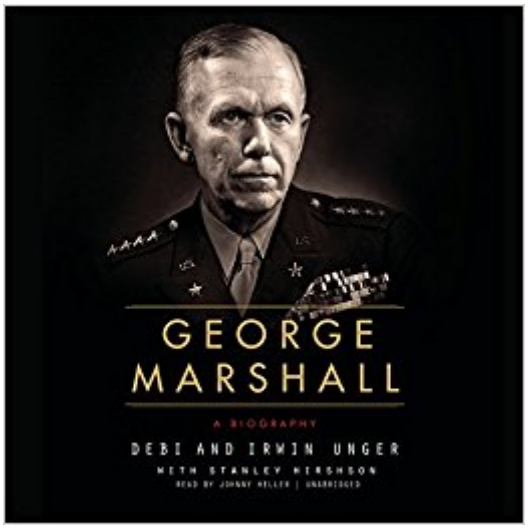
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George Marshall: A Biography



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Synopsis

A major historical biography of George C. Marshall - the general who ran the US campaign during the Second World War, the Secretary of State who oversaw the successful rebuilding of postwar Europe, and the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize-and the first to offer a complete picture of his life. While Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley, Montgomery, McArthur, Nimitz, and Leahy waged battles in Europe and the Pacific, one military leader actually ran World War II for America, overseeing personnel and logistics: Chief of Staff of the US Army from 1939 to 1945, George C. Marshall. This interpretive biography of George C. Marshall follows his life from his childhood in Western Pennsylvania and his military training at the Virginia Military Institute to his role during and after World War II and his death in 1959 at the age of seventy-eight. It brings to light the virtuous historical role models who inspired him, including George Washington and Robert E. Lee, and his relationships with the Washington political establishment, military brass, and foreign leaders, from Harry Truman to Chiang Kai Shek. It explores Marshall’s successes and failures during World War II and his contributions through two critical years of the emerging Cold War - including the transformative Marshall Plan, which saved Western Europe from Soviet domination, and the failed attempt to unite China’s nationalists and communists. Based on breathtaking research and filled with rich detail, George Marshall is sure to be hailed as the definitive work on one of the most influential figures in American history.

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Customer Reviews

’’By any standard, George C. Marshall looms large over the twentieth century. Debi and Irwin

Unger’s in-depth biography will raise an eyebrow or two over the man we thought we knew and provide an intriguing look at Marshall’s guarded personality, his complicated relationships, and his turbulent times.’’ -- (Walter R. Borneman, author of THE ADMIRALS and AMERICAN SPRING) ’’Integrity, honor, humility-how quaint, and how sorely missed, these virtues seem today. They were embodied in George Marshall, the great World War II army chief of staff and Cold War secretary of state. Marshall’s leadership style drives this grand but judicious biography of a fascinating man.’’ --Evan Thomas, author of Ike’s Bluff

Ã¢â ¬Å“Elegant and iconoclastic . . . refreshing . . . persuasive.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEWHere is the first biography to offer a complete picture of the life of George C. Marshall, chief of staff of the U.S. Army from 1939 to 1945 and the military leader who actually ran World War II for America as he oversaw all personnel and logistics.Following Marshall from his childhood in western Pennsylvania and his training at the Virginia Military Institute to his role during and after World War II and his death in 1959 at the age of seventy-eight, this biography casts light on the inspiration he took from historical role models, such as George Washington and Robert E. Lee, and his relationships with military brass, the Washington political establishment, and world leaders, from Harry Truman to Chiang Kai-shek. It also explores MarshallÃ¢â ¬â„¢s triumphs and defeats during World War II, and his contributions through two critical years of the emerging Cold WarÃ¢â ¬â •including the transformative Marshall Plan, which saved Western Europe from Soviet domination, and his failed attempt to unite ChinaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Nationalists and Communists.Based on exhaustive research and filled with rich detail, George Marshall is sure to be hailed as the definitive work on one of the most influential figures in American history.Ã¢â ¬Å“A grand but judicious biography of a fascinating man.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Evan Thomas, author of IkeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Bluff --This text refers to the Preloaded Digital Audio Player edition.

