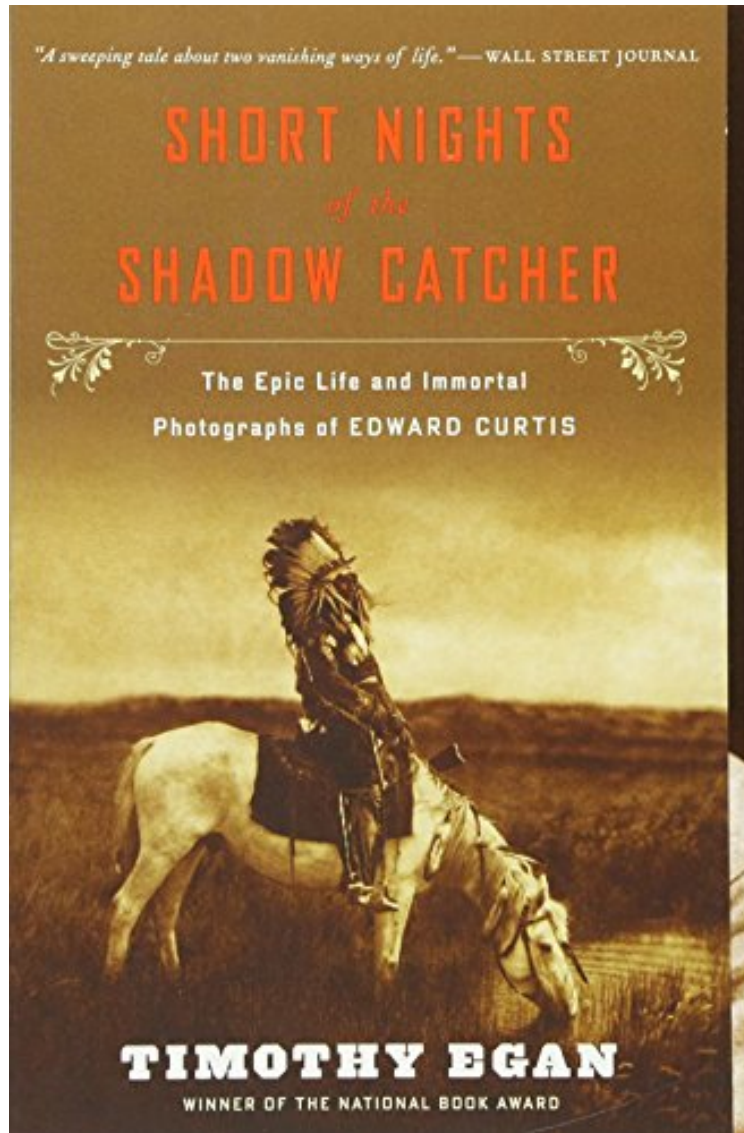


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Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis

Timothy Egan

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Timothy Egan : Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis:

279 of 288 people found the following review helpful. Captivating biography of an American original By Pam Gearhart I had heard of Edward Curtis but knew only that he was a photographer, and that he took many pictures of

