

# The Spanish Lady: History truly does repeat itself

■ Book Review: 'Pandemic 1918'

by Catharine Arnold

By Lisa Britton  
Go! Magazine

I didn't really want to read the book.

But the nonfiction table at the Baker County Public Library drew me in with the promise that these selections "read like fiction."

I'm not a big nonfiction reader. I love to learn, of course, which is the big draw for nonfiction.

But when I open a book I like to lose myself in a fictional world that makes me laugh and makes me cry.

(To be fair, nonfiction has caused these reactions, as well.)

The bookshelves in our home are stuffed with true stories — crime and histories and all sorts of nonfiction books, thanks to my husband's preferred genre.

The book that grabbed my eye at the library was "Pandemic 1918: Eyewitness Accounts From the Greatest Medical Holocaust in Modern History" by Catharine Arnold.

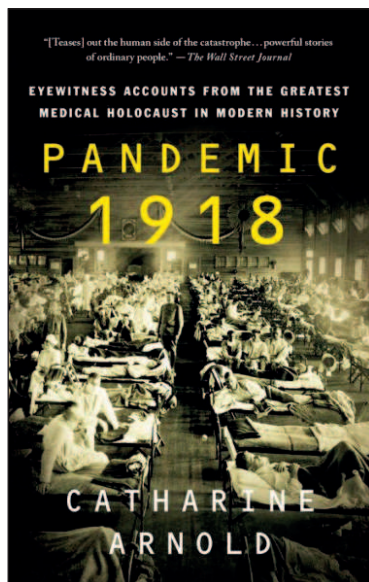
I knew why this particular book made it to the library's display — we are still living through a pandemic, although this one is caused by a different virus than the one that spread around the globe in 1918.

I checked out the book, along with a hefty stack of novels.

(Side note: Kudos to the Baker County Library for staying open through nearly all of the last year. Our family sure appreciates having such a great source of reading material.)

The 1918 pandemic, in case you don't know, was caused by the Spanish flu.

This strain of the flu did not



originate in Spain, but that country's press was not censored like so many others during World War I. Spanish newspapers reported on the outbreak, unlike other countries that were not allowed to print anything that might damage morale.

Suffice it to say word about the contagious illness did not spread very quickly, and the sickness marched on alongside the soldiers, invading cities and towns around the world.

The first part of the book focuses on the war, and how one sick person could quickly infect an entire camp of troops. The Spanish flu, the author explains, behaved in a way unlike other influenza viruses in that it overwhelmingly killed young, healthy people.

My favorite type of nonfiction is the style that tells a story through other stories.

Arnold employs that technique here by sharing anecdotes and

newspaper clippings that show the progression of the disease.

She doesn't hold back on the grisly details of how victims succumbed — it was no wonder people became terrified of the Spanish Lady, as the sickness was dubbed.

What struck me, as I read through these pages, was how history truly does repeat itself.

One hundred years after that pandemic ended, the world is facing another one — this time against the novel coronavirus.

A chart in "Pandemic 1918" shows a small bump in the summer of 1918, then a spike in the winter, and other jump in cases the spring of 1919.

It could be a graphic from today's news.

Although Arnold tells story after story of those who succumbed to the Spanish flu, she weaves hope into the pages, such as a boy nicknamed "Diz" who lied about his age in order to drive for the Red Cross.

He contracted influenza but survived — and went on to delight generations of Walt Disney fans.

The medical stories are fascinating as well. Without the technology to know what was causing the sickness, doctors did their best to care for patients and scientists worked to develop a cure and a vaccine.

They were not successful because they thought the flu was caused by bacteria, not a virus.

In the end, I learned a lot and was glad I chose this book. And in 100 years, I'm sure someone will be reading about the great pandemic of 2020.

## the BOOK NOOK

■ Publishers Weekly bestsellers for the week ending April 3

HARDCOVER  
FICTION

1. "The Red Book" by James Patterson and David Ellis
2. "The Four Winds" by Kristin Hannah
3. "The Midnight Library" by Matt Haig
4. "Win" by Harlan Coben
5. "Eternal" by Lisa Scottoline
6. "Klara and the Sun" by Kazuo Ishiguro
7. "The Invisible Life of Addie La Rue" by V.E. Schwab
8. "Life After Death" by Sister Souljah
9. "Sunflower Sisters: A Novel" by Martha Hall Kelly
10. "The Affair" by Danielle Steel

HARDCOVER  
NONFICTION

1. "The Hill We Climb: An Inaugural Poem for the Country" by Amanda Gorman
2. "The Women of the Bible Speak: The Wisdom of 16 Women and Their Lessons for Today" by Shannon Bream
3. "Seeing Beautiful Again: 50 Devotions to Find Redemption in Every Part of Your Story" by Lysa Terkeurst
4. "Get Good with Money: Ten Simple Steps to Becoming Financially Whole" by Tiffany Aliche
5. "Violence. Speed. Momentum." by Dr. Disrespect
6. "The Code Breaker: Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race" by Walter Isaacson
7. "How to Do the Work: Recognize Your Patterns, Heal from Your Past, and Create Your Self" by Nicole LePera
8. "Everybody Fights: So Why Not Get Better at It?" by Kim Holderness and Penn Holderness
9. "Eat Better, Feel Better: My Recipes for Wellness and Healing, Inside and Out" by Giada De Laurentiis

10. "Everything Will Be Okay: Life Lessons for Young Women (from a Former Young Woman)" by Dana Perino

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