



The Assassin's Mark

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September 1938. Spain's Civil War has been raging for two years, the outcome still in the balance. But rebel General Franco is so confident of winning that he has opened up battlefield tourism along the country's north coast. Jack Telford, a left-wing reporter, finds himself with an eccentric group of tourists on one of the War Route's yellow Chrysler buses. Driven by his passion for peace, Telford attempts to uncover the hidden truths beneath the conflict. But Jack must contend first with his own gullibility, the tragic death of a fellow passenger, capture by Republican guerrilleros, a final showdown at Spain's most holy shrine and the possibility that he has been badly betrayed. Betrayed and in serious danger.

The Assassin's Mark Details

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Jude Lennon says

Gripping! As more recent historical fiction than I would normally choose, I wasn't sure how I'd get on with this but it was utterly gripping. The Spanish Civil War is so recent in terms of World Events and yet I knew very little about it. The main character is cleverly and skilfully drawn.

Tori Tee says

Firstly I must thank Ebsworth not only for providing a complimentary copy of this book in return for an honest review, but also for having immense patience in waiting for me to provide him with that review. I must also point out how much I have enjoyed reading this book, even if I did struggle to get into the book at first.

There are several aspects which I feel to be major strengths in this book, particularly the characterisation. The assembled cast of characters are all extravagantly wonderful in their own ways, working well together and being entirely believable in the context of the text. In addition, it is worth commenting that they work as well individually as they do collectively, a great testament to Ebsworth's writing style. Jack Telford, as the main character, is a wonderful example of manhood and his cynicism in the tour breathes a breath of fresh air, prompting much thought by the reader on the matters discussed.

A further strength of this book is its intricate and well developed plot. It is brilliantly put together, with mystery and thought provoking elements all combined with some humour and great history. I can't compliment enough the many well written twists and turns in this novel, whether it's sudden and unexpected deaths or mysterious figures appearing at odd intervals, there's always something that keeps the reader on the edge of their seats and thinking of what could be happening behind closed doors. It's a fantastic read for making you think about what you are reading, however, this is an occasional downside as it makes it a difficult book to read when you only have a few minutes spare.

Perhaps, for me, the best aspect of this book is the detailed research that shines through on every page. It is evident, even to someone with a limited knowledge of the Spanish Civil War, that there is much to learn in this book and that it has been incredibly well researched. Clearly, Ebsworth put much time into his research, and to his credit, as it adds an extra dimension to this story.

Finally, there is little else for me to say other than to recommend this book to all who enjoy history, a good mystery and a strong leading character.

Sarah says

This was a fascinating story about a group of British tourists on a coach trip through the civil war battlefields of Spain in 1938. News reporter, Jack Telford, joins a variety of characters for the journey with a range of views on the motives of the civil war. The mystery of the tragic death of one of the members of the trip is wrapped up within the story of the politics of the era.

This is an era of history I know little about, but this book has left me craving more knowledge.

Peggy says

Although *The Assassin's Mark* reads superficially like a murder mystery (there was that unfortunate accident at the hotel..), I think the greater mystery posed here is which side was holding the moral high ground during the Spanish Civil War in 1938 - Franco's Nationalists backed by Hitler's Germany and Italy's Fascists, or the Republicans supported by the Soviets and the famous International Brigades?

A group of mainly British tourists, each with his or her own agenda, drive the plot as they spend their holiday touring the northern battlefields on one of Franco's state-sponsored yellow tour buses. Jack Telford has been sent by his left-leaning newspaper to report on what he observes, but his views are colored by his ardent pacifism, which puts him at odds with most of the other passengers. But Jack is about to have his mind changed by becoming an unwilling participant in the political plottings of those using the tour for their own ends.

While reading this book, I had to satisfy my own curiosity about a time and place which I know very little about by consulting other sources on the Spanish Civil War. To me, that's one of the chief rewards of reading good historical fiction - that the author makes you want to explore that subject further. This is not a fast read, but a most thought-provoking one.

