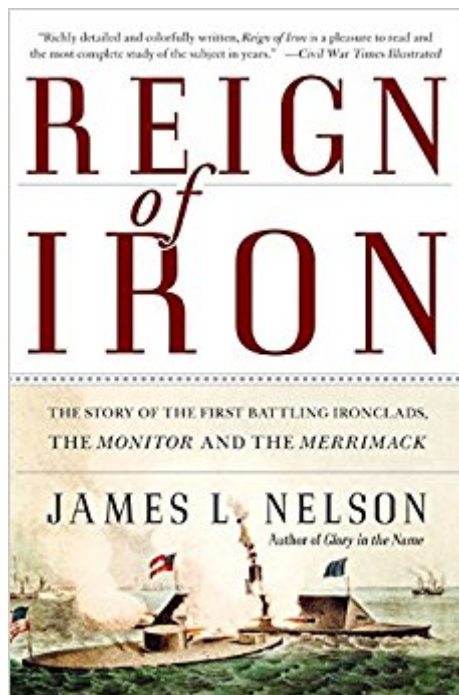




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# Reign Of Iron: The Story Of The First Battling Ironclads, The Monitor And The Merrimack



## Synopsis

At the outbreak of the Civil War, North and South quickly saw the need to develop the latest technology in naval warfare, the ironclad ship. After a year-long scramble to finish first, in a race filled with intrigue and second guessing, blundering and genius, the two ships -- the Monitor and the Merrimack -- after a four-hour battle, ended the three-thousand-year tradition of wooden men-of-war and ushered in "the reign of iron." In the first major work on the subject in thirty-five years, novelist, historian, and tall-ship sailor James L. Nelson, acclaimed author of the Brethren of the Coast trilogy, brilliantly recounts the story of these magnificent ships, the men who built and fought them, and the extraordinary battle that made them legend.

## Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial (March 29, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060524049

ISBN-13: 978-0060524043

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 21 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #815,430 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #42 in [Books > History >](#)

[Americas > United States > Civil War > Naval Operations](#) #1636 in [Books > History > Military >](#)

[Naval](#) #8359 in [Books > History > Military > United States](#)

## Customer Reviews

The Monitor-Merrimack showdown may be one of the Civil War's most overhyped chestnuts: the two ships were by no means the first ironclads, and their long awaited confrontation proved an anticlimactic draw, their cannon fire clanging harmlessly off each other's hulls. Still, the author of this lively history manages to bring out the story's dramatic elements. Nelson, author of the Revolution at Sea series of age-of-sail adventure novels, knows how to narrate a naval crisis. He gives a harrowing account of the Merrimack's initial onslaught, in which it destroyed two wooden Union warships in a bloody and chaotic battle the day before the Monitor arrived, and of the Monitor's nightmarish final hours as it foundered in a storm at sea. Equally arresting is his retelling of the feverish race between North and South to beat the other side to the punch with their respective wonder ships. He delves into every aspect of the ships' innovative design and

construction, and draws vivid portraits of the colorful characters who crafted them, especially the brilliant naval architect John Ericsson, one of that epic breed of engineer-entrepreneurs who defined the 19th century. The resulting blend of skillful storytelling and historical detail will please Civil War and naval engineering buffs alike. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The fabled battle between these two iron-plated vessels is ironic. The battle had virtually no effect on the outcome of the Civil War, yet it revolutionized naval warfare, instantaneously condemning wooden warships to obsolescence. Nelson's technical knowledge of the art of naval warfare is impressive, and he effectively tells this story in lay terms. He begins with the launching of the Merrimack (more correctly, the Virginia, after its refitting). His description of the attack upon almost helpless Union wooden warships spares nothing in showing the bloody carnage. Nelson then chronicles the genesis of both ships, and his portrayals of the key players in the process, both Union and Confederate, are absorbing and often surprising. He concludes with the confrontation between the ironclads, and his vivid, blow-by-blow account has the aura of two uncertain giants pummeling each other while watching for the effects of their blows. This exciting retelling of a famous and groundbreaking battle is an excellent addition to Civil War collections. Jay Freeman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

