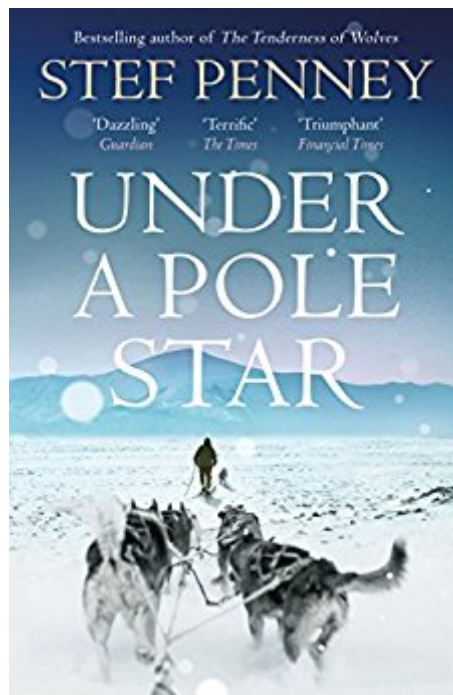




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Under A Pole Star: Richard & Judy Book Club 2017 - The Most Unforgettable Love Story Of The Year



Synopsis

THE RICHARD & JUDY BOOK CLUB PICK - 'ONE OF THE BEST NOVELS I HAVE READ FOR A VERY LONG TIME' RICHARD MADELY 'A dazzling tale of romance and survival' (Guardian) Follow the path to the freezing north. Follow your ambition. Follow your heart Flora Mackie was twelve when she first crossed the Arctic Circle on her father's whaling ship. Now she is returning to the frozen seas as head of her own expedition of exploration. Jakob de Beyn was raised in Manhattan but his yearning for new horizons leads him to the Arctic as part of a rival expedition. When he and Flora meet there is an instant connection that slowly builds to become an all-consuming love. The affair survives the growing tensions between the two groups. Then, after one last glorious summer on the Greenland coast, Jakob joins his leader on an extended trip into the interior, with devastating results. The stark beauty of the Arctic, where pack ice can crush a ship like an eggshell, and the empty sweep of the tundra, alternately a snow-muffled wasteland and an unexpectedly gentle meadow, are vividly evoked. Against this backdrop Stef Penney weaves an irresistible love story, a compelling look at the dark side of the golden age of exploration, and a mystery that Flora, returning one last time to the North Pole as an old woman, will finally lay to rest.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A novel set in the Arctic Circle in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Wonderful descriptions of snow and ice, an unforgiving, brutal environment. This story tells of the fated romance between Flora Mackie and Jacob de Beyn. Flora is unusual for the time depicted, no narrow insular world for her. Flora becomes a Meteorologist and leads her own expedition into the Arctic Circle. Jacob de Beyn is a Geologist with a fascination with the glaciers and ice formation in the Arctic Circle. Both are driven characters in their own field. I suppose some may be disappointed by the "romantic" component but I felt it complimented the story and the characters overall. However for this reader it was the visceral descriptions of the landscape, the Eskimo way of life and the times that kept me reading.

Such beautiful descriptive writing of the North Pole and environs...took me there. However, the intimate scenes did not fit in with the rest of her writing. They seemed "dropped in".

I love books like this where the landscape is so remote and cold and unfriendly that you even feel nervous about going there in fiction form. But there's something about explorers and what they achieved despite the lack of technology we have now and the work they had to do to get to the most inhospitable places on earth that really fascinates me. The early scenes of a woman known as the Snow Queen heading back with a journalist who's hoping to find out about this amazing woman and what happened on that journey were just full of foreboding and it was the start of a great read for me. It's the landscape of Greenland which for me is just fascinating and eerily evoked. The ice and water are weapons, wild and unpredictable, the boat journey through the ice fraught with danger never mind when they get there. Flora for me was a character made for role of explorer no nonsense and I did chuckle when she turned out to be someone who had tried humour in her twenties and then gave it up. It's a novel which reads like a ghostly expedition through one of the most hostile shipping lanes in the world a land so remote and cold that few have managed to go there and return successfully. But imagine the excitement of being the first if not one of the first. If you go missing people here then who would ever know? Ooh I did like this one. Chilling in more ways than one but ethereal too.

I was instantly intrigued by the cover and the blurb of the book when I first saw it on NetGalley and I was thrilled to get a chance to read it. However, I had some serious problem with the story. 2 times during the book was a very tempted to give up the book. First, at around 30% and then around 60%.

But, I felt that I had gotten so far that I wanted to finish the book and I wanted to know the ending. Now, the book isn't all bad. There were moments in the story I liked. But, after the intriguing intro, did the book lose some flow and for 30% it was just an introduction to the two main characters, Flora and Jacob. And, it's a thick book 608 page long and 30% of that felt a bit too much for just reading about people growing up. It got a bit better when the Flora and Jacob finally met during two separate expeditions. However, I could never really get into their great romance and the book felt way too long. I did like reading about the expeditions, the will to find new land and the life of the Inuits. I think I would have preferred reading the book if it had focused more about the exploration of Arctic than Flora and Jacob life and tribulations. I did find Flora's life interesting to read as a woman in a man's world. It was just that sometimes it got a bit dull and I didn't find Jacob's life as interesting. Sometimes the story felt like it just went on and on. A bit too wordy for my taste. I chose to read this ARC and all opinions in this review are my own and completely unbiased!

UNDER A POLE STAR by Stef Penney is a hypnotic narrative with a dark edge, that will pull you into another time and place, where survival isn't always guaranteed. The story is based on Flora's life as we watch her grow up on her father's whaling boat in the nineteenth Century, which was considered highly improper for a girl at that time, to later in life when she becomes a meteorologist and marries a man who will help her realise her wish to co-lead a scientific expedition. We truly get to know Flora, flaws and all, as she embarks into the Arctic once again, and falls deeply in love with Jakob DeBeyn. Through the golden age of discovery we are enveloped in this harsh world of many sides, and as we travel alongside Flora's life-journey, many mysteries and enigmas become unearthed. UNDER A POLE STAR by Stef Penney is a piece of historical genius and I thoroughly enjoyed it, but be warned, at 608 pages, this is not a short, light, read.*I voluntarily reviewed this book from Netgalley.com

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