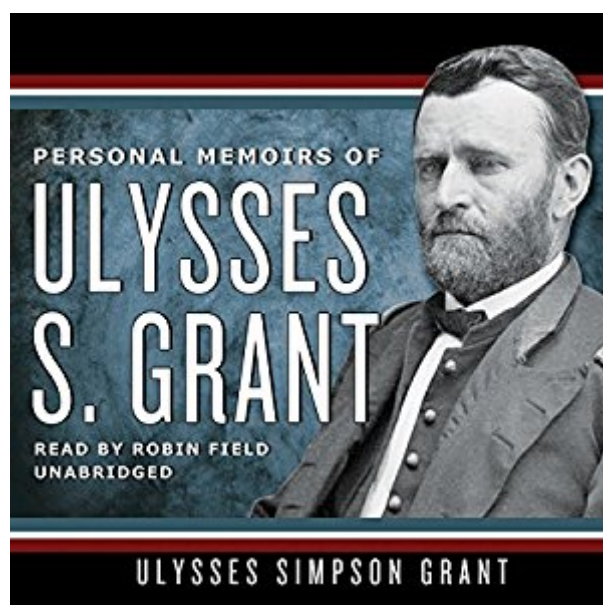


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Personal Memoirs Of Ulysses S. Grant



Synopsis

Among the autobiographies of great military figures, Ulysses S. Grant's is certainly one of the finest, and it is arguably the most notable literary achievement of any American president: a lucid, compelling, and brutally honest chronicle of triumph and failure. From his frontier boyhood, to his heroics in battle, to the grinding poverty from which the Civil War ironically rescued him, these memoirs are a mesmerizing, deeply moving account of a brilliant man told with great courage as he reflects on the fortunes that shaped his life and his character. Written under excruciating circumstances-Grant was dying of throat cancer-and encouraged and edited from its very inception by Mark Twain, it is a triumph of the art of autobiography. Grant was sick and broke when he began work on his memoirs. Driven by financial worries and a desire to provide for his wife, he wrote diligently during a year of deteriorating health. He vowed he would finish the work before he died, and one week after its completion, he lay dead at the age of 63. Publication of the memoirs came at a time when the public was being treated to a spate of wartime reminiscences, many of them defensive in nature, seeking to refight battles or attack old enemies. Grant's penetrating and stately work reveals a nobility of spirit and an innate grasp of the important fact, which he rarely displayed in private life. He writes in his preface that he took up the task "with a sincere desire to avoid doing injustice to anyone, whether on the National or the Confederate side."

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 29 hours and 37 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Blackstone Audio, Inc.

Audible.com Release Date: November 17, 2010

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B004CWFASO

Best Sellers Rank: #29 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Letters

#46 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Fiction & Literature > Literary Collections #60 in Books >

Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Civil War

Customer Reviews

General Grant wrote this book while dying of throat cancer. He had been swindled by a dishonest

Wall Street Broker and his trophies and possessions were stripped from him to satisfy the demands of his debtors. Bankrupt, suffering from a terminal illness and never passing a moment without acute pain, he produced this magnificent monument to his greatness. Those who denigrate Grant as a drunkard, butcher, bumbling President need to read this book in order to correct these errant assumptions. It is impossible to read this book and not realize that Grant was an inordinately intelligent man and one hell of a writer. Grant's Memoirs are a deserved classic in American literature and considered the greatest military Memoirs ever penned, exceeding Caesar's Commentaries. Grant wrote as he lived: with clear, concise statements, unembellished with trivialities or frivolities. The only "criticism" the reader might have is that Grant bent over backwards not to wound the feelings of people in the book. He takes swipes at Joe Hooker and Jeff Davis, but what he left unsaid would have been far more interesting. A compelling and logical reason why Grant was so spare in his comments was because he was involved in a race with death. He didn't know how long he could live and therefore, "cut to the chase." Grant's assessments of Lincoln, Sherman, Sheridan and other military leaders are brilliant and engrossing. His style, like the man himself, was inimitable and couldn't be copied. In everyday life, Grant was a very funny man, who liked to listen to jokes and tell them himself. His sense of the absurd was acute. It's no accident that he loved Mark Twain and the two hitched together very well.

I have never been much of a Civil War fan, but after reading "The Killer Angels" by Shaara, a historical fiction about Gettysburg, I was interested in following up with some non-fiction about the most important event in US History. This book kept me turning the pages from end to end. Despite its bulk (some 618 pages) I simply couldn't put the book down, as Grant's matter-of-fact description of the events that surrounded him was completely engrossing. Grant was not an extraordinary man or brilliant tactician, his soldiers did not have the same obsession with him that the South held for Lee, he simply saw the war for what it was, a campaign against a rebellion. He looked at the entire war in its entirety, from battlefield to battlefield, and he repeatedly used that to his advantage. Many times he makes reference to deploying troops to no clear end other than to occupy an enemies flank, this often as a junior with no authority over the battle as a whole. Grant was a man of action, who realized he had to take a step in order to walk a mile. He took the battle to the enemy, divided clear and necessary steps which were needed to win the war as a whole. He was a general who did not just see the war as independent sets of battles, but saw those battles as a means to ending the Civil War. One of my favorite parts of the text was watching the scope of Grant's vision widen. Starting with his actions in the Mexican American War his vision is very limited: he sees only the

immediate battle, and his descriptions focus on minutiae reflecting his low rank. His vision escalates with his rank, until the end of the book, with the surrender of Lee, he sees and describes the entire army, and battles that would have once taken chapters to described are now dismissed in single sentences.

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