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In 1508, Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The thirty-three-year-old Michelangelo had very little experience of the physically and technically taxing art of fresco; and, at twelve thousand square feet, the ceiling represented one of the largest such projects ever attempted.

Nevertheless, for the next four years he and a hand-picked team of assistants laboured over the vast ceiling, making thousands of drawings and spending back-breaking hours on a scaffold fifty feet above the floor. The result was one of the greatest masterpieces of all time. This fascinating book tells the story of those four extraordinary years and paints a magnificent picture of day-to-day life on the Sistine scaffolding - and outside, in the upheaval of early sixteenth-century Rome.

Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling Details

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From Reader Review Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling for online ebook

Sean Gibson says

There are some works of art that are so transcendent, so seemingly divinely inspired, that you almost don't want to look too closely at the individual(s) responsible for creating such magnificent beauty lest they turn out to be total douche bags. It's a little bit like seeing how the sausage is made. "Man, this sausage is delicious...I can't wait to see how you guys do—wait...oh...oh, no...hold on...is that pig anus you're putting in there?! Seriously? Like, the anus of a pig? I'm eating a pig's ass? Why is it so delicious? WHY, GOD, WHY?!"

Hmm. This review is not getting off to a very good start. Let's try that again.

Michaelangelo is the ninja turtle who loves to party. He also loves pizza—well, I mean, they all love pizza, but Mikey especially loves pizza, and he sure comes up with some crazy toppings. This one time he...

What? Wrong Michelangelo? F\$@& me!

All right. Let's try this one more time.

It's pretty universally agreed, and I'd wholeheartedly include myself amongst the group of agreeers, that the ceiling of Sistine Chapel is one of the most amazing works of art ever created (and it's unquestionably one of the most influential). The artist most responsible for that work (I say "most responsible" because, like any Renaissance fresco-er, he had help from a team of assistants), was Michelangelo Buonarroti, and the story of how he came to paint that magnificent work—and the challenges he encountered while doing it—is a fascinating one, ably recounted by Mr. King.

In retrospect, it seems almost impossible that we can admire Michelangelo's work today. The passage of time alone could have, and nearly has on multiple occasions, destroyed it (only a combination of luck, genius craftsmanship at the outset, and dedicated conservation efforts have managed to preserve it), but the fact that it exists in the first place is almost inexplicable.

Michelangelo shot to fame on the strength of a number of works, but primarily because of a 17-foot-tall naked dude by the name of David (like Madonna or Beavis, he needs only one name, though I've heard Beavis is more well-endowed). He considered himself a sculptor first and foremost and had never executed a fresco before (though he had been commissioned to do one); in fact, the primary reason he ended up getting offered the commission to paint the Sistine Chapel ceiling was because a rival talked the pope into it in the hopes that Michelangelo would either decline (and be disgraced) or utterly fail (and be disgraced).

Despite his relative inexperience, the logistical difficulties of painting something so absurdly high (contrary to popular belief, Michelangelo did not paint lying on his back, though rumor has it that he did once eat a plate of pasta in that position, which, in and of itself, should be recognized as one of history's most daring and difficult feats, because gravity...am I right?), the sheer amount of square footage involved (it took Michelangelo more than 4 years to complete), and the near-constant turmoil that resulted from then-Pope Julius's warmongering ways (side note: my alma mater, Ohio Wesleyan University, features the seemingly inexplicable Battling Bishop as its mascot; that concept makes a lot more sense after reading about the exploits of the vainglorious Julius), Michelangelo produced a masterpiece of form and aesthetics that

continues to inspire people today.

I should preface the following remarks by noting that I am, in the technical sense, a heathen, having never been baptized. I was raised nominally as a Christian, but with no particular guiding doctrine nor any family devotion to, well, devotion. So, when I visited the Sistine Chapel a few years ago, I did so primarily with historical and artistic interests in mind, not religious ones. We had the good fortune to be part of a tour group that was able to gain access to the Chapel before it opened for the day to the general public, which means that there were only about 50 or 60 people milling about when I was there—it might as well have been empty.

Craning my neck to see the full splendor of Michelangelo's work, I was dumbstruck. (Well, really, I was awestruck, but since when you adjust for my lack of intellectual horsepower, it was the functional equivalent of being dumbstruck.) Despite having nary a religious bone in his body, I can only call it a religious, or, at least, cathartic, experience. The sheer power and awesome majesty of Michelangelo's (and his conspirators') work was so unbelievable that it seemed hard to believe that human hands could have crafted it...

