

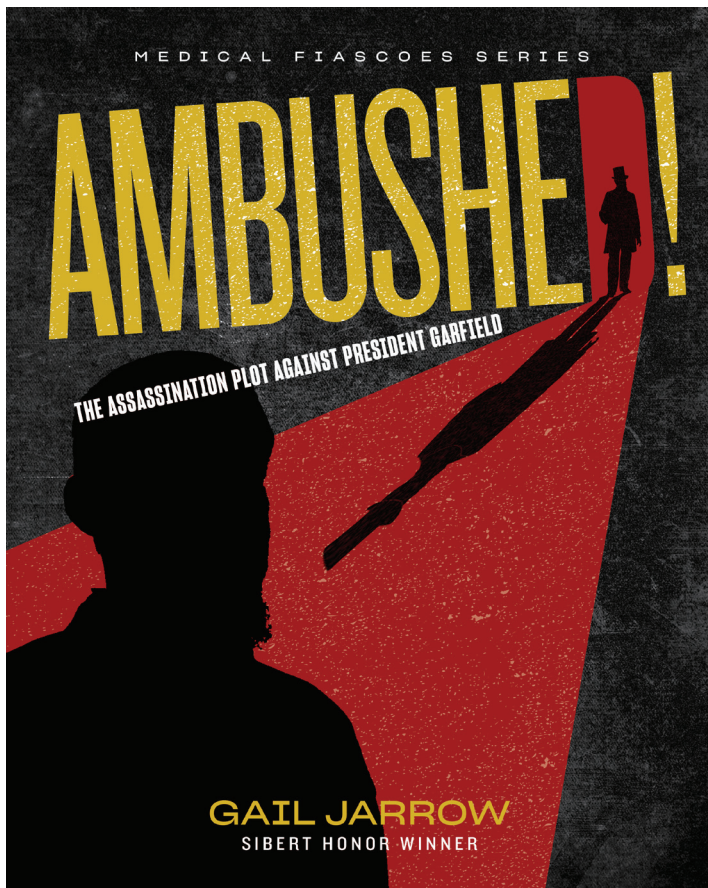
# AMBUSHED!

## THE ASSASSINATION PLOT AGAINST PRESIDENT GARFIELD

WRITTEN BY  
**GAIL JARROW**

★ “Eminently readable” —*Kirkus Reviews*

**An Educator /  
Discussion Guide**



### ABOUT THE BOOK

This thrilling title for young readers blends science, history, and medical mysteries to tell the story of the assassination and ultimately horrible death of President James Garfield.

James Abram Garfield, the 20th president of the United States, was shot by Charles Guiteau in July 1881, less than four months after Garfield was inaugurated. But Garfield didn't die until 80 days later. In this page-turner, award-winning author Gail Jarrow delves into the fascinating story of the relationship between Garfield and Guiteau, and relates the gruesome details of Garfield's slow and agonizing death. She reveals medical mistakes made in the aftermath of Guiteau's assassination attempt, including the faulty diagnoses and outdated treatments that led to the

president's demise. This latest title in Jarrow's Medical Fiascoes series is nonfiction for kids at its best: exciting and relevant and packed with plenty of villains and horrifying facts.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What was the difficult challenge Garfield and his assassin, Charles Guiteau, shared? How did this challenge affect each of them?

James Garfield was the last of the “log cabin” presidents. What symbolism was attached to being born in a log cabin that was important to a presidential candidate? What experiences and attributes did Garfield have in common with the best-known of the log cabin presidents, Abraham Lincoln?

What experiences in Garfield’s childhood and youth shaped his values and ambitions?

While serving in the Union army during the Civil War, what did Garfield witness that made a great impression upon him?

Why did Garfield run for Congress in 1862? While serving in the House of Representatives, what were his positions on the presidencies of Andrew Johnson, Ulysses Grant, and Rutherford B. Hayes?

During Garfield’s tenure in the House of Representatives, the Republican party split into two factions. What were the causes of this split, and what position did Garfield take?

What events led to Garfield’s nomination as presidential candidate? In what ways did Garfield change traditional presidential campaigns? Why did his supporters emphasize his humble origins?

What words would you use to describe Charles Guiteau’s personality? What are the differences between how he thought of himself and how others perceived him?

