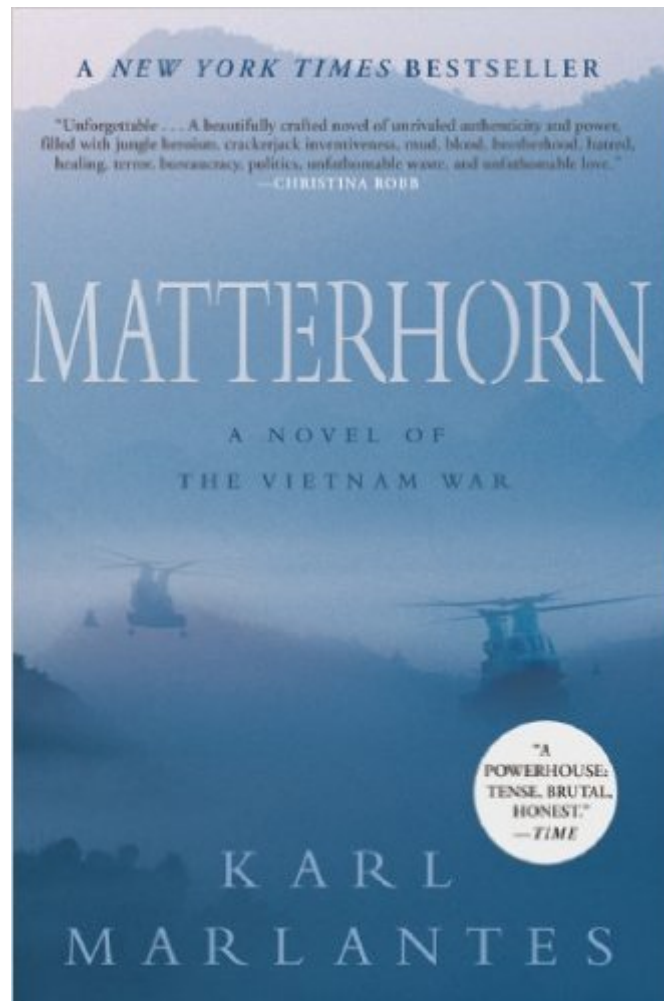


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Matterhorn: A Novel Of The Vietnam War



Synopsis

An incredible publishing story—written over the course of thirty years by a highly decorated Vietnam veteran, a New York Times best seller for sixteen weeks, a National Indie Next and a USA Today best seller—Matterhorn has been hailed as a “brilliant account of war” (New York Times Book Review). Now out in paperback, Matterhorn is an epic war novel in the tradition of Norman Mailer’s The Naked and the Dead and James Jones’s The Thin Red Line. It is the timeless story of a young Marine lieutenant, Waino Mellas, and his comrades in Bravo Company, who are dropped into the mountain jungle of Vietnam as boys and forced to fight their way into manhood. Standing in their way are not merely the North Vietnamese but also monsoon rain and mud, leeches and tigers, disease and malnutrition. Almost as daunting, it turns out, are the obstacles they discover between each other: racial tension, competing ambitions, and duplicitous superior officers. But when the company finds itself surrounded and outnumbered by a massive enemy regiment, the Marines are thrust into the raw and all-consuming terror of combat. The experience will change them forever. Matterhorn is a visceral and spellbinding novel about what it is like to be a young man at war. It is an unforgettable novel that transforms the tragedy of Vietnam into a powerful and universal story of courage, camaraderie, and sacrifice: a parable not only of the war in Vietnam but of all war, and a testament to the redemptive power of literature.

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Customer Reviews

I am not qualified, so I will not attempt a literary review of the book "Matterhorn". What I am qualified

to comment on is the authenticity of this novel. I was in Vietnam at the same time the author was, our experience differed mainly in the name of our units. Marlantes was in Charlie 1/4, I was in Alpha 1/4. It's all so accurate, so real, and brought back a flood of memories from my time in the jungle. If a person wants to know what it was like to be a grunt in a Marine Corps rifle Co in I Corps in the Republic of Vietnam in the late 60's, then read "Matterhorn". I cannot express how impressed I was by this novel. Mr. Marlantes NAILED it. He wrote my story, and the story of the men I humped those jungle trails with, the men I fought, cried, and died with. Thank you Sir. Semper Fi

A Story Within a Story, Within a Story.....A review of Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War by Karl Marlantes Although it's true that Matterhorn: A Novel of the Vietnam War isn't your ordinary war novel, it will give the reader an historically accurate and alarming vivid experience of the conflict that took place over 40 years ago in South East Asia. Just like other books of this type, the person who reads this 622 page book will be taken through the lives of teen boy's as they struggle with the reality of becoming a Marine, their painfully rapid acceleration into adulthood and too often their seemingly meaningless demise. As in other stories about war it has all of the usual components like the deep comradery between solders, the sorrow of loss, the intense fear of battle and the excitement of combat. Readers of this genre will not be disappointed. However, author Karl Marlantes has gone above, beyond and far deeper with Matterhorn than the ordinary war novel. In this book about the Vietnam War, is another book about humanity and humility, and yet another about the complexities of racism. What also immerges within these pages is another story laced with subtle religious symbolism and the effects of a sacrosanct ideology. Even a rendition of a well-known allegorical tales is exquisitely presented as still another story in this winning novel. The individually unique characters in this book grapple with meaning; the meaning of leadership, the meaning of reason, the meaning of war, the meaning of death and the meaning of life. Human dilemmas such as honor vs. cowardice, morality vs. malice, feminine vs. masculine and belief vs. doubt are painstaking studied and flushed out through the rich personalities portrayed within. It's also important to note Marlantes has captured, as only a combat veteran could, the quick wit and primordial humor present between soldiers during wartime. The author brings you along as Second Lieutenant Waino Mellas, the man character, goes through profound physical, psychological and developmental transformations. We meet Mellas with a detailed description of his appearance. He's donned in a new flak jacket, embarrassingly shiny new boots and the "...dark green t-shirt and boxer shorts his mother had dyed for him just three weeks ago..." We also join in with his thoughts. "Forty new names and faces in his platoon alone, close to 200 in the company, and they all look the same,