...which brings us back to the thorny issue of not wanting to look too closely at the person responsible for such divine glory lest he turn out to be a large-nosed curmudgeon who thought smiles were comparisons using "like" or "as" rather than facial expressions intended to convey that inexplicable feeling known as "happiness." Which, in this case, he was. And, yet, the story of the Sistine Chapel's painting, of Michelangelo's strange relationship with Pope Julius, of his rivalry with Raphael, of his odd family dynamics, of his insane and obsessive work ethic, is fascinating in and of itself. If it doesn't reach the dramatic heights of his artistic achievements, it does not in any way diminish them, and King's account adds flesh and bone to the ethereal images that have continued to speak to us across the ages.

Well worth a read for art or Renaissance aficionados.

(On an unrelated note: do we think Splinter was being intentionally ironic when he named the most happy-go-lucky ninja turtle after the grouchiest of his quartet of Renaissance artist-inspired names? I hope so; otherwise, it just makes him look ignorant, and there are few things I hate more than an ignorant mutant rat who holds himself out as a wise sensei. I just don't truck with those shenanigans.)

Judy says

I suppose I should give this book five stars because it has lead me on to a more extensive study of Michelangelo. It was somewhat slow going as I read the book because I kept switching to my iPad to look up pictures of various works of art mentioned in the book. Years ago I read Irving Stone's "The Agony and the Ecstasy," then saw the movie and was captivated by it. However, I learned through Ross King's book that there is much mythology in Stone's book. King has done a vast amount of research, and I was amazed at how much has survived of Michelangelo's family letters and other sources touching his life. King goes into detail concerning the political situations in the Italian States at that time. I had never thought to note that Martin Luther was a contemporary of Michelangelo--just one of the sidelights that interested me. Though his temperament and interaction with people wasn't good, there is no doubting that Michelangelo was an artistic genius. I recommend the book for history fanatics like me!

But this book deals primarily with how Michelangelo painted the Sistine Chapel ceiling. It was an unbelievable task that he was forced into by Pope Julius II. Michelangelo didn't consider himself a painter,

but wanted to sculpt. Because of Ross's expert interpretation of each section of the Chapel, I have a much better understanding of the entire work. Since I finished the book I've begun seeing the Great Courses lectures "The Genius of Michelangelo." And, despite it not being factual, I plan to see "The Agony and the Ecstasy" again. Can't beat Heston and Harrison!

Deborah Ideiosepius says

This very interesting book tells the story of how a notable sculptor such as Michelangelo Buonarroti came to spend four years or more of his life painting the ceilings of the Sistine Chapel for pope Julius II.

Ross King does a masterful, well researched job of describing the circumstances leading to pope Julius insisting Michelangelo abandon the craft forms he knew and delve into painting, (which he had some training and a little experience with) and more importantly fresco, with which he had virtually no experience at all. The politics, significant persons, significant events both military and other surrounding the years the ceiling got re-done are amazing and confusing. I know very little of Italian history and have no interest in catholicism but despite these disadvantages, with wit and excellent writing skills Ross King led me to a much better understanding of the country, events and era that help shape Michelangelo and Julius, leading to the amazing ceiling that it one of the wonders of the world.

I was absolutely delighted with the details of how fresco is rendered, the layers and materials that go into preparing it. Also the details of how the pigments were sourced and prepared applied and reacted with the render were fascinating, this level of detail may not be everyone's favourite part but I found it fascinating.

The political machinations of that pope.... well, I did not know that recently popes were initiating military campaigns, were that possessive over land and property (no wonder the catholic church is so rich!) or indulged in so many of the joys of the flesh that the church preaches about. If you are catholic and have a residual respect for the institution you may find these aspects of the book confronting. King goes into quiet some detail to explain the stops and starts of work on the ceiling and, well, that organisation and it's leaders in the 1500's strikes me as anything but holy. Both Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus came to the same conclusions incidentally, when they visited Rome during the work on the ceiling and they are among the extensive suite of secondary historical figures mentioned in the book.

The friction between Raphael and Michelangelo is also brought into it, there always seems to be an artistic feud with any of the renaissance artists doesn't there? Although honestly, I am still unconvinced as to how much real rivalry was there.

