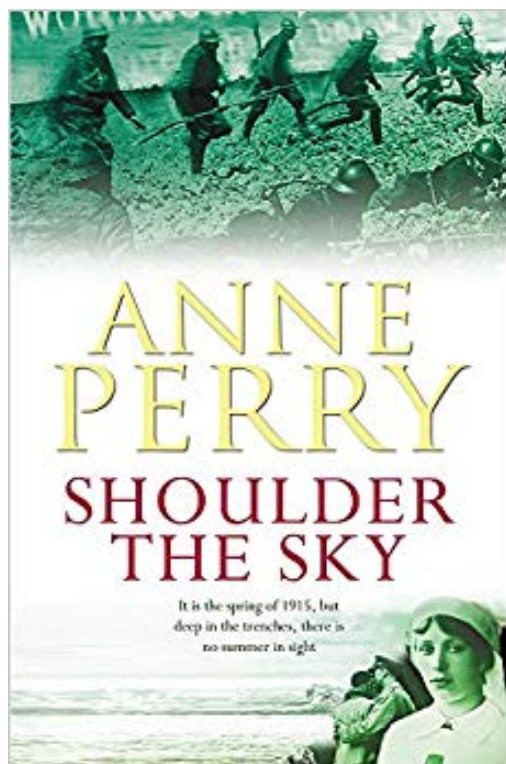


Shoulder the Sky: A Novel (World War One Novels (Paperback)) by Anne Perry



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Reviews of the **Shoulder the Sky: A Novel (World War One Novels (Paperback))** by Anne Perry

Lightbinder

I have long been an Anne Perry fan and was unhappy to discover that I'd read ALL her Victorian mysteries: I loved them. Transplanting myself from the late 1800s to the time of WWI would be hard, but worth it if she could bring that period (about which I didn't know much) to life for me as well as she had Victorian England. I've read both books in the series thus far, and found them...well...less wonderful than the Victorian period ones, but still good enough that I eagerly await the continuation of the series. One thing I wanted was to have a deeper comprehension of WWI--how it affected people's behaviours, values, life-styles, mores--the impact it had on people of the time. I think I gained a lot of understanding about this from Perry's book, and for that I'm grateful. She's plotted a mystery suitable to her themes, and revelatory of her characters' developments: black and white make room for grey, in a very believable way, and I think that that was undeniably one of the important results of the War. Characters develop believably; themes such as the changes in women's roles are well presented, and the reader sees room for further development of this theme to come in later volumes in the series. Was this novel as gripping as the Victorian ones? I can't really say so. I felt the plot moved slowly, and Perry repeated the "moral of the story" a bit more than needed, I felt--I got just a bit tired of the agonizing soul-searching the chaplain engaged in--it was meaningful, but repetitious. Of course, perhaps that's how we change, not in flash but dreadfully slowly. I'd have liked to see much more of his sister, who was transforming from a petulant, self-indulgent and shallow girl in the first book of the series, into a strong, decisive, purposeful woman in the second. Maybe Perry is saving her for the next volume--and you can count on it: I'll be there to see!

Vobei

In July 2010, was looking for a book about WWI, trench warfare and how it was fought. My search came up with the first of this series entitled: 'No Graves As Yet', which was an excellent read and thus I was captured. This is about an English family whose grown children get involved not only in the war, but also are involved in trying to solve a mystery. To me, Anne Perry, is not only gifted as a story teller, but her descriptions of England before and during WWI are vivid to the imagination. 'Shoulder the Sky' is the second of the series. I have read quite a few books in between, but I'm back to this series now. 'Shoulder the Sky' is a winner. I have both of these books on my Kindle. - j.

Sat

Anne Perry's "Shoulder the Sky," is set in 1915, approximately eight months into WWI. This is the second in a five part series which takes place during the war. The first novel, "No Graves As Yet," deals with a conspiracy that would bring dishonor to Great Britain and threaten all of Europe. The details are recorded in a document which, if placed in the wrong hands, would defame England at a time when the continent is one step away from open hostilities. The mystery of who is behind the plot is not solved in the first novel, and plays a large part in this book's storyline. However, it is not necessary to read "No Graves As Yet" to fully enjoy this latest installment, as the author does an excellent job of bringing new readers up to date in the first few chapters.

Eight months into the war, Captain Joseph Reavley, chaplain and former Cambridge professor, is ministering to the wounded and dying in the thick of trench warfare on the Western Front. Eldon Prentice, a war correspondent arrives and begins to ask Reavley's men extremely inappropriate questions. He is an arrogant troublemaker. With his insensitive queries, he quickly earns the animosity of everyone he comes into contact with, including Joseph. When the journalist decides to file a report on soldiers' self-inflicted wounds, the men become bitter and more resentful. Soon after his arrival, Prentice is found dead, murdered. He was drowned, with his head held under the filthy water of the trenches in no-man's land, an area forbidden to most noncombatants. It soon becomes evident that the murder was committed by one of Joseph's soldiers. The chaplain's conscience demands that he seek the truth of one man's death, amidst the deaths of so many thousands.

Matthew Reavley, Joseph's younger brother, is a member of England's Secret Intelligence Service, (SIS). His primary assignment is to discover the identity of "The Peacemaker," a mysterious figure who represents those who seek to make a treaty between Kaiser Wilhelm II and King George V, which would unite warring Germany and Britain into a common front. England would abandon France and Belgium to the Germans. The Germans and the British would then form an empire to divide the world between them. "Most of Europe would fall to Germany, who would help Britain to keep its present empire and add to it the old colonies, including the entire United States."

The previous summer, before the outbreak of the war, the Reavley siblings lost their parents, John and Alys, in a car crash which was proved to be a "careful and deliberate murder." The day before his death, John Reavley, a former member of Parliament, had phoned Matthew to tell him that he discovered a document that outlined a plan which, if implemented, "would ruin England's honor and change the history of the world" - the Peacemaker's plan. The deadly "accident" occurred, while John was driving from his home in St. Giles, along with his wife Alys, to deliver the papers to his son. The killer, a mere pawn in the game, is dead as is his brother. The instigator of the treasonous plot, however, is alive and hard at work. He believes he can convince the King to sign the treaty to form the "Anglo-German hegemony." "The Peacemaker" has to be someone important enough to have access to both King and Kaiser. And he must be stopped!

Twenty-four year-old Judith Reavley, sister to Joseph and Matthew, is a volunteer driver/translator for the general in command of the Ypres Salient. She is grieving for her parents and decides that volunteering for the war effort will help take her mind off her individual pain. When not acting as General Cullingford's chauffeur, she drives an ambulance.

The action alternates between the Ypres Salient in Belgium, England, and Gallipoli. An espionage thriller, murder mystery and historical novel, "Shoulder the Sky" depicts the horrors of trench warfare, with its filth, stench of death and decay, the use of gas as a weapon, and the terrible toll in human life. The intensity of World War I trench warfare meant about 10% of the fighting soldiers were killed. This is compared to 4.5% killed during WWII.

The Prentice murder is ultimately solved, but there is little mystery involved. I was totally absorbed in the building tension surrounding The Peacemaker and international espionage. I did become frustrated when I realized, that this particular plot-line would not be resolved in "Shoulder the Sky." As the tension has been building since the first novel, one can only wonder if Ms. Perry is waiting for book 5 to reach the denouement. However, her writing is good, as always, although there are a few places where the pace slows. If not for these issues, I would have rated the novel 5 Stars. Highly recommended, especially for fans of Anne Perry, and those readers with interest in the history of the Great War.

Jana Perskie

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