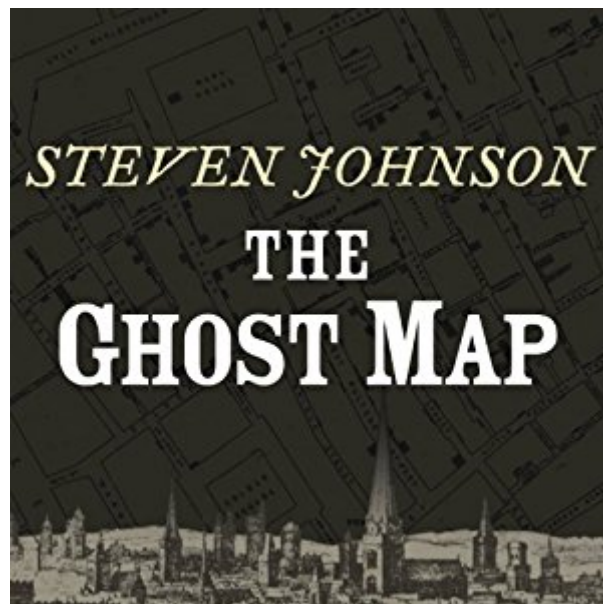


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# The Ghost Map



## Synopsis

A thrilling historical account of the worst cholera outbreak in Victorian London-and a brilliant exploration of how Dr. John Snow's solution revolutionized the way we think about disease, cities, science, and the modern world. From the dynamic thinker routinely compared to Malcolm Gladwell, E. O. Wilson, and James Gleick, *The Ghost Map* is a riveting page-turner with a real-life historical hero that brilliantly illuminates the intertwined histories of the spread of viruses, rise of cities, and the nature of scientific inquiry. These are topics that have long obsessed Steven Johnson, and *The Ghost Map* is a true triumph of the kind of multidisciplinary thinking for which he's become famous-a book that, like the work of Jared Diamond, presents both vivid history and a powerful and provocative explanation of what it means for the world we live in. *The Ghost Map* takes place in the summer of 1854. A devastating cholera outbreak seizes London just as it is emerging as a modern city: more than 2 million people packed into a ten-mile circumference, a hub of travel and commerce, teeming with people from all over the world, continually pushing the limits of infrastructure that's outdated as soon as it's updated. Dr. John Snow-whose ideas about contagion had been dismissed by the scientific community-is spurred to intense action when the people in his neighborhood begin dying. With enthralling suspense, Johnson chronicles Snow's day-by-day efforts, as he risks his own life to prove how the epidemic is being spread. When he creates the map that traces the pattern of outbreak back to its source, Dr. Snow didn't just solve the most pressing medical riddle of his time. He ultimately established a precedent for the way modern city-dwellers, city planners, physicians, and public officials think about the spread of disease and the development of the modern urban environment. *The Ghost Map* is an endlessly compelling and utterly gripping account of that London summer of 1854, from the microbial level to the macrouban-theory level-including, most important, the human level. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is surprisingly, one fascinating and important read that spins the historical reality of pathogenic disease with a well crafted story regarding the plight of a society facing a treacherous epidemic. Combining an in-depth view regarding the indefatigable energy and brilliance of Dr. John Snow in his quest to solve the deadliest outbreak of cholera in the history of London, with the history of epidemic plagues, 'The Ghost Map: The Story of London's Most Terrifying Epidemic- And How it Changed Cities, Science, and The Modern World' provided me with one page-turning, gripping historical tale that also provided further insight into the plight free societies face today in lieu of the possibilities of biological or chemical attacks on innocent people. When I was recommended to read Steven Johnson's book, it was not for the sake of diving into a good read, but rather to 'browse' through it for further insight on the origins of water contamination and how, thru these origins, terrorist could look at contamination for horrific purposes. As a writer with an interest in international affairs, and a tendency to use fiction storytelling to share my views, I opened Steven Johnson's book and within pages was completely hooked on this extraordinarily written, well researched tell all of the London epidemic of cholera that killed so many lives. With reflection on how science viewed pathogenic outbreaks during the midpoint of the 19th Century, it was startling to find that there really existed a classification system that gave all sorts of bizarre reasons why a disease would spread, including a weight based upon wealth and financial disposition! We sure have come a long way . . . or have we? I guess we can still look at Africa with great outrage and clearly say we're back in London during 1854! And this folks is important: in Johnson's attempt to share the history of the past, what he really is doing is talking about the immediate needs of to protect the most impoverished with assistance to medical treatment, and ongoing diligence to understand the nature of disease and how wide-spread health concerns effect not only those who are directly in contact with a pathogenic, but equally as important: how societies infrastructure's essentially crumble when epidemic disease spreads. Writing with such an easy style that readers will not get lost, Johnson takes us on a fascinating trip with Dr. John Snow; clearly one of the scientific pioneers whose actions have saved the lives of untold people. Take your time and sit back with 'The Ghost Map': it may bring you a bit closer to acting in a socially responsible way that connects all of us a bit further.

