

A world lit only by fire



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A World Lit Only By Fire, a magnificent book written by William Manchester transform the way people saw the medieval and the renaissance times. He portraits a very vivid image of that time opening our eyes to what really happen to the people who lived that era. The book is divided into three parts: The Medieval Mind, The Shattering and the last part, One Man Alone. The first part of the book introduce us to a new perspective and understanding of what the author believe, thanks to his investigations, form and mold the medieval mind.

The society of this time was one of indifference toward others, corruption, violence, and cruelty. Men of the church were blind by the power the Holy See gave them, and by the name of that same church, the one that was supposed to protect the interest of all the faithful Christian, was the one that cause thousands of innocent deaths. When you read things like this you think that it can't get worse, but when you keep reading you realize that not even the sins where taken seriously and that corruption was worse than we thought but, the worst part of the situation were the diseases.

Education was so ignored by the people that at some point as the people infected with the diseases try to reach for a doctor or a person that can cure them they find themselves without a good treatment just because the ignorance led them to became an illiterate society with a seriously lack of ethics, moral but more important, the base of success, the education.

At the end of this part Manchester set very clearly that this society was so insignificant, they were like stock in time, fighting the impossible, the change, a revolution toward a new time fill with amazing thinkers and discoveries but with the same or worse characteristic that define this era,

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corruption and injustice. This new beginning is the Renaissance. With the re birth of an era the author begins the second part of the book *The Shattering*.

Manchester goes more deeply in the corruption of the church and the new intellectuals that emerged to expose to the world their ideas of what in their perspective was for example the way to obtain salvation. For example we have Erasmus and Martin Luther, two extraordinary humanists that fought basically against “The Invincible” the Catholic Church. Both of them spread their ideas of salvation and faith but at the same time they reveal the mistakes and corruption committed by church officials.

The Church of that time was sick with the power it have. Especially, the one sick with this power was the head master, The Pope. He was the first to commit mortal sins like murders and incest. Thanks to all the corruption and indifference from the church, the faith of the fellows toward them began to decrease rapidly causing the church to lose a lot of the power they loved so much. The renaissance was an era of change, fighting, and unexpected discoveries made by extraordinary people.

This lead us to the final part of the book, *One Man Alone*, basically concentrated in the trajectory, discoveries, and life of Ferdinand Magellan. He and his voyages will change completely and irrevocably the world as they know it. William Manchester as hi let us know in the note at the beginning of the book almost all of his sources are secondary. Most of these sources are documents and studies about the medieval and renaissance time, but he also uses some primary sources like *Life on a Medieval Barony* by William Stearns Davis.

He pictures the medieval community and experiences very clearly. Another source Manchester uses is works from Dr. Timothy Joyner and James Boyden, both work help the author complete this book with real facts from historians who studied very deeply the medieval and renaissance era. In my honest opinion this is not the type of reading I actually expect to be reading in school. I was expecting something more monotonous, but never expect to find this reading so interesting.

Maybe is the fact that most of the themes treated in the book are not new to me. Being this my first time reading from William Manchester I can really say I love his works but I can really tell that if all his books are like this one I will certainly enjoy them. A World Lit Only By Fire has opened the eyes of every single person that read it to the reality of that time it actually make me feel like I was living in that monstrous time but it was a really great experience.

However this book is not for everybody the people how read it have to be open mind to the past and most important they have to know how interpret the point of view and critics of the author. Finally William Manchester is a great writer; he knows how to balance between his critics, point of view, and the reality of the facts. Reading this brightening book was worth my summer time and I hope that the books I will be assigned to read in the future are as good as this one.