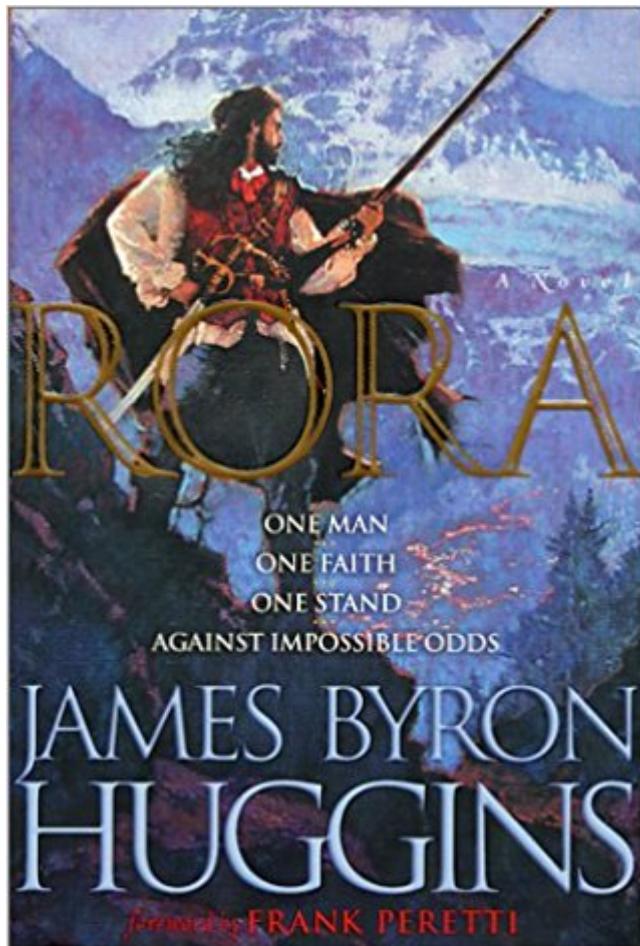


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## Rora



## **Synopsis**

In an eloquent word painting that could be his most significant and profound work ever, author James Byron Huggins has resurrected the magnificent story of RORA from the yellowing and dusty records of history, robed it in flesh and blood, infused breath and spirit, and created a vivid saga that is part poetry, part painting, part cinema. -from the forward by Frank Peretti.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Astonishing" -- Newt Gingrich

James Byron Huggins is a former journalist with over twenty awards for excellence in editing and writing. he is the author of five best-selling novels: A Wolf Story, The Reckoning, Leviathan, Cain, and Hunter.

This is the first book I've read by James Byron Huggins, and I'm thoroughly impressed. Rora blew me away. Rora tells the tale of Joshua Gianavel, leader of the small town called Rora in the Italian Alps. The year is 1655, and the Spanish Inquisitors are naming heretics, killing and burning as they go. An Inquisitor, Thomas Incomel, names the people of Rora heretics, and proceeds to send an army to destroy them if they do not renounce their faith. But there is one problem. Joshua will not renounce his faith, and isn't willing to give up so easily. To make a long story short, thus begins the great conflict (a war, really) between one hundred fifty defenders of Rora and their thousands of

enemies. There is far more to this tale than this, of course. There are many different subplots involving outside forces, like Lord Cromwell, lord protector of England, who wishes the Inquisitors to leave Rora alone, and a weak Duke of Savoy who is funding the War on Rora, as well as an underground of ex-priests and monks and escaped heretics who are fighting against the evils of the Church. I won't go into depth, but as you can probably see that Rora has a very complex and intricate plotline. And, surprisingly, Huggins does a brilliant job of weaving these numerous stories together to tie in and carry their own weight. They seemed relevant to the main story, and Huggins didn't spend so much time on any of the subplots that it took significantly away from the main story. Although, I did feel that Huggins could have spent a touch more time with the main characters, Joshua Gianavel, but I'll touch on that later. We know the story was executed well, but now I need to address how that story was told. The writing style was actually what I expected. It wasn't what I would call ideal, but it was what I expected. Occasionally the writing seemed a little forced, and there was a lot of "telling" as opposed to "showing" us what's happening. That's not to say there isn't detail, because there certainly is. Huggins does a great job of describing the battle scenes, landscapes, people, and many events. It's just that it sometimes seemed a bit amateur, as if he was just learning. Over all, there isn't much to complain about, the occasional passive voice, and a couple of cringe-worthy moments, but they were few and far between. Most of it is nit picking. Huggins did the job, and got it done. The dialogue was good too. Not great, but very good. As with some of the writing, some of the dialogue seemed forced and unrealistic, but generally it worked. What is most important is that it wasn't all exactly the same. The dialogue fit the characters, and differed from person to person. As I said, Huggins does the job. Probably the most important part of the book is the characters. If the characters don't work, the book doesn't either. Huggins did pull it off. He makes the faith of the people of Rora believable, and he makes the decisions that other minor characters make seem realistic and fitting as to the circumstances. I thought the characters of the Duke of Savoy, Pianessa, and Blake were the most dynamic and interesting. To be honest, Joshua Gianavel wasn't all that dynamic. Don't get me wrong, I really enjoyed him and he was believable, and it was amazing seeing him react to the stress and the incredible responsibility, but his character didn't change very much at all. He was essentially the same man from beginning to end. Yet that may be simply my own opinion. It may be just because that was the man he really was. After all, he is a determined man who will never ever give up, and that's the way he was through the whole book. There are a couple more things I'd like to talk about before I conclude. The first is the fact that Rora can be a bit confusing at times. Some of the battle scenes are hard to imagine, mostly because it's difficult to picture the terrain. It takes about half of the book to really get the layout of

