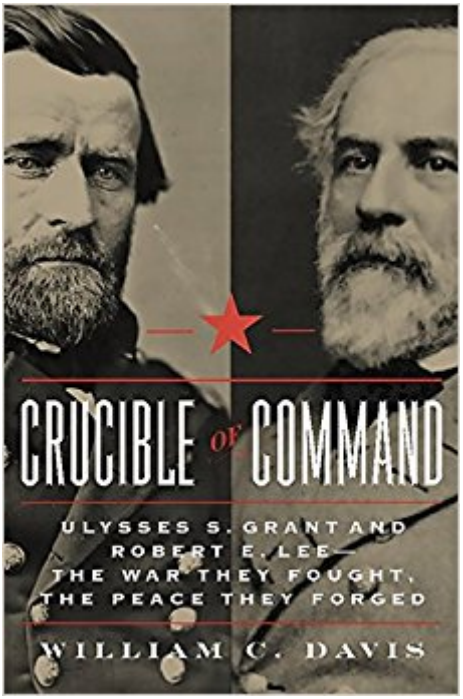
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Crucible Of Command: Ulysses S. Grant And Robert E. Lee--The War They Fought, The Peace They Forged



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Synopsis

They met in person only four times, yet these two menÃ¢â ¬â •Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. LeeÃ¢â ¬â •determined the outcome of America's most divisive war and cast larger-than-life shadows over their reunited nation. They came from vastly different backgrounds: Lee from a distinguished family of waning fortunes; Grant, a young man on the make in a new America. Differing circumstances colored their outlooks on life: Lee, the melancholy realist; Grant, the incurable optimist.Then came the Civil War that made them both commanders of armies, leaders of men, and heroes to the multitudes of Americans then and since who rightfully place them in the pantheon of our greatest soldiers. Forged in battle as generals, these two otherwise very different men became almost indistinguishable in their instincts, attributes, attitudes, and skills in command.Each the subject of innumerable biographies, Generals Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee have never before been paired as they are here. Exploring their personalities, their characters, their ethical and moral compasses, and their political and military worlds, William C. Davis, one of America's preeminent historians, uses substantial, newly discovered evidence on both men to find surprising similarities between them, as well as new insights and unique interpretations on how their lives prepared them for the war they fought and influenced how they fought it.Crucible of Command is both a gripping narrative of the final year of the war and a fresh, revealing portrait of these two great commanders as they took each other's measure across the battlefield with the aid of millions of men.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A Main Selection of The History Book ClubAdvance praise for Crucible of Command"Dual biographies are famously difficult to pull off, but William C. Davis has done it with panache. His research in previously unexploited sources reveals new information and insights on both Grant and Lee. With narrative skill that shifts the focus back and forth between the two generals, Davis builds the tension as their careers converge toward the climax at Appomattox. Here we have something genuinely new in Civil War scholarship."—James M. McPherson, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of the New York Times bestseller Battle Cry of Freedom"Magical and magisterial, William C. Davis's transportive joint biography truly brings these iconic warriors vividly to life., tracing their inevitably linked stories so compellingly that readers will be forgiven if they find themselves on the edge of their seats as the narrative hurtles toward an outcome they thought they already knew. Using primary sources with his customary commitment to originality, Davis manages to interpret the data both judiciously and jauntily. Frankly, I could not put this seductive book down."—Harold Holzer, author of Lincoln and the Power of the Press"There are many volumes contrasting Lee and Grant, but William C. Davis has gone far beyond the typical wartime comparisons. This beautifully written and wonderfully entertaining study falls right into line with his other excellent works, and the side-by-side comparisons of the lives and growth of Lee and Grant offer far more than the usual examination of Civil War strategy. This is a surprisingly fresh addition to any Civil War library."—Jeff Shaara, New York Times bestselling author of Gods and Generals"William C. Davis brings a vast familiarity with events and personalities of the Civil War to this engaging portrait of the conflict's two great military figures. With keen analysis and descriptive flair, Davis creates a narrative that plays out against an epic story. Even readers familiar with the basic outline of the generals' lives will read this book with pleasure and profit."—Gary W. Gallagher, author of The Union War"This refreshingly new comparative study rises above overworked analyses of strategy and tactics and concentrates on character and personality. For those who like their history human, here is the starting point for an accurate understanding of what Lee and Grant meant—to each other as well as to the nation they molded."—James I. Robertson, Jr., author of Stonewall JacksonCivil War Book Review, Summer 2015“Based virtually entirely on contemporary primary sources, an unusual authorial choice that probably contributes to the immense readability of its lively, uncluttered prose…An ambitious and well-executed book by a distinguished Civil War historian, which although it covers extremely well-trodden historiographical ground, does so in a somewhat fresh and distinctive way.Ã¢â ¬Â•H-Net, October 2015“The book's value lies in the author's approach and the comprehensiveness of the result…A deeply researched