David Ebsworth also peppers his story with images of Spain's Basque country along the northern coast that make me want to book a trip there right this minute, especially if I can see the sights while sampling some of the delectable Spanish cuisine he describes. I'll just make sure that it's a self-drive tour and avoid the complications with fellow travelers!

Allison Hiltz says

War and Tourism Collide in 'The Assassin's Mark' by David Ebsworth - A book about battlefield tourism during the Spanish Civil War. For the review, visit The Book Wheel.

Tracy Terry says

With twists and turns aplenty, a strong sense of time and place and peppered throughout with vivid images of both the Basque region and its cuisine *The Assassin's Mark* is extremely well written and obviously thoroughly researched, the authors knowledge and passion for his subject shines through in this his second novel.

Set in 1930's Spain at the close of the civil war, alas, as it turns out, not a chapter in history that I found myself particularly fascinated by (I suspect that on this account I may well have fared better with the authors first book, *The Jacobites Apprentice*) whilst I did enjoy this as a Christie-eque thriller I admit that I did find the political element more than a bit daunting and on occasion a bit long-winded.

Impressed that it did work on so many levels, perhaps more than the plot itself it was the wonderful cast of eccentric characters that made this such an enjoyable read for me. Quirky if not always likable, the author did a wonderful job in capturing the psyche of the Brit abroad.

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Disclaimer: Read and reviewed on behalf of the author, I was merely asked for my honest opinion, no financial compensation was asked for nor given.

David Eva says

A really good read - I couldn't put it down. It combines some great historical information on the Spanish Civil war and the politics and tensions of the time with some action and a "murder mystery". The story has some interesting twists and characters that enable the author to represent the different politics and viewpoints of the day albeit that some of them (for example the Professor) pretty unlikeable and a bit one dimensional. It will no doubt not appeal to anyone who wants the author to firmly back one side or who thinks that the Civil War was not a horribly messy affair where the sacrifice of many of the International Brigade was unnecessary and that all wrongs were done by one side. Jack does not ride off into the sunset to fight fascism and I wasn't sure if the ghost of his father and his suicide in face of returning to trenches was supposed to preview jacks own "way out" (in which case very deep!!). Maybe Jack has just disappeared to ride again?

Emmaa22 says

Really enjoyed the setting (Northern Spain in 1938) of this story, it had a lot to interest both geographically and historically. I was a little disappointed by the somewhat wishy-washy ending, but the journey there was worth reading all the same.

Lori says

I loved everything about this book! It is truly well-written and has intrigue, mystery, suspense, sex, and history and characters that took me to Spain and made me apart their adventure. I figured out two of the mysteries and was yelling warnings to the characters, like they could hear me. When I do that, I know I'm really into the story! lol I highly recommend The Assassin's Mark for anyone who loves historical fiction, Spain's history, political intrigue, mysteries, colorful characters, or simply a great story. It took me a lot longer than usual to finish the book because I caught a very bad cold and was too sick. But, in the end, I was able to savor the story longer. I'll miss Jack. Thank you Dave for sending me the file so I could read your great book! :)

Jo Barton says

When Jack Telford, a maverick news reporter, decides to take a tour of the Spanish battlefields in September of 1938, the Spanish Civil War has been raging for two years. His fellow travellers on the war route are a disparate group of individuals, who each have their own reasons for making this perilous journey, and yet

Jack with his passion for peacekeeping, finds himself drawn into a maelstrom of political conflict.

General Franco's mission to open up the Spanish battlefields, whilst war was still raging, is based on fact, and whilst keeping the historical integrity intact, what then follows is a Christie-esque thriller which abounds with deception, dishonesty and political skulduggery. At the core of *The Assassin's Mark* is a murder mystery, with more than enough twists and turns in the plot to keep you turning the pages, and yet, it is in the fine attention to historical detail and in the clever characterisation where the story really comes alive. Such is the imagery and descriptive talent, I felt like I was transported back in time to the Spain of the 1930's, to a country which was divided by war and political dishonesty.

