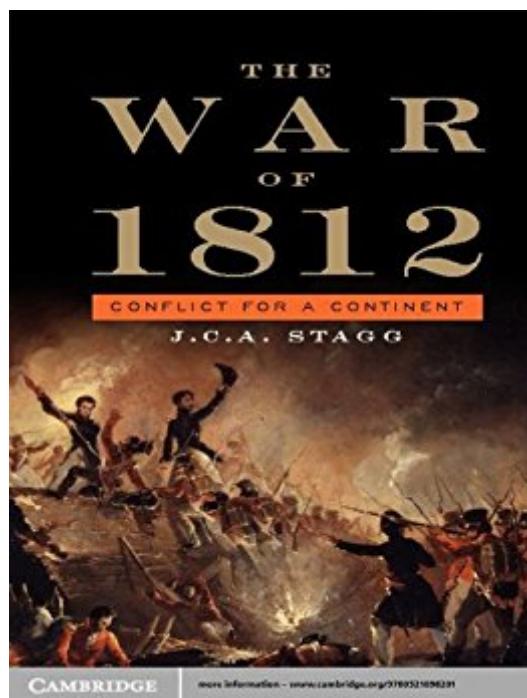


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The War Of 1812 (Cambridge Essential Histories)



Synopsis

This book is a narrative history of the many dimensions of the War of 1812 - social, diplomatic, military and political - which places the war's origins and conduct in transatlantic perspective. The events of 1812-1815 were shaped by the larger crisis of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe. In synthesizing and reinterpreting scholarship on the war, Professor J. C. A. Stagg focuses on the war as a continental event, highlighting its centrality to Canadian nationalism and state development. The book introduces the war to students and general readers, concluding that it resulted in many ways from an emerging nation-state trying to contend with the effects of rival European nationalisms, both in Europe itself and in the Atlantic world.

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Customer Reviews

The title and promotional reviews led me to expect more than I found in this short essay by J.C.A. Stagg. Phrases like a "judicious general overview" and statements like, "he (the author) has been able to condense his immense expertise into such a readable and insightful book" had let me to

anticipate an exciting read. It was not to be found. The fact that J.C.A. Stagg is said to be James Madison's official biographer also created anticipation. The book was not bad. It was just disappointing. To start with, it appears it was designed visually to save cost and money. The style of writing and organizing does not lead to visual interest. There is an introduction so long it should have been a separate chapter, and 5 chapters, titled, simply, War, 1812, 1813, 1814 and Peace. Sections within each chapter are not titled with a clue to the coming content, but simply, I, II, III, IV, V, VI, etc. The plainness of the print distracts from the interest, at least for this reader. I will not use the word "boring". It certainly was NOT boring, but even in this short 198 page presentation, I found myself in a hurry for the story to get more interesting. I would use the word "dry". The book is replete with interesting information which I did not know, as well as excellent analyses, and a very refreshing lack of severity toward American commanders and military. I just finished reading another 1812 history, titled "The Civil War of 1812: American Citizens, British Subjects, Irish Rebels & Indian Allies" by Alan Taylor. Mr. Taylor gave a rather harsh analysis of American "know-how" and execution. Stagg presented the same basic information in a more understanding manner that did not overly castigate soldiers who were trying to serve their country, but merely bereft of understanding and skill. The truth probably rests somewhere in the middle. In fact, America was indeed very fortunate to "win" the war and retain our independence. That is, if you could call what we did as "winning". It is more appropriate to say that the British "lost" the war by running out of the will to continue. (This is my own opinion based on what I have read.) One thing I did learn from Mr. Stagg: It really does matter who tells the story. Same story, same facts, much of the same interpretation, but a different and kinder impression comes from Stagg. Also, there is a great map section in the front of the book. I liked the book. It seemed dry. But the author does know his subject and I know and understand more than I did when I picked it up. Four stars: one off for dryness and style.

I learned a lot from this history. The writer points out that all most people know about the War of 1812 was the burning of Washington (and Dolly Madison saving the portrait of George Washington from the President's House) and the Battle of New Orleans starring Andrew Jackson. He is right; that is all I knew before I read this book. This history leads the reader through the difficulty of raising and keeping an army, the disunity among the states, the attempts to invade Canada, the naval battles on Lake Champlain and the Great Lakes, the incompetence of some US military men, the influence of Napoleon, the desire of Russia to mediate a peace, President Madison's constant efforts to get the congress to take action, etc. (Did you know that the US lost Detroit to the British

during this war?) This is a well written book that is full of information.

For a school book. It was pretty good.

Rather boring and stale in writing style, but yet it is a useful presentation about the War of 1812 that is thorough and seems based on facts. Strange how this bicentennial time of the War of 1812 receives so little attention.

I really this book because I wanted to know more about this war which we don't hear much about. It was very informative for a overview. Not very personal about the battles still a good read

This slice of history fits well into any honest appraisement of our history in relationship to the Napoleonic Wars playing out in Europe. Madison was determined the United States would take her rightful place among global traders despite Britain's efforts to control the seas. Through seemingly sheer determination and against powerful forces, Madison attempted to expand U.S. territories both north into Canada as well as west and further south into Spanish territories. The impact and expansion of the economy due to this War were carefully documented drawing comparisons to the Revolutionary War. Both the Army and Navy were restructured both during and after with emphasis on those reasons why having to do with how officers were commissioned, troops were organized and those political positions regarding classification or paid militia as well as adequate training which the first 89 graduates of West Point were sorely lacking. Considering less than 10% of the troops received any training at all and the challenges posed in areas of communication, establishing shipyards on the Great Lakes, quartermasters and the delivery of supplies as well as the questionable behavior of commissioned officers and congressmen, that we should claim to have won the war might seem ludicrous to some, but we did nonetheless. May I also recommend A Short History of American Capitalism

Dry. The book could be cut down to 1/3 it's size and get everything it covered in. Read like a high school history book that is trying to cover the topic, without really getting to everything, but over covering other ideas. General ideas at times are covered in detail, but battles are covering in a sentence or two. Not something I can recommend to others.

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