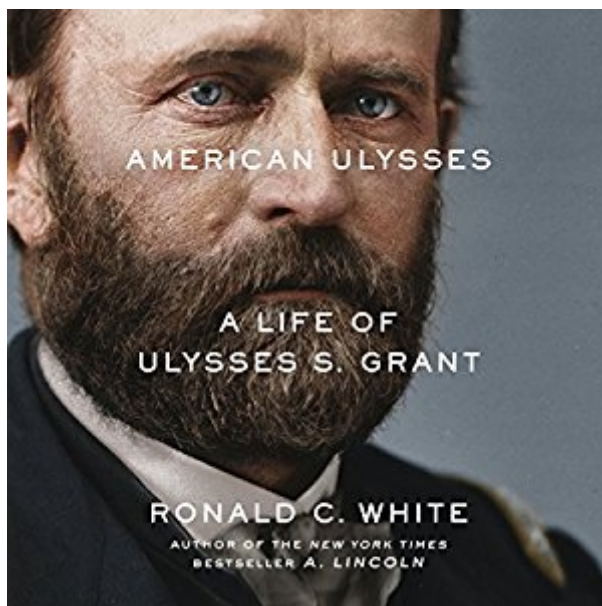


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American Ulysses: A Life Of Ulysses S. Grant



Synopsis

A major new biography of the Civil War general and American president, by the author of the New York Times bestseller *A. Lincoln*. The dramatic story of one of America's greatest and most misunderstood military leaders and presidents, this is a major new interpretation of Ulysses S. Grant. Based on 7 years of research with primary documents, some of them never tapped before, this is destined to become the Grant biography of our times.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 27 hours & 35 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Brilliance Audio

Audible.com Release Date: October 4, 2016

Language: English

ASIN: B01KBMP7IQ

Best Sellers Rank: #1 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > United States > Civil War
#1 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical & Political Figures
#1 in Books > History > Americas > United States > Civil War

Customer Reviews

"American Ulysses" is a captivating and thorough biography of one of America's greatest and often forgotten heroes. As an amateur, Civil War historian, I appreciate the author's vivid detail and the historical accuracy of Grant's accomplishments during the war. Going beyond simple prose, the book is packed with informative maps, period pictures, and illustrations. However, for myself, the real treasure of this biography is found in the details of Grant's personal life, and the periods both before and directly after the Civil War. Ronald C. White Jr. based this biography, in a large part, on all 33 volumes of "The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant". Even though I have read countless other Grant biographies, and Grant's own wonderful memoirs several times over, "American Ulysses" was full of surprises and new insights. Grant's relationship with his wife, Julia, and his entire family, is depicted in great detail. The author's in-depth treatment clearly reveals that Grant's marriage, family, and loyal friends were his anchor during the personal and professional challenges he weathered. Mr. White's description of Grant's accomplishments (and frustrations) while serving under President Andrew Johnson was eye-opening. And both terms of Grant's presidency are given vivid, accurate,

and (thankfully) unbiased detail. Likewise, the section on Grant's world tour was a treasure, and I found myself grateful that fate had finally given this untiring servant of the people a gift for himself. Near the end of the book, there were tears in my eyes when reading about Grant's last day. Mr. White not only brought Ulysses alive for me, but, more than that, helped me to see him as if he was my own friend. For that, I am extremely grateful. Surely, however, the author's greatest accomplishment is that he has given present and future generations of historians and scholars the definitive tome on the life of Ulysses S. Grant. And for that, the world is extremely grateful.

It's funny - in elementary school I remember learning that Robert E. Lee was the spit-and-polished military mastermind who simply ran out of men in his dignified leadership of the noble yet flawed Confederacy, while U.S. Grant was the grumpy idiot savant who smoked and drank and basically threw men at the problem until blundering into victory. And I went to school in Massachusetts! While I've learned the real history since then, I probably had not learned it in such an in-depth way that Ronald White presents here. This is of course a Grant-focused biography. Gettysburg gets a sentence or two, while the Vicksburg campaign gets a chapter - but that gives a deep look into aspects of the Civil War I barely knew or had long forgotten. White does a great job giving lots of details while never feeling overwhelming the reader. White's narrative is totally readable and engaging. This is not a "dry and academic" history (not that there's anything wrong with that in proper setting) but an exciting and poignant and epic biography of an overlooked giant of American history. The "revisionist historians" of yesteryear marginalized Grant - because they were motivated to present a racist and white supremacist worldview - and a biography like this is a chance to revise it back. In school, I had also "learned" that Grant was essentially an accidental president, put up by the era's powerbrokers as someone they successfully manipulated - again, not a true version of history. While Grant's presidential administration had its share of scandals, both personal and professional, White gives enough context so they make sense in the 1870s standards of behavior. More importantly, Grant's consistent attempts at supporting the freedmen were often stymied by the Democratic politicians of the time (including the odious Andrew Johnson), and while he did his general best, the people of the US weren't up to it - the choices made in the 1870-90s represents our nation's darkest hour, and it's no wonder revisionists try to hide that era's evil. But Grant was always big, it's the country that was small.

It wasn't so long ago that in my junior high and high school history classes we learned about gallantry and genius of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson while Grant was almost an

afterthought. We'd learn how Andrew Johnson had stood up to Radical Republicans to save the constitution. Then finally we'd read in our textbooks about how Grant's Presidency was in most ways a failure and ushered in the gilded age. It was interesting reading to me at the time but of course I eventually found out it was materially false account in many aspects. This book follows many other books over recent decades that help set the record straight and allows readers to appreciate Grant's rise from obscurity and failure to become a dynamic military and political leader. The author delves into Grant's campaigns in a manner that is engaging and insightful while demonstrating his military genius. The author also spends time outlining how Grant's principled actions he took as President, some he took without popular support, to ensure former slaves civil rights were protected and the union stabilised after the civil war and divisive, failed presidency of Andrew Johnson. The most interesting part of the book for me though was Grant's pre-civil war life. He came from humble beginnings to attend West Point and become an army officer only to resign in disgrace and fail as a farmer and businessman when he was almost 40. I find it interesting how much he grew in terms of his leadership abilities as a man approaching middle age. This book helped me gain a greater appreciation for Grant as a person and great American leader. I fully recommend this book to anyone who loves American history or reading about great historical figures.

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