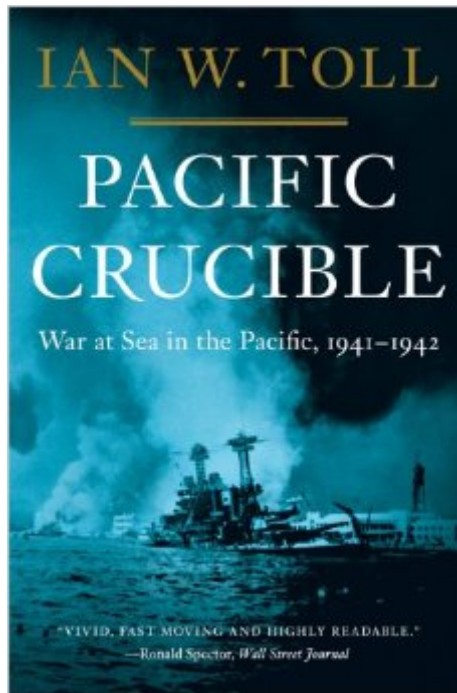


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Pacific Crucible: War At Sea In The Pacific, 1941-1942: War At Sea In The Pacific, 1941-1942



Synopsis

“Both a serious work of history . . . and a marvelously readable dramatic narrative.” —San Francisco Chronicle

On the first Sunday in December 1941, an armada of Japanese warplanes appeared suddenly over Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and devastated the U.S. Pacific Fleet. Six months later, in a sea fight north of the tiny atoll of Midway, four Japanese aircraft carriers were sent into the abyss, a blow that destroyed the offensive power of their fleet. *Pacific Crucible* tells the epic tale of these first searing months of the Pacific war, when the U.S. Navy shook off the worst defeat in American military history and seized the strategic initiative. This dramatic narrative, relying predominantly on eyewitness accounts and primary sources, is laced with riveting details of heroism and sacrifice on the stricken ships and planes of both navies. At the war’s outset, Japan’s pilots and planes enjoyed a clear-cut superiority to their American counterparts, but there was a price to be paid. Japanese pilots endured a lengthy and grueling training in which they were disciplined with baseball bats, often suffering broken bones; and the production line of the Zero “Japan’s superbly maneuverable fighter plane” ended not at a highway or railhead but at a rice paddy, through which the planes were then hauled on ox carts. Combat losses, of either pilots or planes, could not be replaced in time to match the fully mobilized American war machine. *Pacific Crucible* also spotlights recent scholarship that revises our understanding of the conflict, including the Japanese decision to provoke a war that few in their highest circles thought they could win. Those doubters included the flamboyantly brilliant Admiral Isokoru Yamamoto, architect of the raid on Pearl and the Midway offensive. Once again, Ian W. Toll proves himself to be a simply magnificent writer. The result here is a page-turning history that does justice to the breadth and depth of a tremendous subject.

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Customer Reviews

Having thoroughly enjoyed Ian Toll's history of the founding of the U.S. Navy in *Six Frigates*, I was looking forward to his history of its glory days in the Pacific during WWII. I was not disappointed. *Pacific Crucible* is a fine account of the crucial six months between Pearl Harbor and Midway. The events and much of the material Toll uses to describe them will be familiar to students of the period. What makes Toll's book such a pleasurable read is the quality of his narrative style and his superb judgment in deciding which items to include and how to arrange them. His perceptive prologue and his portraits of the key players are quite good as well. The prologue in particular offers a worthwhile explanation of how quickly Japan caught up with the western world and then was fatally tempted to subdue it. In addition, I found Toll's description of the Battle of the Coral Sea fresh and comprehensive. This important battle is often relegated to a passing mention as the prelude to Midway, but Toll corrects that oversight. His recounting of the role intelligence played in the ultimate defeat of the Japanese also goes well beyond that provided in other books on the subject. Among other things, I had not considered the value of Halsey's raids in the early months of 1942 to the cryptologists - the resulting increase in Japanese radio traffic helped to identify locations, ships, and even officers. There are a few glitches. The International Date Line is not northeast of Oahu, and the term "shuttle bombing" is misused. I also tired of the numerous references to pilots as "flyboys." After several odd references to "fuel tankers," Toll labels these ships with the more familiar term "fleet oilers." These are very minor complaints, however, and should not deter anyone from acquiring this highly recommended book.

Ian W Toll has done it again. It has been years since I read his first book, *Six Frigates* so when I saw that he was releasing another book on naval history, I was more than excited. The *Pacific Crucible* starts out with a brilliant account of the Mahan tactics, which helps establish his point of how a sailor from the 1850's would be more accustomed to the life aboard a ship in the 1600's than in the 1900's. This is continued by the detailed descriptions of the political situations that developed

the conflict on both fronts. The, Toll delves into a graphic and violent account of the day that has lived in infamy for over 70 years. I was enlightened at how Churchill convinced Roosevelt that a Europe first strategy was more important than committing to a Pacific campaign, and the descriptions of how the Japanese military converted their society for war brought their ultimate demise. The naval battles were done in an informative and exciting fashion. For those that claim that history is dull, I recommend that they read a Toll book. My one complaint about the book is that the ending felt somewhat rushed. Toll concludes the Battle of Midway, and then after a several pages briefly proving Admiral Yamamoto's early predictions of how war with the United States would end, the book ends itself. I was expecting more regarding the rest of the war, but since the book was primarily about the major naval actions of the Pacific, it was understandable, seeing how the subtitle of the book states it only accounts from 1941-1942. Overall, a five star rating barely does this magnificent book justice. I certainly hope that Toll is working on another project.

This book is one terrific read. As someone who has a deep interest in WW2 history, I try to read as many books on the subject as I can. The book is filled with new information and detail I was unaware of. For example, the aftermath of the attack on Pearl Harbor is very well done. Descriptions of sailors and marines covered with fuel oil that was almost impossible to remove even with gasoline baths, the fear of the civilian population just after the attack, the difficulty of seaplanes to take off in water fouled with fuel oil (one of the pilots was a future CNO) and graphic descriptions of the injuries and burns are just some of the details that I have never read before. The book also contains mini-biographies of men such as Yamamoto, Nimitz, and King which are succinct but very clear. The review of political events leading to war are also well done. Although this expression is probably overused, the book does read like a novel. The above is only a small representation of the book which is very much worth your while. I do not think you will be disappointed.

OK - I'm only up to chapter 5 but for all the fans of Ian Toll's "Six Frigates" who want an early review; he's done it again. To be honest I'm not a history buff nor fanatically interested in WWII or the Pacific Theatre (although as an Australian, I probably should be). But once again, Ian Toll's gripping writing has me keen to finish work today and get home to find out what happened to the overwhelmed lads on Wake Atoll, surrounded by Japanese and abandoned by a shell shocked naval leadership in Hawaii. And pardon my complete ignorance, but Yamamoto went to Harvard and Nimitz spoke fluent German... It's a funny world. The portrait of Yamamoto is fascinating. He's more than a likable character. Two books in, the author is fast creating a Toll trademark for combining

enormous research and a gripping story telling ability. I'll update this review when I've finished. I almost want to read it slowly and enjoy it for longer. You know he won't be back with his next book for few years. So five chapters in and I can't put it down. He's done it again.

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