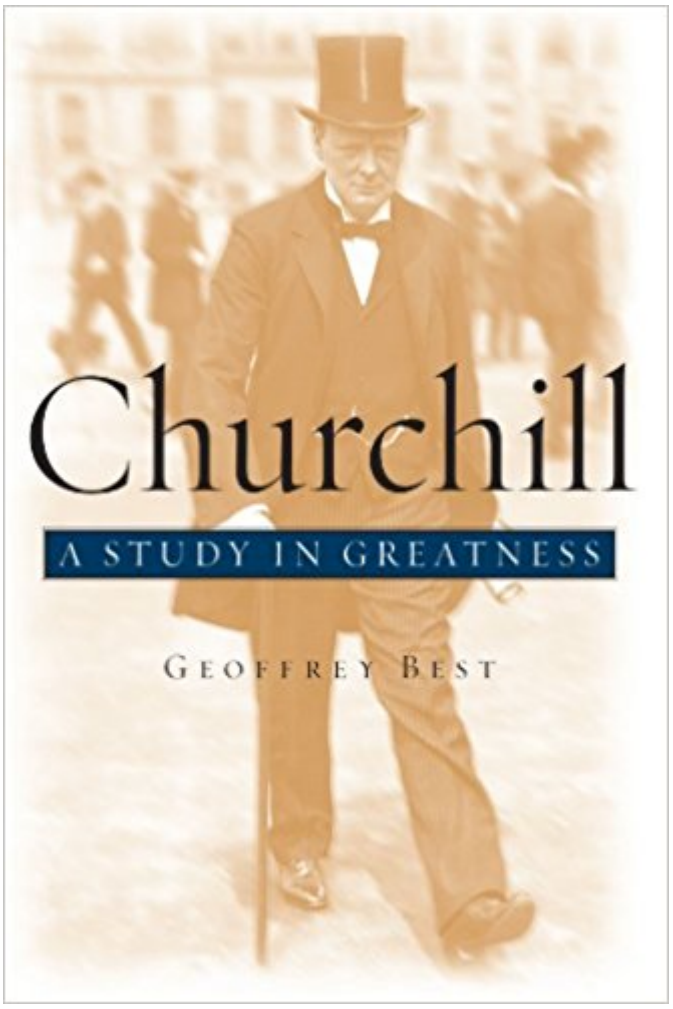
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Churchill: A Study In Greatness



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Synopsis

One of the glorious triumvirate of World War II and founder of the strong Anglo-American friendship that is still apparent today, Winston Churchill stands out in history as a man who led his country through one of its most difficult times, with all of the steadfastness of a fierce and loyal bulldog. Churchill was already recognized as the most diversely gifted man in British politics before, at the ripe old age of 66, he suddenly emerged as a figure of world importance. Becoming Prime Minister on the very day in 1940 that Hitler invaded France and the Low Countries, he braced the British people to continue fighting and even to counterattack the, up to that point, all-victorious Germans. A clever and confident statesman, with an obvious love for the people he served, for years Churchill's character went unchallenged and his inspiring leadership left him above criticism. Recently, however, his record has come under attack. In Churchill: A Study in Greatness, one of Britain's most distinguished historians makes sense of this extraordinary man, and his long, controversial, colorful, contradictory and heroic career.Geoffrey Best illuminates both his strengths and his weaknesses, looking past the many received versions of Churchill, in a biography that balances the private and the public man and offers a clear insight into what made him truly great.

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Customer Reviews

"Reminds us that is still possible, at a time when irony and cynicism are so much the fashion, to pay tribute to greatness without being hagiographical."--New Republic"Splendid.... A marvel of densely researched scholarship expertly sifted and presented with misleading ease in an elegant prose

style."--The Washington Times"An astonishingly fresh and original study that renders all previous short biographies out of date."--Times Literary Supplement"We are all worms. But I do believe I am a glow-worm."--Winston Churchill"Excellent."--New York Review of Books

"We are all worms. But I do believe I am a glow-worm." --ChurchillWinston Churchill’s inspiring leadership in the Second World War once made him above criticism. In recent years his record has come under attack from revisionists. In Churchill: A Study in Greatness one of Britain’s most distinguished historians rebuts these charges and makes sense of this extraordinary man and his long controversial, colourful, contradictory and heroic career. Geoffrey Best brings out both his strengths and his weaknesses, looking past the many received versions of Churchill in a biography that balances the private and the public man and offers a clear insight into Churchill’s greatness. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book was excellent. It is however better suited for someone with an advanced understanding of 20th century European history. Otherwise it could be easy to get lost in the details. It is also written by a British author for apparently a British audience so as an American with limited understanding of British politics it was at times confusing. Bottom line a great book about a great man!!

Go elsewhere for nuanced revisionism. As promised in the title, this is the straight forward case for Churchill as a Great Man of history. Gets it directionally right, I think. In a different time and place, Sir Winston’s stubbornness and ego might have made him a serious villain, but thrust into the role as defender of Western civilization, his strengths filled England and the world’s needs perfectly. Enjoyed this a lot and suggest that if you want one Churchill primer, this is a good place to start.