and useful book…Both lay readers and scholars will enjoy this excellent book…A valuable addition to the shelf of any military historian. Crucible of Command will take an important place in the corpus of books about the two giants of the Civil War.Ã¢â ¬Â•Blue & Gray magazine, Vol. XXXII, #1“Davis has coupled two of history's most interesting generals in a book that is difficult to put down…[An] excellent dual biography…[Davis'] writing style is smooth and fluid, possibly the best in the craft.Ã¢â ¬Â•Kirkus Reviews, 1/1/15“One of Davis' chief contributions in this accessible, well-written study is to show how thoroughly politicized the war was…A fresh look at the sources and a careful eye to leadership and character places this book high atop the list of recent Civil War histories.Ã¢â ¬Â•Booklist, 1/1/15“A solid pick for the Civil War collection.Ã¢â ¬Â•January Magazine, 1/13/15“A magisterial dual biography that rises far, far above the average. Davis balances fact and research with searing action and penetrating personality. This very entertaining history is much more than the sum of its parts.Ã¢â ¬Â•InfoDad, 1/15/15 “Exhaustively researched…Attractive reading for the historically inclined.Ã¢â ¬Â•Harold Holzer, The Daily Beast, 11/6/14“A real page-turner.Ã¢â ¬Â•Dennis Showalter, BookBurst.com“Davis is not only a leading authority on the Civil War. He is among the most successful… Read more writers of intellectually solid history for general audiences…Articulate, provocative, and persuasive, this will appeal to a wide audience of specialists and general readers.Ã¢â ¬Â•Denver Post, 1/11/15“Shows the Civil War generals as complex men.Ã¢â ¬Â•Kirkus Reviews e-newsletter, 1/20/15“Best Books Out This Week.Ã¢â ¬Â•Miami Sun News, 1/26/15“Combining all the elements one could wish in what is essentially a dual biography and a military history of the Civil War as it impacted the careers of its two leading generals, this work of extraordinary scholarship deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in American history in particular and the art of war in general.Ã¢â ¬Â•Bookviews blog, February 2015“The fascination with the American Civil War has generated many books and there's always room for one more, especially if it is as good as Crucible of Command.Ã¢â ¬Â•Richmond Times-Dispatch, 2/8/15“A revelatory portrait of both men.Ã¢â ¬Â•Civil War News, Feb/Mar 2015“Very readable and informative…Davis succeeds in his goal of providing personal insights into the lives and command styles of both generals.Ã¢â ¬Â•Civil War Times, April 2015“The latest—and the best—dual biography…Crucible of Command reads fresh. Davis seems to have made very little use of secondary sources, approaching his subjects with a bold, sometimes irreverent, outlook…Partisans of both commanders will find much to admire in Crucible of Command.Ã¢â ¬Â•Kirkus, February 24, 20151 of 12 titles named “This Winter's Best

