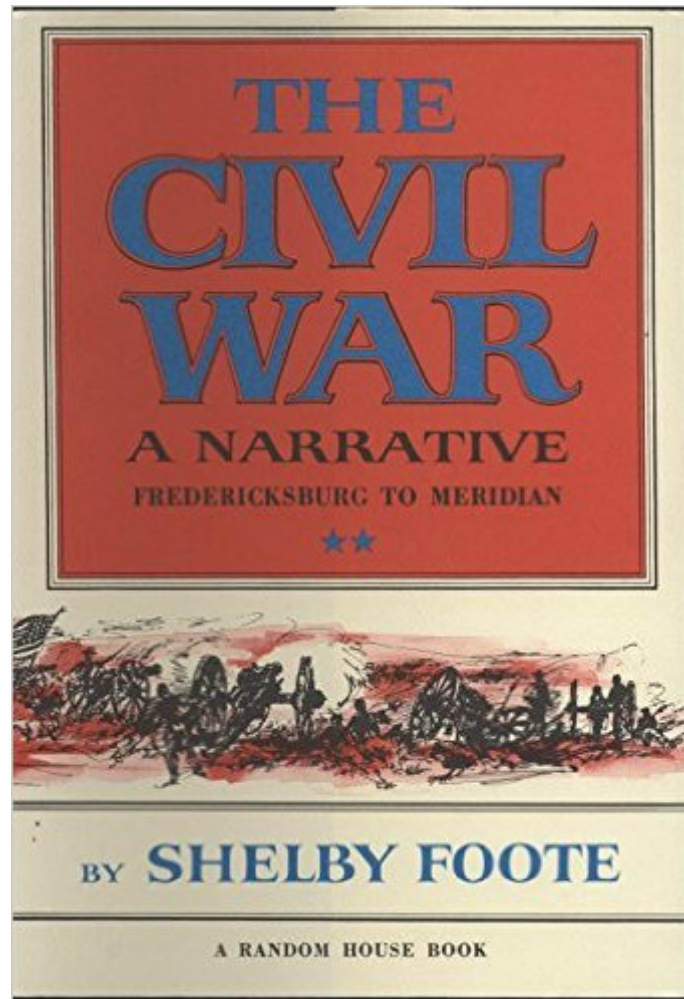


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The Civil War: A Narrative, Vol. II: Fredericksburg To Meridian



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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Civil War: A Narrative: Volume 2, From Fredericksburg to Meridian" is Foote's second book in his magnum opus and considered by some sources to be the best. I began with Volume II because of my interest in 1863, Stones River, Gettysburg and Chickamauga, and all those subjects received a very detailed treatment. I remember perusing the book in the early 1980s and wanted to read it, but was intimidated by its size. After all, it was only one of three 2.5" thick books in the series. After watching (and re-watching) Foote's interviews in Ken Burns' "The Civil War", I became so fond of the man that I bought the whole set, both in print and in audio. The books have a permanent spot in my nearest bookshelf and the audio is in a permanent playlist on my iPhone. Volume II begins with Jefferson Davis' 1863 trip around the Confederacy to rally his constituents, and takes us through the battles of Fredericksburg, Stones River, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, Chickamauga, and Chattanooga. We lose Stonewall Jackson, see the rise of Nathan Bedford Forrest and Ulysses Grant, and witness the fall of Rosecrans and Bragg. It does not just focus on the well-known activities of the Army of the Potomac vs. the Army of N.VA, but interposes scenes from all theaters of the war as well, as the other branch of service (Navy). It's not just a military history, as we learn of such items as the infighting in both White Houses, international ramifications of the War, and the dysfunctional inflationary economies and riots in Southern cities like Richmond and Northern cities like New York. Foote is a master storyteller and his riveting and personal accounts may make the reader forget they are reading non-fiction history.

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