



The Amber Room

Steve Berry

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The Amber Room is one of the greatest treasures ever made by man: an entire room forged of exquisite amber, from its four massive walls to its finely crafted furniture. But it is also the subject of one of history's most intriguing mysteries. Originally commissioned in 1701 by Frederick I of Prussia, the Room was later perfected in Tsarskoe Selo, the Russian imperial city. In 1941, German troops invaded the Soviet Union, looting everything in their wake and seizing the Amber Room. When the Allies began the bombing of Germany in August 1944, the Room was hidden. And despite the best efforts of treasure hunters and art collectors from around the world, it has never been seen again."

Now, two powerful men have set their best operatives loose in pursuit, and the hunt has begun once more. . .

Life is good for Atlanta judge Rachel Cutler. She loves her job, loves her kids, and remains civil to her ex-husband, Paul. But everything changes when her father, a man who survived the horrors of World War II, dies under strange circumstances--and leaves behind clues to a secret he kept his entire life . . . a secret about something called the Amber Room.

Desperate to know the truth about her father's suspicious dealings, Rachel takes off for Germany, with Paul close behind. Shortly after arriving, they find themselves involved with a cast of shadowy characters who all claim to share their quest. But as they learn more about the history of the treasure they seek, Rachel and Paul realize they're in way over their heads. Locked in a treacherous game with ruthless professional killers and embroiled in a treasure hunt of epic proportions, Rachel and Paul suddenly find themselves on a collision course with the forces of power, evil, and history itself.

A brilliant adventure and a scintillating tale of intrigue, deception, art, and murder, "The Amber Room" is a classic tale of suspense--and the debut of a strong new voice in the world of the international thriller. "From the Hardcover edition.

The Amber Room Details

Date : Published 2004 by Ballantine Books (first published August 26th 2003)

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Author : Steve Berry

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Genre : Thriller, Fiction, Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Adventure, Suspense

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From Reader Review The Amber Room for online ebook

Melissa says

I gave this book an extra star because of the research put in to it, but I really didn't like it. The father is the best-written character, for whom the reader feels most connection to, but he gets killed off right away. The next-best written characters? The bad guys. And not best-written bad guys. Nope, more interest is paid to them and their relationships than the protagonists, even when they're just killing people indiscriminately. They're written with far more sympathy than the actual protagonists, who, really, seem to make one bad relational decision after another (until the very end, when it all wraps up very neatly). I liked The Romanov Prophecy and the Cotton Malone series sounds interesting, but I'm glad I didn't recommend this for my book club.

Piyangie says

A good concept but a weak plot. Couldn't like any of the characters. And too much of swearing really put me off!

Matt Halpern says

Steve Berry's writing style is very reminiscent of Dan Brown. The difference that I have found with this book though is that Berry's approach is not about the symbols like Brown, but about the story as a whole. I really enjoyed this book and am looking forward to reading more of his work.

Ann says

Oh *Amber Room*, how did I hate thee? Let me count the ways...

- Every German says "und" (instead of "and") even as they're speaking English.

- Women say "Damn you" to the man they're about to sleep with.

-"Damn" used in every other sentence: "The trail was easy to follow. Too damn easy."

-How much needless, random sex do you need in a book?

-Every cliche possible is used - my favorite: The greedy American treasure hunter is named McCoy and calls women "little lady". ARE YOU KIDDING ME????

-Crazy long paragraphs of description of the history behind the Amber Room - any competent writer would have been able to put that information in the action without resorting to pages of exposition. Or even in shorter exposition!

-The female protagonist is "feisty", and her Russian, widowed father lovingly says that "she's just like her mother". Oh wow, another cliche! For the record, the character wasn't feisty - she was just bitchy.

-I listened to the audio-version of this, and the reader made every German sound exactly the same, and exactly like the gay German alias on the movie *The Saint*.