Bets.Ã¢â ¬Â•Milwaukee Shepherd-Express, January 6, 2015“Compares and contrasts the most prominent opposing generals, Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee...[An] enjoyable double-biography.Ã¢â ¬Â•Wall Street Journal, 3/7/15 “Brilliant and balanced…Davis's meticulous drive for facts and suspicion of historical agendas add credibility to his narrative. His voice is sharp and opinionated, peppered with compliments and criticism, with virtually every assertion supported by a detailed citation. Smoothly written and accessible, the book is also a history buff's dream, brimming with arrow-filled battle maps and dotted with familiar characters and controversies… Scrupulously evenhanded…Mr. Davis's narrative is well-paced, and the smash-cut transitions from one theater of war to another are smoothly handled…Despite his careful analysis, Mr. Davis avoids professorial dryness, and colorful personal details of both men emerge.Ã¢â ¬Â•Winner of The American Civil War Museum's 2014 Jefferson Davis Award“Masterful interweaving of Lee's and Grant's complex and somewhat tortuous journey to their Civil War eminenceÃ¢â ¬Â• in a way that “helps us understand both men betterÃ¢â ¬Â• within “a wonderfully understandable context of military history.Ã¢â ¬Â•Publishers Weekly, 1/26/15“[Davis] draws a multi-dimensional portrait of each man, succinctly capturing their particular skills, and uncovers some little-known facts…This meticulously researched, well-written book greatly enriches our understanding of each of these extraordinary figures and of the terrible war in which they fought.Ã¢â ¬Â•Roanoke Times, 1/25/15“A one-volume parallel account of the lives of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee—the two key players who prosecuted the Civil War, brought the war to its inevitable conclusion and defined the peace that would follow…Davis is able to include the battles without alienating the casual reader of military history or boring the seasoned Civil War student…Reader-friendly prose…The use of fresh, primary sources distinguishes this work from that of the romantic rhapsodists and caustic critics whose careers are focused on perpetuating the myths that surround the lives of these two West Point graduates. Crucible of Command gives us the opportunity to learn the lessons of history so we can more easily avoid repetition.Ã¢â ¬Â•Washington Times, 4/21/15“For serious historians of the Civil War, William C. Davis is the ultimate go-to source for reliable information on a conflict that spawned a staggering amount of mythology… At hand is a thick—and very readable—volume that culminates a life of serious research into all aspects of the war, including personalities, strategies and politics. Mr. Davis, fortunately for all of us, is a stickler for original and contemporaneous sources, rather than long-after-the-fact memoirs…The most avid of Civil War buffs will relish the revealing details in a book rich in authenticity and readability.Ã¢â ¬Â•Military

Heritage, July 2015“[Davis] approaches Grant and Lee in a new way…Worth reading.Ã¢â ¬Â•Michigan War Studies Review, 7/8/15“An intimate portrayal of two notoriously reticent individuals. Davis writes in an engaging narrative style and has a knack for keen, succinct descriptions of battlefield tactics…A good choice for both specialists and general readers.Ã¢â ¬Â•

William C. Davis is the author or editor of more than fifty books in the fields of Civil War and Southern history, as well as numerous documentary screenplays. A three-time winner of the Jefferson Davis Award, given for book-length works in Confederate History, he was senior consultant for the A&E Network's 52-episode documentary series Civil War Journal. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission and serves on several other consultative bodies. He lives in Blacksburg, Virginia.

The book portrays the personality and some might say soul of the two leaders. You emerge from the book not favoring one over the other. You also develop a sympathy toward each as both had great obstacles, both personal and professional to overcome. You very much come to understand how the two gentlemen became the most compelling individuals in the United States during the 19th Century other than Lincoln himself. Lee's defensive strategy for conducting the war and Grant's approach toward putting down the rebellion to preserve the Union are clearly depicted without going into endless detail of battle strategies and logistics. While many previous works emphasized the reluctance of military leaders to engage early in the conflict stemming from ambivalence toward slavery or a distaste for engaging previous comrades in arms. However, the reality is clearly depicted that the field commanders understood the full potential of the carnage and actually were measured in seeking engagements. This is a long but good read!

This was an interesting study of the two most famous generals of the Civil War/War of Northern Aggression. The depth of research into each man put some flesh on otherwise granite hero's.

I truly enjoyed this book. I have always enjoyed history and the characters that were created by the times that they lived. But after reading this book, I have to change my views on both Grant and Lee. The Civil War rally made both men, since neither had really done much before the war. Grant had resigned his commission from the Army as a Captain and Lee resigned as a Colonel. It was also interesting the changes that Lee went through, prior to the war he thought secession was a mistake.

But when Virginia joined the Confederacy, Lee changed and followed his state out of the Union. All in all, it was an excellent book.

Very good book, Provided heretofore unknown insights about both these great men. A must for anyone interested in the Civil War or the America of that time period.

The book is great, the author sometimes slips into a bit of wordiness, but overall this book enlightens you to their inner feelings, and reasons for their ways.

I am an avid student of Civil War History, and a devoted fan of Gen. Robert E. Lee, and this book is a most welcome addition to my library. William C. Davis is a top Civil War Historian and his writing style is entertaining and most readable.James Orr

I am enjoying this book. The author writes in a fast moving style and does not get bogged down in too much detail. I have learned a lot of interesting facts about Grant and Lee which are not widely known. Great book for those wanting to learn more about these two great men of U.S. history.

great reading of the Civil War!!

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