There was a great deal of information in this book and despite the nicely chosen colour plates and numerous black and white ones, I spent a lot of time googling images through the reading because I could not even begin to visualise all the images being described or the colours used. At the end of reading it, the Sistine chapel and Rome and Florence of the 1500's have come alive for me in a whole new way. Michelangelo himself seems so much more a real figure than ever before, perhaps not someone you would want to sit down to dinner with (though I would not turn down an invitation from Raphael), but a fascinating introverted gloomy man with a level of dedication to his craft that was stupendous and an ability to see beyond mere fashion in art to the raw emotions it can command.

Why wasn't it five stars? The research, writing and information available certainly warranted five stars, the scholarship and comprehension of the author is undoubted and it even feels a little insulting of me not to give

it five stars - I am a bit ashamed of myself. But readability has to come in to it as well for me and at times, personally, the flow of the writing didn't really work to the best advantage. Though I never really wanted to put it down I found I often had to be in the right frame of mind to pick it up. This is because there is a lot of back history and fairly minor Italian personages who were involved in the project in one way or another and they are included in the book. Now, while I was interested in these obscure people and am glad to know some of the politics that swirled around at the time there was a fair bit of it. I get the sense that King was really trying to limit the list of people as much as he could, so maybe a historian or art history person would know them all. I didn't know hardly any of them, I often couldn't pronounce their names and consequently I didn't always remember who they were.

Despite that small issue that made a star drop off, this was a book, I felt, that really impressed on the reader the intellectual spectacle as well as the visual that the Sistine chapel ceiling is.

Lorraine says

I am torn between 3 and 4 stars for this book. I loved the history of the period and of the art enough for 5 stars but I just did not find the writing compelling. There is nothing wrong with it, it is all very well written, it just leaves a bit to be desired in the enjoyment category in that, for me, it was not a page-turner. Especially interesting are the characters of Michelangelo and the Pope. There are wonderful scenes of Michelangelo showing why he was possibly the only man in Rome who could stand up to "il papa terribile", and it quickly becomes clear why this pope has such a nickname. Raphael is here and to a lesser degree, so is Leonardo da Vinci. The times were terrible and dark but the art was magnificent. In this Kindle edition, the illustrations and photos are just not good enough, so I read this book with an internet connection close by, Googling each work of art to appreciate fully. I must also mention that it is full of typos and missing words. You kind of get stuck when you read the title of a section of the fresco as "Cod Separating Light from Darkness". Yes, Cod, not God. I wonder if autocorrect was at work here and why we did not get the final edit.

Jean Tessier says

What a treat. This book felt like the best read I've had in a long time. This may seem unfair to some of the great books I've read recently, but this one was at the same time instructive and of very easy access. It covered everything from the technical aspects of painting frescos to the artistic concerns that went into the vault of the Sistine Chapel, to the geo-political landscape of Italy at the beginning of the 16th Century.

The book starts with Michelangelo's early career and how he landed the commission to fresco the vault of the Sistine Chapel. It was very interesting to see the life of a tradesman in those days. The author goes over Michelangelo's character and his relationships with various figures of the day. As the book follows the progress on the vault, we are made privy to the ever changing political landscape and the ongoing competition with Raphael, as each one pushes the boundaries of art.

I have read quite a bit about the Papacy during the Middle-Ages and this was a very nice refresher of the events in Northern Italy at the time. The book is as much about Pope Julius II as it is about Michelangelo. But the real focus of the book is the fresco and its numerous panels and figures. The author walks us over all

the difficulties, tribulations, and inventions that continually happened throughout the project.

The book has many illustrations and nice color plates of the entire vault. But for some reason, it is missing the two pendentives from the altar wall that were considered by Michelangelo's contemporaries as his best work. There are also other works, notably by Raphael, that are not depicted and I had to go to the Internet in order to see them. But it was still a very enjoyable read that gave me a new perspective on this cornerstone of Western culture.

Heidi says

Although I enjoyed this book overall, and King does a good job dispelling some of the myths that have arisen around Michelangelo and the painting of the Sistine Chapel's ceiling, it read too much like an art major's master thesis. It felt like the author wasn't really engaged with his subject, or wasn't able to convey his enthusiasm if he was.

