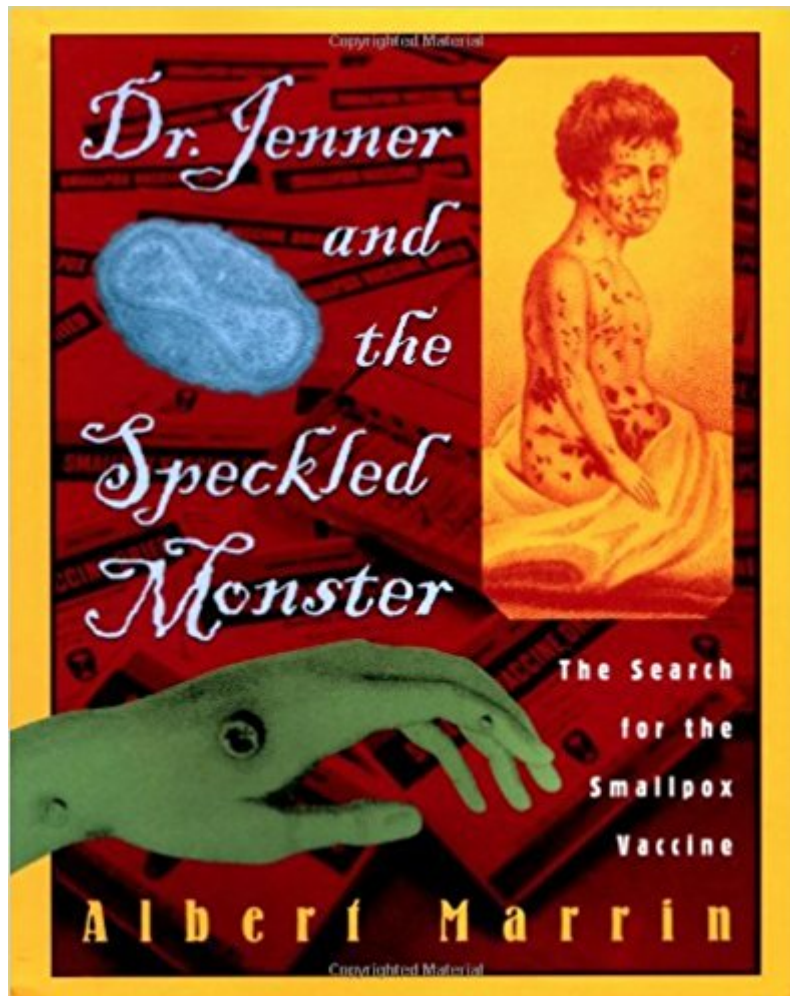


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# Dr. Jenner And The Speckled Monster: The Discovery Of The Smallpox Vaccine



## Synopsis

In 1796, an unknown country doctor named Edward Jenner developed and administered the world's first vaccine—turning the tide in humanity's age-old war against disease. Award-winning author Albert Marrin explains the significance of "immortal" Jenner's gift to mankind as he narrates the epic story of smallpox, a disease so contagious and deadly it has dramatically influenced the course of history. From the mummified remains of its first known victim to the sinister threat of the "frozen monster" that lurks in the vials of ultramodern laboratories, readers will be held spellbound by this readable and timely combination of science and history.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 990L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 96 pages

Publisher: Dutton Juvenile (October 14, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0525469222

ISBN-13: 978-0525469223

Product Dimensions: 7.4 x 0.6 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #403,093 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in [Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > History > Modern](#) #272 in [Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Science & Technology](#) #327 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness](#)

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 5-9—This is a fascinating, detailed history of the smallpox virus, beginning with its probable origins in a farm animal in Asia or the Middle East approximately 8000 years ago, continuing with its spread to Europe via trade routes, to the New World with the Spanish explorers, and concluding with the current concern that remaining stocks of variola may fall into the hands of terrorists intent on waging germ warfare. Intertwined with the disease's history is the biography of Edward Jenner, the 18th-century English surgeon whose observation that milkmaids who had contracted cowpox were immune to smallpox led him to conduct experiments that resulted in the perfection of the

