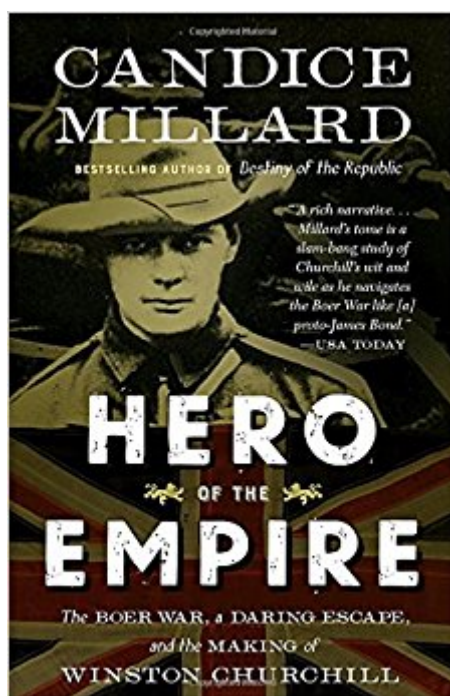


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Hero Of The Empire: The Boer War, A Daring Escape, And The Making Of Winston Churchill



Synopsis

"A thrilling account.... This book is an awesome nail-biter and top-notch character study rolled into one." —New York Times Critic Jennifer Senior's Top Ten Books of 2016

At the age of twenty-four, Winston Churchill was utterly convinced it was his destiny to become prime minister of England. He arrived in South Africa in 1899, valet and crates of vintage wine in tow, to cover the brutal colonial war the British were fighting with Boer rebels and jumpstart his political career. But just two weeks later, Churchill was taken prisoner. Remarkably, he pulled off a daring escape—traversing hundreds of miles of enemy territory, alone, with nothing but a crumpled wad of cash, four slabs of chocolate, and his wits to guide him.

Bestselling author Candice Millard spins an epic story of bravery, savagery, and chance encounters with a cast of historical characters—including Rudyard Kipling, Lord Kitchener, and Mohandas Gandhi—with whom Churchill would later share the world stage. *Hero of the Empire* is more than an extraordinary adventure story, for the lessons Churchill took from the Boer War would profoundly affect twentieth century history.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

An Best Book of September 2016: It should come as no surprise that Winston Churchill was an ambitious, young go-getter long before he became Sir Winston Churchill—but you might be surprised by how interesting his young life was. The son of Lord Randolph Churchill—who ascended to the position of leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer before dying at the age of forty five—Winston Churchill set off as a young man to find glory on the

battlefield, with an eye toward ultimately emulating his father's success in politics. The young Winston played a part in four wars on three different continents, the last of which was the Boer War. His experience as a prisoner in that war is the jumping off point of this book, and author Millard puts her narrative gifts to work as she describes his harrowing escape, setting the man in his time, and illustrating the man to describe his times. — Chris Schlupe, The Book Review --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER Chosen as a Washington Post and New York Times Book Review Notable Book of 2016 "A thrilling account... This book is an awesome nail-biter and top-notch character study rolled into one... Could someone be persuaded to make a movie about this episode of his life? I'd watch." — New York Times Critic Jennifer Senior's Top Ten Books of 2016 "Gripping [tremendously readable and enjoyable] — Alex von Tunzelmann, The New York Times Book Review "[A] truly fascinating book." — Financial Times "A gripping story... It's a thrilling journey and Millard tells it with gusto." — The Guardian "Millard's tome is a slam-bang study of Churchill's wit and wile as he navigates the Boer War like [a] proto-James Bond." — USA Today

Although I have never been a big fan of Winston Churchill (I remember watching his funeral when I was a young boy), I have always been fascinated by the famous photograph of Churchill in a POW line-up in Pretoria in 1899. When I worked in Pretoria in the 1980s, my route into town always stopped at the intersection of Skinner and van der Walt streets and the Staatsmodel School where Churchill was held stared back at me like a historical ghost amid the modern buildings and traffic of apartheid South Africa. So, when I saw this book, I grabbed it, gobbled it up in two days and have to give it five stars, which I rarely give, even to very good books. Millard writes wonderfully; she knows her history and, frankly, I can't offer one negative criticism of this book. The criticism that this is a "left-wing" attack on Churchill is ludicrous; the author is even-handed in her perspective, and intrinsically correct in her later historical analysis. I recommend this book enthusiastically: it is a great yarn, well-told. By the way, I also enjoyed her book on Garfield: the Destiny of the Republic. It was well-written, informative, and, most importantly a fascinating tale. I recommend that one as well.

