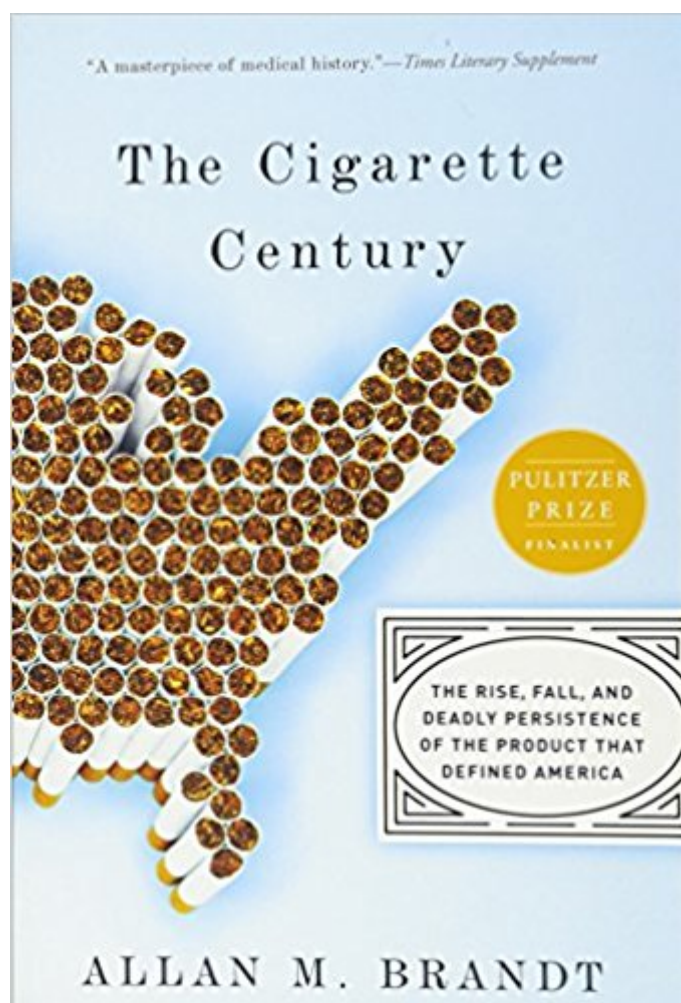


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The Cigarette Century: The Rise, Fall, And Deadly Persistence Of The Product That Defined America



Synopsis

From agriculture to big business, from medicine to politics, *The Cigarette Century* is the definitive account of how smoking came to be so deeply implicated in our culture, science, policy, and law. No product has been so heavily promoted or has become so deeply entrenched in American consciousness. *The Cigarette Century* shows in striking detail how one ephemeral (and largely useless) product came to play such a dominant role in so many aspects of our lives—and deaths.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Once so acceptable that even Emily Post approved, cigarette smoking is an integral part of American history and culture, as demonstrated in this highly readable, exhaustively researched book: the cigarette's "remarkable success ... as well as its ignominious demise ... fundamentally demonstrates the historical interplay of culture, biology, and disease." Brandt, Harvard Medical School's Amalie Moses Kass Professor of the History of Medicine, explores the impact and meaning of cigarettes, from cultural, scientific, political and legal standpoints. Particularly fascinating (and shocking) is the scientific community's struggle to prove the harmful effects of smoking, even as scientists found, "in 1946, that lung cancer cases had tripled over the previous three decades." As any contemporary history of tobacco must, the narrative becomes a tale of the lies, deceit and eventual public exposure of Big Tobacco. But, the author warns, it's too soon for the ever-growing anti-smoking contingent to think they've beaten the industry: Big Tobacco is busy selling cigarettes to developing countries, threatening "a global pandemic of tobacco-related diseases that is nothing

short of colossal." Though the industry can't be stopped, Brandt says, "understanding the history of cigarettes may be a small but important element in ... knowing their dangers and having strategies for their control

In the mid-1800s, cigarettes were considered a curiosity and represented a minuscule portion of tobacco consumption. The transformation of cigarettes into a mass-consumer product would have deep and lasting effects on our cultural values and on our legal and political systems. Brandt, Harvard professor and respected medical historian, was able to examine vast amounts of internal confidential industry correspondence, reports, and memos due to tobacco litigation "discovery" and Internet access. This exhaustive study reveals how the ascendancy of a product that clearly threatens the health of the user caused its manufacturers to deny and obfuscate the facts for decades, meanwhile secretly ensuring that their addictive product would hook an increasingly younger population. The issue goes right to the core of America's belief in freedom and the right to do as we choose, but also the right to live free from the imposition of harm imposed by others from secondhand smoke. Most important, Brandt reminds us that this battle is far from over, as Big Tobacco sets its sights on developing nations, threatening to create a deadly pandemic of global proportion. David Siegfried Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It's a thick, full book, happily inexpensive enough to buy one and take a look. It gives detailed, readable coverage of the rise and success of the cigarette (inhaling--"Do You Inhale? OF COURSE I DO!"--turned the tide in the cigarette's favor). Perhaps the product should be capitalized due to its success and power, i.e., the Cigarette, or King Cigarette). The book includes some court battles into which the author was reluctantly drawn (he had hoped to remain a researcher) but is not a law book. It is history-rich but not statistics-choked, and can be jumped into anywhere and still you'll stay afloat. Being on inexpensive paper made it affordable (unlike an excellent competitor's whose author was very interesting, even compelling, when interviewed on CSpan--but who could afford his doggone \$\$\$ book!). From this book and other sources it is clear that the cigarettes we are exporting by the supertanker-load will kill many millions of lung owners, and nothing will stop it: cigarette profits are very high, enough to blind the makers to other considerations such as, say, morality (well, it is a matter of choice, right?). Unless some pivotal people get religion, it seems that a growing monster is loose. Someone even called our increasing exports of cigarettes the (coming?) greatest mass murder in history. (An aside: Forget about pipes and cigars--you don't inhale a stogie

