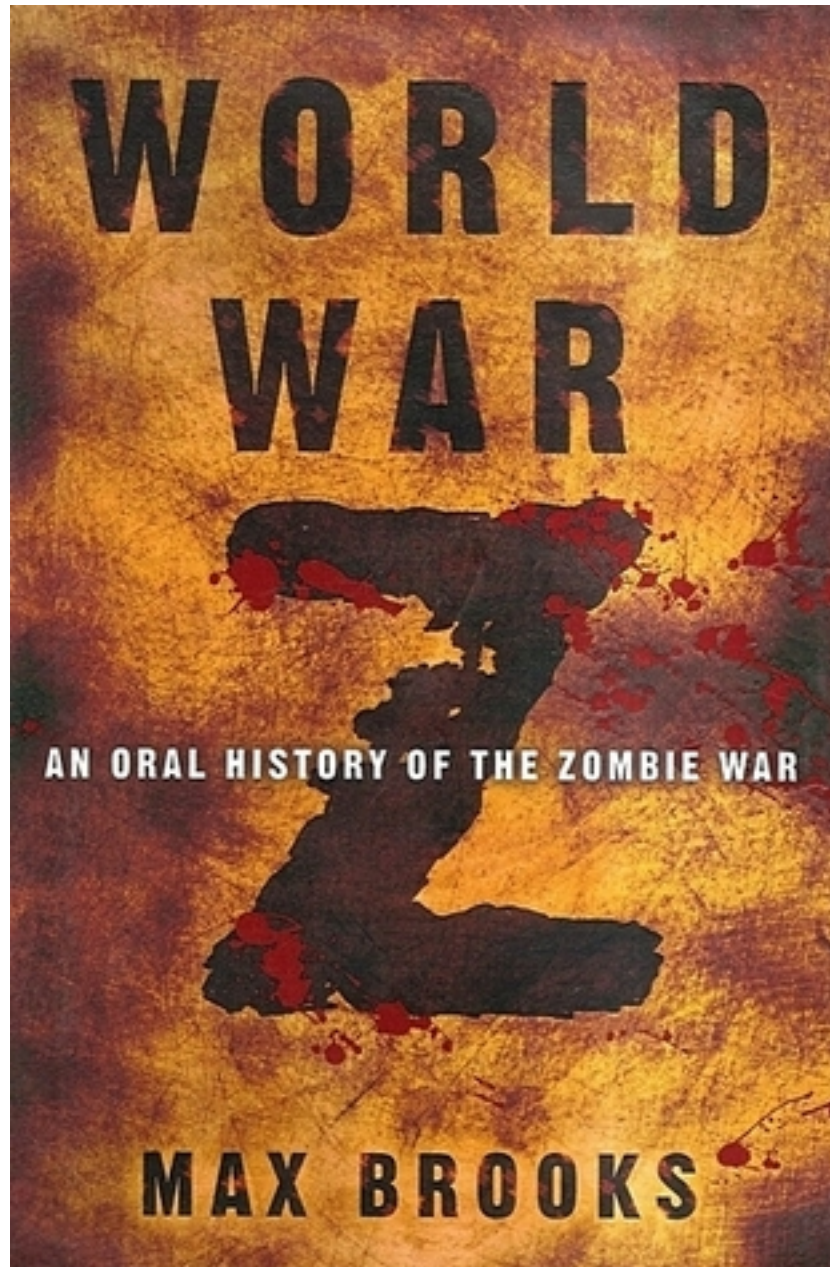


World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War Book PDF Download



By:
Max Brooks

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What people Say:

Ellen

This book was initially recommended to me by several people in the office and since I love zombies and apocalyptic themes, well, I was pretty excited. Unfortunately, it did not live up to my expectations and I struggled to finish it. (I'm going to write this review under the assumption that the reader has some inkling about the story and how it's constructed.)

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There are two issues that killed it for me. Firstly, most of the characters had the same--or similar--voice. Of course this is partly to do with the fact that the voices all originate from the mind of one individual, the author. Also, the more journalistic/interview approach to constructing the narrative limits how much color the author can impart on any given character. Q and A is inherently dry, no matter how exciting the events described are intended to be. This is a minor gripe, though, and one that can be lived with.