Unbelievably bad. I got to the last disc of the 13 disc set and couldn't do anymore, even though I was so close to the end. Maybe it turned brilliant in that last disc?? I just didn't care. I wanted to like it because I thought the premise seemed so interesting, but it was horrible. Every character makes the stupidest decisions you can possibly imagine, and there is scarcely a character to even like, let alone care about. I suppose, to be fair, I should admit that I hate almost all thrillers, but there are intelligent thrillers of this type out there (*The Eight*, *The Book of Q*), so there's just no excuse for using such potentially good material and turning it into something so bad. It's officially in my list of the worst books I've ever read.

To add to my annoyance, I realized after looking at some reviews on Amazon that the reader of the audiobook was also pronouncing the German names incorrectly. Ugh!!!

Nick Brett says

The Amber Room was a treasure looted by the Nazis and lost during the end of WW2. Worth an on-line search to understand the background, it's quite interesting.

And Steve Berry's debut novel is a thriller based around the story. While there are similarities to the many types of book dealing with lost treasures, it was refreshing and interesting to have the WW2 elements and for it not to be the usual search for Jesus' sandal, Hercules lunch box or the lost MacDonald's of Atlantis. Yep, we do have a couple involved (I think that must be in the unofficial rules) and ruthless killers, but this is actually well written and well researched. The "suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished" is a quote from Browning and is used during the book, it's an apt and appropriate quote.

US Judge follows the trail of the Amber Room once her father is killed and she discovers he was involved in the search for the room at the back end of the war. It appears he had a secret that he kept until his death. Judge's estranged husband joins her as they follow the trail through the types of adventures and close calls that we have now come to expect of these books.

Well written and quite good fun if you like these kind of things.

Dan Smith says

This is one of the Best Steve Berry Books written. Not a Cotton Malone book. According to the post notes, there was a lot of research done for this book and there are a lot of truths used.

I think that anyone would enjoy this story..

Lance Charnes says

The Amber Room is a much like the kind of tale I write – an international thriller with an everyman protagonist (in this case, an everyman and everywoman) who gets by with whatever native intelligence and wits he/she brings to the party. It was Steve Berry’s first published novel, one of three he wrote before he drifted into Dan Brown territory with his Cotton Malone series, and as such it still has some mooring in the real world.

The Amber Room is the near-legendary Czarist treasure stolen by the Nazis from the Soviet Union during WWII. The amber-encrusted wall panels disappeared at the end of the war, leaving behind a number of conflicting theories regarding their fate. This much is true. Where Berry comes in: two wealthy art collectors – who steal stolen artworks for their own uses – now compete with each other to find the now-priceless panels. Their henchpeople – one man, one woman, both of course beautiful, sexy, adept sociopaths – canvass the U.S. and Europe for clues to the room’s location.

Enter our protagonists: Paul and Rachel Cutler, he a lawyer, she a judge. Rachel’s elderly father happens to be one of the few people alive who has a handle on the Amber Room’s final stop. When he ends up suddenly dead, Rachel decides to investigate, and Paul decides to follow to keep her out of trouble. That they run afoul of those two beautiful, sexy, adept, sociopathic henchpeople and become deeply enmeshed in the hunt for the Amber Room should come as no shock to you.

The big surprise here isn’t in the plot – if you’ve read enough of these, you’ll have a pretty good idea where things are going before they get there – but in what good company the Cutlers are. They act and think like normal (albeit highly educated) people. Divorced but not hateful, they have lingering feelings for each other, and both are devoted to their children. At one time or another, one or the other is quite ready to stop and go home; I can’t recall Dan Brown’s Robert Langdon ever deciding to say “to hell with it” when the Forces of Darkness gather around him. The Cutlers make mistakes and trust the wrong people and learn from their missteps. And, like real people, they sometimes do things they haven’t thought through and for which they don’t have clear motives. In a genre in which both protagonists and villains always seem to know everything and know how to do everything, it’s enormously refreshing to tag along with characters who don’t make you feel hopelessly ignorant and incompetent.

