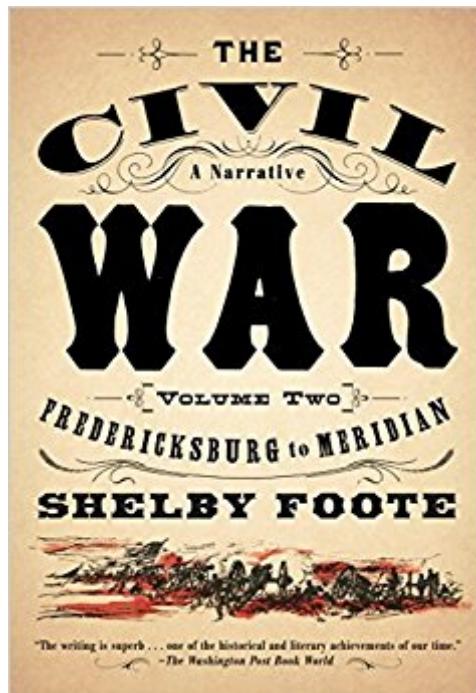




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The Civil War: A Narrative: Volume 2: Fredericksburg To Meridian



Synopsis

Focused on the pivotal year of 1863, the second volume of Shelby Foote's masterful narrative history brings to life the Battle of Gettysburg and Grant's Vicksburg campaign and covers some of the most dramatic and important moments in the Civil War. Includes maps throughout. "This, then, is narrative history—a kind of history that goes back to an older literary tradition.... The writing is superb...one of the historical and literary achievements of our time." —The Washington Post Book World "Mr. Foote has an acute sense of the relative importance of events and a novelist's skill in directing the reader's attention to the men and the episodes that will influence the course of the whole war, without omitting items which are of momentary interest. His organization of facts could hardly be better." —Atlantic "Though the events of this middle year of the Civil War have been recounted hundreds of times, they have rarely been re-created with such vigor and such picturesque detail." —The New York Times Book Review "The lucidity of the battle narratives, the vigor of the prose, the strong feeling for the men from generals to privates who did the fighting, are all controlled by constant sense of how it happened and what it was all about. Foote has the novelist's feeling for character and situation, without losing the historian's scrupulous regard for recorded fact. The Civil War is likely to stand unequalled." —Walter Mills

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Customer Reviews

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—Walter Mills

FREDERICKSBURG TO MERIDIAN "Gettysburg...is described with such meticulous attention to action, terrain, time, and the characters of the various commanders that I understand, at last, what happened in that battle.... Mr. Foote has an acute sense of the relative importance of events and a novelist's skill in directing the reader's attention to the men and the episodes that will influence the course of the whole war, without omitting items which are of momentary interest. His organization of facts could hardly be better."--Atlantic

The Civil War Trilogy is not a project or light read, it's a commitment. The second volume is 967 pages, about 100 more than volume one. The first two have been exhaustively researched and detailed, and Mr. Foote's ability to tell a story is wonderful. This is not just a compendium of facts and troop movements, it's a real, living breathing account of the men who fought this war. From the men on the line to the generals to the presidents, you are there, you feel what they feel. The personalities are drawn with a vivid brush, you know what it's like to try to hold the factions of a country together (both sides had riots), the politics and rivalries between the generals, and what the civilians experienced. This book is so real, so accurate, that Gettysburg, a battle that took three days, takes three days to read. I've read books on that battle that weren't this good. I did have to take break between tomes, but I think I'm ready for volume three. The thing is, when I'm reading these books, that's what I want to do. I mean, the dishes really pile up, y'know?

I'm just starting Volume 3. Using the Audible narration is the only way I could digest this much content in the time I have for reading. It makes my drive time quite enjoyable. As a lifelong student of the Civil War I have read most general and quite a few specialty books. This is the definitive set and, for someone who wants as much detail as possible, is without peer. Shelby Foote is enjoyable to read as well. His dry humor cuts through the sometimes flowery writing of the time and brings the true points out in every engagement and political struggle. If you've finished most of the single volume histories I would strongly recommend this wonderful set.

I read the Shelby Foote Three Part narrative (The Civil War: A Narrative), every couple of years (about as often as my millennial daughters read the Harry Potter series). It's rich and definitive. Foote is a novelist at heart and the prose is beautiful. It is not surprising to know he came up in the Oxford, Miss/Faulkner tradition. I love this work. I am not sure any ever needs to write another 'definitive' Civil War history because of Foote.

Shelby Foote has produced in these three volumes what I believe is clearly the definitive history of our nation's Civil War. He does so with incredible accuracy and detail. His writing style adds clarity and humor to an American tragedy and compels the reader to turn the page with interest and enthusiasm. I have almost completed volume 2 and will savor the remainder of volume 2 and all of volume 3 which yet awaits me. If you enjoyed his cameo appearances and insights delivered in Ken Burns, "The Civil War", you will truly enjoy his three volume history of the Civil War.

The first book jarred me with Foote's unusual spelling and long, circuitous sentences, but by the second book, I was used to his style. Foote really hit his stride in this second book. The Gettysburg portion was fantastic. It was a rare treat to read about what happened on the ENTIRE battlefield on each day, amazingly enough, stuff happened NORTH of Little Round Top on July 2, 1863. Foote does mention Chamberlain's famous bayonet charge, but he also fills you in on everything else that happened that day. I still get jarred by his use of the term "air-line miles," as it's odd to be conjuring the image of jets when discussing the civil war. When I first encountered the term, I wondered if he was talking about nautical miles versus statute miles, but I've taken to assuming he was talking about a straight line on a map. Weird term, used frequently. Anyhow, the series is wonderful, and it illuminates the goings on of the war in great depth.

This is the most comprehensive account of the war I had ever read and it flows like a novel. It

should be required reading for all Americans.

This is not another retelling of the battles. It is a truly fascinating study of the participants' personalities and rivalries and how they affected decision making and the war's outcome. Keeps you in suspense and wanting to read more even though you know how it comes out! I've read many civil war books, and Foote simply outflanks the competition in all respects. In this volume I especially appreciate his coverage of the Fredericksburg through Chancellorsville campaign that solidified Lee's reputation as a great general. Since Lee came to view his soldiers as invincible, his confidence led him to command Pickett's ill fated charge on July 3, even though it was not his usual strategy of defensive warfare. Altogether an amazing combination of wonderful writing and solid research.

I have read vol. 1 and now almost done with vol. 2, and will definitely get vol.3. If you remember history classes in school, you know about certain battles, and some of the key generals, and the Presidents of the North and South. What is normally missing is details about the people, the politics, as well as the battle plans and what made them work or not work. The reason you don't normally see that detail is it is not very exciting to read about, unless you are reading a book by a great story teller. Mr. Foote manages to make you feel like you are back in that time, the battling political forces in both North and South as deadly and critical as the battles themselves. How close did we come to not having Abraham Lincoln as President, why did the South choose Jefferson Davis? The little details of what different enlisted men said or thought, the role of women in the war, all are here. Although this war was fought so many years ago, the issues of states rights and federal authority are still current in our present day politics. There could be lessons learned, if we took the time to look, and these books are an excellent way to view this period of upheaval in our country. Well done, Mr. Foote!

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