or take a drag from a bowl of Prince Albert.)

It's been a very long time since I have been so satisfied with the purchase of a book. To wit:- Considering the sloppiness in the composition of so many non-fiction texts published since the turn of the century, the logic and elegance in the organization of this material is utterly astonishing. To all the lazy SOB's who cough up old weblogs and then call them a "book" - LOOK AND LEARN: this is how the contents of a non-fiction book should be organized!- The prose is exactly the right match for the material, sophisticated without being pedantic or jargonish (difficult to accomplish once the topic turns to medical diagnoses).- While exhaustively annotated (70+ pages of notes), the citations do not interfere with the narrative in even a single instance. It doesn't matter whether you think tobacco producers are heroes or murderers - you should buy this book simply to admire and enjoy the sheer craft of it.

This book is well researched and fascinating in parts. However, I'm still struggling to finish it as the editing is awful. Each paragraph is like a separate quip and overall, the progression from cash crop to massive marketing is disjointed. Maybe the second half will pick up, in which case I will revisit this review, but it's painful to read for at least the first 50%.

This is a comprehensive story of the cigarette, big tobacco, tobacco research, public opinion and public policy. It's a hefty book, at 500 plus pages, but it was all interesting and readable. One thing I took away from reading this is how big tobacco could not have gotten away with selling their deadly product without the collusion of the congressmen it bought. It also shows tobacco company executives at their most ridiculous when they repeatedly said there was "no proof" that cigarettes cause cancer, even after there was no doubt. I'll keep this book as a reference.

Allan Brandt's new book, "The Cigarette Century", is as comprehensive a study on one subject as I've seen in a long time. Written crisply and authoritatively, Brandt covers the tobacco industry from the end of the nineteenth century through today with cigarettes as his main focus. What he has researched, uncovered and passed onto the reader in an expansive (yet truly condensed) form is terrific. His book is a blockbuster. Cigarettes have been around for a long while in the United States but not until James Bonsack's rolling machine came into play in 1881 (churning out 200 cigarettes per minute) could they be distributed on a wide-scale basis. It wasn't until World War I, however, that the national demand for the product really took off, and did it ever! Brandt's book is a parallel

study of American sociological history of the twentieth century as cigarettes have been at the center of so much of our cultural life. Women began smoking in earnest in the 1920s and Hollywood added its own weight with countless movie stars puffing away in countless films to remind the public of the "joys" of smoking. Advertisements abounded and cigarettes were here to stay. Along came the 1950s and things began to change. This is where Brandt's book really takes off as he begins to shape the "controversy" between the industry and those determined to warn Americans of the risks of smoking. The Surgeon General's report of 1964 declaring smoking to be hazardous to one's health (later packaging warnings reminded the smoker of the same) was a big first step as the public was beginning to question the safety of cigarettes. While more and more research on the dangers of cigarette smoking was made public, the tobacco companies fought tooth and nail to assure Americans that all was well. Lawsuits began to be filed on an increasing level yet the industry was always one step ahead of its detractors. Tobacco companies insisted that safety was a primary concern, but being "remarkably effective in resisting serious health initiatives", they were not. Brandt concludes "we now know a good deal about how this goal was achieved: a careful mixture of reassurance, half-truths, innovative public relations, disinformation, and deception." Calling their actions "the crime of the century", (the title of his epilogue) the author has, by this point, made a careful and compelling argument for that chapter's title. In my lifetime there have been three major social changes that I've noticed, one being that there are many fewer smokers today in the United States than when I was being raised. Yet, as Brandt points out, tobacco companies learned that if they can't sell as many cigarettes at home they'll export them...with no regard to the health of other nations' citizens. The industry seems to be winning again at the expense of those whose health fails after using their product, creating a pandemic just under the radar screen. I highly recommend Allan Brandt's "The Cigarette Century". It's an eye-opener, extremely well-written and well-paced, and will either give you a new angle at which to look at cigarettes or reinforce the thoughts you may have had already. I think it is one of the best books of the year.

It is so sad that the one industry that killed more people than all of our enemies combined and tricked so many children over many generations (more than all the illegal drugs and alcohol combined) got away with murder for so long (with the help of the government).

Great read for anyone interested in public health

This is a very interesting cultural and historical background of how the cigarette persisted in sales

despite its deadly affect on consumers.

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