The henchpeople – Knoll (he) and Danzer (she) – are largely interchangeable, amoral in the usual ways, with roughly similar tastes and proclivities (why is it that in thrillers, the more evil you are, the more and better the sex that you have?). But at least they have reasons for being the way they are, and they’re merely sociopaths and not psychotics. Their masters are also largely interchangeable, wealthy beyond bounds and living in medieval Central European castles bedecked with their ill-gotten loot. The sameness of the antagonists is one of the key failings of this book. The historical downloads are usually motivated and usually end before they get irritating, although characters sometimes repeat themselves. The settings are well-drawn and easily visualized and will look swell in the inevitable Showtime or Starz original movie.

The Amber Room is a fine way to spend a few hours if you’re into search-for-treasure thrillers. It’s like Dan Brown lite, without the attached reading list and with better writing. The protagonists prove that not every thriller hero has to be ex-Special Forces or World’s Foremost Expert in anything, and it’s a nice change to not have the fate of the known universe hanging in the balance. A good time was had by all.

Rob says

I chose the book because I have been following Steve Berry's Cotton Malone series, and I wanted to see what's going to be my reaction to his stand-alone novels. My two stars should not be misinterpreted. It was a well-researched book. My only complaint are the illogical actions of Judge Cutler and her ex-husband, Paul as they go following the clues behind the death of Rachel's father. During the war, Rachel's father was a POW in a Nazi camp, and he witnessed the interrogation and murder of several soldiers who knew about the theft and possible location of the the Amber Room.

Being a judge, I would think that Rachel would have more respect for the law and police procedure. Instead, she and Paul (although they are already divorced, they are still in love with each other), go off to Europe and tries to follow the trail of clues. Assassination attempts by two treasure hunters who are also searching for the treasure is not going to stop them. Even after Rachel was sure that the guy who saved her from a car accident (it was staged) tried to kill her, she kept it a secret from the investigators and her ex-husband, because she found the guy attractive. Hey, if somebody ever tried to kill me, I don't care how hot she looks. I'm going to be telling everybody who wants to listen about the attempt.

E Wilson says

This book had such a promising subject for a mystery and the author obviously researched amber and the amber room's history well. Then he threw it away in a mediocre novel with a truly unlikable heroine and her semi-wimpy ex-husband. I think it would have been much much better if he had written about Rachel's Father and his partner's attempt to find the treasure.

There are so many implausible events starting with Rachel's decision to flit off to Europe and leave her two young children as well as a contentious race for her judges seat. Maybe with her judgement she should lose the race anyway. What Mother flies to Europe and doesn't call to check on her children and let whoever is taking care of them know how she can be reached? Then on the spur of the moment her husband, Paul, takes off after her. Then, why was Christian ready to kill her in the cave, but after she witnesses a killing he lets her and her husband go with just a warning. They continue running around Europe after almost being killed without a thought of the kids back home. There were just so many incidents when I was thinking "this just would not happen".

This all may seem petty, but to me these unrealistic details spoil the story for me especially when the author did such a fine job of researching the amber room and amber itself. I listened to this on an audio book and I really wanted to listen to the interview with the author, but it was already a week overdue and I had to turn in in.

Ithlilian says

Unfortunately, an interesting idea does not make a good novel. People who try to look for panels of amber that were once located in a Russian palace turn up dead. The main character's father may know more than he is telling his daughter, but he is murdered. So begins the hunt for the amber room with 2 crazy killers, some old men, and a divorced couple. That may sound a little cynical, but after sitting through this novel I'm a little annoyed.