It may even cause you to open your wallet and send a few much needed dollars to health care organizations attempting to follow the lead of Dr. Snow: determining pathogenic causes and feverishly attempting to help those in need. Steven Johnson's 'The Ghost Map' is simply brilliant.

The Ghost Map uses the Cholera outbreak in London in 1854 to weave together a compelling story of science, demographics and superstition. Rather than just engaging in a straightforward narrative about the outbreak, Johnson dives into a truly interesting analysis of the fear with which people viewed city living in the 1850s. Back then, nobody knew if a city of 2 million people, like London, would simply crumble under its own social weight. He also digs deeply into the science and medicine of the time (or lack thereof) and how it treated an outbreak like 1854's. In addition, he lays out the story of John Snow doing true scientific work, finding the real cause of the outbreak, winning some important converts, failing to win others, but ultimately saving many lives. What makes the book so good is the way it places you into the mind of someone living in London in 1854 and making you understand why it was so hard for them to accept the true cause of the disease when it seems so obvious to us today. That experience makes a thoughtful reader wonder what things we take for granted today that will seem so obviously wrong in 150 years. The book stays at four stars, not five, for several reasons. First off, the actual namesake of the book, The Ghost Map, is little more than a tacked-on afterthought at the conclusion of the book. It's interesting, but more of a post-script than anything else, and certainly not appropriate as the title of the book - somebody must have thought it sounded like it would sell books. No worries though, the book it sells is a good one. Also, Johnson goes on some odd tangents at the end of the book talking about city life and trying to tie internet technology back to the work Snow did. It's a reach and not terribly relevant. I get the feeling it was fun for Johnson to write his pet theories, but they don't really fit here and probably could have been the basis of an interesting book on their own. All in all, this one has some flaws, but is a thought-provoking and interesting book that takes your mind back 150 years and gives you a fresh perspective. Well worth reading.

The Ghost Map is an engrossing tale of medical detection and discovery. In 1854 a London neighborhood was suddenly plunged into a massive cholera epidemic. The actual disease was awful enough, but ignorance added to the fear felt by Londoners, because no one understood the true method by which cholera spread from one victim to another. Prevailing medical opinion held that cholera, like nearly all other diseases, was spread through miasmas, bad air and bad smells. Two men, Dr. John Snow and Rev. Henry Whitehead, began to suspect that the true culprit

was water from the neighborhood pump and conducted an assiduous investigation that finally proved them right. Although most doctors and scientists were reluctant to discard the miasma theory, eventually the weight of the evidence convinced them that Snow and Whitehead were correct. Like all good histories, *The Ghost Map* branches from the main story to trace the many different ways in which Snow and Whitehead's investigations helped lead to the development of modern cities. I especially enjoyed the final chapters and epilogue, in which Johnson identifies many ways in which our modern mega-cities are both more vulnerable (yet thanks to technology and communications safer and better able to cope with threats as well) than was London in 1854. *The Ghost Map* is an engrossing read, well written, scholarly, yet dramatic too. It will appeal to historians and fans of medical detection alike.

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