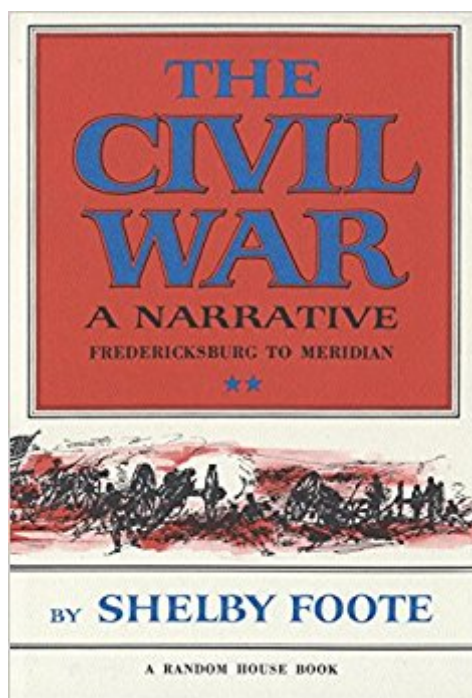


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The Civil War: A Narrative, Vol. II: Fredericksburg To Meridian



Synopsis

Selected by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best nonfiction books of all time The first volume of Shelby Foote's tremendous narrative of the Civil War was greeted enthusiastically by critics and readers alike (see back of jacket for comments). In this dramatic second volume the scope and power, the lively portrayal of exciting personalities, and the memorable re-creation of events have continued unmistakably. In addition, "Fredericksburg to Meridian" covers many of the greatest and bloodiest battles of history. The authoritative narrative is dominated by the almost continual confrontation of great armies. For the fourth time, the Army of the Potomac (now under the command of Burnside) attempts to take Richmond, resulting in the blood-bath at Fredericksburg: Then Joe Hooker tries again, only to be repulsed at Chancellorsville as Stonewall Jackson turns his flank -- a bitter victory for the South, paid for by the death of Lee's foremost lieutenant. In the West, during the six-month standoff that followed the shock of Murfreesboro in the central theater, one of the most complex and determined sieges of the war has begun. Here Grant's seven relentless efforts against Vicksburg show Lincoln that he has at last found his killer-general the man who can "face the arithmetic." With Vicksburg finally under siege, Lee again invades the North. The three-day conflict at Gettysburg receives book-length attention in a masterly treatment of a key great battle, not as legend has it but as it really was, before it became distorted by controversy and overblown by remembered glory. Then begins the downhill fight -- the sudden glare of Chickamauga and the North's great day at Missionary Ridge, followed by the Florida fiasco and Sherman's meticulous destruction of Meridian, which left that section of the South facing the aftermath even before the war was over. Against this backdrop of smoke and battle, Lincoln and Davis try in their separate ways to hold their people together: Lincoln by letters and statements climaxing in the Gettysburg Address; and Davis by two long roundabout western trips in which he makes personal appeals to crowds along his way. "Fredericksburg to Meridian" is full of the life of the times -- the elections of 1863, the resignations of Seward and Chase, the Conscription riots, the mounting opposition (on both sides) to the crushing war, and then the inescapable resolution that it must go on. And as before, the whole sweeping story is told entirely through the lives and actions of the people involved, a matchless narrative which could be sustained so brilliantly only by one of our finest novelists.

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Customer Reviews

"A stunning book, full of color, life, character and a new atmosphere of the Civil War, and at the same time a narrative of unflagging power. Eloquent proof that a historian should be a writer above all else. I predict that Foote's three volumes will be a turning point in the writing of Civil War history."-- Burke Davis

"This first of a three-volume history of the Civil War is so good that the reader is apt to mistrust his instant and overpowering enthusiasm. If the subsequent works in the series are its equal, novelist Shelby Foote will have written one of the finest histories ever fashioned by an American."-- Wirt Williams, Los Angeles Times

"The quality is high; the tone, cool and objective, yet lighted with excitements.... Foote's narrative style is first-rate, vivid, and refreshing. When the trilogy is completed it will most likely stand as the most thorough history of the-Civil War yet done."-- Hudson Strode

"Here, for a certainty, is one of the great historical narratives of our century, a unique and brilliant achievement, one that must be firmly placed in the ranks of the masters ... a stirring and stupendous synthesis of history."-- Van Allen Bradley, Chicago Daily News

"A great, hulking book ... great in quality as well as in size. Not only does the author achieve a wonderful breadth of coverage, he also recounts the events of the war with an impressive depth of understanding. His book is a major achievement in the literature of the Civil War: good research superbly written."-- Richard B. Harwell, Chicago Sun Tribune

