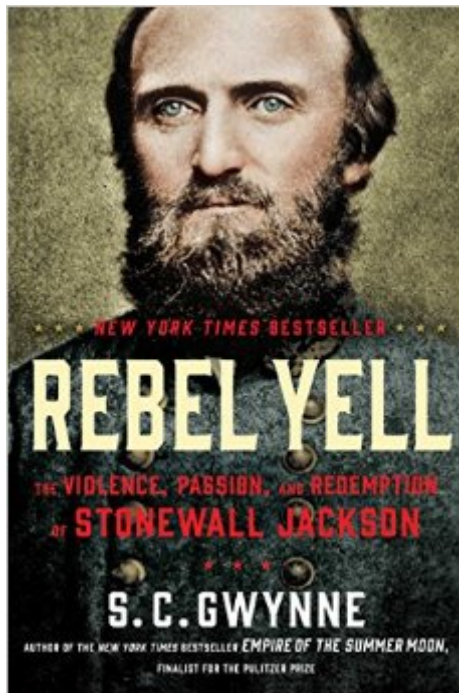


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Rebel Yell: The Violence, Passion, And Redemption Of Stonewall Jackson



Synopsis

From the author of the prize-winning New York Times bestseller *Empire of the Summer Moon* comes a thrilling account of how Civil War general Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson became a great and tragic American hero. Stonewall Jackson has long been a figure of legend and romance. As much as any person in the Confederate pantheon, even Robert E. Lee, he embodies the romantic Southern notion of the virtuous lost cause. Jackson is also considered, without argument, one of our country's greatest military figures. His brilliance at the art of war tied Abraham Lincoln and the Union high command in knots and threatened the ultimate success of the Union armies. Jackson's strategic innovations shattered the conventional wisdom of how war was waged; he was so far ahead of his time that his techniques would be studied generations into the future. In April 1862 Jackson was merely another Confederate general in an army fighting what seemed to be a losing cause. By June he had engineered perhaps the greatest military campaign in American history and was one of the most famous men in the Western world. He had, moreover, given the Confederate cause what it had recently lacked—"hope"—and struck fear into the hearts of the Union. *Rebel Yell* is written with the swiftly vivid narrative that is Gwynne's hallmark and is rich with battle lore, biographical detail, and intense conflict between historical figures. Gwynne delves deep into Jackson's private life, including the loss of his young beloved first wife and his regimented personal habits. It traces Jackson's brilliant twenty-four-month career in the Civil War, the period that encompasses his rise from obscurity to fame and legend; his stunning effect on the course of the war itself; and his tragic death, which caused both North and South to grieve the loss of a remarkable American hero.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I'll start with my usual disclaimer that I can't speak to the accuracy of the history in this book. In fact, my prior knowledge of Stonewall Jackson, and indeed the whole Civil War, could fairly be described as non-existent. But Gwynne has clearly done a huge amount of research and, assuming the accuracy, the only word that I can find to describe the book is superb. In terms of the quality of the descriptive writing, the structure and skilful use of language, and the depth Gwynne brings to the characters of Jackson and his comrades and friends, the book stands not just as an outstanding biography but as a very fine piece of literary writing. As Jackson and his force of cadets set out to war, Gwynne tells us of his pre-war life as a rather strange and awkward man, deeply religious, suffering from poor health and perhaps a degree of hypochondria. Having overcome his early lack of education to scrape into West Point, he took full advantage of the opportunities on offer there, dragging himself up from the bottom of the class to graduate in a fairly high position. The first signs of his heroism were seen in the Mexican war when his courageous - some might say reckless - actions against a much greater enemy force were crucial to the success of the assault on Mexico City. But after this war, Jackson had taken a position as professor at the Virginia Military Institute, a job for which he seemed remarkably unsuited. Unable to control his unruly classes and an uninspiring teacher, he was seen as something of an oddity by his pupils. Gwynne shows how that all changed as he became one of the Confederacy's finest leaders, with many of these same pupils ending up willing to follow him anywhere and die for him if necessary.

First off, let me say that I absolutely love anything and everything to do with The Civil War (even going so far as to marrying a man who grew up outside Gettysburg). That said, I was excited to read this book, and I must say that I was not disappointed. This is truly an exceptional book about an exceptional human being. Mr. Gwynne does an excellent job of detailing not only the life of General Jackson, but also the lives of the people around him; the events that shaped his life; and the events of this sad, but necessary, war. I did not know the sad circumstances surrounding General Jackson's early life: his father passing when he was but a child, his mother's remarriage and subsequent death, and his being "farmed out" to relatives. He was at least lucky enough to be welcomed into a family that truly loved him. He had an early marriage to Ellen, which ended abruptly when she died after giving birth to a stillborn son; but he was fortunate enough to find love again and from all appearances and letters which have survived to this day, they truly loved one another, eventually

having a daughter, Julia - of which the general was indeed fond. He was a professor of physics at Virginia Military Institute (VMI), from which he left to continue his military career; and extremely religious, which he carried with him in his day-to-day life: when his first wife Ellen passed away, he was comforted in the knowledge that she was with God, but it did not, in turn, keep him from deep grief. Yet he never let his beliefs keep him from what he thought was his military duty: he was a stern officer and rigorous commander, unpredictable; yet at the same time, he could be extremely caring toward his men.

Mr. Gwynne has provided us a new perspective of a legendary and very eccentric American General in a very readable and interesting format. Confederate General Thomas J. Jackson aka Stonewall Jackson a West Point Grad, decorated leader of the Mexican War, instructor at VMI, deeply religious with health trouble, and finally a military genius who prolonged an unwinnable war against the Union States has been a subject of many books dating back to John Esten Cooke's (a former CSA Veteran) book "The Life of Stonewall Jackson". Thomas J. Jackson started from a very humble childhood as a son of a broken family. His big break in life came when a distant relative obtained an appointment to West Point for the young Jackson. This was the beginning of a legendary career that had its interruptions between the Mexican and Civil Wars (it's interesting that Jackson like US Grant departed the Army between wars due to disappointment). I feel Gwynne has defined this very complicated historical figure very accurately. Jackson being a deeply religious and modest man would transform into a Devil of a Warrior on the Battlefield by arresting his officers for petty reasons, marching his men till they dropped, and relentlessly attacking day and night. He was a bull dog and shocked the leading Northern Generals at the time. The low key Jackson a military school teacher started with less than 20,000 rebel recruits and ending up a leading General by consistently defeating Northern Forces in the Shenandoah Valley (Bull Run, Antietam, & Harper's Ferry to name a few). His short time of approximately two years in service stopped Union forces adding years to the War between the States. His battle wounds and ultimate demise was a result of his aggressive nature of constant attack on the enemy.

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