I was also disappointed that the picture section 1. did not show the ceiling in its entirety, and 2. did not have close-up views of the panels beyond one or two samples. King often described the panels in detail, but some of them were missing from the panoramic view; and if they were included, you had to get out a magnifying glass to try to appreciate the details. For those of us who have not had the good fortune of visiting Rome, it would have been a nice touch.

Linda Harkins says

Having immensely enjoyed reading Brunelleschi's Dome by the same author, I knew this bestseller about Michelangelo would not disappoint. Through thorough research, Ross King exposes truths that rectify many prevailing myths, particularly those promulgated by cinema. Indeed, Michelangelo did not lie flat on his back to paint painstakingly the frescoed scenes on the curved Sistine Chapel ceiling. The artist, in fact, wrote to his father describing how he had to stand on raised scaffolding in an uncomfortable stance with his head tilted back. Unlike the Michelangelo portrayed by Charlton Heston, the real Michelangelo was not the only artist responsible for decorating this ceiling. Michelangelo employed numerous assistants to help with all phases of the work, since sculpture in stone rather than fresco painting was his medium of choice.

King renders both the artist and the pope as formidable personalities. Michelangelo never hesitated to ask for compensation that he felt was due him. He even followed the warrior pope to the battleground to ask for money. Although respectful, Michelangelo never cowered before Pope Julius II, and was probably highly admired and respected in return.

The Sistine chapel ceiling that took more than four years to complete has become synonymous with Michelangelo's name. King points out numerous details that illuminate the life and work of an artist whose portfolio seems inexhaustible. Well-researched and readable, I highly recommend this accounting of Michelangelo's life.

Susanna - Censored by GoodReads says

Another fine volume of art history from Ross King. This covers most closely Michelangelo's early years in Rome, from 1505 when he got the commission for Pope Julius II's tomb, through 1512, when he finally finished the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. The notoriously grumpy genius was immortalized twice (at least) by artists working at the Vatican in those years - by himself as the prophet Jeremiah, and by Raphael as the notoriously grumpy genius Heraclitus in his "The Academy of Athens."

By the end of it, I was envisioning Michelangelo as muttering "Damn it, Pope Julius, I'm a sculptor, not a painter!" and "Damn it, Pope Paul III, I'm a sculptor, not an architect!"

Sara says

King does a fine job of pulling together information about Michelangelo himself, his struggles with "il papa terribile" Julius II as well as with his family members and his rivals. There is much detailed information here about the painting of the Sistine Chapel and some can get a bit tedious. But King uses short chapters to good effect in presenting the complex history of Julius II's wars with Louis XII of France and the Duke of Ferrara. Usually I nod off at the mention of a battle. But the interweaving of the story of Michelangelo and Julius worked beautifully to keep me interested, and I may even remember some of this - like the fact that the battle of Ravenna was the first "modern" battle in its use of artillery by the Ferrarese. People actually died! Before that, it was just medieval pageantry, not very risky. Memorable also is the story of Julius's numerous health crises and recoveries - you begin to believe that the old b_____ will never die, and he might have died much sooner had he paid attention to his doctors.

It's too bad the illustrations are not more numerous, but if you refer to good pictures of the Sistine Chapel, you will be fascinated by the progress of Michelangelo's skill as a fresco painter, as well as by his personality and the conditions under which he completed this truly herculean task.

Amy says

why is this book soooo boring?! I'm only on page 100-ish and it's taken me forever to get that far because it's so boring. not sure how much longer i can hang on

Can't hang on any longer! made it to like 70 pages left, figure i will pick it back up again when i get a bad case of insomnia as it is sure to cure it!

Deb (Readerbuzz) Nance says

The story of Michelangelo's struggle to obey a pope and paint a fresco on a ceiling though he always considered himself a sculptor makes for a dramatic book. The author shares the story sequentially, as Michelangelo slowly makes his way across the ceiling, over a four year period, and intertwines this story with the story of the pope and his desire to keep France out of his realm.

Netta says

I remember myself standing in Sistine Chapel. I was standing there speechless, throwing my head back, absolutely dazzled by what I was experiencing. Later I thought, though, what other people had felt standing there. Did they know the story behind Pope's ceiling in question? Did they understand the narrative of each scene they saw? Did they try to imagine what creating such a masterpiece required? Or were they simply standing there thinking why on Earth THIS is considered to be one of the greatest things humanity has ever created? Did they read something on the subject? Did anyone tell them?

