



The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America

Timothy Egan

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National Book Award–winner Timothy Egan turns his historian's eye to the largest-ever forest fire in America and offers an epic, cautionary tale for our time.

On the afternoon of August 20, 1910, a battering ram of wind moved through the drought-stricken national forests of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, whipping the hundreds of small blazes burning across the forest floor into a roaring inferno that jumped from treetop to ridge as it raged, destroying towns and timber in the blink of an eye. Forest rangers had assembled nearly ten thousand men to fight the fires, but no living person had seen anything like those flames, and neither the rangers nor anyone else knew how to subdue them. Egan recreates the struggles of the overmatched rangers against the implacable fire with unstoppable dramatic force, and the larger story of outsized president Teddy Roosevelt and his chief forester, Gifford Pinchot, that follows is equally resonant. Pioneering the notion of conservation, Roosevelt and Pinchot did nothing less than create the idea of public land as our national treasure, owned by every citizen. Even as TR's national forests were smoldering they were saved: The heroism shown by his rangers turned public opinion permanently in favor of the forests, though it changed the mission of the forest service in ways we can still witness today.

This e-book includes a sample chapter of **SHORT NIGHTS OF THE SHADOW CATCHER**.

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