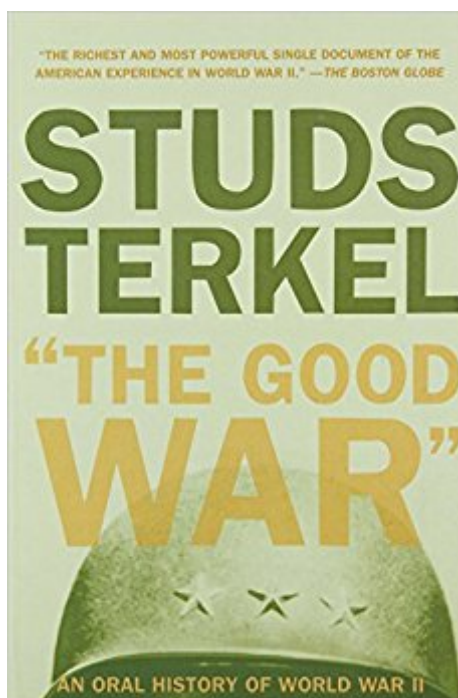


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# The Good War: An Oral History Of World War II



## Synopsis

“The Good War”, for which Studs Terkel won the Pulitzer Prize, is a testament not only to the experience of war but to the extraordinary skill of Terkel as interviewer. As always, his subjects are open and unrelenting in their analyses of themselves and their experiences, producing what People magazine has called “a splendid epic history of World War II.” With this volume Terkel expanded his scope to the global and the historical, and the result is a masterpiece of oral history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Studs Terkel, the noted Chicago-based journalist, gathers the reminiscences of 121 participants in World War II (called "the good war" because, in the words of one soldier, "to see fascism defeated, nothing better could have happened to a human being"). These participants, men and women, famous and ordinary, tell stories that add immeasurably to our understanding of that cataclysmic time. One Soviet soldier recounts that, surrounded by the Germans, his comrades tapped the powder from their last cartridges and inserted notes to their families inside the casings; Russian children, he goes on, still turn these up every now and again and deliver the notes to the soldiers' families. Terkel touches on many themes along the way, including institutionalized racism in the United States military, the birth of the military-industrial complex, and the origins of the Cold War.

As in *Hard Times* and *Working*, this master interviewer again creates a turbulent epic of human experience by quoting the words of those who lived it. . . . A vivid resurrection of a lost time. --

Newsday Deeply moving and profoundly important. -- Boston Globe promise you will remember your war years, if you were alive then, with extraordinary vividness as you go through Studs Terkel's book. Or, if you are too young to remember, this is the best place to get a sense of what people were feeling. -- Garry Wills, Chicago Tribune Book World Incontestably one of the great human documents of all time. It has the essence and cumulative force of a hundred powerful war novels, without drawing on a single word of fiction. Among major historians Terkel is now in orbit all by himself, world class. -- Norman Corwin Read this important book. -- Philadelphia Inquirer Tremendously compelling, somehow dramatic and intimate at the same time, as if one has stumbled on private accounts in letters long locked in attic trunks...Mr. Terkel's book gives the American experience in World War Two great immediacy...In terms of plain human interest, Mr. Terkel may well have put together the most vivid collection of World War Two sketches ever gathered between covers. -- Loudon Wainwright, The New York Times Book Review

So glad I got the Kindle version; this is probably the most important book I've ever read. There is simply nothing more comprehensive in scope and detail, nor more revealing about how American history played out over the 20th century, and beyond. I've never gotten more insight or food for thought anywhere, and the Kindle version will make it easy to take with me for years to come.

I have an extensive WW2 collection and cannot believe I had not read this. Very compelling read into the mindset of the general public about the war. Not propaganda, just a collection of oral memories.

Truly spectacular book capturing participants who participated in so many ways - unsung heroes both men and women along with the tragic survivors of Holocaust. Cannot praise this book enough and started to read more slowly as I did not want it to end.

Informative and entertaining, a hard thing to do with what is basically a history novel. The way the story is broken up and expressed through the participants' words will make you proud to be an American. The Good War is an apt title. A must read for everyone, but especially for WWII buffs.

I needed this book for a class. I wouldn't ordinarily buy it, but I do enjoy hearing life stories. This is fabulous for that!

This sort of writing on war explains why veterans so often avoid speaking about their war experience. These would bring back visual memories of bodies torn to shreds, of the unbelievable smell of decomposition and effluence and of their own failure to act with heroism or at least to hide fear. Combat was exactly the opposite of what the John Wayne portrayed. The reader feels and smells the sphincters released from shock. The author lets the actors explain how miserably long every day is when one didn't know how much longer it would last and how back home their wives put up with the situation. Some men were in this predicament for years on end. I also imagine what the author would have listened to if he had interviewed the British troops, some of who started already in 1939. Writing war as Mr Terkel has done takes all the glamour away from going into battle or flying a bomber.

"The Good War" - Studs Terkel's 5th oral history - was published in 1984. Like most of his other books, this too was a "best seller". Terkel has put together excerpts from some 124 interviews with people who lived during the war years - ex-military officers and enlisted men, defense industry workers, atomic bomb scientists, celebrities, politicians, Jews, Japanese, Germans, Russians, men, women, blacks, native Americans, rich, poor, younger, older. I've missed some, but you get the idea. The war, notes Terkel, was good for most Americans, ergo - the title. After a long, lean depression throughout the country, there were again plenty of jobs, plenty of money, and plenty of hell-raising. Also, Americans were happy to work hard and to lend their support to the war effort - in whatever way they could - because they thought they knew why the country was at war. Maybe they did, maybe they didn't. Most active participants in the war survived the experience: there were 129 million Americans at that time, 5 million served on active military duty, 1 million of those were killed, wounded, or injured in the war. Most Americans interviewed considered the war years generally happy ones. Many of those who served in the military considered their war-time experiences the most exciting times of their lives. When people spoke to the tape recorder about their lives during the war years, they automatically came up with the most exciting, most memorable, most tragic, most funny, most whatever - because these are stories that they've been thinking about, telling and retelling for over 30 years. That's what makes this book so readable. It's definitely not boring and it's definitely informative. Many people recalled a specific moment in their lives, when they were unbelievably lucky, and because they were lucky, they survived with their life. In my view, if you are going to read just one book about WWII, this should be the book!

The book is awesome to read getting it from first person experience gives the War a whole new

perspective.

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