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Freedom - in eleventh-century France, it is a luxury enjoyed by only the King and nobility. For the serf, it is surely worth fighting for. But is it worth dying for?

Arriving home disillusioned from the Crusades, Hugh DeLuc discovers that his village has been ransacked and his wife abducted. The dark riders came in the dead of night, like devils, wearing no colours but black crosses on their chests, leaving no clue as to who they are. Knights they may be, but honour and chivalry are not part of their code. They search for a relic, one worth more than any throne in Europe, and no man can stand in their way. Until Hugh, taking on the role of a jester, is able to infiltrate the enemy's castle where he believes his wife is being held captive.

And when a man is fighting for freedom - for his wife, and for everything he holds dear - he will prove a formidable opponent.

The Jester Details

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John says

Typical Patterson, for better or worse. If you're looking for artistic merit of any sort whatsoever, then forget it. THE JESTER succeeds only on the level of a trashy pulp adventure story--the kind of thing you might enjoy reading in the tub after a long day at work. The writing mostly feels like it was intended for kids, yet the content is strictly adult fare. The story is set during the Crusades and written in first-person (except when it's not), yet the voice of the narrator is virtually indistinguishable from that of detective Michael Bennett, a present day Patterson character. It almost goes without saying that the historical aspects of the novel are weak, despite the authors listing a dozen or so books that they supposedly used for reference during the writing of THE JESTER. With the exception of a few antiqued words, there's no knowledge or insight into the time period that you haven't already gleaned from casual TV viewing. The plot is bland and predictable, but Patterson's breakneck pacing makes it difficult not to be at least somewhat entertained.

Thee_ron_clark says

Every so often, I pick up a book and have a difficult time putting it down. This was exactly that type of book. I swam through nearly 500 pages in less than two days, dying to see the outcome. From start to finish, I was more than impressed.

The basic premise is that an innkeeper joins the Crusades to gain freedom from his tyrannical liege. He becomes disheartened after the first major conflict he is involved in and deserts the Crusader army with a few trinkets picked up during their victory in Antioch.

He finally returns home to find that his inn has burned down and his wife has been taken, among other things by a group of ruthless knights. The innkeeper sets forth on a quest for vengeance in a matter that is much larger than he initially believes.

There, I think I accomplished a decent description without giving anything that cannot be discovered by reading the back cover.

The only flaw I found in this book is that some of the tactics seemed played out and unoriginal. I suppose used in the context of that time period I can forgive that though.

This is a must for those who enjoy literature.

Jerry B says

Unusual and violent medieval tale stretches belief...

Patterson and co-author Gross have certainly crafted an unexpected offering, set literally 1000 years before Alex Cross, Lindsay Boxer, and the gang come along. A French innkeeper, and our leading man, Hugh de Luc, leaves his wife Sophie and his hometown to seek ultimate freedom from his life of servitude. He joins

the Crusades in 1096; then we wade through many chapters of violence and gore as men on both sides of the argument die brutal deaths. Using laughter to save his life, and precursoring his role as a Jester (hence the title) through much of the book, Hugh returns home (actually as a deserter) only to discover his wife was abducted by the evil duke. He sets out for revenge and eventually assimilates into the staff of the evil lord. He is helped along by a noblewoman named Emilie, itself an unlikely scenario, only to stir feelings in both akin to his love for his own wife. This lack of fidelity (although not consummated until after his wife's ultimate death) seemed incongruous with the undying love expressed throughout the first half of the book -- yet these feelings rapidly transfer right onto Emilie with little further provocation.

Before it's over, Hugh "the fool" leads a ragtag band of farmers and other common folk to overthrow not one but two fiefdoms, with such total success that he becomes the darling of the people and starts a movement toward the abandonment of the serf system.

What's tough to accept out of all this is the odds against which this lowly guy survives and flourishes, his role in finding a cherished religious relic, the love affair with the noblewoman, his success against organized armies (and other evils), etc. While Patterson's usual story-telling abilities are in full evidence, the early-on gore and the relatively unbelievable premises we are asked to swallow, one after another, make for a quick but only mildly entertaining read. While we applaud the author's departure from the norm, we need about half of the unbelievable wrinkles removed to give this book a facelift worthy of a more serious look.

