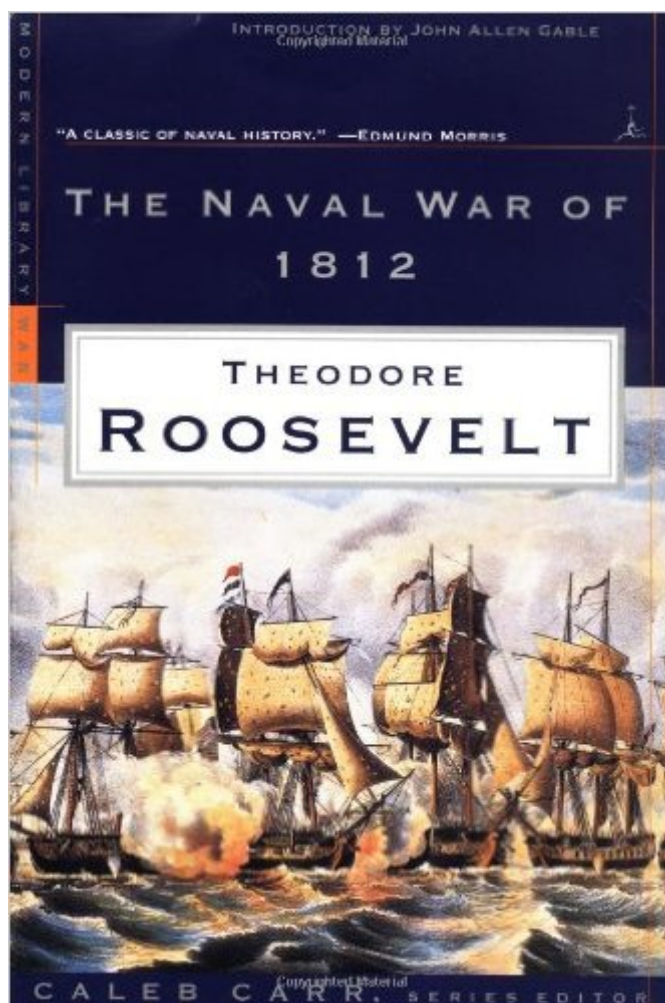


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The Naval War Of 1812 (Modern Library War)



Synopsis

Published when Theodore Roosevelt was only twenty-three years old, *The Naval War of 1812* was immediately hailed as a literary and scholarly triumph, and it is still considered the definitive book on the subject. It caused considerable controversy for its bold refutation of earlier accounts of the war, but its brilliant analysis and balanced tone left critics floundering, changed the course of U.S. military history by renewing interest in our obsolete forces, and set the young author and political hopeful on a path to greatness. Roosevelt's inimitable style and robust narrative make *The Naval War of 1812* enthralling, illuminating, and utterly essential to every armchair historian. The books in the Modern Library War series have been chosen by series editor Caleb Carr according to the significance of their subject matter, their contribution to the field of military history, and their literary merit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In a time when patriotism is passe, reading this book can redden the stuff in any American's veins. Our Navy's often-victorious battles against a superb and numerically superior foe ranks with the Athenian victory at Marathon in the annals of honor. Roosevelt was a natural storyteller and a first-rate scholar. Like JFK two generations later ("Why England Slept") this work was the product of a young twentysomething Harvard grad (JFK was actually a senior) that commanded serious attention nationally, and presaged a later rise to the summit of public life. Roosevelt's research is exhaustive, but not tedious, thanks to a vigorous prose style that carries the reader through a mass

of detail without losing sight. The digression on which nationalities make the best seafarers would no doubt be considered un-PC today, but, as a general characterization of national characteristics, they arguably hold true. The author's final chapter, on the Battle of New Orleans, foreshadows future policy, in that his criticism of the unreliability of the militia were embodied in the reforms that fully Federalized the National Guard, as the Dick Act of 1903. (Doubtless, his Spanish-American War experiences contributed to his desire to supplant the 1793 Militia Act, as well.) This book rests on my shelf, next to Mahan's "The Influence of Sea Power Upon History," and O'Brien's Aubrey-Maturin novels - as is fitting for an historical work written in the spirit of high adventure and studded with minute detail. -Lloyd A. Conway

A book that comes close to setting a standard both for excellent history-writing and for historical scholarship when previous historians need straightening out. Theodore Roosevelt's book "The Naval War of 1812" sets an outstanding example: a story well told, with discussion of controversy along the way, including discussion of mistakes and of sources, and including application to matters current when it was written. TR's first and, I've heard tell, perhaps best book; someone cracked that his book on Cromwell revealed more about TR than about Cromwell. TR (1) tells the story of the war, (2) often correcting a British chauvinist history and giving the details James Fenimore Cooper's story left out, those being the two main histories before TR wrote, (3) going to the original sources--ships' logs, captains' reports, etc., and (4) showing us how he concludes what he concludes. Excellent and enjoyable work--TR has quite a bit of fun correcting the British guy. (I saw the line "Best history book I've ever read" in an article in the libertarian Reason magazine a couple decades ago, saying this of "Washing of the Spears: the Rise and Fall of the Zulu Nation." Which is indeed a 5-star book, but I think TR's 1812 a slightly better one.) 7 December A.D. 2010

This Echo Library edition is a great disappointment. It is riddled with mistakes; words run together, first letter of many words missing, placement of footnote numbers incorrect. There are many different formats used for tables. Their decision to remove the original illustrations and diagrams was a major mistake. It is obvious that a proper proof reading was not carried out. The responsible person for this production has a lot to answer for. In my opinion this edition should never have come to print. It is no longer a useful reference to the serious student nor is it much good for the casual interested reader.

Kindle edition is free. How good does the book have to be? What most readers may not know is that

this book was something of a standard history at the U S Navel Academy and in British universities. TR was a very much a superior historian, if still a man of his times. This is a critical history and not for light entertainment. TR makes a serious analysis of nearly every important engagement between American units and the British. In every case he is scrupulous about praising and blaming where he believe praise and blame is appropriate. In every case he makes known his reasons. Unfortunately, he is furious at a previously published British analysis of the Naval WAR of 1812 and his often repeated damnation of the nationalistic bias of that edition bulks out this volume with too much recycled bile. The presumption that race matters is endemic in this text. There is some admission that -for example- the French built good (better) ships and when well lead could earn victory. In the main there is an assumption that the Americans were the better race, the British, close cousins to Americans were second and all other claimants trail according to how closely their national blood line mirrored the American blood line. For many readers this fact renders this book as unreadable. I suggest that: The Naval War of 1812 stands as document historic in its own right. And that the racism of TR makes it a case in point from which readers can document any number of personal viewpoints.

This very well-written account, surprising from a youth of only 23, gives balanced portrayals of most of the major sea battles between the fledgling American navy, and the Lord of the Seas, Great Britain. In it, Roosevelt backs up his praise of American maritime ingenuity and the seaworthiness and discipline of its sailors with proofs, citations and cautious but sound reasoning. In each, diagrams of the engagements are provided, as well as other documented statistics, without overloading the reader with details, yet there are plenty of those. Roosevelt describes the handling of each ship and the actions of its captains with minute detail, without being, to the layman, purely technical. Although Roosevelt beats the patriotic drum, he also swings a corrective switch, against our commanders and our partisan historians, when their actions are faulty and objectionable -- a fact which underscores his fairmindedness and the authenticity of his rendering.

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