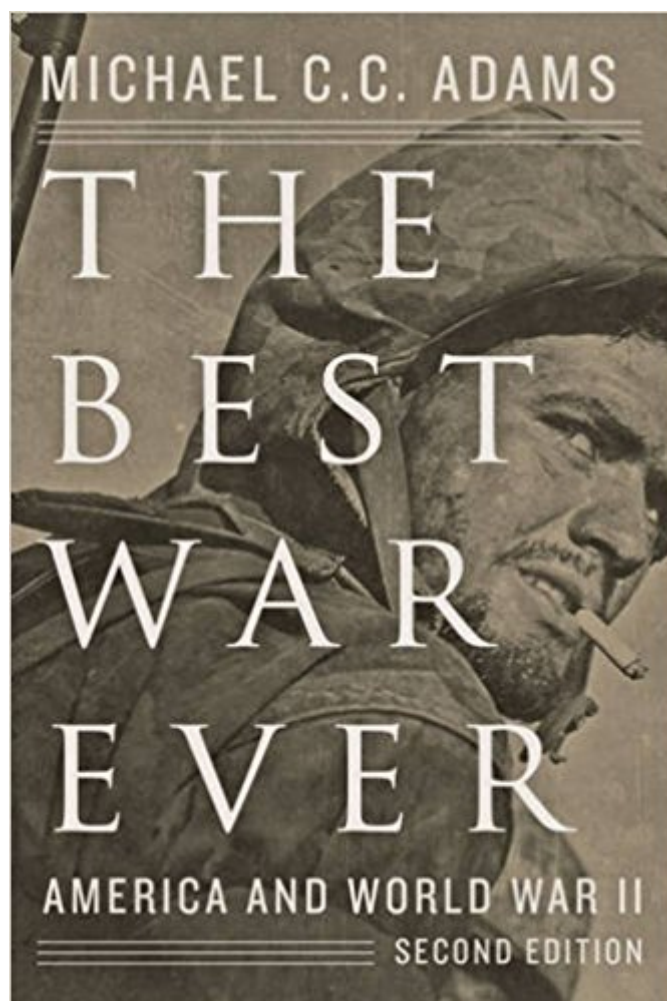


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# The Best War Ever: America And World War II (The American Moment)



## Synopsis

Was World War II really such a "good war"? Popular memory insists that it was, in fact, "the best war ever." After all, we knew who the enemy was, and we understood what we were fighting for. The war was good for the economy. It was liberating for women. A battle of tanks and airplanes, it was a "cleaner" war than World War I. Although we did not seek the conflict—or so we believed—Americans nevertheless rallied in support of the war effort, and the nation's soldiers, all twelve million of them, were proud to fight. But according to historian Michael C. C. Adams, our memory of the war era as a golden age is distorted. It has left us with a misleading—even dangerous—legacy, one enhanced by the nostalgia-tinged retrospectives of Stephen E. Ambrose and Tom Brokaw. Disputing many of our common assumptions about the period, Adams argues in *The Best War Ever* that our celebratory experience of World War II is marred by darker and more sordid realities. In the book, originally published in 1994, Adams challenges stereotypes to present a view of World War II that avoids the simplistic extremes of both glorification and vilification. *The Best War Ever* charts the complex diplomatic problems of the 1930s and reveals the realities of ground combat: no moral triumph, it was in truth a brutal slog across a blasted landscape. Adams also exposes the myth that the home front was fully united behind the war effort, demonstrating how class, race, gender, and age divisions split Americans. Meanwhile, in Europe and Asia, shell-shocked soldiers grappled with emotional and physical trauma, rigorously enforced segregation, and rampant venereal disease. In preparing this must-read new edition, Adams has consulted some seventy additional sources on topics as varied as the origins of Social Security and a national health system, the Allied strategic bombing campaign, and the relationship of traumatic brain injuries to the adjustment problems of veterans. The revised book also incorporates substantial developments that have occurred in our understanding of the course and character of the war, particularly in terms of the human consequences of fighting. In a new chapter, "The Life Cycle of a Myth," Adams charts image-making about the war from its inception to the present. He contrasts it with modern-day rhetoric surrounding the War on Terror, while analyzing the real-world consequences that result from distorting the past, including the dangerous idea that only through (perpetual) military conflict can we achieve lasting peace.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Adams... uses his demythologizing lens to provide a rich overview of American involvement in the war... [He] has a real gift for efficiently explaining complex historical problems." (Reviews in American History)"Not only is this mythologizing bad history, says Adams, it is dangerous as well. Surrounding the war with an aura of nostalgia both fosters the delusion that war can cure our social ills and makes us strong again, and weakens confidence in our ability to act effectively in our own time." (Journal of Military History)

Michael C. C. Adams is Regents Professor of History Emeritus at Northern Kentucky University. He is the author of *Living Hell: The Dark Side of the Civil War* and *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I*.

One of the best books on America's experience in WWII. He shows that most of the problems we have today (name almost anything) goes back to how we fought the war. More especially he shows that we did not stop fighting the War. The US did an excellent job fighting WWII (w/ the exceptions of updating our basic tank and fighting/stopping racial problems/relations) and for the most part we came together as a nation and defeated a terrible set of enemies and Adams shows this. But we did such a good job we have, essentially, stayed organized as a society to fight WWII or its equivalent. The book is well documented, internally w/ in the text. It is easy to read and can probably be read by most in 24hrs or less, and gives an important perspective upon that period of time and what has come out of it. He questions alternatives to Appeasement. We looking back, may not accept or like Appeasement, but he makes some good arguments for Chamberlain's actions. For many of the negative reviewers who blindly follow the Heroic America line, a little antecedent from my Father

who was an armorer for the B-29's on Tinian Island. He and one of the older men he was working w/ were watching the officers coming and going from their club. His friend said, "Frank, those guys think they are so smart, and they have got theirs, but when this is all over, I'm going to get mine."

I developed my interest in history as a teenager reading World War Two history and at that time came to believe the United States pretty much single handedly won the war. My studies in history have since broadened, especially after visiting Japan in the late sixties and watching a Japanese movie about World War Two. From that movie I took an interest in finding books that give accounts from "the other side" and did not glorify the history of war into a paper version of a John Wayne movie. This book gives the adult version of history, laying out the good and the bad. The author does not make the United States a villain, but showed World War Two to be no different than any other time in that war is hell and no side comes away blameless. I especially liked the account of civilians dealing with the war in the United States.

Adams exposes many traditional myths of World War II and war in general, using well constructed arguments and supporting evidence. A good educational tool for perspective on a significant historical event from both the battle field and the home front.

Arrived right on time. In great condition. One of the best books I've read. Very eye opening. I wish more people would read it.

One of the best books about WWII that I ever read. Originally, I had read it for a class freshman year of college and lent my copy to someone and never got it back, so I wanted another one.

If you like war and theory this book is for you. If you also like to hear how war really is and not how movies portray war; then again, this book might be for you.

I grew up through all of the war, but even this book had a couple of things in it that I didn't know about and I always considered myself quite an expert on WWII. I have been collecting WWII books and CDs for years. This is a good one.

great!

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