What are some examples of things Guiteau did in his life that indicate he was psychologically troubled and was disposed toward violent criminal acts?

Why was Guiteau convinced that his efforts put Garfield and Vice President Chester Arthur in power?

Despite serving seventeen years in Congress and having no illusions about the darker side of politics, what was Garfield nonetheless shocked by after he was inaugurated?

What were causes of the rift between Garfield and Senator Roscoe Conkling?

What was Guiteau's response to Secretary of State Blaine's unequivocal rejection of him for a diplomatic appointment?

What did Conkling's resignation from office lead Guiteau to conclude about President Garfield?

Despite the assassination of Abraham Lincoln sixteen years earlier, why did so many still believe democratically elected presidents were not at risk?

What was Guiteau convinced would happen after he killed President Garfield? What measures did he take to guarantee his safety?

How did Dr. Bliss come to treat President Garfield and put himself in charge of his care? What objections did other doctors have to Dr. Bliss?

What caused President Garfield's body to be ravaged by bacterial infection? Why didn't the doctors who treated Garfield accept the "germ theory" methods proposed by Joseph Lister?

What medical procedures and technologies were lacking in 1881 that likely would have saved President Garfield's life today?

In Guiteau's trial, what evidence did the defense present that the assassin was insane?

In 1881, the field of psychology was in its infancy. There was little understanding of the human mind and behavior. If what is understood about the mind now was known during Guiteau's trial, would he be considered "sane" enough to be held responsible for his actions?

What did the autopsy of President Garfield's body reveal about his wounds, and what was controversial about the findings?

What bill did Congress pass and President Arthur sign as a result of President Garfield's assassination?

What impact did Garfield's death have on the medical establishment's approach to germ theory and preventing infection?

## **CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS**

Though he did have more formal education than many people of his time, Garfield possessed great intellectual curiosity and a lifelong love of learning. He was an *autodidact*, a person

devoted to self-education. Other well-known autodidacts include President Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Benjamin Franklin, Mary Anning, Booker T. Washington, Sequoyah, Nikola Tesla, Jane Jacobs, and Malcolm X. See what you can learn about how one or more of these individuals educated themselves and what they accomplished.

Newspaper editorials of the time argued President Garfield's assassination was the tragic result of bitter political partisanship. Do you agree that was a factor? Can you identify some recent troubling events caused by extreme political partisanship?

Dr. Susan Edson, who served as a personal physician to the Garfield family, was one of the first women to attend an American medical school where she studied homeopathic medicine. See what more you can learn about Edson's life and career, and about homeopathic medicine.

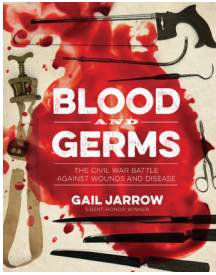
Inventor Alexander Graham Bell was asked by Doctor Bliss to use an early type of metal detector he developed to locate the bullet in President Garfield's body. Bell is best known for his work in the invention of the telephone, but he worked on numerous other inventions throughout his life. See what you can find out about these other inventions.

Robert Todd Lincoln, eldest son of President Abraham Lincoln, has the unfortunate distinction of being either present or nearby when three presidential assassinations occurred. See what you can learn about Lincoln's life and career in public service and business.

Great effort was made to keep President Garfield comfortable by cooling his bedroom in the White House, all primitive attempts at what we now call air-conditioning. How was this technology developed and when did it become widely available?

*Ambushed!* includes many primary documents such as photographs, newspaper articles, and quotations. Why do you think the author put these in the book? How do these documents help you better understand the story of President Garfield's assassination?

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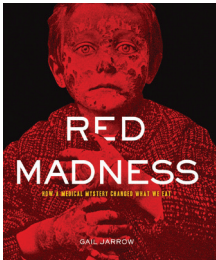
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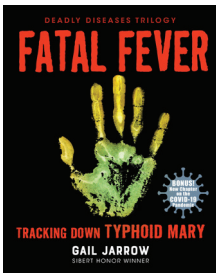
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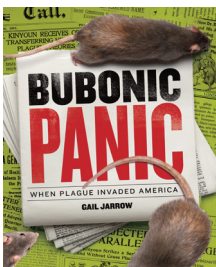
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