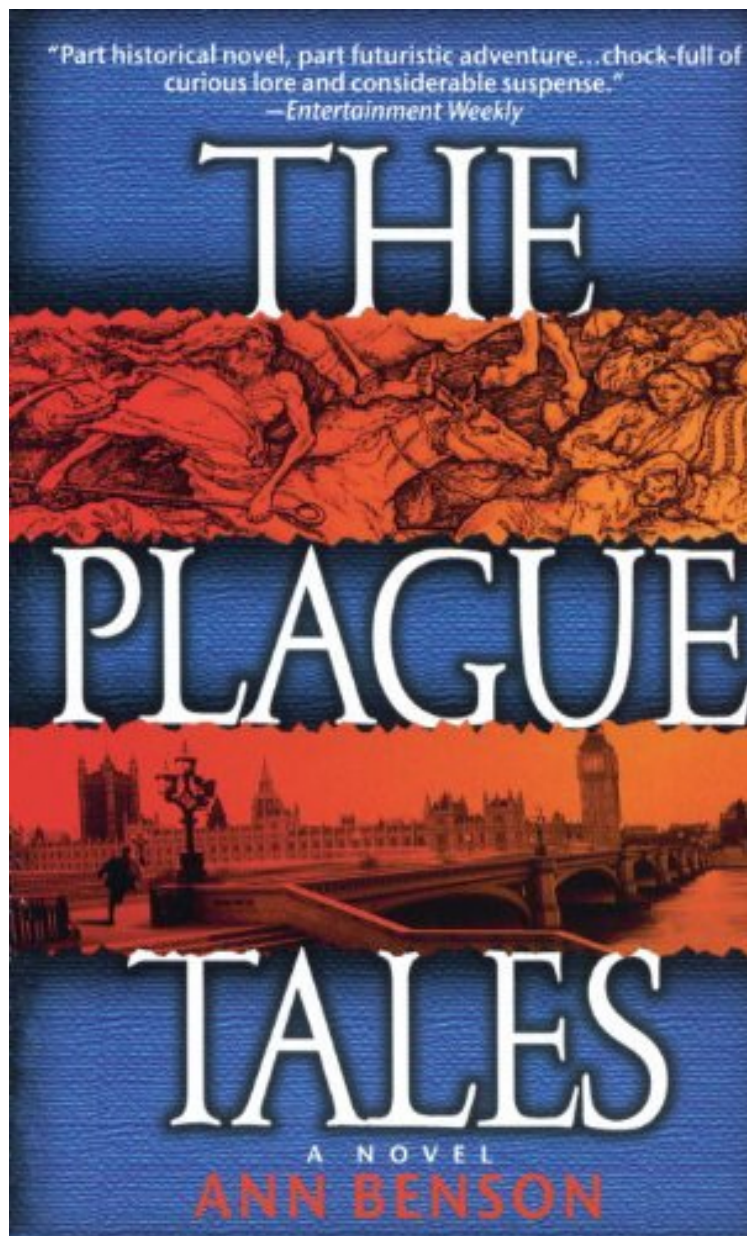


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The Plague Tales

Von Ann Benson

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Von Ann Benson : The Plague Tales before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Plague Tales:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich.

Compelling story, well-drawn characters, a good read
Von lyndag@ct1.nai.netI picked up *The Plague Tales* out of curiosity of how the author would handle what appeared to be essentially the same premise as *The Doomsday Book*. To my surprise, I found it much more original and more enjoyable than Willis' take on the topic. To start, I liked the choice of characters - seeing the Medieval world through the eyes of a Spanish Jew was a nice change of perspective (acknowledging for a change that the Middle Ages actually did exist outside of England!) And the middle aged heroine in the future was a refreshing choice (you don't have to be young and perky to save the world!) As someone who's studied history, Medieval history in particular, I take exception with some readers' comments about its being portrayed as too 'nice.' The image of putrifying bodies that permeates that time period is reminder enough that life in those times could be sometimes be nasty, brutish and short. But remember that to the character, a product of that time frame, what he experienced was normal and he should not be expected to express horror with it any more than we express horror about our own lives, as primitive as they might appear to someone living 500 years from now. I agree that the characters in the future were less well crafted, but then again, I felt the same way about the *Doomsday Book*. (Which, though I am criticizing it, I did actually enjoy.) Is this a perfect book? No, of course not. There are a few pacing problems, some characterizations are weak and a few leaps of faith are required. But again, I experienced more 'yeah, right' moments in *The Doomsday Book* than in this. Personally I read very quickly so the length of the book, which some other readers had problems with, was not an issue. And, please, it's not heavyweight material. You don't have to ponder every word! Actually, the only thing that gave me pause, at first, was the abruptness of the ending, and the fact that the woman who occupied the heroine role for the majority of the book just faded away and the secondary female character gained sudden importance. After giving it some thought, though, it seemed to me that the author was depicting the drive and struggle of all types of life to survive (the selfish gene, Darwinism, etc.) at all costs, including everything from the bacteria to humans and perhaps a mystical or spiritual existence that transcends the physical world, including time. (Do I believe in such supernatural life, no, but there is more to heaven and earth than is dreamed of in your philosophy, or mine...and, for heaven's sake, it's a story. As long as it stays true to its own rules, it works for me.) There was a crisis, a break in the continuity of the keeper of the ancient knowledge. Who's to say that the entire chain of events was not set off to ensure that a successor would be found and the continuity maintained. I enjoyed the book, though I feel a sequel is a bad idea. The story's been told. But if she were to come up with another premise, I'd be more than willing to give it a try.

