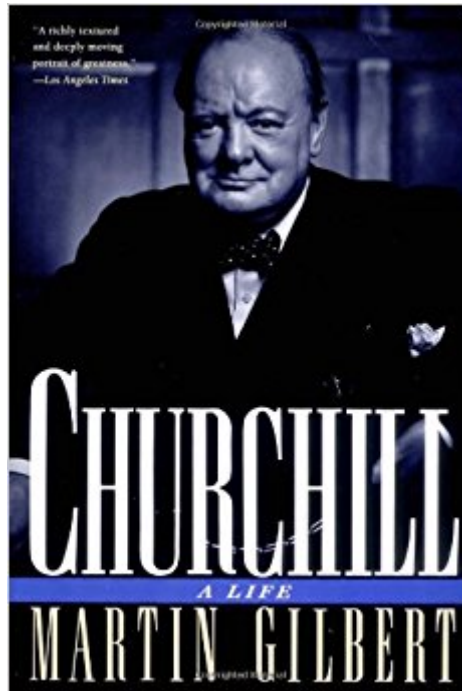




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Churchill: A Life



Synopsis

Distilled from years of meticulous research and documentation, filled with material unavailable when the earliest books of the official biography's eight volumes went to press, Churchill is a brilliant marriage of the hard facts of the public life and the intimate details of the private man. The result is a vital portrait of one of the most remarkable men of any age as well as a revealing depiction of a man of extraordinary courage and imagination.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is impossible to understand the Second World War without understanding Winston Churchill, the bold British Prime Minister who showed himself to be one of the greatest statesmen any nation has ever known. This lengthy biography is a single-volume abridgment of a massive, eight-volume work that took a quarter-century to write. It covers Churchill's entire life, highlighting not only his exploits during the Second World War, but also his early belief in technology and how it would revolutionize warfare in the 20th century. Churchill learned how to fly a plane before the First World War, and was also involved in the development of both the tank and anti-aircraft defense. But he truly showed his unmatched mettle during his country's darkest moments: "His finest hour was the leadership of Britain when it was most isolated, most threatened, and most weak; when his own courage, determination, and belief in democracy became at one with the nation," writes Gilbert. There are several wonderful books available on Churchill, but this is probably the best place to start.

Author of an eight-volume official biography of Winston Churchill, Gilbert here distills his vast knowledge into a lucid, comprehensive and authoritative life of the man considered by many to have been the outstanding public figure of the 20th century. Photos. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I have to rate this book up there with one of the best I have read, in spite of the fact that there was a point in the book, about a fourth of the way through, when I wondered if I would finish it. I struggled a bit, reading about Churchill as a boy, and also his early political life. He was an odd child, and not having a great understanding of the British Parliamentary system, it dragged on some. That being said, in the end, I would not remove any of that from the book if I were editing it, which I clearly don't have the qualifications to do. Without them, it would be hard to fully understand the life of this unique and magnificent man. I don't believe there is a more significant character in the 20th century than Winston Spencer Churchill and without an understanding of this man, it is impossible to understand World War II and why the allies won the war. Martin Gilbert does such a wonderful job of weaving the narrative of, not only Churchill's life, but the multitude of events in the 20th century that he played a role, that even though I knew the outcome, I couldn't put the book down. In the end, I came away with not just a deeper admiration for WSC, but a greater understanding of the history of his era. Churchill is one of the heroes of history, and Gilbert does an admirable job of proving that point. Highly recommended.

It's been said Churchill was the greatest man of the 20th Century. I'm not sure I'd go that far but there is no denying he'd be at the top of the short list. This book gives you his life in a one-volume source. Written by the top current Churchill biographer, it gives you his life from birth to boarding school, the military to parliament (of which he was a member for most of his life...and indeed most of the 20th Century. I'll skip the usual mini biography and instead tell you about the book (which is the point of a review, since this isn't a board ok report). It's easily accessible to Americans who probably aren't familiar with the vagaries of UK political history. I dare say most younger UK citizens would learn a great deal as well. Gilbert treats him fairly neither doing a whitewash or hatchet job, though he takes care to give Churchill's side of controversies or what some see as debacles (like the Turkish campaign in WWI). What I would have liked to have seen more of is personal stuff.... His marriage seems to have been happy but it seems every time his wife is mentioned, she's on a holiday without him (which makes sense...since she wouldn't have written him letters...the source of the information... if she was with him). Still, you wonder if all was well in their marriage, or cutting the

chase...if he had any affairs. Gilbert doesn't address the issue at all, where this makes one wonder or question his objectivity. Also, he mentions Churchill's prodigious drinking habits but only occasional mentions of being drunk. I think a man is explained by the little things as well as the great, I would like to have read about his diet, taste in films/music and more about his relationship with his children. One very minor point, I caught a couple of minor technical errors...such as the type of aircraft he used as wartime PM (it was a York, not a Lancaster) again small but easily checked, I expected more from such a renowned historian. Again, I really enjoyed this, I'm tempted to try the author's multi-volume work..Highly recommended if you're interested in 20th Century or World War I/II History..in fact I'll go so far as to say this should be on every WWII buff's reading list.

This is a massive, one volume biography of one of the twentieth century's true Titans. The book encompasses Churchill's youth, education and early military career, his journalistic work, and his political leadership. As one would expect, the narrative peaks during WWII. Churchill's leadership during this dark time was superb. He was one of those historic characters who was EXACTLY the right man, in the right place, at the right time!! His imprint on world history and Great Britain is indelible. The span of the man's life and his accomplishments in several diverse fields is absolutely astonishing. All of this is driven home by the author's excellent prose. The narrative is augmented by Churchill's own speeches and excerpts from his writing. The man's words leap off the page and engross the reader. However, I was disappointed and I fully recognize that my rating and my opinion runs counter to the vast majority of other reviews posted here. My concerns are as follows:- I thought way too much trivial detail was spent on Churchill's youth. While I understand how important youthful experiences are in shaping and defining later attitudes and motivations, I came away with little insight into young Churchill's soul. I was disappointed that not more effort was spent on sharpening the focus of his relationships with his parents and family. Less space taken up with Churchill's report cards and more attention to the "inner" youth would have been, I believe, more profitable for the reader.- My major issue with the book is that it is in no way objective. Churchill's every move, every phrase, every political position, every forecast is treated as outright success or draped in positive connotations. Failures that are attached to Churchill's name are actually the fault of others or unavoidable circumstances. There was no "what if" analysis. No discussion of alternatives. Everything Churchill thought or did was presented with such certainty and free from doubt. Frankly, half way into the book I really got sick and tired of reading about the multiple unbroken successes that an larger than life portrait that the author presented.- I didn't feel that I got to know Churchill "The Person" His fears, doubts, motivations, feelings, themes and

emotions were presented, but not fully developed. Churchill is depicted in almost mythic proportions I didn't get to know Churchill as a real living creature, beset by doubts and emotions. It was like looking at a coloring book....images are presented in outline, you get a reasonable idea of the subject, but it is still an outline, not fully developed by color and shading.I greatly enjoy non-fiction that is balanced, objective with sufficient discussion to provide the reader with perspective, insight and thought provoking scenarios. After I finished this book, I learned what Churchill did, what he accomplished but not who he was.

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