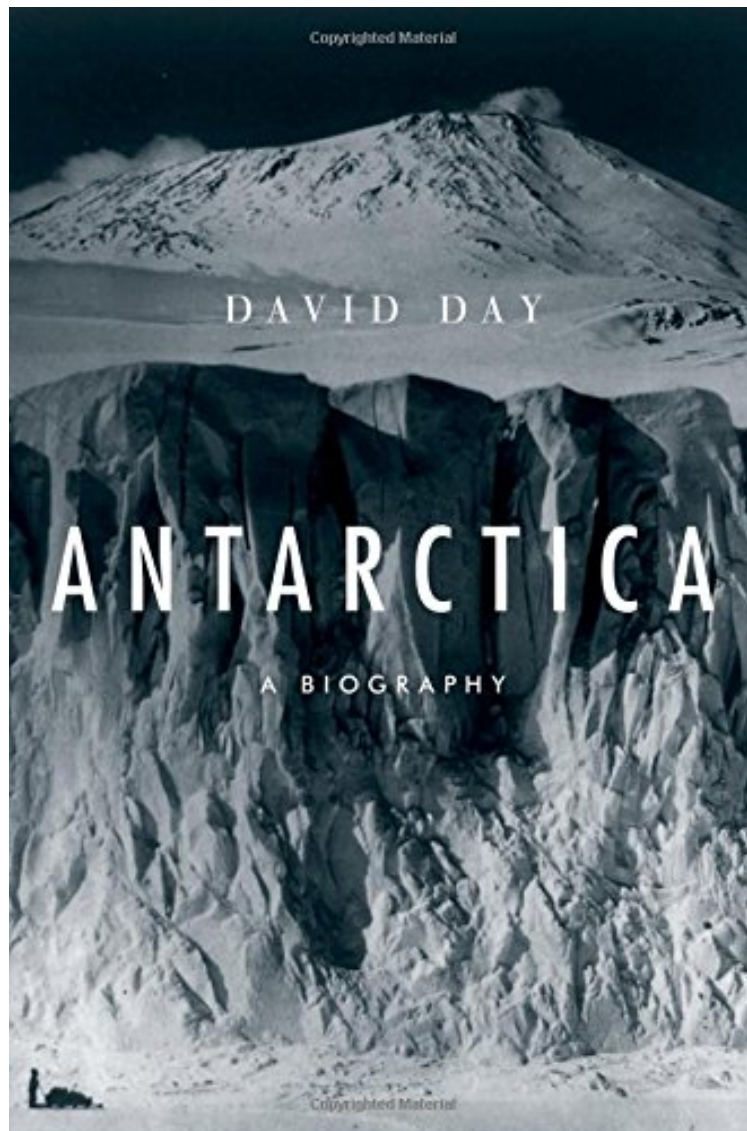


Antarctica: A Biography

David Day

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David Day : Antarctica: A Biography before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Antarctica: A Biography:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Curious Race for Antarctic Ownership By Andrew Desmond Antarctica is a very curious book. I had expectations of the stories of Amundsen and Scott in their race to the pole, the gripping survival story of Shackleton and the exploits of Mawson. Indeed, these courageous men are mentioned but only in passing. Shackleton, for example, is glossed over in a handful of pages. Instead, the book gives extensive coverage to the politics and diplomacy of Antarctica. Clearly, this reader had false expectations. As far as

