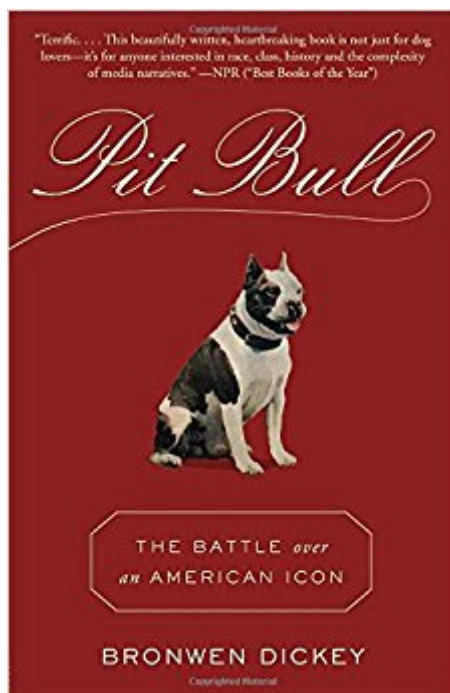


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# Pit Bull: The Battle Over An American Icon



## Synopsis

The controversial story of one infamous breed of dog--a New York Times Bestseller ("Animals" list). When Bronwen Dickey brought her new dog home, she saw no traces of the infamous viciousness in her affectionate pit bull. Which made her wonder: How had the breed--loved by Teddy Roosevelt and Helen Keller--come to be known as a brutal fighter? Dickey's search for answers takes her from nineteenth-century New York dogfighting pits to early twentieth-century movie sets, from the battlefields of Gettysburg to struggling urban neighborhoods. In this illuminating story of how a popular breed became demonized--and what role humans have played in the transformation--Dickey offers us an insightful view of Americans' relationship with their dogs.

## Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Vintage; Reprint edition (April 4, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0345803116

ISBN-13: 978-0345803115

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.8 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 207 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #91,896 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #23 in Books > Science & Math > Biological Sciences > Zoology > Mammals #92 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Pets & Animal Care > Dogs > Breeds #516 in Books > Humor & Entertainment > Pop Culture > General

## Customer Reviews

An NPR Best Book of 2016 A Boston Globe Best Book of 2016 "This is a very good book | Ms. Dickey has earned her reputation as a first-rate reporter. The Wall Street Journal "Terrific... [Dickey] does more than simply dispel the many myths around pit bulls; she strives to explore what those myths can tell us about ourselves. This beautifully written, heartbreaking book is not just for dog lovers it's for anyone interested in race, class, history and the complexity of media narratives." NPR "Ms. Dickey not only writes about the ebb and flow of public fear and loathing, she takes the reader on a thoroughly comprehensible tour of genetics and behavioral science to explain why breeding never guarantees an individual

dog's personality, and shouldn't be used to condemn it.... Picking out one breed to blame is neither warranted nor effective, and a reader of her book will be hard put to disagree."

•The New York Times  
"Brilliant| A powerful and disturbing book that shows how the rise of the killer-pit bull narrative reflects many broader American anxieties and pathologies surrounding race, class, and poverty| A remarkable study of our capacities for cruelty and compassion toward dogs and other humans, and an eloquent argument for abandoning the fears and prejudices that have made pit bulls in particular the victims of mistreatment."

•Christian Science Monitor  
"Like the pit bull itself, this book is sturdy, complicated and resists easy categorization| As Dickey exhaustively demonstrates, there is no aggression gene and no such thing as a dangerous breed."

•The New York Times Book Review  
"In covering a subject that evokes strong, deep-seated emotions, Dickey herself refrains from making sweeping judgments about the pit-bull temperament. She neither condemns nor exalts these dogs. The story of the pit bull is complex, and at times heartbreaking. It's fraught with cruelty and poverty, but also compassion, generosity, and, occasionally, clear-headed thinking. Somehow, Dickey manages to find hope for the future of this dog and its reputation."

•LA Review of Books

BRONWEN DICKEY is an essayist and journalist who writes regularly for the Oxford American. Her work has also appeared in The New York Times, Slate, The Best American Travel Writing 2009, Newsweek, and Outside, among other publications. In 2009 she received a first-place Lowell Thomas Travel Journalism Award and a MacDowell Colony residency grant. She lives in North Carolina.