The first volume of Shelby Foote's tremendous narrative of the Civil War was greeted enthusiastically by critics and readers alike (see back of jacket for comments). In this dramatic second volume the scope and power, the lively portrayal of exciting personalities, and the memorable re-creation of events have continued unmistakably. In addition, "Fredericksburg to Meridian" covers many of the greatest and bloodiest battles of history. The authoritative narrative is dominated by the almost continual confrontation of great armies. For the fourth time, the Army of the

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The Civil War Trilogy is not a project or light read, it's a commitment. The second volume is 967 pages, about 100 more than volume one. The first two have been exhaustively researched and detailed, and Mr. Foote's ability to tell a story is wonderful. This is not just a compendium of facts and troop movements, it's a real, living breathing account of the men who fought this war. From the men on the line to the generals to the presidents, you are there, you feel what they feel. The personalities are drawn with a vivid brush, you know what it's like to try to hold the factions of a country together (both sides had riots), the politics and rivalries between the generals, and what the civilians experienced. This book is so real, so accurate, that Gettysburg, a battle that took three days, takes three days to read. I've read books on that battle that weren't this good. I did have to take break between tomes, but I think I'm ready for volume three. The thing is, when I'm reading these books, that's what I want to do. I mean, the dishes really pile up, y'know?

I'm just starting Volume 3. Using the Audible narration is the only way I could digest this much content in the time I have for reading. It makes my drive time quite enjoyable. As a lifelong student of the Civil War I have read most general and quite a few specialty books. This is the definitive set and, for someone who wants as much detail as possible, is without peer. Shelby Foote is enjoyable to read as well. His dry humor cuts through the sometimes flowery writing of the time and brings the true points out in every engagement and political struggle. If you've finished most of the single volume histories I would strongly recommend this wonderful set.

I read the Shelby Foote Three Part narrative (The Civil War: A Narrative), every couple of years (about as often as my millennial daughters read the Harry Potter series). It's rich and definitive. Foote is a novelist at heart and the prose is beautiful. It is not surprising to know he came up in the Oxford, Miss/Faulkner tradition. I love this work. I am not sure any ever needs to write another 'definitive' Civil War history because of Foote.

Shelby Foote has produced in these three volumes what I believe is clearly the definitive history of our nation's Civil War. He does so with incredible accuracy and detail. His writing style adds clarity and humor to an American tragedy and compels the reader to turn the page with interest and enthusiasm. I have almost completed volume 2 and will savor the remainder of volume 2 and all of volume 3 which yet awaits me. If you enjoyed his cameo appearances and insights delivered in Ken Burns, "The Civil War", you will truly enjoy his three volume history of the Civil War.

The first book jarred me with Foote's unusual spelling and long, circuitous sentences, but by the second book, I was used to his style. Foote really hit his stride in this second book. The Gettysburg portion was fantastic. It was a rare treat to read about what happened on the ENTIRE battlefield on each day, amazingly enough, stuff happened NORTH of Little Round Top on July 2, 1863. Foote does mention Chamberlain's famous bayonet charge, but he also fills you in on everything else that happened that day. I still get jarred by his use of the term "air-line miles," as it's odd to be conjuring the image of jets when discussing the civil war. When I first encountered the term, I wondered if he was talking about nautical miles versus statute miles, but I've taken to assuming he was talking about a straight line on a map. Weird term, used frequently. Anyhow, the series is wonderful, and it illuminates the goings on of the war in great depth.

This is the most comprehensive account of the war I had ever read and it flows like a novel. It should be required reading for all Americans.

This is not another retelling of the battles. It is a truly fascinating study of the participants' personalities and rivalries and how they affected decision making and the war's outcome. Keeps you in suspense and wanting to read more even though you know how it comes out! I've read many civil war books, and Foote simply outflanks the competition in all respects. In this volume I especially appreciate his coverage of the Fredericksburg through Chancellorsville campaign that solidified Lee's reputation as a great general. Since Lee came to view his soldiers as invincible, his confidence led him to command Pickett's ill fated charge on July 3, even though it was not his usual strategy of defensive warfare. Altogether an amazing combination of wonderful writing and solid research.

I have read vol. 1 and now almost done with vol. 2, and will definitely get vol.3. If you remember history classes in school, you know about certain battles, and some of the key generals, and the Presidents of the North and South. What is normally missing is details about the people, the politics, as well as the battle plans and what made them work or not work. The reason you don't normally see that detail is it is not very exciting to read about, unless you are reading a book by a great story teller. Mr. Foote manages to make you feel like you are back in that time, the battling political forces in both North and South as deadly and critical as the battles themselves. How close did we come to not having Abraham Lincoln as President, why did the South choose Jefferson Davis? The little details of what different enlisted men said or thought, the role of women in the war, all are here. Although this war was fought so many years ago, the issues of states rights and federal authority are still current in our present day politics. There could be lessons learned, if we took the time to look, and these books are an excellent way to view this period of upheaval in our country. Well done, Mr. Foote!

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