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The course of empire

Bernard Devoto

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Bernard Devoto : The course of empire before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The course of empire:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A marvelous story, told by a master story-tellerBy Frederick BoyntonI had read this book not long after it was first published, in the 1960s, and then lent it to my brother. he must have passed it on to someone else, because I never got it back.The story of the exploration of North America, the slow realization of the true extent of the continent, and the contributions of many people from many countries, with motivations ranging from the saving of souls to the making of fortunes, is one of epic proportions. De Voto brings to it a wealth of scholarship and a fluid writing style that draws the reader in, enmeshing him deeper as the story unfolds. He gives not only the names, dates and acts that provide the broad outline, but a glimpse into the character of many of the principal players and the motives that drove them.7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Engrossing narrative; needs companion maps, or a new editionBy James DoughtyLike many readers I was led to DeVoto by Stephen Ambrose, and I was not disappointed. This book combines meticulous historical scholarship with a real skill in storytelling, and it gave me a new understanding of how Europeans perceived and penetrated the continent. I began with the intention of reading the three volumes in historical order, and I'm eagerly continuing to "Across the Wide Missouri," which is all the review you should need.My only complaint -- and the only reason to deny it a fifth star -- has nothing to do with DeVoto's work itself. The edition I read (purchased here, and as far as I can tell identical to the one for sale above) had black-on-white, pen-and-ink maps that appear to date from the original printing. They can be hard to read, which is a significant drawback in a narrative that relies so heavily on geographical references.I would be very happy to see either a companion volume filled with modern maps (as has been done so admirably with the

Aubrey-Maturin novels), or a new edition of the book that incorporates them directly. I have no illusions about the sales volume of this title, or its power to induce such a new printing. Nor do I ignore the charm in presenting these maps with the same "period" style that DeVoto's first readers saw. But I found this book so instructive that I hope for others to derive the same benefit -- and that means using modern techniques to make it the most effective educational instrument it can be. It's important to disclaim that I'm only talking about the illustrative maps. The ones used as chapter headers, that show the continent gradually "filling in" over the centuries, are priceless and should be left as-is in any future printing.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Empire, indeed
By S. J. Snyder
Although the various European powers moved sometimes disorganizedly, in fits and starts, DeVoto shows how the course of empire's path is laid out. As the first volume of a trilogy, DeVoto foreshadows America's later claims of Manifest Destiny and "democratic-imperial" dreams in "Course of Empire," based on the expansionist energy he details in "Across the Broad Missouri." All three volumes are worth a read.