The history behind the amber room is interesting. The killers and what they do for a living is interesting. Uncovering little bits of information that leads the characters to a mountain is also interesting. Continuing the story once the location of the amber room was obvious is just painful. If you are paying attention you will know what happened to the amber room about half way into the novel. Don't pat yourself on the back because you have to sit through the other half of the novel yelling at the main characters to put their thinking caps on. Maybe if this was told from the perspective of the divorced couple only it would have been tolerable, it actually may have been good. Adding in the perspective of the two treasure hunters reveals too much. As a reader, I can't learn behind the scenes information from one character and then pretend I'm ignorant while I read another character's point of view. This story is way too simple for how long it was, and by 3/4 of the way I was ready for it to be over.

Amy says

with such a fascinating (and real) historical subject, it's hard to put into words just how horrifyingly awful berry's execution of this story is. i noted that a lot of people like this. gave it 4 stars even. how is this possible?

i am tempted though, to read more of berry's work. it's almost inspiring. you too, people of the world, can write. and apparently become a best seller.

Billy says

Wow! Berry's 1st outing is about as good as his others...,

Being that this was Steve Berry's first book and I read his books out of order, I was pleasantly surprised to find that this was as well-written as his more recent outings. I read Berry's other three books before reading this and the only fault that I can find in this book is that he has outdone himself with each subsequent release. Basically, because he has gotten so good at the thriller genre, he makes his older books seem a little less impressive; thankfully, this book was still excellent. It kept me on edge from start to finish. This book was just another example of his unique writing style that keeps the reader entertained and enthralled from cover to cover.

I cannot wait for Berry's next book. I am now a life-long Steve Berry fan.

An excellent read with unexpected plot twists, vivid descriptions and excellent character development. Just shy of a 5/5 I would rate this as a 4.5/5...

Manchester Military History Society (MMHS) says

Not brilliant, but a reasonably entertaining read

The premise is strong - "Acquisitors," who scour the world for rare and stolen art treasures for their wealthy employers, however the delivery is predictable and the characters are not too strong either.

The historical background of the Amber Room is quite interesting, but the story could have been so much better.

A decent holiday read, but not very memorable.

Sophie Narey (Bookreview- aholic) says

Published: 2007

Author: Steve Berry

Recommended for: fans of mystery and history fiction

This book caught my attention straight away from the cover to the first paragraph. it was a joy to read it. It was fast paced and kept you guessing as to what was going to happen next. I wouldn't say any of it was predictable it had a lot of twists and turns in it. I would recommend it for anyone who likes adventure stories and who has an interest in history. It is very well written, and keeps the reader right until the very end. It doesn't skimp on the description, it paints a very good picture in the imagination and makes you feel like you're seeing everything happen.

Kristy Lin Billuni says

I didn't much like DaVinci Code, but since I met Steve Berry and liked what he had to say about writing, I thought I'd give this one a try. I may now be in love with the genre. It combines what I love about historical fiction--history lessons--with another area of learning--learning about art--and Berry's novel is a much better, more satisfying read than Dan Brown's.

Jean says

This is the first Steve Berry book that I read. He writes historical thrillers that lead the reader all over the world. He bases his main idea for the book in fact, and then takes a few liberties with the facts to make it a more readable story. Then at the end, he tells the reader what is true and what was made up. In this story, there are two sets of art thieves out to find some of the most expensive and beautiful art treasures in the world. Many were looted in WWII. The biggest prize is The Amber Room, a room made from Baltic amber

and taken to St. Petersburg, Russia. After the war, nobody is sure what happened, although it was suspected that the amber was sold off bit by bit. In the book, the two main art thieves are playing cat and mouse with each other and trying to find this fabulous prize. Does someone have it hiding somewhere? You'll have to read the book to find out! The Amber Room has been since recreated, and you can see pictures of it on Flicker.com. It is indescribably beautiful. I think you will enjoy Steve Berry's writing, since he has good, fast moving plotlines, and you can always learn a bit of history too!