black or white. It overwhelmed him. They all wore the same filthy tattered camouflage, with no rank or insignia, no way of distinguishing them, from the skipper right on down. All of them were too thin, too young and too exhausted."Another carefully crafted character is Hawke, an older Marine at 22 with a large red moustache who is filled with the kind of wisdom born out of experience.`"Hawke had been in-country long enough to be accustomed to being scared and waiting--that came with every operation--but he was not used to being worried, and that worried him".The relationship between these two men at first tenuous, grows with a need for survival and the kind of respect only shared by those who have endured what many only experience in their worst nightmares.Some of the other personalities that Marlantes has expertly woven into this human drama are: Lieutenant Colonel Simpson a despicable alcoholic who the reader can't help but pity, Vancouver who has chosen to live life on his own terms, Cassidy the hard and bitter gunny, Doc Fredrickson and senior squad leader Sheller both who use the minimal medical supplies, their dedication and their compassion to help gravely wounded soldiers, Hippy "... a creature of unknown order, a spirit carried by crippled feet..." and the self assured Lieutenant Karen Elsked, an integral part of the parable within this story of war. These are only a few of the cast of characters superbly developed in Matterhorn.The fine and clear word smithing in this novel brings the reader into the jungles of the Quang-Tri Province of Vietnam. You can smell the freshly cut bamboo, feel the sting of ant bites, shiver as the leeches slide under your utility shirt, and see the "...fine faint plume...darker grayish silver cloud hardly distinguishable from the overcast backdrop.." of Agent Orange. As night or rain falls you experience the wet, the coldReading Marlantes's vivid words have you feeling the pain of jungle rot, emersion foot, starving hunger, debilitating thirst and the pummeling of mortars."Another explosion hit only 15 feet from their hole, followed by four more. They winced with the pain as the concussion slapped against their eardrums. Mellas felt the air rush from his lungs. He felt he was in a heavy black bag being beaten with unseen clubs. Shrapnel hissed overhead and dirt rained down their heads, down their backs, in between their gritted teeth, and caked around their eyes, Smoke replaced oxygen. They couldn't talk. They endured".Because of the authors' dedication to detail and authenticity words like hooch, squid, fragging and gungy or acronyms like FAC, C-4, or 175's could leave those without a military background lost. Marlantes skillfully handles this problem with creating an easy to use "Glossary of Weapons, Technical Terms, Slangs and Jargon". He also includes a "Chain of Command" flow chart complete with radio call signs.Marlantes's story telling capabilities evoke emotions not often accessed while reading a novel. Any reader of Matterhorn is advised to allow the story to completely envelope you in order for a true depth of understanding to take place.Lastly, at the risk of revealing the allegorical tale mentioned earlier, it must be said that Marlantes does an exquisite job of

showing the meaning of this tale. One must have compassion and live the honorable life instead of falling prey to evil. So "There it is".Lorry Kaye, MA, LMHC

Whatever you think you know about war, about men under arms and about the war in Vietnam will be challenged by this book. It's quite simply a masterpiece. The letter from the publisher included with the review copy of this book says that Vietnam War and USMC veteran Karl Marlantes wrote this over the thirty years after his service ended. It was worth every minute of the wait. Marlantes presents us with a classic of American literature. That it falls into the genre of war literature is secondary to the stunning narrative, the vivid characters, and the gravity of every action depicted over more than 500 riveting pages. "Matterhorn" is centered on the experience of a Waino Mellas, a USMC second lieutenant and infantry officer, during the first three months of his thirteen-month rotation in Vietnam. Among the conflicts Mellas is forced to comprehend at a rapid pace (and which Marlantes illustrates with precision, simplicity and unerring accuracy):-replacements and veterans-conscripts and careerists-officers and enlisted-blacks and whites-infantry and aviation-the differing realities of command elements in the rear and maneuver forces in contact with an elusive and determined enemy. Some of these were unique or amplified in Vietnam, others are enduring issues in any military setting. Marlantes captures them with museum-quality clarity. Marlantes threads these conflicts and navigates Mellas through three combat patrols as he seeks to understand his own competence as a leader of young men whose lives and limbs -like his own- are subject to the variable qualities of enemy ordnance, the decisions of leaders and their commitment to each other. The dialog is crisp and realistic, the characters are vivid and complex (even those who could easily be reduced to stereotype or caricature in a lesser work). The heat and chill of jungle warfare...the hunger, thirst and pain of the infantryman...the dark humor grown by those who face the threat of sudden death or maiming...the bureaucratic absurdities that every war inflicts on its participants...each is superbly presented. Marlantes presents this story in the third person, and I had my own ideas about where he would take Mellas at the end of the book. I was wrong about this and about where the narrative would end. To say anything more would deprive other readers of their own opportunity to journey to Vietnam with Waino Mellas. But make the journey with him; you'll be better for doing so.

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