There're plenty of scholars who regularly publish their researches full of complicated terms and relatively new ideas which they usually don't offer to a broader audience. There're plenty of guides who tell one and the same story every day in Sistine Chapel, or in the Louvre (insert the museum that you like most) and don't even try to make it fun to listen. There're plenty of tourists who would never understand why they have paid their money to see *Mona Lisa* or *Pietà* and what all the fuss is about. Don't get me wrong, I love scholars and respect what they do, I certainly know that being a guide day by day is exhausting, and I don't think that every individual is obliged to be in awe standing in front of the work of art. But I do believe that art, history and, hence, art history as well could (and should for that matter) be both informative and entertaining. Moreover, I believe art history may be appealing for a huge audience once the person who tells the story makes it relatable.

Ross King certainly knows how this things works. I wouldn't dare to compare Ross King with any serious scholar though, but I love his approach both to Leonardo (I've been in team Leonardo since I remember myself being interested in art in general) and to Michelangelo. He may simplify facts or omit something overcomplicated, but he always invites his readers to learn more. Both in *Leonardo and the Last Supper* and in *Michelangelo and the Pope's Ceiling* he gives impressive, broad context for the period of creation of the masterpiece in question, trying to describe what surrounded the artist and his work. Sometimes King gets carried away, but mostly it does no damage to the book. It may even hook a reader and make him or her search for additional information.

This book does not make art seem boring or a privilege of the elite. It tells the fascinating story of a man who sometimes was unsure and afraid, made his mistakes, lost his temper, and, above all, created the grandiose chef-d'œuvre. It tells the story of the time when ugly deeds were adjoined with grand gestures and visions. And I hope that this book works the way it should.

Karyl says

This book is a fascinating trip through early 16th century Italy, focusing mainly on the frescoing of the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. I read several reviews here on Goodreads in which the reviewers felt that the author should have stuck solely to Michelangelo and his art, and that all the other information given is completely extraneous. I have to say I completely disagree with that. A work of art is not created in a vacuum. There were many events, political and religious, swirling around Michelangelo at the time he was creating his amazing frescoes, and ignoring the world and the events around him does the reader a disservice. I do not have a degree in Art History, nor have I taken an Art History course, but I found this book a fascinating read that drew me in from the first chapter, covering everything from how a fresco is applied to

the wall to how colors are created and ground for application onto the plaster to the effect of Julius II's tyrannical papacy on Michelangelo and his art, as well as the rest of Italy. I never felt as through the author assumed I was an expert on Italian art in the 1500s, like other reviewers have felt. My only regret is that I did not read this book before I saw the Sistine Chapel for myself in March of 1997.

Tim Muldoon says

What a great read! I'm fascinated by Michelangelo's work on the Sistine ceiling, and learning more about its production was a walk through a fascinating chapter of European and Church history.

Like many, my image is taken from "The Agony and the Ecstasy"-- Charlton Heston's Michelangelo as a solitary figure, lying on his back painting. King's book explodes that myth. He shows him rather as the head of a team of skilled laborers, with the artist still emerging as a remarkable talent revered by his peers, including Raphael, the young upstart who labors at the same time painting the stunning, yet less well known, "School of Athens."

As a Catholic theologian I grimaced at the ugly papacy of Julius II, the megalomaniac who ran roughshod over the gospel to claim papal states in open war. This backdrop, and this man, brought into sharp relief how fragile was the very possibility of Michelangelo's finishing the work at all. Somehow he managed--amidst negotiations with the pope, noise from his family in Florence, jealousy and competition with his artistic mentors and peers, and politicking with cardinals--to produce one of the world's most astounding works of art.

Arybo ? says

2,80 ?

Un gran calderone, un bombardamento di notizie che spesso non sono inerenti all'argomento principale del libro. Continui salti di tema in uno stesso capitolo, con nozioni che non interessano al lettore o che non dimostrano avere fondamento nella letteratura artistica.

Sono rimasta delusa.

Al posto di un libro di arte mi sono trovata davanti un testo pseudo-storico pieno di racconti aneddotici (non provati), dove si preferisce ricostruire la figura umana e non artistica dei personaggi che compaiono sulla scena agli inizi del Cinquecento. Volevo un approfondimento su Michelangelo, non l'ho avuto.