Mel says

I'm only reading this because I haven't gone to the library recently and it was one of the few fiction books on the shelves that I hadn't read. It's terrible, but yet I keep reading. Morbid curiosuty, I guess. It's supposed to take place in France during the Crusades, but the writing style is all wrong for historical fiction and is full of anachronisms and unconvincing slang. There's no emotional depth to any of the characters, and no intricacy to the plot. Patterson has clearly written way too many serial killer novels, because he keeps trying to top himself with the brutality of the bad guys, which is all described in loving detail.

Why am I still reading? I guess because I'm a compulsive reader, and if text appears in front of me, I have to read it, and if I start a book, I have to finish it. And at this point, the library won't be open again until mid-day Monday, so there's nothing good to distract me from this train wreck of a book.

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I've now finished it, and the last hundred pages did not redeem it. *Of course* the noble girl that's been helping the jester out is the king's daughter. I saw that coming pretty much as soon as the character was introduced.

Structurally, the novel is a mess. Most of the chapters are 1st person, from the point of view of the jester. Sprinkled throughout, there are 3rd person objective chapters following various characters (a few of these chapters edge into 3rd person limited with shallow penetration). Then there's the framing story, which only appears in the beginning. The first chapter (or was it prologue?) was set in modern times, with an archeologist finding a holy relic. The rest of the book tells the story of how the relic ended up where it was. I thought that the frame was completely pointless, but if they were going to use it, they should have at least made it a real frame and had a chapter at the end also set in modern times. It just feels lopsided the way it is.

Kate says

Sometimes all you need is something to tide you over. Dinner is in an hour but your stomach is rumbling away so you nibble on a cookie, chow on a candy bar, suck on a ring-pop. The food might not be the greatest and a couple hours later you've probably forgotten you had it. But it did the trick. It took care of your hunger for the moment.

James Patterson and Andrew Cross's new book *Jester* is little more than the bag of nuts you get on an airplane to keep you going until your next layover or until you reach your destination. You wish your flight had a meal served on it, but are happy to at least have the snack.

Jester is an exciting tale of love, wars against royalty and quests for religious relics. While the tale briefly begins in present time, the true story begins in 1050 A.D. when Hugh De Luc watches people head off on crusades. He holds himself back from partaking in the religious battles at first, but when a second opportunity arouses, he is unable to keep himself from going to war. He leaves his wife Sophie at home and fights for the freedom he feels is right.

When Hugh returns home he finds that his decision to join the crusades has affected his whole villages and his wife, who has been taken captive. Going on about the plot might actually make the book seem less appealing and more dime-store-romance-novel-ish... But essentially that's what it is, with only a fraction of the smut.

Patterson and Cross do a very good job of writing an entertaining story that keeps you turning the pages. With no less than 153 chapters in only 452 pages, *Jester* is broken up into bite-size chunks easily accessible to anyone. The book is flawed: while the book begins in the present, we never return to the beginning characters but instead end still in the time of the crusades; the plot is much too predictable.

When you want a nice easy read though, perhaps on a long flight where you just want to be distracted from the crying babies behind you and the coughing passenger besides you until your next layover or until you reach your destination, open the *Jester*. You might not remember much about the book when you're finished, but you will enjoy the read.

The Book Maven says

I think the nicest thing I can say about this book--and possibly all of Patterson's books--is that it would be an excellent book for adult learners (especially male) to cut their reading teeth on. The chapters are short, the sentences are short, there are very few challenging words to stump readers, and there's no complexities to the text whatsoever.

But for an adult reading at an advanced level, hoping for involved plot or character development, this book is...possibly going to be disappointing.

J.M. Robison says

This was the first James Patterson book I have read, and I must say I was not impressed. (It was co-authored by Andrew Gross, so I cannot say to whose writing style I provide this review).