This exciting story is flawlessly presented; most certainly there are noticeable shades of Agatha Christie, and even generous helpings of Graeme Green, but there is also the undeniable talent of an author who not only loves his craft, but whose own distinct writing skill is evident in every word.

I have no hesitation in recommending this book to readers who enjoy well written and decisive historical fiction.

Marianne says

This book was the first one for me to review this year. I was thrilled when the author asked me to read his story and I am glad that I agreed!

From opening the first page, I walked through the door into a world I knew nothing about; or rather it has been years since I'd thought about – the Spanish War. As a matter of fact, I don't remember anything from school about this particular event. Yet thanks to the author, I felt like I was there. I found myself googling titbits to get more information because I wanted to know more (and this is great!) I found myself sitting on the edge of my seat, I took my e-reader to places it shouldn't have been – thanks to this story. It was hard to put down!

The Assassin's Mark a well written read that included a healthy dose of mystery, intrigue, mystery, suspense and sex. As a reporter, it was extra special to be able to connect with the lead character Jack Telford.

I highly recommend this novel to anyone looking for a great mystery set during a part of history that very few people know or talk about. Cudos to the author for wetting my appetite and making me want to know more.

Don says

In September 1938 the forces of the Spanish Republic had been defeated by the onslaught instigated by Franco's coup. Though the Popular Front government still held Madrid and Catalunya, but the sense was that the air-power support the Nationalists had received from Hitler and Mussolini had turned the tide against the Republicans.

Franco chose this moment to extend an invitation to the world to come and visit the battlefield sites of the

Basque country and the Asturias in an effort to counter the adverse reports in the international media about Nationalist atrocities.

Enter Jack Telford, a journalist on the left wing Reynold's, who joins a party of Brits who, together with two Swiss nuns, join the party being bused across the scenes of the fighting. The rest of the group seems to be made up of sympathisers with the fascist cause - in particular the Reuters journalist Valerie Carter-Holt.

The story turns into a mystery tale when one of the group dies in what appears to be bizarre accident at one of the hotel stop-overs. Jack becomes obsessed with the idea that the people he is travelling with are not all they seem....

Despite the whodunit element the novel has been crafted as a piece of historical fiction and Ebsworth sketches many compelling pictures of what war-torn northern Spain must have looked like in September 1938. The Falangist line being fed by the Sligo-born tour guide Brendan Murphy is rebutted by the leftie journalist who is able to pick up as he works through the issues a bigger story of the betrayal of Republican Spain by the western powers. Whilst all this is happening the storyline cracks on with a sense of intrigue and conspiracy driving the plot.

Ann says

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this. I was impressed by the author's ability to recreate an authentic sense of the '30s and also to give me a real feeling of being in Spain in that period. This wasn't just about the settings but also the way in which the Spanish Civil War must have looked to ordinary people at the time. I was amazed to find that the plot is based around the battlefield tourism which Franco actually organised while the war was still being fought. Against this background, the author gives us a decent thriller with plenty of twists and a cast of eccentric characters, many of whom are thoroughly unlikeable – but, even here, I found myself being quite attached to them by the end of the story. And it was a story which not only kept me turning the pages but also taught me a huge amount. I fully recommend this book!

Patriciagoodwin says

An excellent read. Set just prior to WW2 , a tour bus visits landmarks from Spanish civil war. On Amongst the group are British fascists. & a journalist but all are not what they seem. A murder ensues plus a plot. A page turner. I felt as if I was on the bus with these people & that I was indeed in the 1930's.

Ethekwinigirl (Karen) Lotter says

A great story with wonderful characters. I didn't know anything about the Spanish Civil War and so enjoyed the detail in this carefully written tale of intrigue.