1 von 1 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Good paranoid blend of past and present
Von Tracy Davis
In Ann Benson's *The Plague Tales*, the reader is introduced to two timelines and two protagonists: Janie Crow, a former surgeon from the near future, and Alejandro Canches-Hernandez, a Jewish doctor of the 14th century. The world in which both characters live is dominated by illness and death. For Janie, it's world trying to recover from the "Outbreaks", an undefined plague that wiped out most of the US, including her family. For Alejandro, it's the Bubonic Plague, which killed almost half of Europe during the 1300s. These two timelines intersect at several points throughout the book, especially in the case of Caroline, Janie's assistant, who seemingly dreams of the 14th century while suffering from its scourge dug up in the early 21st century. Benson creates a wonderful sense of suspense as the reader approaches the first third of the book. Although some of the plot points are obviously contrived, especially in the modern timeline, by the middle of the story, the reader is taken in. Benson paints an accurate picture of ancient and modern prejudice, paranoia, and desperation, as the protagonists of both times race to save their worlds and themselves. A good read.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Decent first novel with some flaws
Von Mattapp@aol.com
I picked up this novel because it looked incredibly similar to one of my favorite books of all time, Connie Willis' *The Doomsday Book*. Like Willis' novel, *Plague Tales* competently manages to weave together two different stories about plagues threatening two societies 700 years apart. The characters are sympathetic, and while the plot does occasionally bog down, it for the most part moves at a decent pace. For a first go, Benson's engaging novel has understandably drawn some good reviews. However, there are some problems with the book. About 400 pages into the book, Benson introduces a fantasy element that is completely at odds with the realism that permeates this novel. In an interview Benson has stated that this element is religious in nature, one that is supposed to make one of the main characters rethink God's presence in the world. I, however, found this intrusion highly jarring and annoying -- especially since it helps bring resolution to the novel's events. Also, there are too many unanswered questions and loose ends left over -- these are the type of questions and threads that usually form the basis of a sequel. Normally, I don't mind when authors produce a sequel or write a book intended to start a series. However, I don't like it when the novel is blatantly left open for a sequel when it's not advertised as the beginning of the series. (Benson's website also mentions that she is indeed writing a sequel). Apart from these two flaws, I'd recommend the book to most people. Those who read this might also want to pick up Willis's novel and read them back-to-back for an interesting contrast in how two authors handled similar material in different fashions.

Kurzbeschreibung It is history's most feared disease. It turned neighbor against neighbor, the civilized into the savage, and the living into the dead. Now, in a spellbinding novel of adventure and science, romance and terror, two eras are

joined by a single trace of microscopic bacterium—the invisible seeds of a new bubonic plague. In the year 1348, a disgraced Spanish physician crosses a landscape of horrors to Avignon, France. There, he will be sent on an impossible mission to England, to save the royal family from the Black Death.... Nearly seven hundred years later, a woman scientist digs up a clod of earth in London. In a world where medicine is tightly controlled, she will unearth a terror lying dormant for centuries. From the primitive cures of the Middle Ages to the biological police state of our near future, *The Plague Tales* is a thrilling race against time and mass destruction. For in 2005, humankind's last hope for survival can come only from one place: out of a dark and tortured past. From the Paperback edition..de

Before venturing back and forth in time with this historical and futuristic adventure novel, Ann Benson was best known for her beads. The idea for *The Plague Tales* came to her during a period of research in London for one of her craft books; passing by an open plot of ground, she learned that it was a mass grave for 14th-century victims of the bubonic plague, inspiring her own fantastic version of the disastrous disease's effects. *The Plague Tales* consists of two parallel stories: one an account of a king's physician in 14th-century England, the other a tale of futuristic London—a time when antibiotics no longer cure and "Bio-Cops," empowered to exterminate those suspected of carrying disease, prowl the streets..com

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