

The American Civil War: A Military History (Vintage Civil War Library)

By John Keegan

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By John Keegan

The greatest military historian of our time gives a peerless account of America's most bloody, wrenching, and eternally fascinating war.

In this magesterial history and national bestseller, John Keegan shares his original and perceptive insights into the psychology, ideology, demographics, and economics of the American Civil War. Illuminated by Keegan's knowledge of military history he provides a fascinating look at how command and the slow evolution of its strategic logic influenced the course of the war. Above all, *The American Civil War* gives an intriguing account of how the scope of the conflict combined with American geography to present a uniquely complex and challenging battle space. Irresistibly written and incisive in its analysis, this is an indispensable account of America's greatest conflict.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
American scholars tend to write the Civil War as a great national epic, but Keegan (*The First World War*), an Englishman with a matchless knowledge of comparative military history, approaches it as a choice specimen with fascinating oddities. His more thematic treatment has its shortcomings—his campaign and battle narratives can be cursory and ill-paced—but it pays off in far-ranging discussions of broader features: the North's strategic challenge in trying to subdue a vast Confederacy ringed by formidable natural obstacles and lacking in significant military targets; the importance of generalship; the unusual frequency of bloody yet indecisive battles; and the fierceness with which soldiers fought their countrymen for largely ideological motives. Keegan soars above the conflict to delineate its contours, occasionally swooping low to expand on a telling detail or a moment of valor or pathos. Some of his thoughts, as on the unique femininity of Southern women and how the Civil War stymied socialism in America, are less than cogent. Still, Keegan's elegant prose and breadth of learning make this a stimulating, if idiosyncratic, interpretation of the war. 16 pages of photos, 12 maps. *(Oct. 21)*
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From Bookmarks Magazine
In his broad, single-volume history, Keegan offers an outsider's view of the American Civil War, providing fresh insights from a bracingly impartial perspective. However, though critics were quick to voice their admiration for Keegan's previous works, they were deeply disappointed by *The American Civil War*. His narrative is lamentably riddled with inaccuracies, including the dates, locations, and events of major battles. He incorrectly attributes well-known quotes, presents disproved myths as facts, and repeatedly contradicts himself. Critics also bemoaned the brevity of the book, which muddled the repetitive descriptions of battles and troop movements, and Keegan's obscure asides. "He's loath to leave any of his erudition off the table," opines the *New York Times*. Critics expected more from this eminent historian, and readers may be similarly disappointed.

Review

“Assiduously researched. . . . Vivid, panoramic. . . . A wonderfully concise, comprehensive and insightful work. It is also a heartfelt history.”
—*Philadelphia Inquirer*

“Keegan takes the long view [of the Civil War], putting it into broad historical context amid history’s great conflicts. . . . [He] teases out the Civil War’s parallels with World War I with great aplomb, from how troops were mobilized through methods of attacking enemy trenches. He also catches, quite movingly, the essential difference between these two wars.”
—*The New York Times*

“[Keegan’s] achievement is to bring an international perspective. . . . As well as looking back at European influences, [he] looks forward to how the civil war changed European warfare.”
—*The Economist*

“Notably thoughtful. . . . Keegan’s fine book will find its way to many a bookshelf.”
—*The Washington Times*

“[A] history that offers a thoroughly satisfying account for the general reader . . . and a multitude of intriguing insights for the Civil War buff.”
—*Boston Globe*

“A commanding history of the Civil War. . . . [Keegan] is a big picture writer. . . . The one-volume approach is refreshing.”
—*Bloomberg News*

“Written in crisp prose and a confident, distinctive voice. . . . [Keegan] offers the kind of provocation we need to foster a thoughtful and inclusive, rather than a romantic, commemoration of the Civil War sesquicentennial. . . . When such a craftsman offers a one volume narrative account of the American Civil War, we should pay attention.”
—*Slate*

“An excellent political and social history. . . . [Full of] important facets often neglected.”
—*The Virginian-Pilot*

“Thoughtful, incisive. . . . [Keegan] breaks down the elements of battle in the war, noting the unusual fact that they were so frequent compared to other wars of the time, and so intense, and ponders how a single democratic society could produce such a ferocious intensity of war against itself. . . . A cogent, well-argued and insightful book, which approaches so much of the story from a vantage different than that of most of our Civil War scholarship.”
—William C. Davis, *The Military Book Club*

“Keegan delves into leadership, strategy and geography in his examination of this much-explored topic, bringing his remarkable knowledge of comparative military history to bear.”
—*The Kansas City Star*

“Keegan is known for his military histories, and this is a worthy addition to that collection. . . . Highly recommended to Civil War enthusiasts and scholars.”
—*The Oklahoman*

“A sophisticated survey. . . . With fluid assurance Keegan distils the challenging literature that has made the Civil War one of the 19th century’s most popular subjects. . . . The precision and punch of Keegan’s narrative will please a broad audience.”
—*BBC History Magazine*

“Keegan, an Englishman with a matchless knowledge of comparative military history, approaches [the Civil War] as a choice specimen with fascinating oddities. . . . Keegan’s elegant prose and breadth of learning make this a stimulating . . . interpretation of the war.”
—*Publishers Weekly*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sybil Davis:

This book untitled The American Civil War: A Military History (Vintage Civil War Library) to be one of

several books that best seller in this year, that is because when you read this guide you can get a lot of benefit in it. You will easily to buy this specific book in the book shop or you can order it by way of online. The publisher with this book sells the e-book too. It makes you more easily to read this book, as you can read this book in your Smart phone. So there is no reason for you to past this book from your list.

William Jimenes:

People live in this new morning of lifestyle always attempt to and must have the spare time or they will get great deal of stress from both lifestyle and work. So , once we ask do people have time, we will say absolutely yes. People is human not a robot. Then we inquire again, what kind of activity are you experiencing when the spare time coming to an individual of course your answer can unlimited right. Then do you ever try this one, reading guides. It can be your alternative throughout spending your spare time, the particular book you have read is The American Civil War: A Military History (Vintage Civil War Library).

Lawrence Seay:

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Walter Feuerstein:

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