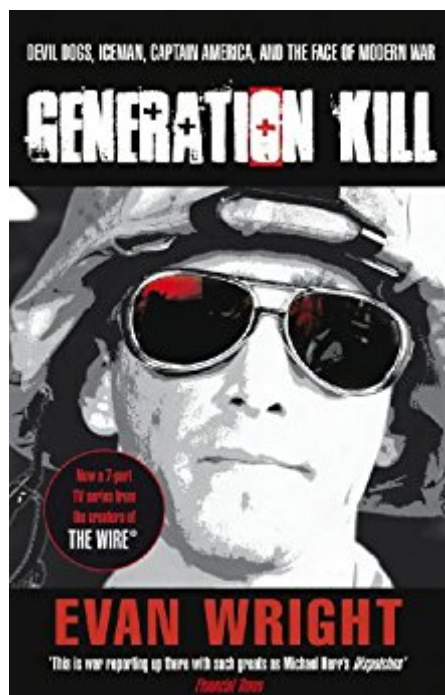


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Generation Kill



Synopsis

Generation Kill is about the young men sent to fight their nation's first open-ended war since Vietnam. Despite the flurry of media images to come of the recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, you have never really met any of these people, who serve as front-line troops. For whatever reason, the media simply doesn't get them. As we all know, news accounts of the last two wars focused almost exclusively on battlefield imagery of high-tech weapons wreaking astounding destruction, comply with analysis from retired army grandees and other experts, punctuated by the odd heart-warming patriotic sound-bite. The troops themselves play a role in the media's presentation of recent wars rather like extras in *The Triumph of the Will*. They are everywhere yet somehow invisible. When they speak you get the sense that what they are saying has been carefully scripted. Now *Generation Kill* tells the soldiers' story in their own words. The narrative focuses on a platoon of 23 marines, many of them veterans of Afghanistan, whose elite reconnaissance unit spearheaded the blitzkrieg on Iraq. This is the story of young men that have been trained to become ruthless killers. It's about surviving death. It's about taking part in a war many questioned before it even began. Evan Wright was the only reporter with First Recon, which operated well ahead of most other forces, usually behind enemy lines. They were among the first marines sent into the fight and one of the last units still engaged on the outskirts of Iraq, even after the city centre fell. *Generation Kill* is not just a combat chronicle but an inside look at how people fighting in war actually experience it. It is both an action narrative like *Black Hawk Down* and a detailed portrait of a generation at war along the lines of *Band of Brothers*. It is not a book you are going to forget in a hurry...

Book Information

File Size: 2327 KB

Print Length: 404 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0425224740

Publisher: Transworld Digital (December 31, 2011)

Publication Date: December 31, 2011

Language: English

ASIN: B006H4C4LG

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #390,643 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #89

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Customer Reviews

If you can only read one account of the Iraq War, this should be it. Wright spent about a month with a squad of recon Marines -- essentially the special forces of the corps -- and his account is nothing short of gripping. It is also exhausting, as Wright subjects the reader to a full range of emotion -- from joy to appalling horror to pride. Wright has a keen eye for the details that bring the stories of the war to life. The banter between the soldiers is fascinating and frequently hilarious, and is definitely a highlight of the book. No other account brings you closer to the men who slugged this thing out as they barreled across the Iraqi desert. It is useful to keep in mind that this book calls the shots as they are seen from a small group of soldiers on the frontline of the war. What this book is not is a comprehensive overview of the run-up to the war or of the overall strategy employed by the U.S. military. The soldiers often gripe about certain officers and decisions taken at the higher levels. Some of the complaints are balanced out with alternate views. Wright's account is valuable not for its even-handed treatment of every side in a particular issue, but for giving insight into how the men on the ground met and dealt with problems that cropped up during their historic mission. The book does dwell on a lot of the mishaps encountered by the soldiers. Among the headaches endured by Wright's squad: a lack of lubricating oil to keep their weapons functioning properly, muffled radio communication thanks to incompatible encryption, and general cluelessness about the true nature of their mission, which was basically to drive through enemy positions to draw fire so their position/size/strength could be estimated.

Whether you were for or against Gulf War II, this is essential reading about it. Rolling Stone writer Wright was embedded with an elite U.S. Marine reconnaissance unit that was often at the "tip of the point of the spear" during the invasion of Iraq. He spent approximately two months with them, riding shotgun in a Humvee as they were used as ambush-bait in the push north. The result is brilliant front-lines reportage that's at turns harrowing, hilarious, shocking, and chaotic -- reflecting the reality of combat at its most basic level. The book's title is provocative, designed to sell rather than

describe the contents. And yet, Wright does have something to say about the new generation of American soldiers sent to fight in Iraq: "These young men represent what is more or less America's first generation of disposable children. More than half of the guys in the platoon come from broken homes and were raised by absentee, single, working parents. Many are on more intimate terms with video games, reality TV shows and Internet porn than they are with their own parents."Based on that excerpt, one might expect Wright to go on to provide a litany of the unit's worst excesses and examples of Marine Corps machismo and arrogance. Thankfully, he instead is interested in the men and not stereotypes, and manages to gain acceptance among them. Some have critiqued the book for this—essentially saying that because Wright became tight with these Marines, he couldn't be objective about their actions. While it would be absurd to suggest that Wright operated under total objectivity, as a critique, it doesn't hold up. Most of the book is Wright just writing about what he sees happen and recounts the feelings the men share with him about their experiences.

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