Antarctic diplomacy is concerned, this largely involved the claiming of ownership rights to the vast and icy continent. In the 21st century, this sounds strange. Racing to own or claim title to certain parts of the continent seems to be such a pointless exercise. What did Antarctica have to offer? Well, potential mineral resources were often assumed to be there but precious little was ever found. Rather, it seems that a number of countries were in search for misguided prestige. Britain was the earliest of possible claimants with Captain Cook sailing south in the late 18th century. He never sighted the continent but may have whetted the appetite of other nations. Principal among these in no particular order was France, Norway, Australia, New Zealand and, later, the United States and the Soviet Union. There was also the duelling Latin America nations of Chile and Argentina. To this day, all these countries, except the U.S. and Russia, claim part of the continent. However, as time has shown, these claims are almost totally spurious. No one owns Antarctica. Rather, it is a giant international park. David Day has done a fine job in detailing the machinations of the various competing parties. Unfortunately, it is a somewhat dry topic. Perhaps Day should have devoted more attention to the explorers? 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Sweeping overview of Antarctic history By Lighthouseguy From Captain Cook to the modern day tourist adventurers, David Day covers three plus centuries of exploration, exploitation and colonial claims of sovereignty over the last place on earth- the Antarctic Continent and its surrounding waters. I found the early chapters covering the efforts of Cook, Bellingshausen, Ross and others the most compelling and interesting. Having read many of the accounts of the heroic years in the Antarctic, I was a disappointed in the somewhat brief and dismissive chapters on Shackleton and Scott. David Day is squarely in the Roland Huntford camp in his opinion of Scott as his closing paragraph leads off "The bumbling incompetence of Scott and his expedition was not realised by some at the time." The later chapters on the post war years and the jockeying for priority of discovery amongst the contending countries, whilst in great detail, was less interesting and at times a struggle to get through. For readers new to the Antarctic and its story, this is a comprehensive overview. For those more widely read on the subject, it was perhaps less successful. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Outstandingly Informative By Peter L. Murray David Day authoritatively relates the political history of the Antarctic Continent since its discovery in the early 19th century until the present day. This is a must read for anyone interested in the last World frontier as we start the 21st Century.

Since the first sailing ships spied the Antarctic coastline in 1820, the frozen continent has captured the world's imagination. David Day's brilliant biography of Antarctica describes in fascinating detail every aspect of this vast land's history--two centuries of exploration, scientific investigation, and contentious geopolitics. Drawing from archives from around the world, Day provides a sweeping, large-scale history of Antarctica. Focusing on the dynamic personalities drawn to this unconquered land, the book offers an engaging collective biography of explorers and scientists battling the elements in the most hostile place on earth. We see intrepid sea captains picking their way past icebergs and pushing to the edge of the shifting pack ice, sanguinary sealers and whalers drawn south to exploit "the Penguin El Dorado," famed nineteenth-century explorers like Scott and Amundson in their highly publicized race to the South Pole, and aviators like Clarence Ellsworth and Richard Byrd, flying over great stretches of undiscovered land. Yet Antarctica is also the story of nations seeking to incorporate the Antarctic into their national narratives and to claim its frozen wastes as their own. As Day shows, in a place as remote as Antarctica, claiming land was not just about seeing a place for the first time, or raising a flag over it; it was about mapping and naming and, more generally, knowing its geographic and natural features. And ultimately, after a little-known decision by FDR to colonize Antarctica, claiming territory meant establishing full-time bases on the White Continent. The end of the Second World War would see one last scramble for polar territory, but the onset of the International Geophysical Year in 1957 would launch a cooperative effort to establish scientific bases across the continent. And with the Antarctic Treaty, science was in the ascendant, and cooperation rather than competition was the new watchword on the ice. Tracing history from the first sighting of land up to the present day, Antarctica is a fascinating exploration of this deeply alluring land and man's struggle to claim it.

From Booklist Beginning with Captain Cook's voyages in the 1770s and concluding with late twentieth-century threats to international treaties and conventions, *Antarctica: A Biography* purports to be as comprehensive a title on the southern continent as possible. Day deserves praise for crafting an interesting historical survey of exploration and scientific research that follows a clear narrative and includes entries from lesser-known expeditions. But there are some surprising omissions. An overtly negative consideration of Robert Scott's doomed South Pole journey includes reference only to Roland Huntford's infamous 1979 biography while ignoring David Crane's more recent and evenhanded title. Ernest Shackleton's survival epic after the loss of his ship, the *Endurance*, a hallmark of southern heroic tales, receives only one scant paragraph. Strangest of all, in the section on aviation, Day does not include the man who first flew there or piloted an aircraft over more than 1,000 miles of the continent, Alaskan Ben Eielson, instead giving the expedition organizer, Australian explorer George Wilkins, all the credit. To be sure, Day has accomplished some interesting things here, but it is not as complete a volume as claimed. --Colleen Mondor "Solid as a block of Antarctic ice itself... [Day's] latest book draws on five years of meticulous research to tell the story of

