES**

“This riveting study plots the course of the deadliest pandemic in history.”
—**THE SUNDAY TIMES**

“A page turner that should easily satisfy armchair historians and epidemiologists and anybody who likes a good, if gruesome, yarn.”—**FOREIGN POLICY**

“A saga of tragedies and a detective story... *Pale Rider* is not just an excavation but a reimagining of the past. As the book progresses, the flu is cast increasingly as a character that crops up *Zelig*-like at important moments in history, altering the course of events previously unattributed to it...Compelling.”—**THE GUARDIAN**

“Impressive...Set against the devastating backdrop of global contagion, it is individual lives and deaths, discovered in letters, diaries, biographies and memoirs, that epitomize this rich account...Along with exemplary research, Spinney's narrative is packed with fascinating, quirky detail...As the centenary of this monumental event approaches, other volumes on the pandemic will undoubtedly appear. *Pale Rider* sets the bar very high.”—**NATURE**

“Wide-sweeping... Spinney is a storyteller with a science writer’s cabinet of facts... The book reveals how desperately and differently people reacted and how gravely the flu influenced the modern world, touching everything from medicine to business and from politics to poetry.”—**SCIENCE**

“Influenza, like all viruses, is a parasite. Laura Spinney traces its long shadow over human history ...In Europe and North America the First World War killed more than Spanish flu; everywhere else the reverse is true. Yet most narratives focus on the West...Ms Spinney’s book goes some way to redress the balance.”—**THE ECONOMIST**

“An excruciating report on the global disaster... Absorbing... Important... Magisterial.”—**THE OBSERVER**

“Ambitious...Spinney delves into the unfolding tragedy around the globe, looking at Brazil, China, Iran, India, and Russia. There is fascinating detail.”—**THE SPECTATOR**

“A vividly recreated, grimly fascinating book... Spinney demonstrates how Spanish flu cast a long, dark shadow over the 20th century.”—**THE DAILY MAIL**

“Spinney’s book is intensely readable, and instead of a strictly chronological account she circles around history, epidemiology and culture to give a panoramic portrait of the previous century’s most deadly pandemic.”—**THE AWL**

“A masterful account of the possible origins, spread, and cultural consequences of this modern-day plague.”
—**GEOGRAPHICAL**

“[Spinney] evokes a world that seems both farther from us than a mere century, and also uncomfortably close... If we can’t reconstruct our memories of the Spanish flu quickly enough, millions more will die in the next pandemic.”
—**THE TYEE**

“Remarkable... a concise but comprehensive work.”—**THE CASCADIA ADVOCATE**

“For all the tragedies and upheavals, *Pale Rider* actually paints an oddly hopeful picture of a population more sensitized to early warnings and largely more willing to heed them.”—**THE NATIONAL**

“A compelling, expert account of a half-forgotten historical catastrophe.” —**KIRKUS REVIEWS**

“*Pale Rider* contains vivid journalistic accounts of outbreaks around the world, from the U.S. to China, India, and Persia...Insightful.”—**PUBLISHERS WEEKLY**

“An insightful and valuable account for all history collections.”—**LIBRARY JOURNAL**