Geoffrey Best undertakes an unenviable task with this book. He attempts to capture the life of one of England’s greatest leaders in one book. Best is successful in his attempt.While it is obviously impossible to list all of Churchill’s great stories and accomplishments in just over 300 pages, Best is entertaining in his approach. While this chronological tale may be a bit dry to the average reader, those who enjoy history will embrace this book. Best documents Churchill’s attitude that he was destined for greatness early in life, discusses many of his war strategies, and is thorough enough to look into Churchill’s family and personal life. Many people are unaware of the tragic lives of his three children, all of which are alluded to in this book. There truly is more to this man than is demontrated in the common pictures history books record of him.Churchill worked toward bettering England and

world almost unitl his death. This man who was largely self taught played a large role in shaping contemporary Europe even when he was no longer the Prime Miister. Even when his idea of the United States of Europe failed, he continued to be an early proponent of arms control and ending communism. The chapters which discuss his later years are among the most fascinating parts of this book.Books on the life of Churchill can go into much greater detail than this. This book is an excellent starter for learning about the life of Churchill.

Below are key excerpts from the book that I found particularly insightful:1- "Churchill did not see himself as an ’enemy of the people’. He perceived himself as a benevolent friend to the working class, a promoter of social welfare, and the protector of unions’ rights and of everybody’s civil rights; and indeed the record shows that he was all those things. But the record also shows how little he was prepared to see everybody’s civil rights and the security of the state endangered by civil disorder and revolutionary activism. The legend of ’Tonypandy’ after all had some justice in it, though for the wrong reason. "2- "Churchill’s words - ’Those terrible "ifs" accumulate’ - are only too true. There were numbers of moments when, if events had taken another turn, if advice had been accepted or rejected, or if decisions had been made instead of shelved. history would have been written altogether differently. But one of the most Striking features of the many accounts of the campaign is that each authority seems to choose his own turning-points, and hardly any two are the same."3- "Two of his deep-down passions and principles were, first, the rule of law as protector of civil and religious liberty, and of the standards of civilisation; and, secondly, the place and prestige in the world of Great Britain and its Empire, as necessary both for the security of the English-speaking people and for the welfare of its other subjects. In the gap which sometimes opened between them may be glimpsed, not at all surprisingly, prejudices and assumptions which he shared with other men of his age, race, nation and class."4- "Men who take up arms against the State must expect at any moment to be fired upon ... Men who take up arms unlawfully cannot expect that the troops will wait until they are quite ready to begin the conflict ... Armed men are in a category absolutely different from unarmed men ... I carefully said that when I used the word ’armed’ I meant armed with lethal weapons or with firearms This crowd was unarmed. These are simple tests which it is not too much to expect officers in these difficult situations to apply."5- "He still held to the belief that he was destined to do great things for the nation he loved, but when, if or how he would ever be able to do them seemed doubtful even to him. War was what especially excited him and brought out what was most original and powerful within him. Aware of the dangers of such a temperament, he was not the bad sort of man who would wish to start a war in order to shine in it,

but his early scepticism about the Treaty of Versailles had been borne out by subsequent events. and by now, the early 1930s, he felt more and more sure that what was still universally known as the Great War would sooner or later become called the First World War."6- "He was the first British statesman of any note to identify, and to call public attention to, the dangerous twist given to German national aspirations p (which he well understood) by their confluence from 1933 with Nazi ideology and Hitler's leadership. He correctly sensed before evidence had accumulated to support the charge, how dangerous to the peace of the world Germany would become in Hitler's hands."7- "Churchill was the most prominent of the few leaders of British opinion who refused to believe that this policy of appeasement, once the British government had unmistakably adopted it, was either honourable or sensible. He understood what Hitler meant by the Versailles grievances but something, probably just brilliant intuition, told him that Hitler had much more in mind than the mere redress of them."8- "Churchill was not the man to let this great machine run without constant inspection and interference. His style of management was striking and peculiar, the most remarkable no doubt of any Prime Minister's, and although it undoubtedly had abrasive and time-wasting aspects, overall and in the long run it did much more good than harm."9- "War is a constant struggle and must be waged from day to day. It is only with some difficulty and within limits that provision can be made for the future. Experience shows that forecasts are usually falsified and preparations always in arrears. Nevertheless, there must be a design and theme for bringing the war to a victorious end in a reasonable period..."10- "An iron curtain is drawn down upon their front. We do not know what is going on behind ... Surely it is vital now to come to an understanding with Russia, or see where we are with her, before we weaken our armies mortally or retire to the zones of occupation."11- "As we go forward on our difficult road, we shall always be guided by two main aims of policy. One is to lose no opportunity of convincing the Soviet leaders and, if we can reach them, the Russian people, that the democracies of the West have no aggressive designs on them. The other is to ensure that until that purpose has been achieved we have the strength necessary to deter any aggression by them and to ward it off if it should come. We shall continue at the same time to seek by every means open to us an easement [detente] in international tension and a sure foundation on which the people of the world can live their lives in security and peace."

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