

Analysis of the dead wake: the last crossing of the lusitania by erik larson

[Literature](#), [Biography](#)



Complete with a tale-bearing tone, Erik Larson takes on narrating the ordeal of the sinking of the luxury ocean liner Lusitania, in *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*. The purpose of the book is to unearth the drama and emotional strength tangled in a disaster whose actual connotation and most deep-seated details may have been concealed by history. The novelist wrote the story not because there was no satisfactory work on the subject, but because there was no work that had indulged into some of the secondary details of the disaster. Larson's primary target audience with the narration was the general public, as he intended to reveal specific facts which had been masked by history. Erik Larson is an American journalist, who also doubles as an author of some well recognized, bestselling books under the genre of historical nonfiction, although he has never tackled this subject in his previous works. He attended University of Pennsylvania, as well as Columbia University where he studied history and journalism respectively. Larson's viewpoint in *Dead Wake* merges with the thesis that the sinking of Lusitania was the force behind America joining the 1st World War after the nation's former neutrality.

Schemed on an event in history, *Dead Wake* is based upon the story of the magnificent Lusitania, a steamship that left New York for Liverpool, England on May 1, 1915 when World War I was clocking the tenth month, and the ship had no connections with the ongoing war. Crafted with the utmost skill, the ship was deemed practically unsinkable, and with the continuity of the war between Britain and Germany, an agreement had been finalized that neutral or business vessels, like Lusitania, were not to be targeted.

Nevertheless, Germany issued a warning shortly after, that commercial

vessels were prone to attack when cruising within waters enclosed in the war zone. However, the passengers and team on board disregarded the message as they were convinced that the ocean liner could not be attacked. Larson further reveals the actuality, unknown at the time, that Lusitania had been mentioned repeatedly by the Germans in majority of their seized messages. Although, during that period, Germany was determined to shift the rules. On May 7th, the ship was struck by a German Unterseeboot-20, a move that was an illustration of triumph for Germany. The ocean liner sank in eighteen minutes, killing more than half the population on board. The disaster moved President Woodrow Wilson to ditch his impartial policy which led America to enter the war.

From Germany's conduct, it is notable that Germany was deceiving America to join the war by seeking reciprocation after attacking American vessels. While Britain wished that America would join as an ally, the disaster of the ocean liner was an illustrated the convergence of the aims of the two nations at war. The author's thrilling narration and desire to reveal some hidden truth paints a broader picture of America by infusing suspense and revelation of President Woodrow, who maintained a neutral stand and had trepidation for the fast expanding war, but was also captured by the outlook of a new love. The detailed fact about the president at that time that he further uncovers is his relationship with Edith Galt, which seems to have been the sole justification of why there was information leakage from America. Larson's mode of recounting the tragedy is filled with historical research as well as exciting tales, and successfully manages to spell out

some of the tales which were unknown to people or had not been exhausted by earlier works. Additionally, the act of twisting a historical event and giving it a novelistic feel makes *Dead Wake* a worthwhile read, coupled with some of the interesting verities. For example, Larson points out a captivating realization that on board was a family named 'Luck' and they were among the survivors.

Dead Wake fits perfectly into the established interpretation of the topic, as it has a historical input to understanding a significant tragedy during World War I that managed to shove America into the war, despite its former refusal to take sides in the ongoing battle at that time. The book further clarifies the standard point of view by illustrating all the interesting facts and truths regarding the cause of the tragedy, the fueling factors, what exactly happened, and the aftermath of the disaster that may have been hidden by history.

Finally, I would highly recommend this book to the audience of professional historians who may wish to delve deeper into key events in history. The author, Erik Larson, accomplished the intended purpose of giving a captivating, yet truthful and factual account of the tragedy, which may have been illustrated differently in the early works. Being one of the bestsellers, *Dead Wake* is a book that would equally benefit the general public due to the richness of facts about one of the biggest tragedies in American history.