

About the Author

ERIK LARSON



Erik Larson is the author of five New York Times bestsellers, most recently *Dead Wake: The Last Crossing of the Lusitania*, which hit #1 on the Times list soon after launch. His previous book was *In the Garden of Beasts: Love, Terror, and an American Family in Hitler's Berlin*, which also hit #1 and remained on the printed list for 35 weeks. Erik's book *The Devil in the White City* stayed on the Times' hardcover and paperback lists for a combined total of over five years. It won an Edgar Award for nonfiction crime writing and was a finalist for a National Book Award.

Erik also wrote *Isaac's Storm*, published in September 1999. In addition to becoming an immediate Times bestseller, the book won the American Meteorology Society's prestigious Louis J. Battan Author's Award. The Washington Post called it the "Jaws' of hurricane yarns."

Erik graduated summa cum laude from the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied Russian history, language and culture. He received a masters in journalism from Columbia University. After a brief stint at the *Bucks County Courier Times*, Larson became a staff writer for *The Wall Street Journal*, and later a contributing writer for *Time Magazine*. He has written articles for *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *The New Yorker*, and other publications.

Larson lives in Seattle with his wife and three daughters.

Biographical information from:

www.eriklarsonbooks.com



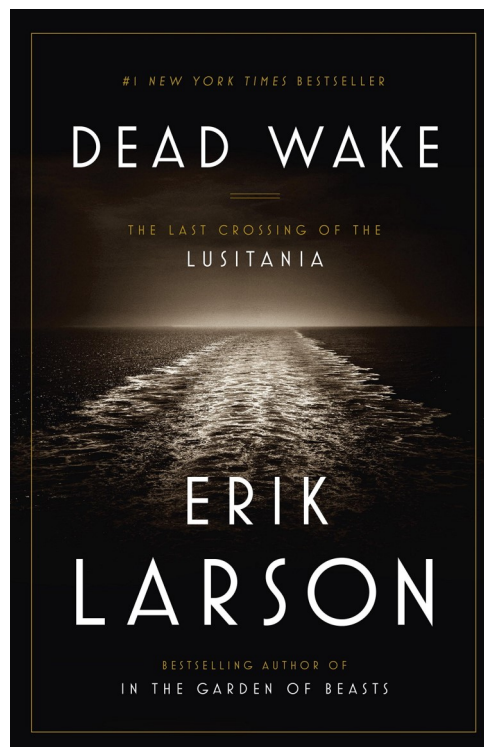
ROSENBERG LIBRARY
MUSEUM BOOK CLUB

PROGRAM AGENDA

Summer 2016

June 29 · August 18

12:00 noon	Welcome & Introductions
12:00-12:15	Historical Presentation
12:15-1:00	Book Discussion



Rosenberg
Library's
Museum Book
Club provides
a forum for
discovery and
discussion,
linking literary
selections with
artworks and
historical
objects from
the permanent
collection.



WWI TRENCH ART
Gift of Dr. Edward and Sally Futch
2006.005.012

"His wife had died ...two days after Britain entered the new war in Europe and just a year and a half into his first term. In losing her he lost not merely his main source of companionship but also his primary advisor, whose observations he had found so useful in helping shape his own thinking."

-p. 23

Discussion...

Larson provides insight into the lives of passengers and crew members from a variety of socio-economic classes. Whose stories did you most closely identify with? Were there certain people aboard the *Lusitania* that you liked or disliked? Why?

Book dealer Charles Lauriat took extreme measures to protect his rare drawings and books, but these items were lost anyway. If you had been onboard the *Lusitania* with highly valuable items, what would you have done with them? Why do you think Larson focuses so much on the possessions people travelled with?

"The western front had become a reciprocating engine of blood and gore, each side advancing then retreating across a no-man's-land laced with barbed wire, gouged with shell holes, and mounded with dead men."

-p.110



GERMAN GAS MASK, WWI
Gift of Charles N. Barrow
83.041.1,2

Discussion...

Were you familiar with President Woodrow Wilson's personal life and his relationships? Did any of the revelations made in this book surprise you?

President Wilson continued to maintain his position of neutrality even after the sinking of the *Lusitania*. It was not until two years later that he asked Congress to declare war against Germany. Do you think he should have taken action sooner?

"Even those who had seen the warning paid little attention. The idea that Germany would dare attempt to sink a fully loaded civilian passenger ship seemed beyond rational consideration. And even if a U-boat did try, the *Lusitania* was simply too big and too fast, and once in British waters would doubtless be too well protected by the British navy.

-p. 94



1915 LUSITANIA MEDAL
Gift of Calvin D. Shorter
95.008

Discussion...

Did your impression of Captain Turner change as the book progressed? Do you think he was at fault for what happened to the *Lusitania*? If you read Isaac's *Storm* by Erik Larson, did you see any similarities between Captain Turner and Isaac Cline?

Do you consider Captain Schwieger's attack on a civilian ship an act of terror? Do you feel that the Germans gave fair warning with the advertisements they placed declaring coastal waters war zones for any ship that might enter?