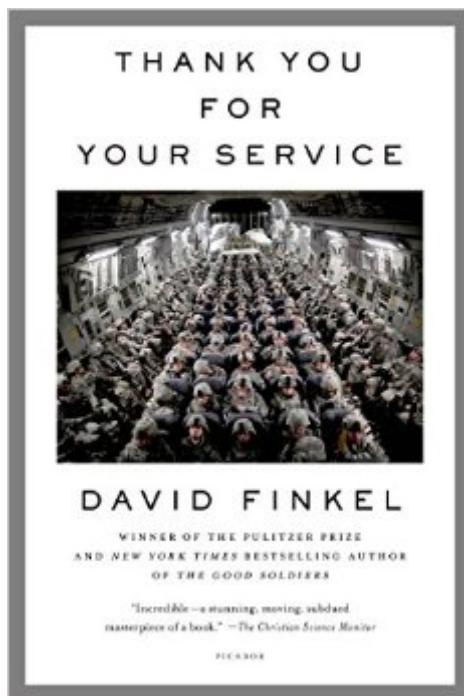


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Thank You For Your Service



Synopsis

A FINALIST FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES BOOK PRIZE, THE DAYTON LITERARY PEACE PRIZE, AND THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY HELEN BERNSTEIN AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN JOURNALISM ONE OF TEN FAVORITE BOOKS OF 2013 BY MICHIKO KAKUTANI (THE NEW YORK TIMES) AND A WASHINGTON POST TOP TEN BOOK OF THE YEAR NAMED A BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR BY THE WASHINGTON POST, USA TODAY, THE ECONOMIST, THE SEATTLE TIMES, AND MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE. NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW NOTABLE BOOK OF THE YEAR. No journalist has reckoned with the psychology of war as intimately as David Finkel. In *The Good Soldiers*, his bestselling account from the front lines of Baghdad, Finkel embedded with the men of the 2-16 Infantry Battalion as they carried out the infamous "surge," a grueling fifteen-month tour that changed them all forever. In *Thank You for Your Service*, Finkel follows many of those same men as they return home and struggle to reintegrate—both into their family lives and into American society at large. He is with them in their most intimate, painful, and hopeful moments as they try to recover, and in doing so, he creates an indelible, essential portrait of what life after war is like—not just for these soldiers, but for their wives, widows, children, and friends, and for the professionals who are truly trying, and to a great degree failing, to undo the damage that has been done. *Thank You for Your Service* is an act of understanding, and it offers a more complete picture than we have ever had of two essential questions: When we ask young men and women to go to war, what are we asking of them? And when they return, what are we thanking them for?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Commenting on this book should start with the elegiac cover image of nameless soldiers packed into a transport plane - small, faceless and an honest visual portrayal. That's what soldiers looked like, going overseas or coming home: tired and small and grinding out another day. As this easily five-star book explains, that grind continues long after the plane ride ends. In interviews, author David Finkel has made clear he did not use the title ironically - as he said, when one says 'thank you' this book describes what those words are thanking a soldier or their families for. This book follows soldiers and family members first chronicled in Finkel's *The Good Soldiers*, which told the story of an Iraq deployment in 2007-8. The years since have given Finkel the time and space to tell a post-war story with honest perspective. Finkel scrupulously avoids the first-person narration so self-indulgently common in many wartime stories and memoirs. He does not pass judgement, or editorialize. He witnesses and chronicles events and conversations, but only rarely can a reader say with confidence what Finkel actually thought. That's a compliment - the narrative becomes the subject's story, whether it's Sgt. Adam Schumann, dealing with crippling PTSD, or Amanda Doster, who lost her husband, or others. With this objective focus, I rarely felt manipulated or emotionally distracted by a writer's demand that I feel something - the descriptions do that without needing any artificial help.

Thank You for Your Service chronicles the slow and painful journey of soldiers profiled in *The Good Soldiers*, and their families to recover from war. These men, and one widow, mainly want just to get back to normal. The problem is that that very little in their lives is normal. Not only is PTSD an ever present waking nightmare, money troubles, career problems and the strain of raising children under incredible pressure is more than some can bear. If there were an effective cure, or even a good treatment for PTSD, ineffective treatment would be less frustrating to read about. We'd be turning the pages waiting for the upturn in the story. This book takes us on the journey of treatment but mostly it's about the disease, and what it does. I read about these men, wives beaten, children raised in stress, listening to constant fighting and my heart ached. These families are so young. The wives are little more than girls, but have responsibilities that would crush much more experienced people. Most seemed isolated from their families, with no aunts, uncles, parents or grandparents to share the burden. This terrible problem needs national attention - I don't know of a recent veteran who isn't worried about at least one friend. Many young veterans have lost good friends, to suicide. There are veterans groups, doctors, the sometimes hapless VA, but no easy answers. But at the same time I worry that this book might make people nervous about returning veterans, the vast majority of whom, do not suffer from the long term effects of PTSD. When my son went off to war, as

a Marine, he explained to me that the risk of PTSD increases with each deployment. He came home of sound mind, and in one piece.

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