A more serious complaint, however, is that this book can be seen as completely lacking any and all dramatic tension that a person (or, me) expects from a survival horror-themed story. The primary draw--the zombie war and how humanity survived--is such a compelling hook, but it's told...by the people who survived. As in, past tense, as in we are left with their impressions of things that happened to them. Basically, then, the story devolves into an exercise in basic exposition: "And then this happened, and then that happened." And so the author is free to weave his story without any pesky things like character development, story arcs, plotting, and personal details that are shown and not told. It seems to me like an extraordinarily easy (maybe even lazy) way to tell a story.

One other minor point: For me, accounts of survival when the victims are real have meaning that allows them to transcend the limitations described above. WW2 Holocaust survivors' accounts, for example, can take your breath away. The difference is, of course, that they were real events that happened to real people.

Since all the classic storytelling elements are dispensed with, we're basically left with the author's views on our current world, particularly and naturally, the wars and our culture(s). However, it's my view that there are dozens of books written about these subjects already; books that haven't needed

to sex the discussion up with a horde of shambling undead.

So, in summary, if I'm going to read an apocalyptic recounting of the end of civilization as we know it, I want to read about people in real time, struggling to survive, not being told how people survived after it was over.

(I realize, though, that it's all a matter of taste, as I know half a dozen people whose views I respect that absolutely loved this book.) :D

Jason Pettus

(My full review of this book is longer than Goodreads' word-count limitations; find the entire essay at the Chicago Center for Literature and Photography [cclapcenter.com].)

Anytime I hear of some funny, gimmicky book suddenly becoming popular among the hipster set, I always squint my eyes and brace myself for the worst; because usually when it comes to such books, the worst is all you can expect to find, an endless series of fluffy pop-culture pieces designed specifically for crafty point-of-pur

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, which supposedly is a hilarious "actual" oral history about an apocalyptic war with the undead that supposedly almost wiped out the human race as we know it; even worse, that it had been inspired by an actual gimmicky point-of-purchase humor book, the dreadful

from a few years ago which had been published specifically and only to make a quick buck off the "overly specific survival guide" craze of the early 2000s. And even worse than all this, the author of both is Max Brooks, as in the son of comedy legend Mel Brooks; and if the son of a comedy legend is trawling the literary gutters of gimmicky point-of-purchase humor books, the chances usually are likely that they have nothing of particular interest to say.

So what a surprise, then, to read the book myself this month, and realize that it's not a gimmicky throwaway humor book at all, but rather a serious and astute look at the next 50 years of global politics, using a zombie outbreak as a metaphorical stand-in for any of the pervasive challenges facing us as an international culture these days (terrorism, global warming, disease, natural disasters), showing with the precision of a policy analyst just how profoundly the old way of doing things is set to fail in the near future when some of these challenges finally become crises. It is in fact an astoundingly intelligent book, as "real" as any essay by Seth Godin or Malcolm Gladwell, basically imagining the debacle of New Orleans multiplied by a million, then imagining what would happen if the Bushists were to react to such a thing in the same way; and even more astounding, Brooks posits that maybe the real key to these future challenges lies with the citizens of third-world countries, in that they are open to greater and faster adaptability than any fat, lazy, middle-class American or European ever could be. Oh yeah, and it's got face-eating zombies too. Did I mention the face-eating zombies?

Because that's the thing to always remember, that this comes from an author who has spent nearly his entire life in the world of comedy and gimmicky projects, not only from family connections but also his own job as a staff writer at

from 2001 to '03; that no matter how smart

gets (and it gets awfully smart at points), it is still ultimately a fake oral history of an apocalyptic zombie war that supposedly takes place just five or ten years from now, starting as these messes often do as a series of isolated outbreaks in remote third-world villages. And in fact this is where Brooks first starts getting his political digs in, right from the first page of the manuscript itself, by using the initial spread of the zombie virus to comment on the way such past epidemics like HIV have been dealt with by the corrupt old white males who used to be in charge of things; basically, by ignoring the issue as long as it wasn't affecting fellow white males, then only paying attention after it's become an unstoppable epidemic. In Brooks' world, just like the real one of pre-9/11 intelligence-gathering, we see that a few government smarties from around the world really were able to catch the implications of this mysterious new virus while it was still theoretically controllable; just that their memos and papers went ignored for political reasons by those actually in charge, as well as getting lost in the vast bureaucratic shuffle that the Cold War has created in the Western military-industrial complex.