Andy says

A mediocre novel at best. If you're looking for a reasonably entertaining book for a long airplane ride then this might do the trick. Otherwise, I think there are much better books of this genre out there. While the concept of recovering lost art treasures that were looted by the Nazis in WWII is a fascinating one, and the historical info about the actual Amber Room is also quite interesting, the author just can't put it all together into a compelling story. One of the biggest problems is that the protagonists just aren't likable, and it doesn't help that by far the most interesting character in the book (Karol Borya) is killed off very early. In fact, it's Borya's murder that is the catalyst for the entire storyline of the novel so it's not a "spoiler" mentioning this here. Overall I give the author credit for the concept and for making a valiant attempt at an exciting novel. I definitely liked the European locales, but the villains, known as "Acquisitors," who scour the world for rare and stolen art treasures for their wealthy employers, who act more like trained assassins was a bit much. I found myself skimming a lot of pages in the final third to get through this one. Not horrible, but just not that good either.

Bonnie says

I have one word that sums up my feelings for this book, and unfortunately, 90% of *The Amber Room's* dialogue content: "Hardly."

Defined:

1. Only just; almost not; barely: We had hardly reached the lake when it started raining. hardly any; hardly ever.
2. not at all; scarcely: That report is hardly surprising.
3. with little likelihood: He will hardly come now.

A few samples:

"They didn't have forklifts?"

"Hardly."

She motioned to the art. "A connoisseur?"

"Hardly."

"I'm waiting," the female voice said.

"And patience is not one of your virtues?"

"Hardly."

"Maybe it's genetic?"

"Hardly."

Knoll obviously hadn't sensed her presence, thinking he'd rid himself of her in the Atlanta airport. Not hardly, Christian.

"That shaft is hardly big enough for three people to walk through."

She gestured to the blossoms. "Garden?"

"Hardly."

"Sounds like you're developing a heart, Christian."

... YOU GUESSED IT. "Hardly."

GET ANOTHER ADVERB.

This story had potential; it really did. When I grabbed it off the shelf in Penn Station, it was the Nazis, stolen art, war, Acquisitors, rich old men willing to kill people, and promising villains that intrigued me. But somewhere along the way I started realizing that while Amber is pretty and all, it was way cooler in Jurassic Park when it fossilized mosquitoes with dinosaur DNA. I was also tricked into reading it because the main characters were lawyers "doing some very unlawyerly things" as Mr. Berry himself explained in the cute little interview in the back. He likes to "break stereotypes," he says. Well, sometimes that sad old stereotype that mothers take care of their kids, and don't run off to certain death in Stod at a moment's notice over a hunk of rock, may just ring truer than breaking it.

I like fun, globe-trotting adventure stories. I appreciate research. I did not like *The Da Vinci Code*. Dan Brown writes *The Amber Room* is "[m]y kind of thriller."

Well folks, is this my kind of thriller?

... _____.

Suzanne says

Let me just say that this has to be the best Steve Berry novel that I have read to date!

Art historians everywhere would love to know what happened to the Amber Room after it disappeared during WWII. Berry paints a wonderful tale of what might have happened to it in a story that chronicles the adventures of Atlanta judge Rachel Cutler when she travels to Europe to get to the bottom of this mystery after her father Karol Borya, was killed because of what he knew about the Amber Room's whereabouts. Rachel gets mixed up in the race between two European industrialists/art collectors to find the Amber Room, and almost loses her life in the process. The big question is who will find it first, and does it actually exist?

For art history buffs, this novel offers an entertaining and intriguing look at one of the art world's most famous mysteries. I was sitting on the edge of my seat through at least half the novel! If you like this novel, I also recommend Jeffrey Archer.

Jonda Beattie says

Really got caught up in this book. I already had an interest in the Amber Room and a long time ago had been at the palace where the room had been. There were pictures there of what it had looked like. I liked the way the book took historical facts and then turned them into a suspenseful read. It didn't hurt that I am from Atlanta (where the story starts) and have been to most of the areas that were in the book. It was also fascinating that last Tuesday there was an article in the newspaper about a dig beginning in Poland looking for the Nazi gold.
