

Analysis of Isaac's Storm by Erik Larson

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Larson Erick's *Isaac's Storm* talks about a hurricane that occurred in 1900, precisely on September 8. The storm took place in Galveston, Texas, a city of innovative development and technology. It reduced the town's development to extinction. In the book, Erik drives home several thematic concerns, the most conspicuous of which is the dangers of overconfidence. The Weather Bureau, led by William Moore, had a palpable impudence that made it shun all warning signs from Cuba.

In the same breath, the citizens focused so much on the glories of the city's modernity and development that they could not heed any warning. Isaac, to whom the author continually refers, is one of the members of the bureau, along with his brother Joseph Cline. He was the Bureau's chief meteorologist. Isaac wrote an article for the Weather Bureau in which he disdained the perceived detriments of the storm. His article planted derelict in the bureau, making the storm strike unawares. He also dismissed any imagination of possible terror on several occasions. Isaac, therefore, played a pivotal role in the hurricane, especially because he was in a position to prevent casualties, yet he decided to downplay the impending danger.

Thesis

The author's main point of the argument is arrogance, negligence, overconfidence, and the dangers thereof. Throughout the pages of the book, the author paints Isaac as a goat, a significant contributor to the effects of the storm. The picture does not imply that Erik blames Isaac for the hurricane because the storm would occur anyway. The point is instead that Isaac duped the agency and the whole town into burying their heads in the sand and assuming that all was well, only to be swept by the storm whose warning had been given beforehand. Larson uses the word hubris to describe the agency, and throughout the story, he does not have positive sentiments about the Weather Bureau. The negativity does not amount to defamation but rather a point of warning to other agencies.

Organization And Content

The book unfolds on the night before the storm with agitated Isaac, who feels that something is not right. The author quickly proceeds to an overview of the science behind tornadoes, describing how the hurricane might have formed. After that, the story peers into Galveston, the abundance of the town and the people therein. Erik interposes telegrams and letters to support the fabric of his narrative. He then follows with the rolling of the storm and the destruction it caused. Erik does not abandon the story at that point but instead crowns it on a note of restoration, highlighting how the inhabitants tried to reclaim the lost glory in spite of having to come to terms with the bitter truth that Houston, the neighboring town, has to take over as Texas' most prominent port.

Sources

Larson supports his narrative with various historical sources, which make the story more credible. He has employed letters, diaries, newspaper articles, and telegrams to substantiate the claims. For instance, he records Isaac's words in the Galveston News in 1891, saying that it was an absurd delusion for less knowledgeable people to think that some disturbance would damage Galveston someday (Larson, 1999, p. 94). He also interposes a telegram in which Moore had notified Isaac of the possibility of high northerly winds and heavy rainfall.

The Author

The Author of the book, Erik Larson, is also the author of various bestsellers. These include *'Thunderstruck'* and *'Dead Wake.'* His literary works, apart from being the bestsellers of their time, have been winners of premium awards. For instance, he wrote another book called *'The Devil in the White City,'* which put him at the top of the National Book Award for Crime Bulletin. In the same breath, *'Isaac's Storm'* attracted the highly-esteemed Louis Battan Author's Award from the American Meteorology Society.

Larson studied Russian culture at the University of Pennsylvania. He then did his master's in Journalism at Columbia University. He has written articles for Time Magazine, The Wall Street Journal, the Bucks County Courier Times, The New Yorker, Harper's, and The Atlantic, where he has been a renowned article writer. Erik was born in Brooklyn in 1954. He is currently a married man with three daughters, and he resides in Seattle with his family.

Value

I have loved several of Erick's publications. When I read *'The Devil in the White City,'* I thought it was the best until I took hold of *'Isaac's Storm.'* Erik has a stunning style of mingling narrative storytelling with historical reporting on real-life events and characters, which makes all his works incomparably fascinating. When I first read *'Isaac's Storm,'* I could not put it down. I read the whole story in one day, braving the wee hours of the night because of the interest it drew. Judging from the themes scattered in the pages of the book, I believe it best suits the general public and professional historians. The book lays down fine details of the 1900 hurricane, educating both the public and meteorologists on such natural disasters.

Works Cited

Larson, Erik. *Isaac's Storm: A Man, a Time, and the Deadliest Hurricane in History.* New York: Vintage Books, 1999. 323 pp.