the land. The same goes for many of the terms and names. There are a lot of characters, and it can get a bit muddled at times, trying to figure out who's who and who is in charge of what, or belongs to what country. This too takes about half the book to really get under your belt. But these are minor issues, considering that all of these places and names are real and relevant to the story. I believe Huggins did all that's possible for clarity. The last thing I'd like to say is that the book does drag some in the middle, and focuses less on the main characters and the town's struggles as much as I'd like, but that's more of a personal issue. It may seem that I have a lot of problems with this book, but really, all of these problems are overshadowed by how good this book really is. The book may be a touch confusing and slow in parts, and the writing style and dialogue may seem forced occasionally, and I may have a couple of personal problems with it, but amounts to nothing in the end. The story is astounding, and just to read about these characters and their profoundly heroic stand against evil and for their beliefs. It really is amazing what a determined man will do. These people, each one a devout Christian devoted to God, fight like no one ever has back then or today. This book is a must read. The only problem someone may have with it is the fact that it is very bloody, violent, and graphic. There are prolonged, gory battle scenes and implied torture and other grisly acts, some of which are done to characters we have grown to love. But despite this, this book is very good and highly recommended. You won't be disappointed.

This book surprised me, to be honest. I was not sure what to expect, but I was spellbound from the first moment and could not put the book down. The book is about 460 pages +/-, and I read it in two days. The story is based very closely on real people and events that really happened, which made it very emotional to read. The author's writing is of excellent quality, with great character development, and a smooth style that keeps your attention. The story is about the persecution of the Waldenses by the Catholic church and the Duke of Savoy in the Alps region between France and Italy during the mid-1600s. It focuses on the man who became the military leader for the Waldenses during one of the persecutions, Joshua Gianavel. I fact-checked the story to some degree with available historical records and the author did keep the story very close to what history records of the events he depicts. I highly recommend this book.

The story of the Waldenses is one I am familiar with as I live in a town they founded in Valdese, NC! I knew the back story to their coming to America from doing research for our outdoor drama, From This Day Forward. I knew about the persecutions, the trials of the people and the characters involved, but this book brings it to life in a way I could not imagine. Cromwell, Louis XIV, inquisitors -

not a safe time to live in. Living by faith and fighting to preserve the faith and lives of your family is never an easy thing to do.

Having read thousands of books, I have made a list of the 7 that I would most want to secure for posterity if books were to become extinct. This is one of those seven. The list includes two books of history, four books of fiction and one book of historical fiction (this one). Years ago I read Huggins' book "The Reckoning", which is also one of my top seven. Other books I read of his later were mildly disappointing, so I lost track of him. Recently I wondered if he had produced anything else in the intervening years. I went looking on and found Rora. Wow! I'd call the book monumental. Although it is historical fiction, the main characters, their achievements, their faith and their valor are matters of record. It tells the story of the attempt of the Inquisition to wage a war of extermination on the Protestant Waldenses in the Piedmont region of Italy during the 1500s. It also tells of stunning military victories that were won by the Waldenses under the leadership of a fearless military genius, Joshua Gianavel, when they were outnumbered by as much as 100 to 1. Those persecuting the Waldenses finally realized that they had no fear of death - only a fear of God and the consequences of denying Him. That's because they were certain what lay beyond death. A person who has nothing worth dying for probably has nothing worth living for either. That certainly would not include the Waldensians and Joshua Gianavel.

I've got to admit that this is my favorite book of Huggins' to date. I wasn't sure anything would beat out my feelings of Wolf Story, but this one does. Huggins has an amazing knack for bringing you right into the story when you read his work and with the events of September 11 fresh in our minds, this is a book I would recommend for everyone. It informs us that we aren't the first people who have had to take a stand for our beliefs and our rights against those who would persecute us. It also gives us deep insights into dealing with these types of fanatics. I also detect a bit of the author in at least one of the characters which is a treat. I always find it interesting delving into the lives of those who are so talented in their art. I hope everyone will take the opportunity to read and appreciate this book. Mr. Huggins has outdone himself in this one, creating characters that are believably real.

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Rora

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