smallpox vaccination. Jenner is portrayed as a dedicated doctor devoted to what he considered a sacred mission, that of completely annihilating the "Speckled Monster" and demonstrating that science could ultimately triumph over disease. His dream appeared to have come true when the World Health Organization declared in 1980 that smallpox had been eradicated from Earth, but the continued existence in the U.S. and Russia of some 600 vials of frozen variola, originally slated to be destroyed by December 31, 1993, is at the center of an ongoing controversy among scientists, governments, and the military. Black-and-white photos appear throughout. This title updates James Cross Giblin's *When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS* (HarperCollins, 1995). Ginny Gustin, Sonoma County Library System, Santa Rosa, CA Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 4-8. Marrin's latest offering is a fascinating, eminently readable social history of smallpox, with an emphasis on Dr. Edward Jenner's contributions to eradicate the disease. Beginning with a description of the role smallpox played in the decimation of the Aztec empire, Marrin makes clear that infectious disease began to take hold and spread once people started living in settled groups and that smallpox probably crossed over to humans from a farm animal host. He explains how the virus works within the body, describes several well-known outbreaks, and recounts how Jenner, an English country surgeon, using a combination of observation and experimentation, developed what we now call the smallpox vaccine. Marrin's writing is direct and succinct, and his scientific explanations are lucid and well detailed. Numerous black-and-white period illustrations (some appropriately gruesome) appear in most chapters, adding interest to the text. A final chapter on smallpox as a weapon of mass destruction makes this title particularly current. Appended with bibliographies of books and Internet sites, the book is a great choice for both science and history classes as well as a solid read for science buffs. The title and the cover will definitely attract browsers. Kay Weisman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Marrin is a favorite author and this one is a little different than others we've read (such as on Vietnam or WWI), with a slightly younger audience in mind, but just as meaty and interesting.

Before reading this book I might have written that I was informed about Dr. Jenner, smallpox and its history. After reading it I realize how ignorant I was. I saw the book in my grandson's school library and chose it to preview for bias and the interpretations that frequently replace knowledge in today's children's books. The author, a retired history professor, has written a book that begins with a

discussion of cells, bacterial and viral disease and ends with a convincing statement about the dangers facing us today as a result of the disappearance of small pox throughout the world. In between is the most thrilling story about the efforts of an ordinary boy who became a man whose efforts positively altered the lives of hundreds of millions of people. His personal qualities were a curious mind; the ability to observe; his dedication to his work; his confidence; and perseverance. The reader learns of the treatment of small pox prior to Jenner; of the various experiments leading to the development of the vaccination; of the objections by recognized leaders to Jenner's work and the ramifications of the eradication of smallpox. This is a thrilling story for the young scientist, but the book is written so well that all children (and adults) will be enthralled. Dr. Jenner is shown to be one of a handful of men who have altered the course of history and the lives of hundreds of millions of humans. The discussion of disease; medical techniques of the past; how one became a physician; historical differences between surgeons and physicians; the nature of opposition to ideas; the development of an idea; the personal characteristics that result in radical change; the importance of observation, thought and experimentation; the reality that the recognized establishment in an occupation is often ignorant and resistant to change are all presented in an engrossing and unsensational manner. The social effects (Native American exposure to small pox) are presented in a straight forward manner allowing a thoughtful child to open his mind to the concept of historical consequences without imposing blame or guilt. The discussion of medical experimentation; its evolution and ethical problems provide knowledge to a child that will be used later when a child reads and thinks further. I so admire the authors use of language and ability to discuss complicated issues on a child's level with sophisticated insight that I am buying other of Dr. Marrin's books.

This is an inspiring story about an inspiring and generous doctor who worked tirelessly for the good of ALL people. My daughter and I both love science, especially medically related and this book was a great read for that. We also enjoyed learning about the character of Dr. Jenner. Imagine how much faster medicine would have advanced if more doctors had his character. Even if your children are not interested in medicine, it's worth the read studying Dr. Jenner's character.

When I purchased this book I actually did not realize it was for younger readers. It was a great read none the less! It had plenty of information and was very interesting. This is a great book for teens, but also for anyone wanting to get a good look at the history of smallpox.

This was a remarkable book. The author was able to explain microbiology, immunology, the history of smallpox, and the development of a vaccine with wonderful clarity. I highly recommend this book for kids (and adults) in 4th grade and up!

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