Note that a raft of one-star "reviews" showed up within hours of the book's publication. These people were sent over from an anti-pit-bull hate group on Facebook, which is urging its members to "swarm" . They have NOT read Bronwen Dickey's book. The Facebook page is explicit: "Here's the deal: We don't need to read it to understand the book's underlying theme." Well, here's the real deal: you DO have to read it. That's how books work. If you haven't actually read something -- carefully -- then no: you are not in a position to understand anything about it. Much less review it. I received an electronic galley a couple of weeks ago, and read it with joy. I assure you that it's by far the most careful and rigorous treatment of the subject to date; it's also an undeniable work of literature -- a gift to the genre -- and genuinely entertaining. I wonder whether any of the kindhearted people leaving fake reviews will ever get around to glancing at the book itself. Apart from everything else,

they might be disappointed by how evenhanded the work is: Ms. Dickey spends a fair bit of time with voices on both sides of the pit-bull debate. Her own conclusions favor science -- she doesn't side with the extremists (who can be found, unfortunately, in both camps). It's a thorough, level-headed and intelligent treatment of a fraught topic; I expect it will remain the definitive work for some time.-----Note: the hate group has just changed its name -- they used to call themselves "Pit Bulls and Amputees." They're now hiding behind the innocuous title, "Pit Bull Public Safety Education and Advocacy." Their campaign of harassment against Ms. Dickey has been documented by the press, however, and it makes for ugly reading: do a search on "Pit bull author's critics are off the leash," by Josh Shaffer (The News & Observer). Also note: I have nothing whatsoever to do with any sort of "right wing, pro-pit bull group" -- the libel posted below. This is the kind of tactic that Ms. Dickey is encountering: ad hominem lies, conjured from thin air.

Bronwen Dickey's book was one of the best books I've read in a very long time....one of those books that I couldn't put down.. I ended up reading it cover to cover and then immediately started to read it again because there was so much in the writing. Whether or not you have an interest in pit bulls, rescue or animal welfare, the areas of the book which delve into the human aspect are so worth the read. Meticulously researched, beautiful, stunning and poignant.

A great and informative read. It sheds light on not only the prejudice that pit bulls face but other breeds. This book doesn't just pertain to pit bulls but all dogs and as dog owners is important that we don't forget.

Finally a source of the complete history of pit bulls. The times that they were appreciated for the dogs they were . And then their fall from grace as much for cultural issues as breed issues. Their history as war dogs. The environment of today where a lot of the places pits live is in the dangerous part of a neighborhood. The actual comparison of biting and death by pits as compared to other dogs. Only 35 deaths a year are attributable to dogs. And of those only a small number are pit bulls. Having worked in a local pet rescue, I am quite familiar with these dogs and they can be wonderful pets. Often aggression can be because male dogs are not neutered or raised in a home where they are not socialized. Enjoy the read and use the information when you hear someone undermining all pits.

I am a dog lover and willing to give other dog lovers a lot of latitude. I am aware of the effort to "rebrand" this particular group of dogs because of the bad press they have gotten in the past. Despite my "progressive thinking" and my liberal attitude, i am ashamed to admit that I have said and thought many of the ignorant ideas mentioned in this book. Well, not anymore. I am sure I will have beliefs based on ignorance but it won't be about pit bulls. I only wish that some of the people cited in the book would admit they are wrong and get on with their lives, but there are a couple examples that fit the adage about teaching a pig to sing. Either they don't read the scientific studies or they are just too proud to admit that they don't know as much as they think they do. Bronwen Dickey is very gentle with some of her case studies who I would consider overweening know-it-alls. If you love dogs and would like the facts served up with heartwarming and colorful anecdotes, you need to read "Pit Bull"

I purchased this book some months ago from and have finally found time to read it. I tend not to enjoy "research" type texts very much but this was a surprising exception. I've never owned a Pit Bull but was drawn to the recent controversy over BSL recently and thought this was a good supplement to my education on the issue. The "real-life" stories are a very functional counterpart to the research and data components and keep you moving through the pages. There are moments of pure sadness in the book as well as times of elation. The book certainly points out the shortcomings of human beings and the forgiveness and patience of the species we refer to as "Dog". Highly recommended.

This book is a **MUST HAVE** for anyone wanting to understand more than just the history of pit bulls, and how we ended up demonizing them. It is extremely well documented and written. It explains dog genetics and how breeds work, it detailed the history of pit bulls and where the dogs came from. More importantly, it is a detailed and extremely intelligent exploration of the historical mechanisms by which pit bulls became the symbols of tensions between communities, races and socioeconomic classes. Even if you are not interested in pit bulls per se, I highly recommend this book. It's a fascinating look on our society, the power of the media and the animal welfare community. **MUST HAVE.**

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