La narrazione della realizzazione della volta della Sistina è interrotta continuamente da notizie su Raffaello, che, sebbene sia "l'antagonista" del momento per Michelangelo, potrebbe benissimo essere relegato in un suo capitolo. Qui, invece, sembra che l'autore abbia voluto scrivere più sul Sanzio che su Buonarroti.

Insomma, consiglio questo libro a chi mastica un po' di arte e storia rinascimentale, ma tutto ciò che si legge va letto e preso "con le pinze". Lettore avvisato, mezzo salvato.

Laurie says

It was a huge chore to slug my way through this tome. Perhaps if a trip to Italy were in the near future I'd have enjoyed it more. As it is, I realized that the descriptions of more than one painting or fresco were ones I'd blithely walked past with barely a glance when I was in Florence a few years ago. I did learn a lot about the Sistine Chapel and if I ever see it I'll know more than most, but that's what tour guides are for, so why did I force myself to finish it? No reason but stubbornness and true grit.

Kathy Doll says

Far from the usual dry commentary that is found most art history books, Michelangelo is portrayed as a real person living in his world with all of the problems and challenges that are familiar to us today. Family issues, living conditions, a demanding boss, technical challenges and financial problems plague him as he works on this unwanted commission from Pope Julius II.

I was surprised to learn of the simmering rivalries with his contemporaries, Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci.

I especially enjoyed learning about the physical methods of making fresco and the manufacture of different pigments.

Lovely photos of the ceiling in the centerplate.

John says

Another excellent popular account of the painting of the Sistine Chapel ceiling. I found the discussion of Italian history during this period, especially the wars of Pope Julius II to be informative. I read this on the Kindle; one problem with a book about art is that you want to see what the author is talking about, and the Kindle version only provided microscopic (IMO) views of what he was talking about.

The book also covers Raphael's murals in the Papal Apartments. This was also interesting, but I was somewhat disappointed that the book had no real coverage of the Last Judgment fresco painted by Michelangelo, also in the Sistine Chapel.

Karen says

This year my goal is to read a book set in each country of the world. I find myself reading books that have been languishing in my physical library (as well as my ebook library) for a long time, which is a good thing. To my delight, I am loving this journey of finding new authors. For me a book is a good one when it points me to other books and more in-depth research. Michaelangelo and Pope's Ceiling is one of them. I had seen the Sistine Chapel, as well as the Pieta years ago during a trip to Rome. While I was reading this book I kept a picture of the Sistine Chapel up on the computer so I could "follow along" with Ross King and his descriptions.

This book did a wonderful job of describing Michaelangelo's work, dispelling some of the myths that have accumulated because of Irving Stone's the Agony and the Ecstasy. Aside from the Sistine Chapel, King discusses Raphael, who was frescoing the Pope's library at the same time. Most importantly of all he describes the history and its important players during the years Michaelangelo worked on his masterpiece.

One fact that I forgotten about Michaelangelo was that he never thought of himself as a painter and he had very little experience in fresco.

If you like Art History and the Renaissance, this a good book to read.

Tung says

Russ King's bestseller describes the painting of the Sistine Chapel under the reign of Pope Julius II, a notorious tyrant of a pope. The book details the technical challenges of the painting of the Sistine Chapel (ranging from paint issues to scaffolding issues to design issues), the life of Michelangelo leading up to the commission, the historical events during the reign of Julius and how they intersect with the chapel painting, and other such details. Overall, I had a hard time getting through this book. While the technical challenges of the painting were interesting, and the pictures of the Sistine Chapel make a man stare in slackjawed amazement at the mural's beauty, the flow of the book didn't hold my attention. One problem was the continuous mention of obscure Italian after obscure Italian (probably not obscure if you were an art history major). After awhile, the names began to run together and I couldn't keep track of the various figures involved in the mural's painting. Secondly, King includes far too many details of every historic event even remotely related to the completion of this great work, and the tangential details ruin the pacing. There were many sections in the book I felt could have been left out, and the book would have fared the better for it. Lastly, King seems to have written the book for art buffs. As he describes works created by Michelangelo or other artists, he often compared aspects of the work to aspects of other existing works that may have inspired said work (i.e. this particular arm pose from one statue is reminiscent of the arm pose from this other statue). But unless one were also familiar with the other works, the points are less effective. I wish King had included far more illustrations throughout so that non-art fans could better follow his analyses. Overall, a recommendation only for fans of the Sistine Chapel, or for European or Art History majors.
