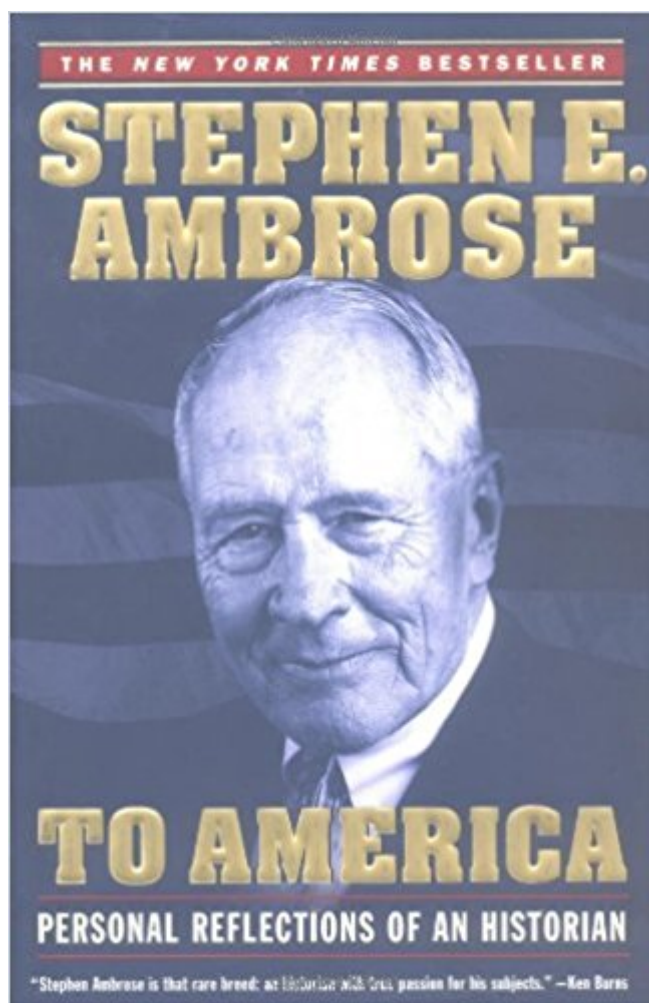


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# To America: Personal Reflections Of An Historian



## Synopsis

Completed shortly before Ambrose's untimely death, *To America* is a very personal look at our nation's history through the eyes of one of the twentieth century's most influential historians. Ambrose roams the country's history, praising the men and women who made it exceptional. He considers Jefferson and Washington, who were progressive thinkers (while living a contradiction as slaveholders), and celebrates Lincoln and Roosevelt. He recounts Andrew Jackson's stunning defeat of a superior British force in the battle of New Orleans with a ragtag army in the War of 1812. He brings to life Lewis and Clark's grueling journey across the wilderness and the building of the railroad that joined the nation coast to coast. Taking swings at political correctness, as well as his own early biases, Ambrose grapples with the country's historic sins of racism; its ill treatment of Native Americans; and its tragic errors such as the war in Vietnam, which he ardently opposed. He contrasts the modern presidencies of Eisenhower, Kennedy, Nixon, and Johnson. He considers women's and civil rights, immigration, philanthropy, and nation building. Most powerfully, in this final volume, Ambrose offers an accolade to the historian's mighty calling.

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## Customer Reviews

"I am a storyteller by training and inclination," writes the late Stephen Ambrose in *To America*, his final book. And what a storyteller. One of the most respected and popular historians of his era, Ambrose had a passion for making the events of the past both relevant and entertaining. In these pages, he touches on many of the subjects that he devoted his career to, including presidents

