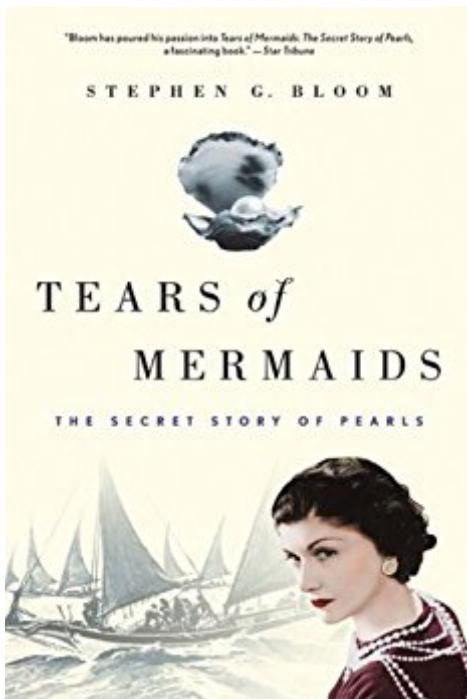


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Tears Of Mermaids: The Secret Story Of Pearls



Synopsis

A round, luminescent pearl is the simplest and most perfect gem. Columbus sought "and found" this precious jewel coveted by his Spanish sovereigns, sparking popularity throughout Europe. Fashion icons Jacqueline Kennedy, Princess Grace, and Michelle Obama cherished them, making them iconic. And designer Coco Chanel raised them to new heights, bringing pearls "fake and real" to women everywhere. In *Tears of Mermaids*, Stephen G. Bloom travels 30,000 miles in an effort to trace a single pearl "from the moment a diver off the coast of Australia scoops an oyster containing a single luminescent pearl from the ocean floor to the instant a woman fastens the clasp of a strand containing the same orb. Bloom chronicles the never-before-told saga of the global pearl trade by gaining access to clandestine outposts in China, the Philippines, French Polynesia and Australia. He infiltrates high-tech pearl farms guarded by gun-toting sentries, farms for pearls in rural China, and even goes backstage at Christie's for a fast and furious auction of the most expensive pearl ever sold. Teeming with rogue humor and uncanny intelligence, *Tears of Mermaids* weaves a nonstop detective story whose main character is the world's most enduring jewel.

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Customer Reviews

First let me say I was a bit put-off by Mr. Bloom's prose style. He is without a doubt an elegant writer, but the glib-gonzo style, which is ok in a short piece, rapidly gets under the skin when stretched out to book length. Mr. Bloom is a journalist and though journalists are not expected to necessarily be experts on the subjects the write about, they do have a responsibility to thoroughly research the topic and get it right. There are times when Bloom does, but there are times when he does not. His first and most egregious error occurs in his introduction. "Pearl pricing", he says, "is totally subjective ... The same strand can go for three thousand dollars or thirty thousand dollars." Nonsense! Oh yes, there is a fool born every minute, but the fact is that pearls trade in a fairly orderly market. So, absent the fool, no such gap between bid and ask prices exists (or the buyer would be soon out of business). Bloom would have been correct if he had said that there is no universally accepted hierarchical grading nomenclature. That is to say, one dealer may call the finest pearls "AAA", while another may simply start with a single "A". However the basic criteria: size, symmetry, surface, luster, orient and overtone are universal and used by all. Bloom's statements about the people he meets in his travels say a great deal more about Mr. Bloom than they do about his sources. For example, early in the book he meets a survey group, including the celebrated former National Geographic writer Fred Ward who "seemed too important to have anything to do with me." Well, I am familiar with that group and they have one afternoon in which to survey an entire gem show full of pearl dealers. Could it be that Ward was simply focused on his work?

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