Penny

I know what you're thinking. "Five stars for

book? Why???"

If you've been following my reviews then you know I tend to stress over how many stars to give a book, and I'm not one to hand out five-star ratings willy-nilly. I'm usually quite cautious when it comes to handing out that all-important fifth star. I'm stingy. That being said, every once in a while a book, that may or may not be amazing, comes along and wows me.

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And now you're (probably) thinking: "But Penny, it's a book about zombies.

Disgusting rotting corpses that stumble around, looking to sink their teeth into any living thing. How--how could that sort of thing wow you? Are you, like, smoking crack???"

First things first: No--I'm not smoking crack. Everyone knows crack is cheap--I much prefer the real thing*. Now that I've cleared that up, lets move on, shall we?

Kat Kennedy

At this current moment in time my husband and I do not actually have a working will. We are the legal definition of intestate. We have not yet made any preparations for our death and we only have life insurance/house insurance because his mother organized the whole damn thing (come to mention it she is also the reason we have electricity, water and a phone line - the internet though was all us because we'd die without it.)

So believe me when I say that we don't organize... anything. Except our zo

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was all us because we'd die without it.)

So believe me when I say that we don't organize... anything. Except our zombie kit. That's right. We have a zombie kit. Should zombies suddenly strike while I type out this review we would be able to take our son and get in our car and drive away without a backward glance. Everything we need is in the boot of the car. If we're holed up inside the house we have our second zombie kit to live off of and use to defend ourselves. We have several plans in place as to where to go, what to do if we're separated at time of crisis, who we're taking with us, how we'll stay in contact etc.

Some may call his paranoia. Some may call this stupidity. Do you know what I call these naysayers?

Zombie food.

It is this obsessive and weird need to ensure survival during a zombie apocalypse, despite every rational reason to believe that all our efforts are for naught, that has made me the prime candidate and target group of this book.

It is not the norm of the zombie genre. In general a zombie movie tends to be about a small group of individuals against the undead hordes looking to floss with intestines.

This book is not about a small group of individuals - it is about a large collection of humanity. This book is how HUMANITY would survive and deal with a zombie infestation. It is a collection of small, broken narratives from people all over the world, across many social, economic and political classes.

Some of them were amazing, others horrifying. Some were inspirational, others so depressing or introspective that I wondered if there was any hope.

Rebecca DeLaTorre

I just can't get on this bandwagon. The pseudo-government reports the book is written in handicap it in many ways. First, there are no protagonists to grow with, no story arc, no climax, etc. You know what's going to happen from day one--there was a world crisis involving zombies and at least some people live to tell the tale. The sure knowledge of the outcome deflates any tension and book feels flacid. The pseudo-scientific jargon is a poor imitation (my sister, a nurse, tossed aside Brooks' o

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people live to tell the tale. The sure knowledge of the outcome deflates any tension and book feels flacid. The pseudo-scientific jargon is a poor imitation (my sister, a nurse, tossed aside Brooks' other Zombie manifesto in disgust within the first few pages and this one fails no better) and there are far too many emotional pauses and descriptive introductions for what amounts to an addendum to a government study of events. The thing that put me over the edge with this book is the inconsistency--one chapter has a boy with bloody knuckles sliding his hands about in zombie goo and remaining uninfected and in the next chapter there is an expression of gratitude that no one exposed to detrius from a headshot has open wounds to be infected through. What editor let that get by? On top of that, racial, national stereotypes abound and are crude and unappealing. Brooks is obviously a big fan of Israel, as they are the heroes of the day, even going so far as to selflessly save Palestinian refugees (yeah, right) and remnants of South Africa's apartheid system are given a reprieve due to their pragmatism. Russians are wacky comrades, Chinamen are inscrutable and Americans are cowboys weakened by education and consumerism. Ugh.

I won't recommend this book to anyone, even a die hard zombie fan, lest World War Z ruin the genre for them forever.