Eisenhower and Nixon, the journey of Lewis and Clark, the building of the transcontinental railroad, and the citizen soldiers of World War II. He also writes about his own personal story and his role as a historian. In detailing a family camping trip to Wounded Knee (an outing which directly led to his dual biography of Crazy Horse and George Armstrong Custer) or offering tips on vivid historical writing (keep your narration in chronological order; keep the reader guessing; and never use the passive voice), he shares what it is like to reflect upon the triumphs and mistakes of the past and why it is so important to pass those stories on to the next generation. In this brief yet satisfying book, Ambrose moves seamlessly from one topic to the next with contagious enthusiasm and unapologetic optimism. Along the way he points out the inherent absurdity of political correctness, and even takes himself to task for past biases and for sometimes failing to consider his subjects within the context of their own times and not his own. He does not shy away from writing about America's sins, both past and present, but Ambrose's undying faith in his country and his fellow citizens is inspiring. --Shawn Carkonen --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Before his recent, untimely death from cancer, Ambrose seemed to feel he had reached that age when a historian should write a memoir, which means writing yet another history book but replacing footnotes and analysis with anecdotes and opinions. Ambrose castigates the slave-holding founders of American liberty, celebrates the heroes of the slighted Battle of New Orleans and argues that white settlers treated Native Americans no worse than the tribes treated one another. On he goes, damning and praising, through the Vietnam War (which he firmly opposed), appending personal observations on racism, immigration, women's rights and America's nation-building mission. Halfway through, he pauses to recount his development as a historian and writer, from his master's thesis and his biographies of Eisenhower and Nixon to his more recent, bestselling books *Undaunted Courage*, *Nothing Like It in the World* and numerous titles on WWII. This personal narrative, dropped into the middle of the book, with revelations about his family life and encounters with famous war veterans, is what Ambrose fans really want to read. It is a pity that Ambrose (or his editors) decided to structure his ruminations and reflections according to historical chronology, because readers looking for his life story will have to take notes and write it themselves. In the process, Ambrose apparently hopes, they will learn what he claims the study of other men's lives has taught him: a broad-minded sympathy that acknowledges an individual's flaws yet focuses on positive achievements. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I enjoyed this relatively short book in which Ambrose touches briefly on many of the subjects he has written about in his more detailed books. This is a good introduction to Ambrose and will help the reader decide which of the many Ambrose books to follow up with. My other favorites are his writings on Lewis and Clark, and the later years of Nixon. Ambrose writes history, rather than attempting to rewrite history. This sets him apart from many of his contemporaries such as Doris Kearns Goodwin. I subtracted one star for an unnecessary derogatory remark he makes about Ernest Hemingway, and his overly simplified reflections on immigration issues.

One of the best books I've read in ages. I find myself so tired of all the bashing the media do on Americans and what they've done in the world. So much of a biased and negative slant in history books and most authors twisting everything at how bad the US had been domestically and internationally. If you are looking to rekindle that pride on being an American and realize that everything the US had done has not been imperialistic, then this is a great book. Ambrose presents facts and lets you decide. Ambrose texts should be in schools instead of the crap I see my kids bring home.

Whenever Stephen Ambrose would be asked which of his books is his best, he would answer by saying his latest one. This effort entitled "To America" is not the longest by any stretch, but of the half dozen of his books that I have read, I enjoyed this one the most. Ambrose covers America from our country's beginnings right into the year 2002 when he died. Obviously he can't go into the detail he did in other efforts, but he covers our nation's history in succinct detail and explaining why he admires men such as Ulysses Grant, Andrew Jackson, Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt, Dwight Eisenhower, and Jackie Robinson. History, Ambrose tells us, "is about people, and nothing could be more fascinating to people than other people, living in a different time, in different circumstances." This is about people who are well known and those who are not, who have made significant contributions to America who we owe a debt of thanks for their life. Ambrose says the technological improvements of the 19th century became killing machines that turned the great wars of the 20th century into the worst century ever. Racism, women's rights, nation building, and the threat we face from the Islamic world are other subjects Ambrose touches on. The book is only 252 pages long, and if you are looking for an outstanding summary of our country's history this book will certainly hold your interest.

I, like many other readers/history buffs, greatly respect Ambrose for his ability to take a portion of history and give it personality and make you care. This book is really a compilation of medium length forays into different aspects of American history. So, if you want a book that covers a wide variety of historical topics but still gives you a ton of information, pick this one up. This would be a fantastic vacation book for the history buff. As I mentioned in the title, this book is very dense with facts and information. I had been reading for a while and was thinking about how much historical terrain I had covered. I checked the page and realized that I was only about 25 pages into the book. Luckily, Mr. Ambrose has a very personable writing style and keeps the reader interested while packing in the information. While the book is dense with information, it feels to be a very casual read. I would recommend this book highly. These essays touch on many of the same topics Ambrose has written whole books about and give the reader a taste of the topic that may lead to further interest in the larger collection on each subject.

If you have read other works by Stephen Ambrose you will find this book to be familiar. But in many ways you get to know the author better by reading this book. I recommend this book as a beginning or an end point in works by Ambrose. Either way you will see our great country and history through his very personal understanding and compassion for both! May Stephen always Rest In Peace!

Fantastic book that give a great perspective from a historian looking back. Stephen Ambrose does a wonderful job at telling the history of America without putting a far left or far right spin on things. I like how he speaks about how he was taught versus how he looks at historical events now. I have read the book 3 times now, and is one that I will continue to pick up and read again from time to time. Probably a book that should be read by people that are in or are running for public office.

An addition to my Library of important historical work.

good book

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