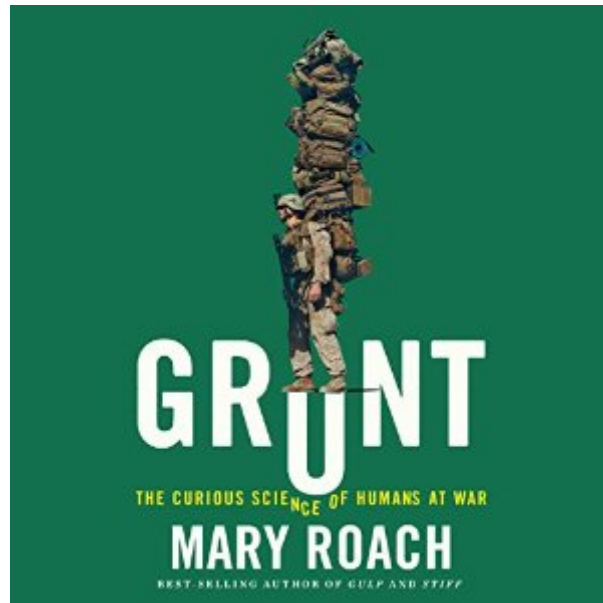


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# Grunt: The Curious Science Of Humans At War



## Synopsis

Bestselling author Mary Roach explores the science of keeping human beings intact, awake, sane, uninfected, and uninfested in the bizarre and extreme circumstances of war. Grunt tackles the science behind some of a soldier's most challenging adversaries - panic, exhaustion, heat, noise - and introduces us to the scientists who seek to conquer them. Mary Roach dodges hostile fire with the U.S. Marine Corps Paintball Team as part of a study on hearing loss and survivability in combat. She visits the fashion design studio of U.S. Army Natick Labs and learns why a zipper is a problem for a sniper. She visits a repurposed movie studio where amputee actors help prepare Marine Corps medics for the shock and gore of combat wounds. At Camp Lemmonier, Djibouti, in east Africa, we learn how diarrhea can be a threat to national security. Roach samples caffeinated meat, sniffs an archival sample of a World War II stink bomb, and stays up all night with the crew tending the missiles on the nuclear submarine USS Tennessee. She answers questions not found in any other book on the military: Why is DARPA interested in ducks? How is a wedding gown like a bomb suit? Why are shrimp more dangerous to sailors than sharks? Take a tour of duty with Roach, and you'll never see our nation's defenders in the same way again.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having spent over twenty years in the USN in the aviation field, this book was both informative and interesting. Topics such as hearing as well as heat and diarrhea are covered. Shark repellent, flies, genital transplants and safety all have their own chapters and these are just a few of the topics. The submarine base in Groton, CT, caught my attention as well. The 'Wet Trainer' enables submariners

the ability to increase their knowledge of how to save the 'ship'. Fascinating to learn that old methods such as a pine plug cone could be effective in an extreme leak. Also, the USS Tang (1944) and the USS Squalus (1939) incidents were well detailed. I remember the USS Thresher in 1963 but was not familiar with the first two incidents. The author has interspersed healthy doses of humor in this book. One thing that made me laugh out loud was the chapter on combat medic training. The author found some file drawers labeled 'spleens', 'aortas' and other body parts. She was on her way to the bathroom and when she saw 'head' it was a moment of interest! Another chuckle for me was in the discussion of the contents of the MRE packets. The USN has baby wipes in their packs for toilet purposes and the USMC uses a piece of their tee shirt! Think that none of us could disagree with that statement! There are so many facts that relate to the manner in which the military is forced to operate that it makes one shake their head. And, sometimes in disbelief at the specifications that the military uses in production of an item. The chapter that covered safety also brought back memories of my days in the USN on the end of many runways. In the morning our first duty at 0800 was FOD (Foreign Object Damage) walk down.

There's something seriously wrong with Mary Roach. Conjure up any vile, disgusting, or taboo subject that anyone in her right mind would shun and you'll find Mary Roach has written a book about it (or is probably planning to do so). Her books to date have dealt with cadavers, the afterlife, surviving interplanetary flight, the physics and chemistry of sex, and the human digestive (and excretive) tract. And she is not inclined to use circumlocutions. She calls crap crap. I love this woman! Military science under the microscope Now, in *Grunt*, her latest book, Roach has turned her attention to military science, specifically the science-based efforts by the U.S. defense establishment to clothe, train, armor, and heal our soldiers, sailors, and airmen and protect them from every manner of wound and loss of function. Unfamiliar and uncomfortable topics such as battlefield hearing loss, shark repellent, bird strikes on airplanes, diarrhea, and penis implantation figure in the story. (The only major topic she avoids is PTSD, because, she writes, "it has had so much [coverage], and so much of it is so very good.") Roach tells her tale with brutal honesty and leavens it with an abundance of humor. Some passages are laugh-out-loud funny. Maybe what's wrong with Mary Roach is that her sense of humor is so much better developed than it is in the rest of us. In any case, I love what she writes. Surprises galore Unless you are remarkably knowledgeable about the U.S. military, you're likely to learn a great deal about how it actually works by reading *Grunt*.\*\*\* Consider, for example, the years-long investigation carried out by the Bird Aircraft Strike Hazard (BASH) team of the United States Air Force.

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