I was first drawn to this book for the tempting story of a man posing as a jester to infiltrate a Duke's castle to save his wife, but that was very short lived. The story was 10% a jester infiltrating a castle and 90% gathering the common low-borns to fight for their freedom.

At first the book hooked me. I walked beside Hugh as he went to and from the crusade and cheered him on when we went forth to avenge his wife. That's why this gets 2 stars. But I do not grant the other 3 for these reasons:

The bulk of the story was written in what I call a "hands-off" way, like the author made the reader hover over the characters instead of walking beside them. For me to like a book, I must walk beside the characters. Again, I felt this way in the beginning, but that sensation stopped about 20 pages in. The authors telling me what I should be seeing and feeling, instead of letting me discover that for myself.

There were logistical issues, such as the line would say "he laid on the floor" and a paragraph later, it would have him lay on the floor again without mentioning him having stood up from the first time. I understand something like this can be my sometimes fast reading speed, but when it happens MORE THAN 3 TIMES I realize it's not me.

The prologue was absolutely useless, and even went further to confuse me. On the first read, I thought it had said a holy relic had been found buried with a jester, but by the end of the book we see it buried with a Duke. I had to go back and re-read the prologue to figure out the confusion. I recommend you don't read the prologue because you can read the entire book without it and not miss a thing. I only hate prologues when they serve no purpose but to plump word count, which this one felt like it was doing.

There were scenes we'd enter, and where I'd expect it to last pages it would only last paragraphs - some things of such magnitude should be given more air-time to further convince the reader it was worth being there in the first place. But too many scenes were touched on and then we jumped to something else. This book felt as if it should have been a solid 2, but instead was stretched to fill just 1.

I honestly got the feeling James Patterson knew he was already famous and didn't matter what he wrote, and his co-author could write however he wanted because he was riding the coattails of James Patterson. I've read co-author books and they are usually brilliantly done, but I did not like this co-authored book. When I stop reading in the middle of a life-or-death battle scene to eat something and don't come back to it for 3 hours, it's no longer me, it's the book.

Bryce Potok says

The novel follows an innkeeper, Hugh, who seeking freedom from the tyrannical ruler of the region, Lord Baldwin, joins the crusades. Throughout his yearlong journey to reach the holy lands and during the battles

of the holy lands, there are many suspenseful moments and situations. During the battles in the holy lands, Hugh fights against the Turks. In Hugh's final battle of the crusades, he fights a monstrously large Turkish man. Hugh loses the swordfight but is spared because the Turk doesn't believe in the war. Hugh begins the lengthy journey back to his home only to find his wife has been kidnapped. He assumes it was Lord Baldwin who kidnapped his wife and devises a plan to infiltrate the castle of Treile. He plans to become a jester and earn Lord Baldwin's trust. He trains with the current Jester and figures out the final details to his plan. One day when Hugh believes he has mastered the art of jestering he attends the court session. He earns the Lord's trust and must now attempt to find his wife. To find out if Hugh finds her you will have to read the book. Throughout the novel, Hugh progresses from an quiet innkeeper into a murdering revenge driven man. Before hugh leaves for the crusades he runs an in, as his journey progresses Hugh progresses as well. With each passing battle Hugh becomes stronger and more confident in himself until he returns to his hometown. He finds his inn burned down and his wife missing. This creates a fire inside Hugh that completes his transformation in the novel. His only purpose throughout the rest of the novel is to find his wife and get revenge on her kidnapper.

The Jester, by James Patterson is a thrilling novel. I knew nothing of the plot before reading the novel, only that it fit the genre of suspense. While reading I enjoyed the constant action and tension throughout it. I often found myself looking forward to reading, which is rare for me. The action starts within the first couple of pages as the men of the tyrannical Lord Baldwin kill a young child because his parents could not pay taxes. The suspense was constant as well, even along his yearlong journey to the holy land difficult conditions caused hardships for all the men, and uncertainty of their survival. The ending of the novel surprised me and made me enjoy it even more. Overall I enjoyed the novel tremendously and would definitely read other books by James Patterson.