This work is largely quotes from other far more scholarly histories and biographies of Marshall and the other principal Western leaders during the 1920 - 1955 period, all strung together with snarky comments, immediately followed by "balancing" comments. They repeatedly laud Marshall for his integrity and care in gathering information and considering the positions of subordinates and allies, then sneer at him for not having made the "correct" decision more rapidly. Of course, it took the authors some six decades to reach their ambivalent views despite the extensive information available to them from myriad reliable resources. They demonstrate repeatedly that they have little real understanding of the organizational, training and logistical aspects of military forces, particularly

in the US during the 20th century when, in response to the whims of media and political demagogues, the US military was repeatedly gutted then too rapidly expanded in reaction to foreign aggression promoted in part by our lack of preparedness.The authors' criticisms of Marshall focus mainly on his lack of prior troop leadership in combat (denied him during our relatively brief participation in WW I in France because of AEF Commander Pershing's need for a senior staff officer who actually knew what he was doing) and his foreign critics related dislike of his tactical and strategic views (that were inconsistent with the Europeans' objective of preserving their empires). They also find great fault with his repeated failures to advocate particular political positions or make decisions that were in no way his to make. As a Viet Nam vet I am all too aware of the absolute power of the civilian politicians over the military, hate it - particularly when abused by the incredibly corrupt and incompetent leaders we had during Viet Nam, but would have it no other way. One CANNOT be a competent officer at a high level with truly believing in this political/military wall. Unfortunately, too many recent senior officers and politicians of late, and, of course, these authors, appreciate the necessity for this Constitution based mandate nor for the consequences of its breach.This book only notes in passing the miracle of transforming the US economy into the arsenal of the West and the complete technological and organizational overhaul of US forces while simultaneously growing exponentially. But all the authors can say about this is that the troops needed more training and that we should have used a unit replacement system rather than the individual replacement system (which is still in use because it is the only one that works in combat). You can train forever and regroup for battle almost as long (see, e.g., FM Montgomery), but sooner or later you must go anyway, whether totally ready or not.I was a staff logistics guy, and I know I was a good one. I have known for 50+ years that Marshall was one of the best ever, found lots of good subordinates to address the endless specific needs and problems. I bought this book hoping to see a few details of how he did it and who he thought were his key logistic, industrial, and personnel subordinates. No joy. This book has few details of any kind, and none on these topics.

Its not clear how much of this book is the work of the Ungers and how much was written by the late Stanley Hirshson. The claimed exhaustive research is not apparent and the book is a litany of criticism. The authors repeatedly fail to separate keeping an open mind from dithering. Marshall is portrayed as a weak link and its astounding that with such alleged defects in his abilities he rose to the most powerful position in the US Army at a time when promotion was discouragingly difficult to attain. Marshall worked among strong and willful characters. Its a testament to his unique skills that he achieved so much, often through negotiating compromise. His lack of field experience is held

against him as though it were his fault Its absurd to assume that a more forceful man would have achieved more and in fact its hard to see how an uncompromising man would have achieved anything at all having to fight for scarce resources in the opposite corner to Ernest King. To expect him to dominate some of the most powerful characters of the 20th century, Roosevelt, MacArthur, Churchill, Stalin, Allanbrook is patently absurd, and yet we know he was a strong enough character as a young officer to question Pershing in the field. After the war he selflessly took on insoluble problems which have still not been satisfactorily resolved seventy years later and yet according to the authors he must bear some of the responsibility for this failure. It's a nice looking book and on face value it seems a more accessible starting point than Forrest Pogue's four volumes. I'm off to read Pogue and I recommend the reader finds another biography of this great man because this one doesn't do him justice

Having read extensively on Marshal this book represents the nadir of my research. The authors revisionist interpretations of Marshals achievements are inconsistent with the record. Read Pogue or Cray for more scholarly consideration of Marshals achievement.

The Ungers' biographer of George Marshall chronicles his professional life and concludes that his reputation as a first class military organizer and strategist, and statesman, is largely undeserved. Little attention is paid to his personal life. I came away from the book disappointed that I hadn't learned more about General Marshall as a person, and also unconvinced by the Ungers' critique of Marshall's decisions as a military commander and as a diplomat.

Just finished slogging through the Unger book about George Marshall. It should have been entitled "500 pages of criticisms and damning with faint praise" re George Marshall. I have never read a book that uses the demeaning, diminishing descriptives as these authors continually use regarding any and nearly all of Marshall's activities and decisions. They used the word "dithering" numerous times to describe his decision making style. Accusations of equivocation in his statements come often and are tiresome. The entire book is one criticism after another, some of which become quite personal. I could better have spent my money on a decent meal. So sad.

Maybe I have read too many George Marshall book before this one but I did not find it informative. It covered no new ground as far as I could see and was only OK as interpretive history goes in my mind.

On balance, I was disappointed with the tone of the book. It is very informative but with a bit of revisionist leanings. The author takes some pain to demonstrate that Marshall was flawed and overrated. There seems to be a lack of appreciation for his standing and consistency. Was he a "great" man? You'll have to decide for yourself. I believe he was because of his bearing and consistency.

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