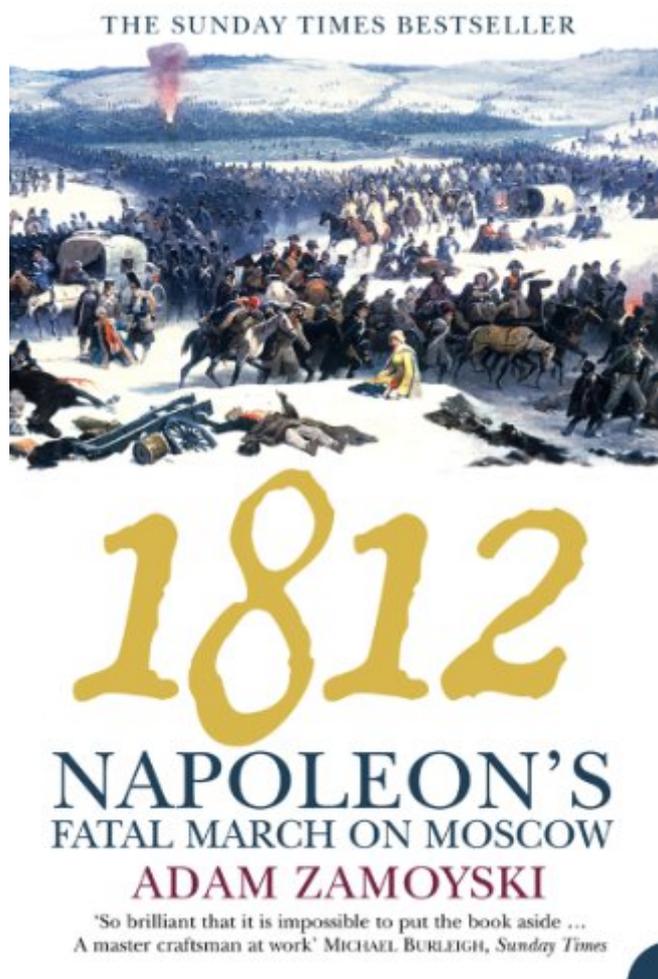


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1812: Napoleon's Fatal March On Moscow



Synopsis

Adam Zamoyski's bestselling account of Napoleon's invasion of Russia and his catastrophic retreat from Moscow, events that had a profound effect on European history. In 1812 the most powerful man in the world assembled the largest army in history and marched on Moscow with the intention of consolidating his dominion. But within months, Napoleon's invasion of Russia " history's first example of total war " had turned into an epic military disaster. Over 400,000 French and Allied troops perished and Napoleon was forced to retreat. Adam Zamoyski's masterful work draws on the harrowing first-hand accounts of soldiers and civilians on both sides of the conflict. The result takes the reader beyond the invasion of Russia to present both a poignant tale of the individual foot soldier and a sweeping history of a turbulent time.

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Customer Reviews

The first half of Zamoyski's book is truly top-quality narrative history, it is written lucidly, and it is packed with interesting facts and observations. A coherent picture emerges of all the many forces at work in that vast and terrible enterprise, the invasion of Russia. Zamoyski does an especially good job of explaining Napoleon's reasons for invading Russia, and I think adds new clarity to them. The author also has wonderful passages in which we see Napoleon's view and considerations at certain

points and then those of various Russian commanders facing him. He does something similar with Tsar Alexander, an intelligent and ambitious man, but not a leader to assume command in battle. He does a deft job at giving the reader some appreciation of the massive, complex preparations necessary for the campaign, almost exhausting a reader's imagination of how one man could put all of it into motion. His other great strength is the description of the battles for Smolensk and Borodino: these are remarkable passages. The second half of the book declines from that high level, in my view, not in the quality of the writing but in the subject matter. There is an awful lot of graphic detail of individual deaths and perils on the ghastly march out of Russia. Some of this is of course necessary to give readers a full appreciation of a situation where climate and the weather played greater roles in Napoleon's defeat than the Tsar's armies, but I think there is too much, becoming effectively padding. The trouble with those kinds of anecdotes is that they cloud the true sense of what is happening.

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