Mark says

A "Pillar's of the Earth" like novel of a French inn keeper swept up in the Crusades who comes back home to the destruction of his family...under the "pretext" of being a "court jester" seeks to avenge the wrongs by exacting retribution against those in the nobility who harmed his family...Decent, but no Ken Follett!

Saša says

Don't read this. You'll get a headache. At first it will seem actually amusing, because you won't be sure if the writer(s) are serious with their catastrophic depiction of Medieval France, the Crusade wars, and the unavoidably horrible sex scenes. However, as you delve deeper and deeper into this atrocity of a novel, you will only find yourself regretting the money (and time) you wasted.

Amy Subaey says

The BEST book I have ever read!!!! its so exciting, and remember, this was pre- Da Vinci code, exciting in a new way. Its also very historical - I love the era of the Crusades, the characters are so interesting, the story is so unexpectd and refreshing - its a thinking person's book for sure. Its not a typical murder mystery like he usually writes. I have passed this book on to Julee and Jeff and they both were just engrossed and read it in like 2 days!!!! MUST read (good beach reach, plane read if you don't want to sleep!)

Carol says

So, this was a very different novel from Patterson's usual mysteries, so I suspect it was more Gross than Patterson. Set in the Middle Ages, it was too brutal for me. The second half redeemed itself for me.

Carolyn says

I guess it's no surprise that a historical mystery written by two thriller writers is not very historically accurate, but if you can grit your teeth and ignore that then it's an enjoyable, often farcical romp through medieval France. Set in the crusades in 11th century France, cheeky commoner and innkeeper Hugh deLuc joins the crusaders to travel to Jerusalem to kill the infidels with the promise of freedom and riches on his return. After seeing the reality of the crusades with many of the common foot soldiers slaughtered on the battlefields Hugh returns to find his Inn burned, his wife kidnapped and his baby son killed by the evil lord who rules his fiefdom. Thus begins Hugh's second life as a Jester as he attempts to find his wife. Unknown to Hugh he is suspected of bringing a holy relic back from the Holy lands and the nobles will stop at nothing to find it.

I suspect Patterson and Gross had a lot of fun writing this novel. They have taken a lot of liberties with the people, customs and traditions of the times but have spun a fun, if far-fetched tale that makes for a good, quick read with short sharp chapters and a pacy plot. 3.5★

Susanne Leist says

I buy a James Patterson book in a thrift store and expect to sit down to read a silly, modern day caper. Instead, I find a love story from a man's perspective taking place during the Crusades.

Hugh, a commoner, an innkeeper, joins the Crusades out of boredom and a way to better his and his wife's lives. He makes unusual friends along the way. His love of stories makes him popular. After a few years of blood and gore, he runs back home with a few trinkets for his wife.

His town is gutted and his wife gone. All believe she is dead except for him. He has a new quest. He must find his wife. He becomes a court jester, gets into trouble, gets more people killed, finds new love, and so on. He has the artifact that is causing more death and blood shed.

The end is predictable. Modern day language and swearing is used. But still I couldn't put it down.

Bill says

I thought the story was awesome. I kept raising the question "How is Hugh getting out of this one?" which kept me reading until the end, finishing the book in less than a week. Of course the book doesn't really leave a lot of downtime. The story is always progressing, jumping from one event to the next in the blink of an eye. You're never too far from the action, and with how short the chapters are (and large text) a book that looks like it could take a while is actually a quick and fun read.

On the other hand, I did have a few caveats about Jester. Patterson barely describes people, sometimes just saying portly woman or old man, so a lot is left up to your imagination. In one way that's alright: you get to picture people how you want, giving them the features you feel they need, but most of the time it just feels lazy. I'm probably just spoiled by the way Martin describes his characters. Such as going into details over what they were wearing, the little scars on them, and a brief history of some that seem to die off in a chapter.

