
The Last Lion. Winston Spencer Churchill – Defender of the Realm, 1940-1965**by William Manchester and Paul Reid****New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2012****1,232 pages (32 pp of B/W photographs, 8 maps)****Cloth, \$C44.00****ISBN 978-0-316-54770-37****Reviewed by Bernd Horn**

This is a remarkable book. It is the final installment of William Manchester's amazing three-volume biography of Sir Winston Churchill. Manchester completed his research and began writing in 1988, and in the next 10 years, he completed approximately 100 pages. In declining health, he passed the torch to award winning journalist Paul Reid to complete the volume in 2003. William Manchester died the following year. Nonetheless, Paul Reid ably finished the task to the same high standard as Manchester's previous volumes.

Although a biography, it expertly captures the essence of the time period, namely, the Second World War and the start of the Cold War. In many ways, it is a window into the strategic

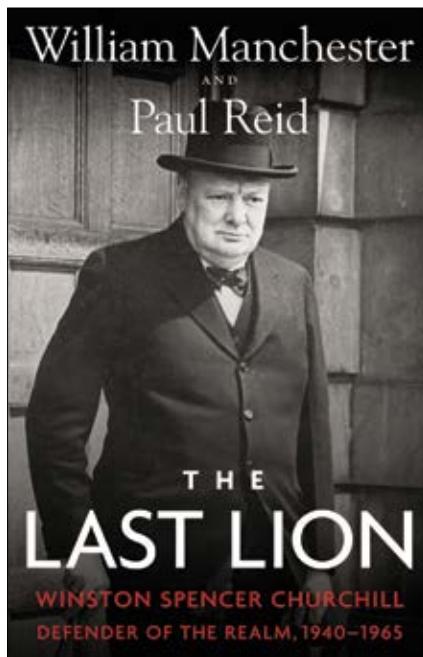
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decision-making of Britain and the Allied cause. The book helps frame decisions, events, and personalities. It never fails to seize the reader's immediate interest.

The book starts with a personal profile of Churchill, which is very detailed and provides an unblemished portrayal of the man. Through personal anecdotes, relationships, and the observations of others, a very accurate picture is developed, which sets the context for the remainder of the book. The author's ability to capture Churchill's personality in such a complete and personal manner is brilliant, and it helps the reader contextualize all else that follows.

The work then follows Churchill from his ascendency to the 'prime ministership,' to his seemingly-personal crusade against Hitler, to his twilight years in the post-war era. The writing is crisp and fast flowing throughout. The outstanding use of language and narrative style makes this chronological biography read like a story that is so engaging that it is hard to put down. Following the progress of the war, starting with the invasion of Western Europe, and through the perspective of Churchill as British War Lord, is simply remarkable. The insights with respect to the Fall of France, the Blitz, obtaining American support, the troubles with coalition partners, determining strategy, balancing political and military imperatives, to name just a few, generates a greater understanding of the conflict, its participants, and the decisions made. Moreover, the use of personal and official

correspondence, letters, and diaries, as well as interviews with those close to Churchill, are all woven together expertly with the end effect that the reader feels they are sharing Churchill's personal confidence.



Not surprisingly, the book focuses primarily upon the Second World War. In fact, 930 pages of the approximate 1,053 pages of narrative are devoted to the conflict. The remaining pages deal with the onset of the Cold War and Churchill's twilight years. This is in no way a criticism as the insights into the policy /strategic level of war are simply invaluable.

The book also contains eight excellent detailed maps and 32 pages of black-and-white photos that capture key actors, some key events, but, most importantly, Churchill's personality. Additionally, the volume contains extensive notes, and a very detailed and accurate index. In the end, this book should be read by all historians, military officers, and anyone with an interest in the Second World War, military history, or strategic-level military civilian relations and decision making.

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