



Corpses, Coffins, and Crypts: A History of Burial

Penny Colman

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Drawing on extensive historical and anthropological research, personal accounts, and interviews with people who work in the funeral industry, Penny Colman examines the compelling subjects of death and burial across cultures and societies. The text, enriched with stories both humorous and poignant, includes details about the decomposition and embalming processes (an adult corpse buried six feet deep without a coffin will usually take five to ten years to turn into a skeleton) and describes the various customs associated with containing remains (the Igala people in Nigeria have a custom of burying people in as many as twenty-seven layers of clothing). Intriguing facts are revealed at every turn; for example, in Madagascar winter was considered the corpse-turning season.

This comprehensive book also includes a list of burial sites of famous people, images in the arts associated with death, fascinating epitaphs and gravestone carvings, a chronology and a glossary, and over a hundred black-and-white photographs, most of which were taken by the author.

Penny Colman writes with compassion and intelligence and humanizes the difficult subjects of death and burial. The result is a powerful look at an inevitable part of life--death.

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