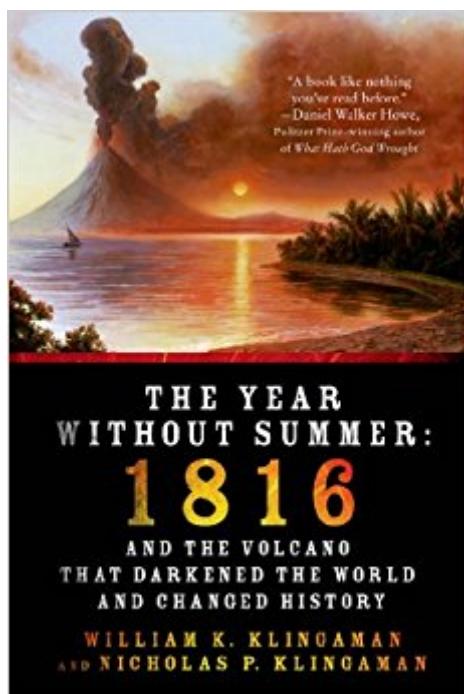


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# The Year Without Summer: 1816 And The Volcano That Darkened The World And Changed History



## Synopsis

Like Winchester's Krakatoa, The Year Without Summer reveals a year of dramatic global change long forgotten by history. In the tradition of Krakatoa, The World Without Us, and Guns, Germs and Steel comes a sweeping history of the year that became known as 18-hundred-and-froze-to-death. 1816 was a remarkable year—mostly for the fact that there was no summer. As a result of a volcanic eruption at Mount Tambora in Indonesia, weather patterns were disrupted worldwide for months, allowing for excessive rain, frost, and snowfall through much of the Northeastern U.S. and Europe in the summer of 1816. In the U.S., the extraordinary weather produced food shortages, religious revivals, and extensive migration from New England to the Midwest. In Europe, the cold and wet summer led to famine, food riots, the transformation of stable communities into wandering beggars, and one of the worst typhus epidemics in history. 1816 was the year Frankenstein was written. It was also the year Turner painted his fiery sunsets. All of these things are linked to global climate change—something we are quite aware of now, but that was utterly mysterious to people in the nineteenth century, who concocted all sorts of reasons for such an ungenial season. Making use of a wealth of source material and employing a compelling narrative approach featuring peasants and royalty, politicians, writers, and scientists, The Year Without Summer by William K. Klingaman and Nicholas P. Klingaman examines not only the climate change engendered by the volcano, but also its effects on politics, the economy, the arts, and social structures.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In April 1815, two giant eruptions from Tamboro, a supposedly latent volcano east of Java, pumped

millions of tons of ash and sulfuric acid into the atmosphere. The immediate results were catastrophic, as the blast, lava, poisonous gases, and a tsunami destroyed entire villages. But the long-term effects, felt the following year, were more far-reaching and devastating. The massive expulsion of gas and dust formed clouds that circled the globe, deflected sunlight, and resulted in a significant lowering of temperatures, especially in the northern hemisphere. This cooling caused crop failures, famine, and social turmoil. The Klingamans lay out the scientific details of the disaster in a lucid, easily digestible manner. They also effectively integrate the natural calamities into a narrative that includes the political and social milieu of Europe and North America. This is an engrossing work that illustrates the fragility of societies when confronted with sudden and severe disruption of weather patterns. --Jay Freeman --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

" Many people in North America and Europe believed that the freezing summer of 1816 foretold the end of the world. Unaware that the invisible ash cloud that spread round the world from a volcanic eruption in Indonesia caused the aberrant weather, they thought the sun was dying. William Klingaman vividly portrays the myths and realities of that terrifying season."--James M. McPherson, Pulitzer-Prize-winning and "New York Times" bestselling author of "Battle Cry of Freedom, Crossroads of Freedom, Abraham Lincoln and the Second American Revolution," and "For Cause and Comrades"" "When a volcanic eruption on a Pacific island swathed the earth with droplets, producing freakish weather that ruined harvests all over the world, how did people react? William and Nicholas Klingaman tell us how the year without summer affected an astonishing variety of people on different continents, including rulers and peasants, working families, Jane Austen and Mary Shelley. A book like nothing you've read before."--Daniel Walker Howe, Pulitzer-Prize-winning author of "What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation Of America" "William K. Klingaman's groundbreaking work will forever alter the way we view the years immediately following the War of 1812. Beautifully written in prose that will excite both expert and layman, it tells the remarkable story3/4in superb detail3/4of how in April 1815 the severest volcanic eruption in 2000 years on Mount Tambora disrupted the earth's weather profoundly, and with it, the politics, economics, arts, and religious beliefs of an era. In every respect this is a marvelous book, impossible to put down."--George C. Daughan author of "1812: The Navy's War""Klingaman's vibrant narrative carries us from Indonesia to Ohio as it traces the global effects of the Mt. Tambora eruption. "The Year Without Summer" is as dexterous at explaining the science of climatology as it is at describing how the endless rain in Geneva figured into Byron's poetry or ho"Many people in North America and Europe believed that the freezing summer of 1816 foretold the end of the world. Unaware that the

