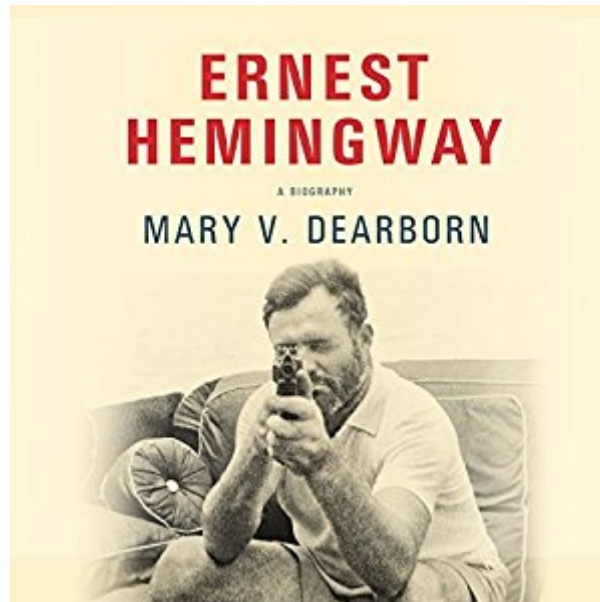




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Ernest Hemingway: A Biography



Synopsis

A revelatory look into the life and work of Ernest Hemingway, considered in his time to be the greatest living American novelist and short story writer, winner of the 1953 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954. Mary Dearborn's new biography gives the richest and most nuanced portrait to date of this complex, enigmatically unique American artist, whose same uncontrollable demons that inspired and drove him throughout his life undid him at the end and whose seven novels and six short story collections informed - and are still informing - fiction writing generations after his death.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 29 hours 39 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HighBridge, a Division of Recorded Books

Audible.com Release Date: May 16, 2017

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B071KZG2C2

Best Sellers Rank: #29 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Artists, Writers & Musicians #91 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical & Political Figures #130 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > United States & Canada

Customer Reviews

Carlos Baker's 1969 biography of Ernest Hemingway, the first full biography of Hemingway, set a high bar for the many Hemingway biographers to come, and in some ways it is still the gold standard. It is well written, meticulously researched and authoritative in many ways. Over the years, I have read it several times, have always enjoyed it and still admire it. Of course in the nearly 50 years since the first edition of Baker's work was published there has been much new scholarly research on Hemingway, especially on subjects such as his mother and her romantic relationship with another woman, his hair fetish and gender fluidity role-playing with his wives and lovers. Mary V. Dearborn, who earned her doctorate at Columbia (Baker's was from Princeton, where he taught for many years) has incorporated this new research, while adding some significant findings of her own. Dr. Dearborn is the first woman to write a full biography of Hemingway, and without making

too much of this, I think that Dearborn brings some perspective on Hemingway that his male biographers didn't have. In his 20s, 30s and into his 40s, Hemingway's image as a sportsman, outdoorsman, warrior and lover of life including good food and drink was admired by many men, including his male biographers. Dearborn doesn't seem quite so easily impressed. She is more willing to explore his many personality faults than did Dr. Baker, though Baker didn't shy away from them. She is also ruthless in presenting his psychological decline in his 50s and how he lost his way as a writer. Dearborn also seems much more willing to admit than Baker and other biographers that many things we thought we knew about Hemingway are at the very least subject to interpretation and debate. Quite often she presents several different versions of what may have happened and simply lets the reader judge what might, or might not, be the truth. Sometimes, she's blunt about mistakes that others have made: For example, she states categorically that Hemingway's "famous" six-toed cats in Key West are a myth, that he didn't keep cats in large numbers until he moved to Cuba. For me, where the new biography most falls short is in Dearborn's literary judgments on both some of his individual works and on why he was, and will always be, such an important figure in 20th century literature. Without going into detail, essentially Dearborn seems to conclude that Hemingway's reputations relies mainly on his first major work, *The Sun Also Rises*, and a number of his short stories. Not only does she agree with others that books like *The Torrents of Spring*, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, *Death in the Afternoon* and almost all of his posthumously published work (except in some ways *The Moveable Feast*) are second-rate, or worse, she also emphasizes the flawed nature of *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, among other works. If you had never heard of Hemingway and came across this biography, you might be excused for not understanding why he was such an important figure in modern literature. Having said that, Dearborn's *Ernest Hemingway: A Biography*, is an important new contribution to the immense amount of work on Hemingway and his canon. It's clearly and, for the most part, gracefully written. It is full of new insights, and it will occupy a prominent place next to Carlos Baker's biography on my bookshelves.

This biography of Ernest Hemingway gives us a woman's point of view from the viewpoint of modern times. Many details are included for the first time. As a Hemingway fan both his fictional creations & factual achievements are fully covered. If you, too, are a Hemingway fan or admire his body of work then your knowledge of him will be both increased and admired.

Mary V. Dearborn's biography of Ernest Hemingway makes a rich contribution to a study of one of

America's outstanding authors. Her research adds understanding to both the author's literary works and his personal life. The book is well documented and her prose makes her study most accessible.

Excellent

Well sone

wonderful book

Very well

Well done.

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