American Indians in the early 1900's. That should make me ashamed, since I lived in Seattle, Curtis's home town, for many years. Timothy Egan's book gives a detailed, balanced look at Curtis's life and his life's work: Publication of a 20-volume look at American Indian communities in the early 20th century. Just thinking about such a venture makes me tired, but Curtis was tireless (hence the "short nights" in the title -- he rarely slept). The series would include not just photographs but a lexicon preserving languages, and in the making of this Curtis would make film and audio records of songs and ceremonies that would have been lost forever. His ambition seems quite unrealistic, almost delusional, to someone from present day. Traveling thousands of miles with bulky photographic equipment, in unmapped territory without the benefit of conveniences we take for granted -- GPS, airplanes, cell phones, overnight delivery, fax machines. He and his team made a photographic and textual record that has never been equalled, and probably never will be. And during this time he made a movie and developed a stage presentation that wowed even the most sophisticated audiences. Even if you're not particularly interested in photography or American Indians, Egan's book is fascinating as a look at the early 1900's, movers and shakers, people like J. P. Morgan and Theodore Roosevelt. Egan's writing is brisk, his descriptions evocative. It never bogged down, even when things weren't going well for Curtis. The book is full of flavor and color, success and hardship, but more important, Egan, through showing us Curtis's life and his work, has brought home the devastation and loss of American's First People. Destruction and loss of their cultures has hurt every American, not just Indians. That's what I took from this book. The epilogue was heartening, and it's also heartening that Curtis knew the value of his work, even if it wasn't fully realized until after he was dead. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. EPIC. PERIOD!!! By William Dahl Its terribly difficult after finishing the 6th in a series of Timothy Egan's books to declare a favorite. Yet, Egan's *Short Nights of the Shadow Catcher: The Epic Life and Immortal Photographs of Edward Curtis* is -well it broke my heart. The life and times of fanatical (self described) artists like Edward Curtis are rarely full of fulfilling, float you on air happiness. Yet, his life had many interactions and endorsements by the days rich and famous (Teddy Roosevelt and J. Pierpont Morgan (to name two - not that this makes any difference in terms of Curtis's immortal contributions). A man who attempted to capture the remnants of an ever encroaching genocide of the remaining inhabitants of the western tribes of Native Americans is a noble story. And noble is the way Egan tells it. Yet, it leaves you (the trajectory of Curtis's life) unfulfilled as the life stories of so many artists do. How Egan finds these tales and has the uncanny ability to weave story in and around the real-life characters he portrays is well a mysterious literary talent that I'm unsure if even he could describe it adequately. The book, story, prose, research and Egan's writing just make you salivate for the next page. This is an unequivocal FIVE STAR work (which I don't attribute to most literature I read). It is a treasure just as the life of Edward Curtis and his enduring work was/is. I am really glad I read this book. You will be too. I am now on to my 7th Egan book in the past three weeks (which I NEVER do); *The Immortal Irishman: The Irish Revolutionary Who Became An American Hero* (2016). You simply CANNOT understand the American West without Reading Timothy Egan PERIOD. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Riveting By Linda Yoder I had put this aside for some time, but once I started it, I couldn't put it down. Curtis was only a dim footnote in my study of photography, but what an amazing man, and what technical perfection he achieved, all while capturing lost languages and histories of the tribes whose few remaining members finally opened up to him. He began his work with nothing but a "big idea," and ended up, after his death, being recognized for his brilliant - and costly to him - life's work. This book is a superb account of Curtis's life and work. Highly recommended.

A vivid exploration of one man's lifelong obsession with an idea . . . Egan's spirited biography might just bring [Curtis] the recognition that eluded him in life. Washington Post Edward Curtis was charismatic, handsome, a passionate mountaineer, and a famous portrait photographer, the Annie Leibovitz of his time. He moved in rarefied circles, a friend to presidents, vaudeville stars, leading thinkers. But when he was thirty-two years old, in 1900, he gave it all up to pursue his Great Idea: to capture on film the continent's original inhabitants before the old ways disappeared. Curtis spent the next three decades documenting the stories and rituals of more than eighty North American tribes. It took tremendous perseverance ten years alone to persuade the Hopi to allow him to observe their Snake Dance ceremony. And the undertaking changed him profoundly, from detached observer to outraged advocate. Curtis would amass more than 40,000 photographs and 10,000 audio recordings, and he is credited with making the first narrative documentary film. In the process, the charming rogue with the grade school education created the most definitive archive of the American Indian. A darn good yarn. Egan is a muscular storyteller and his book is a rollicking page-turner with a colorfully drawn hero. *San Francisco Chronicle* "A riveting biography of an American original." *Boston Globe*

.com In the summer of 1900, Edward Curtis gave up a successful photography career to pursue a quixotic plan: to photograph all the Indian communities in North America. He quickly learned that his subjects were dying off fast, so he'd need to hurry if he was to capture the essence of their lives before that essence disappeared. A mountaineer, explorer, intrepid photojournalist, and amateur anthropologist, Curtis was Ansel Adams crossed with Annie Leibovitz, a willful and passionate chronicler of a people he came to love. I want to make them live forever, Curtis said in the early days of his decades-long mission. As Egan's thrilling story attests, he succeeded, even though he died penniless

and alone. --Neal Thompson Photos from the Author (.com Exclusive) Bear's Belly (Edward S. Curtis, courtesy of Cardozo Fine Art) [Click here for a larger image](#)