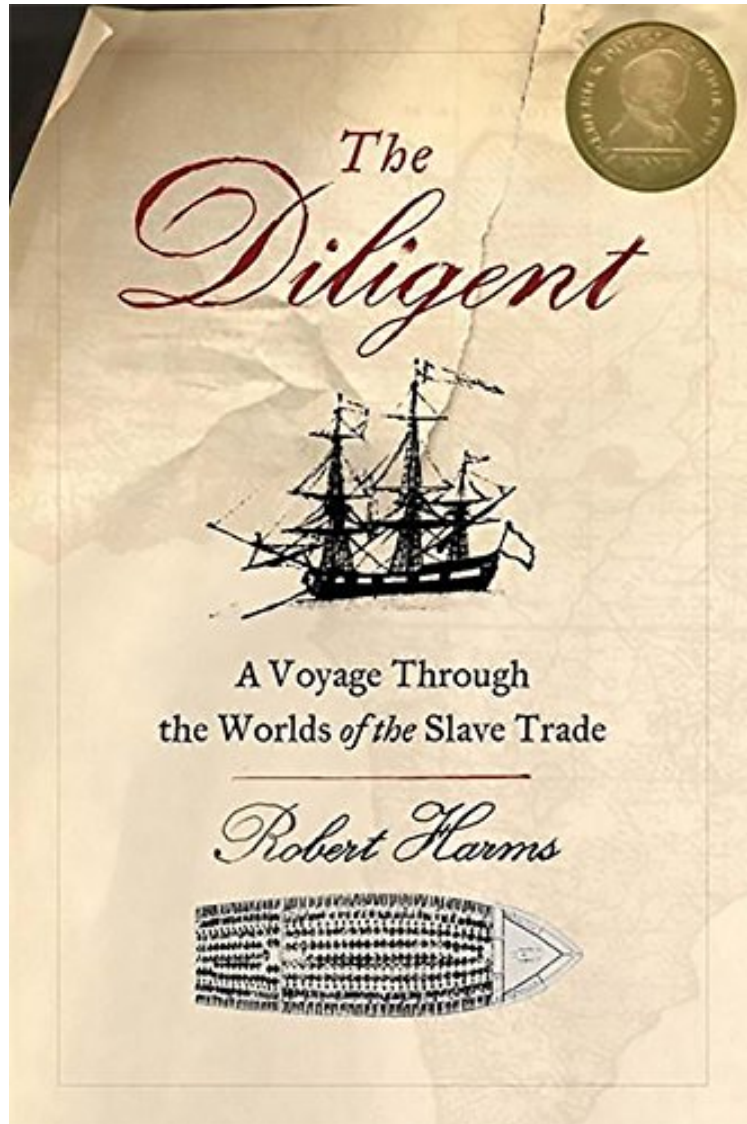


The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds Of The Slave Trade

Robert Harms

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Robert Harms : The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds Of The Slave Trade before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Diligent: A Voyage Through the Worlds Of The Slave Trade:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. GreatBy Skye E.This book was wonderful. So many aspects of the slave trade are left out when you learn about it in school. This filled in the gaps. This put everything in perspective and it made sense. Especially the profiteering, everyone wanted a cut from the Africans that enslaved to the African kings that sold to the Europeans who bought and sold to the crews on the ships. Well worth the read to be further educated.1

of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful retelling of the slave trade from the deck upBy R. BrownMy daughter ordered this for her college class. I picked it up after she brought it home in the summer. It is a wonderful retelling of the slave trade from the deck up, including discussion of French slave-versus-free laws and the business risks. Shows how well we can compartmentalize our morals when needed for economic gain.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Hard readBy CHARLES E WOODYARDHard read for a descendent of African captives. This book provides insight into the inhumane nature of the society/people/world that allowed this to happen.

