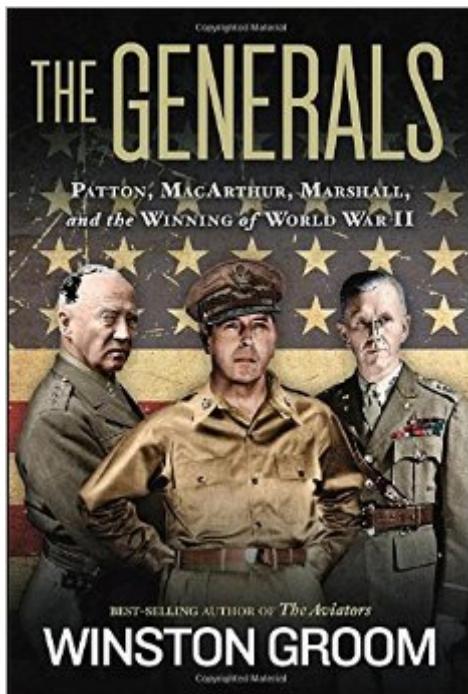


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# The Generals: Patton, MacArthur, Marshall, And The Winning Of World War II



## Synopsis

Celebrated historian Winston Groom tells the intertwined and uniquely American tales of George Patton, Douglas MacArthur, and George Marshall - from the World War I battle that shaped them to their greatest victory: leading the allies to victory in World War II. These three remarkable men-of-arms who rose from the gruesome hell of the First World War to become the finest generals of their generation during World War II redefined America's ideas of military leadership and brought forth a new generation of American soldier. Their efforts revealed to the world the grit and determination that would become synonymous with America in the post-war years. Filled with novel-worthy twists and turns, and set against the backdrop of the most dramatic moments of the twentieth century, *The Generals* is a powerful, action-packed book filled with marvelous surprises and insights into the lives of America's most celebrated warriors.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Winston Groom is an excellent storyteller, whether he's writing fiction or nonfiction. His most recent books (*The Aviators* and this book) have been nonfiction histories. This book, on Generals George Marshall, Douglas MacArthur, and George Patton, is an interesting narrative on the lives, careers, and accomplishments of these great American leaders. Each of these generals have been the subject of many biographies. One might ask why a book should be written, or why should a reader be interested in, a book that provides an overview of these generals' lives? For me the answer to these questions is that Groom has a knack for telling interesting stories that capture key features of a situation. Even though I have read many biographies of George Marshall, including the 4-volume

official biography by Forrest Pogue, I learned new and interesting things about General Marshall from Groom's stories. Though I have not read as much about McArthur and Patton, Groom's stories left me feeling he had painted a penetrating picture of their lives and personas. The book starts with chapters on the early lives and careers of each of the three generals, then a chapter telling the story of their experiences in World War I--Marshall an outstanding planner on Pershing's staff, Patton as a senior tank officer, and McArthur as the fast-rising combat leader of the famous Rainbow Division. In later chapters the author follows their inter-war years, their World War II achievements, and their post-World War II careers. One might ask how Groom chose these three generals rather than others--Eisenhower, for example. He does not address this question, but there is no question that Patton is a more colorful character than Ike. Americans have always venerated those they considered "fighting generals" more than those who, like Eisenhower, were perceived as political or administrative generals. While Marshall was the ultimate political and administrative general in World War II, his role was so critical that Winston Churchill called him "the Organizer of Victory." It would have been even more questionable if Groom had not included Marshall in this book. This book is an interesting read and well worth reading. I rate it four stars, with one star taken off due to technical issues. For example, the Chapter on D-Day ("Overlord") goes into a narrative of the European campaign through German's surrender. Then the next chapter goes into a detailed description of the campaign from northern France into Germany. These two chapters would have flowed better if they had followed a more chronological order. Also, though it is important to note that I read an advance copy of the text that was by no means final, it was difficult to read in places due to editing or typesetting difficulties. Also, the footnotes may not have been finalized. While sources were cited, the page numbers were not, which would make it very difficult to find cited passages. In the larger scope of things, these technical issues do not prevent this book from being an excellent read for both those widely read in 20th century American military history and for those relatively new to this literature. One final note: the subtitle makes it sound like the period covered ends with World War II, but, for Marshall and McArthur, the story continues into Korea and their activities afterwards through the remainder of their lives.

This was not initially a book that I wanted to read because I am pretty familiar (I thought) with the three generals discussed here. But I went ahead and read this book anyway. The author, Winston Groom, is the author of numerous books including *Forrest Gump*, which was a work of fiction. However, what I didn't know was Groom has written a number of popular works of history and these have typically been well-received. The narrative here is about three important generals. George

Marshall, George Patton and Douglas MacArthur. What I really liked about this book is the approach of discussing their biographies and their background before the Second World war even broke out. I learned or was reminded of all kinds of interesting facts about these men. MacArthur grew up on the plains with his father fighting the Indian Wars, Patton fought in Mexico, and all kinds of interesting little facts. Plus, I loved the discussions of the Mexican-American War, and World War I, plus the inter-war period. There was so much history that was covered that is not part of any general discussion anymore. For example, I learned about the bloodiest battle of American history - the Battle of the Arne forest - in which 27,000 Americans were killed. There are lots of discussions of this kind of history in this fine book. Groom is clearly an excellent writer. Why? Because I read a significant portion of the book (the book is about 450 pages) without being cognizant of it. This is an excellent general lay-readers history. It is not the excellent Manchester book about MacArthur, nor the D'Este book about Patton. This book doesn't have to be, but those are excellent books about their particular subjects with lots of detail. I only indicate that this is not a detailed work of biography aimed at those wanting a detailed read. This is a work of general history that should appeal to a very wide audience that wishes for learning about these men in context of the history they lived through. Groom has given the book footnotes which is a good approach and gives the variety of books consulted. As well, there is a generous number of maps (and there may be pictures but I reviewed an ARC so I can't state that definitively). Overall?: There is a lot to like here about this book and narrative. Groom is a good general historian and brings a very good approach to his subject. I read through this book quickly and enjoyed it thoroughly. Well recommended for a general audience.

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