James L. Nelson brings their famous conflict to the fore in *Reign of Iron*, a historical study of the events leading up to and proceeding after the battle. The book begins with the Merrimack, newly recommissioned Virginia, steaming into its first battle and decimating the Union navy's proud wooden ships blockading Hampden Roads, and the Monitor, after struggling through rough seas down the coast, arriving on the scene at the end of a hard day's fighting. But Nelson, a master tactician himself, tears readers away before the two ironclads meet, taking us back to the beginning of the war and the race by North and South to develop ironclad vessels for battle. Nelson carries readers quickly but thoroughly through the process, switching perspectives from North to South as each ship takes shape. Before you know it, you'll find yourself back at Hampden Roads on March 8, 1862 -- Virginia has ruled the day, leaving the pride of the Union's fleet -- the Congress and the Cumberland -- as smoking ruins, and the Minnesota aground in the shallow waters and waiting only for sunrise on March 9 for Virginia to finish the job. But the Monitor, with timing worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster, arrived late on the 8th. Its diminutive size didn't inspire much confidence

among sailors of the massive frigates who'd been bested that day, but the plucky iron "cheese box," as it was called, placed herself at Minnesota's side and defended her admirably. For hours, the two iron ships pounded each other with their big guns -- ultimately doing little real damage to each other, but stalemating in a spectacular fashion. Nelson, a practiced novelist, shows his storytelling skills here by keeping history from being dry despite the long list of characters who appear in the narrative and the lengthy technical explanations that the story requires. This is a thoroughly enjoyable book that will appeal to history buffs, particularly those who enjoy Civil War or battles at sea. by Tom Knapp, Rambles.(net) editor

The topic's been written about many times. This book adds a concise, focused account of the circumstances leading to and the details of the first real battle between armored ships. The details are absorbing and the overview is well presented also. Wondered what it was like to be in an iron ship in battle, the description is well formulated. Mr. Nelson is a good naval historian. I noticed that there's only one negative review, but it's from someone who's not read the book!

I first found James Nelson's writing when I was given "Glory in the Name" as a Christmas gift last year. It was one of the more unusual books I had read about the Civil War as it dealt with the Confederate Navy and was told from their point of view in a most riveting fashion. Since reading that book I have read all of Nelson's writings concerning Thomas Marlowe and his adventures in piracy and Isaac Biddlecomb and his adventures in the Revolutionary War, eight books in all. I have also read "The Only Life That Mattered" which involved a pirate legend and was highly entertaining. Reign of Iron is Nelson's first venture into non-fiction and I can assure you that nothing suffers with the change. Exhaustively researched, Nelson brings back to life the days when the navies of the two warring factions were about to move from the days of wood to the reign of iron. It is an important story, but one that was relegated to a supporting role in the overall panorama of the War Between the States. Now, Nelson has brought it forward, front and center and explained in detail the trials and tribulations that ushered in this dramatic change in how control of the oceans of the world evolved. Most of us grew up with some knowledge of The Monitor and The Merrimac, but as Nelson explains, our general knowledge was superficial and usually wrong. This is the true story and it is an important one. Fans of this author will not be disappointed.

This book is so engrossing that I read the whole thing at a single sitting, well into the night! The author does a superb job of immersing the reader into the stories of the parallel protagonists, both

the Confederate and Union teams, until the pivotal battle between them. This author has the rare gift of making the personalities and the time come alive again and he has the solid nautical background to help the reader understand the context of these technologies and the men that made them come about. If you have any interest at all in history, buy this book - you won't regret it.

Lots of interesting detail, and good insights to preparations at start of war by north and south..  
Interesting to see Pres. Lincoln's direct intervention in battle strategies ..

Interesting account of history that is so well done it is a page turner.

Outstanding book!

It was very interesting to see how the iron ships brought about a complete change to the type of ship needed to stand up in combat.

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