The *Diligent* began her journey in Brittany in 1731, and Harms follows her along the African coast where her goods were traded for slaves, to Martinique where her captives were sold to work on sugar plantations. Harms brings to life a world in which slavery was a commerce carried out without qualms. He shows the gruesome details of daily life aboard a slave ship, as well as French merchants wrangling with their government for the right to traffic in slaves, African kings waging epic wars for control of European slave trading posts, and representatives of European governments negotiating the complicated politics of the Guinea coast to ensure a steady supply of labor for their countries' colonies. The *Diligent* is filled with rich stories that explain how the slave trade worked on all levels, from geopolitics to the rigging of ships.

.com From the 16th to the 19th century, more than 40,000 slave ships plied the waters of the Atlantic, bringing human cargo to the Americas. Drawing on a memoir by a lieutenant, historian Robert Harms tells the story of one such ship, a story that, although shocking to modern readers, "was distressingly ordinary in its own time and place." Designed to transport grain over short distances, the *Diligent* was perhaps not the most seaworthy of vessels. Still, by ship's officer Robert Durand's account, it transported nearly 300 victims at a time from the African coast to the French colony of Martinique, often at a terrible cost in life because of disease, malnutrition, and harsh shipboard discipline. Harms carefully reconstructs episodes in the ship's life, including the curious trial that ended its 1731 ocean crossing. More than that, he untangles the complex business of the slave trade, which was far from monolithic, depending instead on ever-shifting alliances and private agendas in the race for profit. As Harms notes, though more than 17,000 ships' logs from the slaving voyages of the 18th century have been recovered, only a few shed light on daily life aboard those vessels. His troubling narrative does just that, and it gives new evidence of the ordinariness of evil. --Gregory McNameeFrom Publishers WeeklyYale historian Harms (*Games Against Nature*) explores the global scope of an odious industry by tracking the slave ship *Diligent*, which sailed from Vannes, France, in 1731. Using First Lieut. Robert Durand's journal, Harms fleshes out the multinational web of trade relationships and transactions, both legal and illegal: European countries competing for profits; government-sanctioned monopolies giving way to private enterprise; African rulers vying for their share of the profits. The *Diligent*'s cargo of 256 Africans was destined for Martinique's plantation industries, and the profit-and-loss ledger was the lieutenant's primary concern, writes Harris: "Durand mentioned the African captives only twice during the entire sixty-six days of the middle passage, and then only to record deaths." Paradoxically, given the nature of his business, Durand complained when having to leave a hostage in Elmina after a Bordeaux slaver abducted several African merchants, that such deceit made it difficult for "honest men" like himself to conduct trade. Most of the book offers observations based on Durand's journal rather than a patchwork of quotes from it. His reflections blend with other surviving accounts to reconstruct the events of the voyage, and copious footnotes document the extensive research Harms has done to tell the story. By fixing the French ship within the context of its 18th-century world, Harms explores part of a multilayered story "how the slave trade operated in certain places at a certain time... during a crucial period of economic and political transformation." In doing so, he extends our understanding of the Atlantic slave trade by shedding light on new aspects of its tragic history. 65 illustrations, many by Durand. (Jan. 15)Forecast: The middle passage has been a subject of interest in recent years; this should refocus attention on it and achieve good sales. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalThe author of two books on Africa, Harms follows the course of the French-owned slave ship *The Diligent* on its voyage in 1731 from Vannes, France, down the West African coast, and finally to Martinique, where almost 250 surviving captive Africans were sold. Harms used the private journal of the slaver's first lieutenant, Robert Durand, and combed the records worldwide to depict slave trading as it touched three continents. He takes the reader deep inside the politics, society, and economy of France, several West African peoples, Martinique, and more, showing how local interest determined the ways different people engaged in or became caught in the slave trade. It is a chilling history of the cold-bloodedness of people calculating their own profit trading in human cargo. Harms brings the many characters in the tale to light, finding no heroes among the merchants, outfitters, sailors, African chieftains, French sugar planters, and others involved in the trade. In detailing one voyage, he forces us to consider the enormity of the more than 40,000 voyages undertaken by slave ships voyages that forever changed the world. History as it should be written. Randall M. Miller, Saint Joseph's Univ., Philadelphia Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.