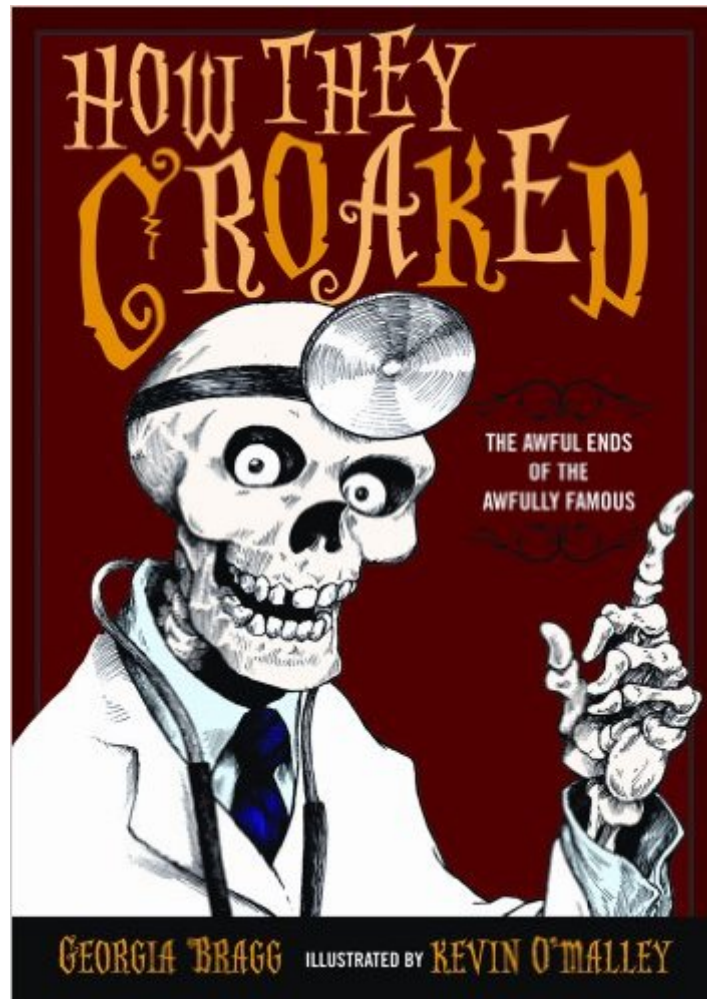


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# How They Croaked: The Awful Ends Of The Awfully Famous



## Synopsis

Over the course of history men and women have lived and died. In fact, getting sick and dying can be a big, ugly mess-especially before the modern medical care that we all enjoy today. How They Croaked relays all the gory details of how nineteen world figures gave up the ghost. Readers will be fascinated well past the final curtain, and feel lucky to live in a world with painkillers, X-rays, soap, and 911.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 950 (What's this?)

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury USA Childrens; Reprint edition (July 3, 2012)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0802727948

ISBN-13: 978-0802727947

Product Dimensions: 7.1 x 0.6 x 10.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (120 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #39,974 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #72 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Death & Dying](#) #101 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > United States](#) #257 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories](#)

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

I debated for quite some time about whether to read this book. There is after all a warning at the beginning that the book contains "the blood, sweat, and guts of real people." And I've never been one for grossness. But in the end I decided that in order to share it with my students, many of whom I knew would be fascinated by this book, I needed to read it. This book specifically looks at the lives (briefly) and unpleasant 'ends' of some of the world's most famous people. Included are King Tut, Cleopatra, Henry VIII, Pocahontas, George Washington, Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Darwin, etc. I confess that I didn't really expect to learn anything new. I love history and most of the people Bragg talks about are well-known. But I did learn things that surprised me. For example, I had no idea that Charles Dickens struggled with mental illness or that Albert Einstein's brain was stolen from his

body before it was cremated. And I seriously had to wince reading the details of Christopher Columbus's numerous physical maladies. This book is definitely not for the squeamish, but Bragg's light-hearted take on the subject keeps things moving while convincing the modern reader to be very grateful for modern medicine. For example, George Washington came down with what modern doctors think was a throat infection that today could be cured by antibiotics. But his doctors used the following 'remedies,' bloodletting (numerous times, they took over a third of his blood), blister-beetle treatment (you don't want to know!), a dose of calomel (contains mercury, which is highly poisonous), tartar emetic (to make him vomit), and a variety of different poultices. No wonder he died! Kevin O'Malley's illustrations provide a nice compliment to Bragg's style of writing and the sidebars provide extra tidbits of information. For example, did you know that July, Julian Calendar, Roman leaders, Czar, Kaiser, and C-section were all named after Julius Caesar. Also the first known autopsy was performed on Caesar. One would doubt the need for that because with 23 stab wounds, the cause of death should be obvious, but it turns out that only ONE of the wounds was actually fatal. Apparently the assassins need to work on their aim. I'm going to stop here because I wouldn't want to deprive you of the 'delights' of reading this book for yourself. Even if it doesn't work for you, I guarantee that someone in your life will be delighted to read it and share all the cool facts they learn with you! :)

I saw my grandson reading this book and it looked good. So much so, I did not want to wait for him to finish so I bought my own copy. It is a bit gory in parts as you might expect from the title but kids like that kind of thing. So far, it has been a fun, easy read.

My soon-to-be 8 year old daughter has a bit of a macabre streak -- she saw this book at the mall and immediately put it on her birthday list. The rest of the family thought it a bit odd, but this IS the same girl that carries around a skeleton doll for the entire month of October... 'How They Croaked' goes further than just describing the "How" of the way some famous folks' lives ended -- there's also quite a bit of insight into some of the other medical issues they fought. And it doesn't just end at death... the book also reveals some surprising stories about missing body parts, thievery, etc. I learned quite a bit having it read aloud from the backseat during a roadtrip! Note: The book doesn't mince words when it comes to slicing, dicing and decomposing, so you can also expect this to lead to more conversations about anatomy, etc. Heed the notice at the beginning that says "If you don't have the guts for gore, do not read this book." The publisher listed the book as appropriate for ages 10 to 14, but even at 8, my daughter was okay with it. YMMV. You'll definitely get used to hearing

"Ewwwwww! Hey, did you know \_\_\_\_\_?"

This wasn't quite as gross as I was hoping it would be, but the boy I gave it to really ate it up. This provides great introductory biographies to about a dozen historical figures. It also is a good introduction to various weird medical maladies. In all, an easy way to get some great medical and historical information across.

Looking for an engaging read aloud for intermediate grade students? *How They Croaked: The Awful Ends of the Awfully Famous* (Bragg, 2011) might be a good idea. This book familiarizes students with famous people, with a sense of change over time (both books tell stories in chronological order), and they both have clear main ideas. *How They Croaked* (Bragg, 2011) is written with a sense of humor - which makes the guts and blood a little easier to swallow. What kid does not love gruesomeness? Bragg also reveals the idea that medicine and what we know about human ailments has evolved over time; unfortunately, there were some agonizing deaths along the way! This could serve as an anchor text for numerous lessons. I suggest reading it aloud, getting students interested, and then using a particular story about one famous person's death to teach "maybe for loaded language, author's tone, development of an idea, and so forth. Then additional excerpts could be used for small group reading and discussions. Another suggestion would be to post a timeline and the names of the famous people you read about as you go. OR you could just read this aloud for enjoyment. I'd also recommend this to parents for summer reading - independent or with a parent there to enjoy.

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