human endeavour in Antarctica, the last continent to be discovered. It paints a poignant biographical picture of the characters involved, the gruelling expeditions undertaken, and the rivalries between nations as they raced to chart the continent and claim possession of it ...excellent." --The Economist "This is an intoxicating book by Australia's greatest historian." --Peter FitzSimons, Australian journalist and author "A remarkable work of scholarship and sustained analysis." - Ross Fitzgerald, The Australian "The fascinating narrative offers a compelling historical understanding of passion to control nature and the way national and economic interests drive scientific exploration... Day's work is epic and incorporates this important, unique unpopulated land into the consciousness of scholars." --Choice "This scholarly but readable volume surveys the geopolitical history of Antarctica from the dawn of the Age of Reason to the present day. Day is a serious historian. His research has taken him around the world, into archives and libraries and into the minds and intentions of governments." --Greg Ray, Newcastle Herald (AU) "An eye-opening history of the race amongst nations to be the first to plant their flag in the frozen land. It is a big book, covering Captain James Cook's attempts to find the 'Great South Land' in the 1770s to the present and all the explorers and adventurers in between." -- Courier Mail (Brisbane, Australia) " For those who enjoy sweeping historical biographies, David Day's Antarctica is a polar reference piece par excellence. "--The Cairns Post (Australia) "In his latest book, noted Australian historian David Day seeks to capture the spirit of Cook and Mawson and the deeds of subsequent explorers, which eventually turned into a race for Antarctic sovereignty. Unlike traditional histories of Antarctica, which focus almost exclusively upon exploration and individual explorers, Day blends that narrative with the increasing politicisation of Antarctica as European powers, then the Americans, and eventually Argentina and Chile jostled for territory." --Sydney Morning Herald "2012 is the centenary of Scott and Amundsen's race to the South Pole, and publishers have jumped on the band sledge. The winner of the bid for territory goes to Antarctica: A Biography... by David Day, a historian and Australian national treasure. This enormous book approaches the subject head on. The colourful end papers are eloquent: the 'New Map of the World 1703' at the front shows a blank 'taint of ignorance' at the South Pole; at the back there is a more modern cartographer's Antarctica, with its surrounding islands. What Day aims to deliver is the bit in between. The result is a clear and intriguing history of flag-raising."--Literary (UK) "Day has done a remarkable job of collating information from rich and varied international sources. He draws from original accounts, newspaper articles, the recently released papers of US naval officer and polar explorer Richard Byrd..." -- Nature "Day weaves a masterly tale of expeditions and their leaders in this hugely detailed and well-researched tome. There are some absolute gems with new insights for even the most avid readers on the subject." -- Times Higher Education "His thought-provoking and detailed work reminds us that the future of Antarctica remains even more fiercely disputed and uncertain than when Bellingshausen and Bransfield first saw the continent." -- Irish Times "A well-researched, scholarly work that examines nearly 250 years of history with a deft pen and a dry wit."-- Country Life "Day's Antarctica is an impressive piece of work, an impartial and deeply researched account of the politics of polar annexation."--Times Literary Supplement "Well-researched history... An intriguing addition to a centuries-long geopolitical adventure story." -- Kirkus sAbout the Author David Day has been a research fellow at Clare College in Cambridge and a Visiting Professor at University College Dublin, the University of Aberdeen, and the Center for Pacific and American Studies at the University of Tokyo. He is currently a research associate at La Trobe University in Melbourne. He is the author of many books, including Conquest: How Societies Overwhelm Others and the award-winning Claiming a Continent: A History of Australia.