

A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918

By G.J. Meyer

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A World Undone: The Story of the Great War, 1914 to 1918 By G.J. Meyer

Drawing on exhaustive research, this remarkable, intimate account tells the story of how World War I reduced Europe's mightiest empires to rubble, killed twenty million people, and cracked the foundations of the world we live in today.

On a summer day in 1914, a nineteen-year-old Serbian nationalist gunned down Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo. While the world slumbered, monumental forces were shaken. In less than a month, a combination of ambition, deceit, fear, jealousy, missed opportunities, and miscalculation sent Austro-Hungarian troops marching into Serbia, German troops streaming toward Paris, and a vast Russian army into war, with England as its ally. As crowds cheered their armies on, no one could guess what lay ahead: four long years of slaughter, physical and moral exhaustion, and the near collapse of a civilization that until 1914 had dominated the globe.

Praise for *A World Undone*

"Thundering, magnificent . . . [*A World Undone*] is a book of true greatness that prompts moments of sheer joy and pleasure. . . . It will earn generations of admirers."***—The Washington Times***

"Meyer's sketches of the British Cabinet, the Russian Empire, the aging Austro-Hungarian Empire . . . are lifelike and plausible. His account of the tragic folly of Gallipoli is masterful. . . . [*A World Undone*] has an instructive value that can scarcely be measured"***—Los Angeles Times***

"An original and very readable account of one of the most significant and often misunderstood events of the last century."**—Steve Gillon, resident historian, *The History Channel***

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. Meyer sets out to integrate the war's discrete elements into a single work of popular history and delivers a worthy counterpoint to Hew Strachan's magisterial three-volume scholarly project, *The First World War*. A journalist and author (*Executive Blues*), Meyer doesn't offer original synthesis or analysis, but he does bring a clear, economical style to the war's beginnings; the gridlock produced by the successes and failures of both sides; the divided military and political counsels that hobbled efforts at resolving operational and diplomatic stalemates; and above all the constant carnage, on a scale that staggers the imagination. Meyer provides brief, useful background on subjects from the Armenian genocide to the Alsace-Lorraine question—topics he considers crucial to an understanding of the war, but too cursorily explained in most popular histories. Correspondingly, he blends "foreground, background, and sidelights" to highlight the complex interactions of apparently unconnected events behind the four-year catastrophic war that destroyed a world and defined a century. Constructing a readable, coherent text in that format is a demanding challenge, accomplished with brio. *(May 30)*
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From Booklist
One only has to look at a few of today's "hotspots" (the Balkans and the Middle East) to realize that World War I's effects remain a determining factor in international relations. It may seem impossible to write an "intimate" account of such a global catastrophe, but Meyer has succeeded in doing just that: a masterful narrative history that eloquently conveys the sense of a civilization engaged in massive self-destruction, while its leaders, blinded by hubris, nationalism, or outright ignorance, led the charge. Although Meyer pays ample attention to the broad themes of causation and military strategies, he consistently reminds us that the war was a compilation of millions of individual tragedies. He captures the horror and futility of trench warfare, the slaughter at Gallipoli, and the genocide of Armenians as experienced by those who were there. Meyer also offers interesting and controversial insights into the motivations of many of the key participants. This is an outstanding survey of a cataclysm that still casts a shadow over world affairs. *Jay Freeman*
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Review
"**A World Undone** is an original and very readable account of one of the most significant and often misunderstood events of the last century. With an historians eye for clear headed analysis and a storytellers talent for detail and narrative, G.J Meyer presents a compelling account of the blunders that produced the world's first "great war" and set the stage for many of the tragic events that followed." —Steve Gillon, Resident Historian, *The History Channel*

"This is one of those books where you read every page.... Meyer organizes his book chronologically, and accompanies each chapter with a short background essay.... [**A World Undone**] has the very best qualities for this kind of comprehensive approach: a gift for compression and an eye for the telling detail." *—Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“A comprehensive history aimed at the general reader....You finish this book feeling you’ve learned everything anyone reasonably needs to know about The Great War.” *—Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*

“Meyer breathes life into the human story within the Great War. He provides in-depth profiles of many of the

political and military leaders of that era, and explains why they were so important....This is a literary vision of WWI that few of us have ever encountered. Simply put, this is historical reporting at its best." —*Smoky Mountain Sentinel*

"Thundering, magnificent...this is a book of true greatness that prompts moments of sheer joy and pleasure. Researched to last possible dot...It will earn generations of admirers." —*Washington Times*

"Especially suited for the interested American reader…. Meyer's sketches of the British Cabinet, the Russian Empire, the aging Austro-Hungarian Empire, the leaders of Prussia with their newly minted swagger, are lifelike and plausible. His account of the tragic folly of Gallipoli is masterful…. It should go without saying that in 2006 … [**A World Undone**] has an instructive value that can scarely be measured."—*Los Angeles Times*

"Accomplished with brio... [Meyer] blends 'foreground, background, and sidelights' to highlight the complex interactions of apparently unconnected events behind the four-year catastrophic war that destroyed a world and defined a century."—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jessie Lloyd:

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