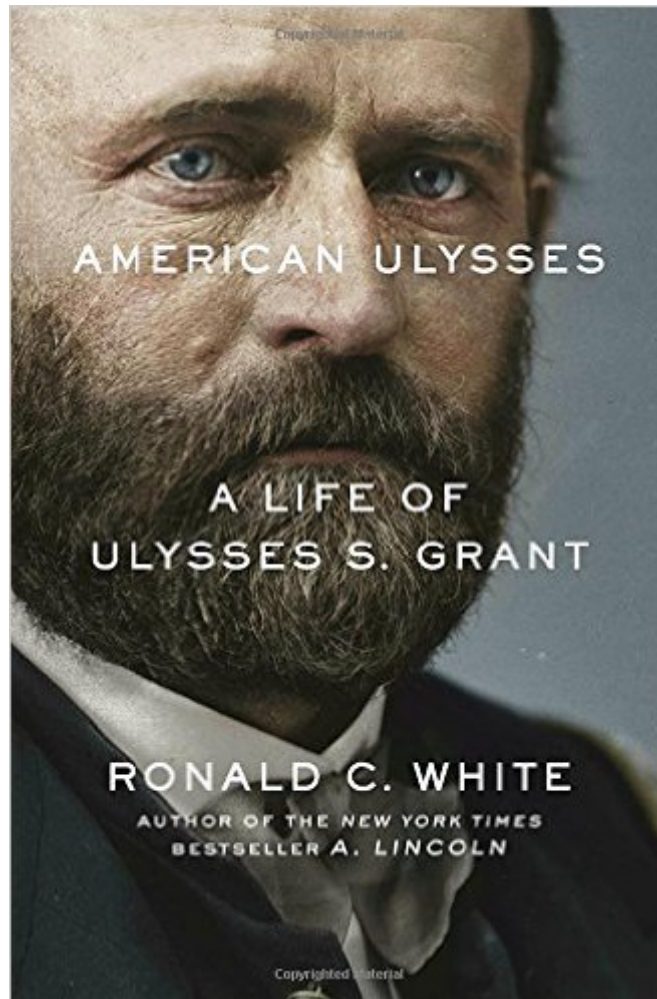


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American Ulysses: A Life Of Ulysses S. Grant



Synopsis

From the author of the New York Times bestseller *A. Lincoln*, a major new biography of one of America's greatest generals and most misunderstood presidents. In his time, Ulysses S. Grant was routinely grouped with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in the "Trinity of Great American Leaders." But the battlefield commander "turned" commander-in-chief fell out of favor in the twentieth century. In *American Ulysses*, Ronald C. White argues that we need to once more revise our estimates of him in the twenty-first. Based on seven years of research with primary documents—some of them never examined by previous Grant scholars—this is destined to become the Grant biography of our time. White, a biographer exceptionally skilled at writing momentous history from the inside out, shows Grant to be a generous, curious, introspective man and leader—a willing delegator with a natural gift for managing the rampaging egos of his fellow officers. His wife, Julia Dent Grant, long marginalized in the historic record, emerges in her own right as a spirited and influential partner. Grant was not only a brilliant general but also a passionate defender of equal rights in post-Civil War America. After winning election to the White House in 1868, he used the power of the federal government to battle the Ku Klux Klan. He was the first president to state that the government's policy toward American Indians was immoral, and the first ex-president to embark on a world tour, and he cemented his reputation for courage by racing against death to complete his *Personal Memoirs*. Published by Mark Twain, it is widely considered to be the greatest autobiography by an American leader, but its place in Grant's life story has never been fully explored—until now. One of those rare books that successfully recast our impression of an iconic historical figure, *American Ulysses* gives us a finely honed, three-dimensional portrait of Grant the man—husband, father, leader, writer—that should set the standard by which all future biographies of him will be measured. Advance praise for *American Ulysses*—Certain to be recognized as the classic work on Ulysses S. Grant, *American Ulysses* is a monumental examination of one of the most compelling figures in American history. —General David H. Petraeus (Ret.) —In this thorough and engaging new book, Ronald C. White restores Ulysses S. Grant to the pantheon of great Americans. As a soldier and a president, Grant rendered his nation invaluable service, and White's epic biography is invaluable as well. —Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize winner and #1 New York Times bestselling author —A fresh assessment of this enigmatic leader, who, like his Homeric namesake, failed at many things before he succeeded in life . . . an engaging resurrection of Grant featuring excellent maps and character sketches. —Kirkus Reviews (starred review) —White at last solves the Grant Enigma—reconciling in character and ability the hero of Appomattox with the (allegedly) failed

president. This is the biography that Grant deserves.â€•â€”Richard Norton Smith, former director of the Lincoln, Reagan, Eisenhower, Ford, and Hoover presidential libraries â€œRonald C. White is a master biographer, and his *American Ulysses* is the beautifully told culmination of a major revival of Grant studies; rarely has an epic life met so fruitfully with its talented author.â€•â€”David W. Blight, author of *Frederick Douglass: A Life*

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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.

Ronald C. White is perhaps best known as one of the leading students of Abraham Lincoln, having written one of the great one-volume biographies of Lincoln, as well as two to other outstanding books on Lincoln as a communicator. Each generation reconstitutes a massive literature on Lincoln, but given so White has authored one of the best books ever written on Lincoln as communicator. His first book on Lincoln - which came after a first career as a historian of American Religion - was LINCOLN'S GREATEST SPEECH, which was an in depth analysis of his Second Inaugural, a speech that many, and I definitely belong to this group, believe is the most remarkable speech ever delivered in the English language, surpassing even his more famous Gettysburg Address. White's next book was THE ELOQUENT PRESIDENT: A PORTRAIT OF LINCOLN THROUGH HIS WORDS, which is one of the closest readings of Lincoln's major addresses ever conducted. I have read somewhere between sixty and eighty books on Lincoln, but this is one of the books I think back on most frequently, mainly because it is tied so closely with Lincoln's words. It is an essential book for anyone interested in Lincoln. His next book was the bestseller A. LINCOLN: A BIOGRAPHY (so-titled because that is how Lincoln signed his name most frequently). I bring all this up to point out that White grew enormously between his first and second books on Lincoln, and then grew even more before the final biography. He has grown even more in writing this biography of Ulysses Grant. What gives White's books on Lincoln so much value is that they are the result of extensive contemplation on perhaps the great figure in American history.

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.

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