My husband and I loved her other two books, The River of Doubt: Theodore Roosevelt's Darkest Journey and Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine and the Murder of a President, so it was with anticipation that I opened this one. True to form, the author grabbed me

from the first paragraph in the prologue, making me forget about the world around me or the affairs of the day. I was there, in South Africa, and a war I had never studied, with all of the implications of the British Empire's magnitude, became alive. I will not repeat what other, more verbose reviewers, already and eloquently wrote about the contents of the book. I enjoy short reviews when I shop on . I highly recommend this book, as I do her other books, biographies told in a way that feel more like a thrilling adventure.

What an enjoyable read. Both the character of Winston Churchill and the Boer War come to life in this narrative. Candice Millard is a talented journalist. She can write a gripping narrative from any historical event. Using diaries and biographies from the era, Millard creates a setting and paces the plot just fast enough to make this story engaging. Credit should also go to Winston Churchill himself, who was also a gifted writer sometimes prone to embellishment, who left all his journals, diaries and letters behind for public use. I have had co-workers and history teachers tell me that the Boer War was England's practice ground for World War I. Millard's story seems to justify this claim. But she also gives reason to the claims of English arrogance and snobbery. The English Empire had grossly miscalculated the perseverance of the Boers and figured a war with the natives would be a quick and decisive victory. That was England's first mistake. The second mistake was not arming their soldiers well enough. Add in Winston Churchill and his air of superiority (his father, Lord Randolph, was a popular politician and related to the Dukes of Marlborough) and one sees through Millard's gift of connecting tidbits here and there across literature that Winston Churchill became the man of his legacy because of his experiences during the Boer War and his captivity. His natural leadership qualities shine through, albeit with some flaws that Millard does not overlook. Millard introduces the reader first to some background on South Africa and the Boers, the Zulus, and England's demands of the region's natural resources (re: diamonds!). She introduces the reader to some key leaders, such as Louis Botha, the first prime minister of the Union of South Africa, the Zulu leader Shaka, and the unfortunate actions of Major-General Sir William Penn Symons. She doesn't waste too much time with this background, however, as the narrative quickly shifts to preparations for war and then the war itself. Churchill goes to the war as a war correspondent for the Morning Post, but still wants to be treated as the British Officer he was when he served in combat in the Sudan. He lost his father as a young adult, but uses his mother's influence to get him to South Africa. There he meets other war correspondents such as Leo S. Amery and John B. Atkins (both who also left journals of the Boer War behind). Another important person for Churchill is Sir James Haldane, who was a prisoner with him while at Pretoria. All three men later have different opinions of Churchill. Millard

divides the story into five parts that summarize the history of South Africa, England's movement of troops into the country and the start of combat, then the unfortunate ride Winston took on the armored train that the Boers attacked, his imprisonment and finally his post-prison freedom. While Churchill never loses his ambitions to become prime minister of England some day, nor his love for wine, glamour and public admiration, he does learn to respect and even admire his adversaries. This will pay off well as he leads his country through World War II decades later. This is a very enjoyable read. I appreciate having an engaging story about the Second Boer War and Winston Churchill in one narrative. Highly recommend for popular history readers and Winston Churchill fans.

Winston Spencer Churchill (1874-1965) is the greatest wartime leader of Great Britain in the long and glorious history of the British Empire. Our story is set in South Africa late in the reign of Queen Victoria. The hero of the tale is WSC who is serving as a wartime correspondent for a London newspaper. Churchill had graduated as a military man at Sandhurst and cut his battlefield teeth in such places as India, Egypt and Cuba. He sought glory and fame but those two phantoms evaded him until he arrived in South Africa. The enemy were the Boers, staunch Calvinists from stern Dutch heritage. They were also enemies of native tribes such as the Zulus. Under their leader Paul Krueger they declared war on England in the summer of 1899. Several fierce battles ensued in which the British suffered both losses and victories. This was the second Boer War since the 1880s conflict which saw the Boers come out as victors. Churchill was captured on an armored train and taken to an old school in Praetoria where he was imprisoned by the Boers from August until December 13, 1899. He made a daring escape over prison walls, was aided by a British man who hid him a dark and rat infested mine and saw that he eventually arrived across the border safe and sound though covered with coal dust. The daring escape made Churchill famous and led to his first election to parliament as an MP for the district of Oldham. The young callow man would end his life as the roaring lion of the moribund British Empire. Candace Millard has written another excellent biography following the story of Theodore Roosevelt in *River of Doubt* and the assassination of POTUS James Garfield in *The Destiny of the Republic*. Popular history writing at its best. This little known episode in the life of WSC will keep you enthralled and reading as if it were an adventure tale. Excellent!

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