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All of us probably check the daily weather forecast to see how it will affect our plans. In fact, the weather portion of televised news is typically the highest rated segment, so much so that it now has its own channels and websites worldwide. And, like me, you likely know or suspect this is so. What I didn't know are some of the underlying causes for these atmospheric changes and the unintended consequences on macro as well as up-close-and-personal levels. William K. and Nicholas P. Klingamans' collaborative work, "The Year Without Summer: 1816 and the Volcano that Darkened the World and Changed History," is a remarkable exploration and portrait of how the weather can be affected by an unexpected event and literally the subsequent fall out on the course of human events. The triggering event for this journey is the April 1815 colossal eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia. The blast was heard more than 900 miles away in Java by lieutenant-governor Thomas Stamford Raffles (in 1819 to be involved with the founding of the City and Colony of Singapore). Local British naval commanders explored the source of the noise and discovered days at noon that

were pitch black with the smoke from the eruption and seas chocked full for up to three miles with volcanic pumice. Little did they know then that the soot, ash and particularly the sulphur plumes had blasted through the troposphere into the stratosphere, or highest level of the atmosphere, to combine with water and form a sulphuric acid aerosol cloud that would circulate around the globe driven by the "polar vortex" winds and within a year reflect back sunlight to cool parts of the Earth in more temperate zones. It is now 1816 and this is where the story really takes off: the War of 1812 for the Americans has ended; the British under Wellington have defeated Napoleon at Waterloo and exiled him to Saint Helena; the French are still struggling to realize a government based on republican or monarchy concepts; most of the underprivileged and poor in Ireland, France and other parts of Europe are just barely making ends meet; Jane Austin is writing "Emma", Shelley Bysshe Shelley penning "Mont Blanc" and traveling in Europe with Mary Godwin - soon to be telling her own tale, "Frankenstein" - and George Gordon Byron completing "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" and "The Prisoner of Chillon" epic poems. A dynamic canvas against which tumultuous events will rapidly unfold. Through painstaking collection of local almanacs, diary entries, newspaper articles, legislative records and other histories the Klingamans have woven the threads into a tapestry depicting the unexpected impact of sustained cold, rain, flooding, wide crop failures and unprepared governments on lives from the very rich to the very poor - as if it were today. They follow the story lines through to 1817 and beyond on the broad social and selected personal themes. If there is any criticism it might be with the repetition of some of the weather descriptions though, I suspect, this is by design: to draw us into the world as the people were living it then. It is a very different and refreshing approach to history - through the lens of meteorology. One of the principles of Chaos Theory is called the "Butterfly Effect," which essentially posits that small changes in the initial conditions lead to drastic changes in the results. Had a butterfly not flapped its wings at just the right point in space and time, say, a Brazilian jungle, would a hurricane in China have not occurred? Might the same be said about the debated causes of global warming today - except that some of these are man-made so the consequences may not be so arbitrary...

This was a very informative book for many reasons. I read Simon Winchester's book called Krakatoa and thought this would be in a similar vein but when I read the comments from readers I realized it was different. Interestingly, I had just previously received e mails from friends stating how GW was all hype and that one volcano produced more warming than all the fossil fuels burned since the Industrial revolution. I knew this was not true but I have given up on trying to change the views of the narrow minded as I am in my mid seventies and have enough wisdom not to reach for the

impossible. The book was much different than KRAKATOA in many respects. It takes you through the severe world wide effects of the severe cooling of the earth and the ramifications of crop loss, starvation, migration of humans who are desperate for food, governments trying to deal with national and local uprisings, outbreaks of typhus and typhoid and various maladies. It is a book that was quite prescient and I would recommend it for everyone interested in climate change and for policy makers trying to prepare for other natural catastrophes

While the world has seen many deadly and damaging natural disasters in recent decades, no disaster of our time had the worldwide scope of the effects following the eruption of Mount Tambora in 1815, the most severe volcanic eruption in recorded history. Weather patterns were adversely changed by the eruption the following year, and in "The Year Without Summer," William and Nicholas Klingaman examine the bizarre weather of 1816 and its surprising mark on history. According to climatologists, 1816 was the coldest year in North America since the first colonists landed in Virginia and Massachusetts. "The Year Without Summer" centers on the United States and Europe, although other regions around the world were affected by the eruption as well. The authors describe the succession of abnormally powerful cold fronts from the late spring through the fall of the year--discolored snow, odd-colored sunsets, wintry landscapes in June in New England, frost in Kentucky and Virginia in July and in the Carolinas in late August, snow and ice in England at the end of August, and flooding in Europe were observed in 1816. The Klingamans note in many places that the elderly of the time could not recall seeing such weather in their lifetimes, and naturally many Americans and Europeans offered guesses as to why it was occurring. While in the early nineteenth century there were rudimentary efforts to gather weather data, accurate forecasting was still in the distant future, and the authors list the factors that eventually led to better forecasts. "The Year Without Summer" is not just about weather and climate. The authors paint a portrait of where the United States was in 1816 and puts the weather in context--the narrative blends weather and history throughout the book, with discussion of events such as U.S.-British relations, religion, the England-Ireland conflict, British and American politics, and migration from Ireland to America and from New England to the Midwest. Literary figures Lord Byron, Jane Austen, and Stendhal appear, as do political figures Lord Liverpool and a few of the early American presidents, as well as Joseph Smith and other historical figures of the time. The awful weather of 1816 resulted in lost livestock and in failed crops and harvests, with attendant inflation, famine, and disease. The Klingamans chronicle these effects, as well as the weather anomalies that lingered into 1817 and the return to relative normalcy in 1818. Those interested in either weather or history

would enjoy "The Year Without Summer," but those interested in both would find this great book especially worthwhile.

So many historic events are written as an isolated happening, but this book puts it into a global historic experience.

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