Jeff says

I just reviewed *Sail*, saying it was the first Patterson book I'd read. I was unaware that he had also written *Jester*. I stand corrected...and Patterson has been redeemed in my eyes. *Jester* was so great. I cared so much for the characters in that book - and felt as though I was right there with them. Set in the days of knights, kings, and of course, jesters...this was a great story of revenge! After realizing that a story I loved so much was written by James Patterson has now motivated me to go out and buy the newest Patterson book that I refused to buy last week because of *Sail*.

So, Patterson is 1-1 for me. The next one had better score a win...or he's back in jeopardy.

Paul Weiss says

I love historical fiction! I love thrillers! I just got a double treat!

Hugh De Luc and his loving wife, Sophie, peasant vassals under their evil liege lord, Baldwin, Duke of Treille, scratch out a meager living as the owners of the local inn in Veille du Père. The papal inducement of a promise of freedom from the grinding servitude of feudalism proves too much to resist and Hugh joins a rag-tag army of Catholic crusaders marching to the Holy Land to retake the city of Jerusalem from the infidels. In the presence of horrific carnage and violence, Hugh undergoes an epiphany of sorts during a battle encounter with a kindly Turk soldier who spares his life. Realizing the futility of what he is doing, Hugh deserts and returns to France only to discover that his infant son has been murdered, his home and inn have been burned to the ground and Sophie has been kidnapped and imprisoned by Norcross, one of Baldwin's bullying minion knights - or so he thinks!

With **The Jester**, Patterson and Gross have achieved something very special indeed. Using the setting and background of medieval France and the Crusades, they crafted a finely polished veneer and laid it on precisely thick enough to provide an exciting, believable and entirely unique cover for what actually lies underneath - a tale that is, in fact, 100% modern high-speed thriller. For example, Hugh's skilful adoption of the guise of a jester and his adroit entry into Baldwin's castle is, by any other name, an undercover infiltration operation into the enemy camp! The relic from the Holy Land that Hugh doesn't even realize he carries and that causes so much death around him, could have been, in a more modern story, a piece of microfilm with some critical information worth millions to the holder! Despite so many of the plot pieces being so typical of this type of novel (I'm sure that some would say trite) - weak underdogs rallying to the strength and moral courage of a new leader; a tender scene in which Hugh's wife dies in his arms only minutes after he has found her; newly found love providing a reason to persevere; a sex scene just before the battle with a charging enemy - they are put together in such a fashion as to be irresistible!

I'll succumb to a cliché myself - **The Jester** was a rollicking great read and I enjoyed it immensely. Somewhere between the next Alex Cross and Women's Murder Club novel, I sure hope that Patterson finds time to give us another "historical thriller"!

Paul Weiss

Tim says

This is an excellent example of my distaste of 11th - 14th century history. The barbarism is perpetrated via a Jester at the time of the Crusades. Thus providing another example my distrust and abhorrence of all religions. Alas and in a clown move, the only laughter occurs at the end. 0 of 10 stars

Tarah says

I grabbed this book off the shelf because it was by James Patterson first & foremost. When I started on the story I was surprised and a little hesitant to continue onward once I found out what time it was set in. I've never been a huge fan of historical novels but I am glad I gave it a chance. Mr. Patterson with the help of Andrew Gross really draw you into this setting and allow you to immerse yourself into the story. You hear the anger in Hugh's voice, you smell the fowl stench of the jail cells, you taste the food being served in the great halls, you can feel the silks the nobles wear.

I found myself rooting for Hugh, gasping when a sword clashed against another sword and feeling a mix of emotions when Hugh discovers Sophie. I found his character to be a true hero, a leader and someone people of today would follow. Hugh stands for justice and freedom and what is right. This book may look long but you quickly realize it ends all too soon when you reach the end. I would recommend this book to any James Patterson fan or any fiction reader who enjoys a historical novel, the research they've done for this book really help enforce the story line.

Janie Johnson says

This is probably one of my favorite Patterson books! And it is totally out of his normal genre. And I love that!

The book is set back to medieval times, it had a great plot and shared some history! I loved that too. I rarely put the book down to be honest. It was a fast quick read.

This book is definitely worth a read by any Patterson fans! It gets 5 stars from me!
