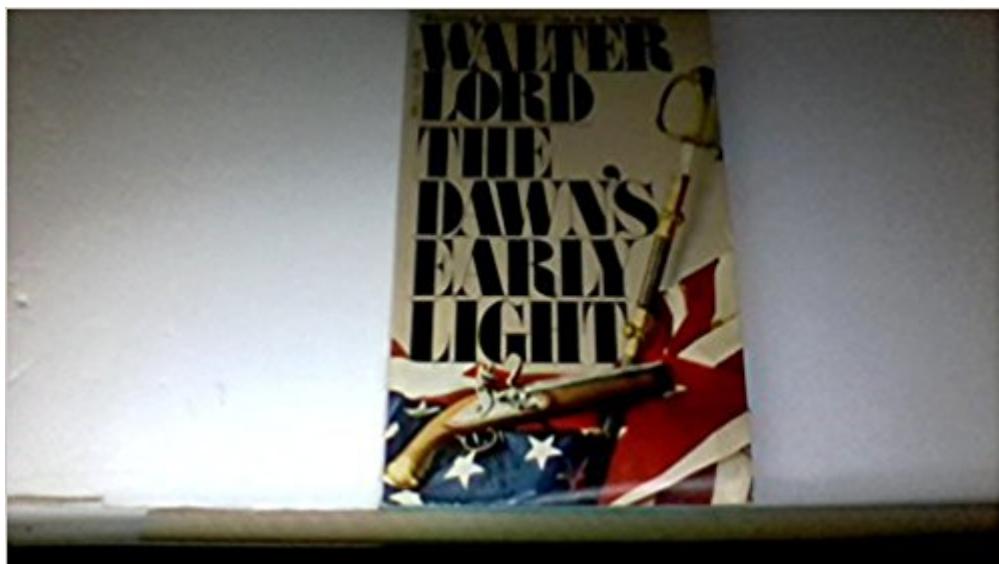


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The Dawn's Early Light



Synopsis

Walter Lordâ •author of such best-sellers as A Night to Remember and A Day of Infamyâ •brings to life the remarkable events of what we now call The War of 1812â •including the burning of Washington and the attack on Baltimore's Fort McHenry that inspired the Francis Scott Key to write what would become our national anthem. Lord gives readers a dramatic account of how a new sense of national identity emerged from the smoky haze of what Francis Scott Key so lyrically called "the dawn's early light." --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Still the best account available of the two key battles of the War of 1812... Popular historian Walter Lord, a Baltimore native, also wrote the bestsellers A Night to Remember and A Day of Infamy. In The Dawn's Early Light he brings the 1814 battles around Washington and Baltimore to life, making them seem terrifying and critical, as they must have seemed to Marylanders at the time. (Baltimore City Paper)Appealing to students of early American history and especially those with an interest in the mid-Atlantic states, this reprint of the 1972 original work on the War of 1812 provides a compelling narrative of the political and military strategy surrounding the battles in the Chesapeake bay in 1814. (Reference and Research Book News) --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Although I bought this hoping it would provide more of an overview of the War of 1812, the book does an excellent job of covering the invasion and burning of Washington, and the defense of Baltimore (and the background behind our national anthem). And, while it doesn't do much to tell readers how the British ended up outside of Washington in August, 1814, it does offer a tidy job of

wrapping things up with the peace conference, the Battle of New Orleans and finally peace. War may be hell, but it can also be very confusing and haphazard, especially in the days before communication consisted of anything besides a piece of paper and a fast horse. Certainly the British and the Americans spent a fair amount of time wandering the back roads of Maryland before the British even made up their minds to attack Washington. Under the right circumstances it might not have even happened, although once it did everyone was polite about it. Nor was the attack on Baltimore a sure bet either, since the British were making up their battle plans on the fly. Ultimately, though, their final destination was New Orleans, and Lord shows that a fair amount of British stupidity helped the Americans win that battle and bring the war to its conclusion. As with many of Lord's books, he has an eye for the interesting detail in the stories he tells that help make the narrative come alive. In this case, he takes the time to explain both the rockets and bombs of the day, which helps greatly in understanding "The Star Spangled Banner." He also touches on things that readers in this country may not know or want to admit. For instance, many of the British people were appalled by the barbarism of Washington's destruction. They were also anxious for tax cuts and fed up with supporting armies in both North America and Europe. Problems at home, rather than our military "successes" went a long way toward ending this funny little war. Because Walter Lord is such a great storyteller, it's sometimes hard to overlook that his scholarship may not be the strongest. I found the end notes rather disjointed and disappointing, although I otherwise enjoyed "The Dawn's Early Light," and have no problem recommending it.

For being nonfiction this book was very hard to put down, and a pleasure to read for this history buff! Lord puts you right there in the thick of things. Whether it be in the old capitol building alongside James Madison, on a Royal Navy ship bombarding Fort McHenry, or just outside New Orleans in the heat of battle repelling the British Red Coats. Or you could be with Francis Scott Key as he gets inspiration for the Star Spangled Banner. So much I learned about the war of 1812 and at the same time enjoying the writing of the brilliant author. A win, win no matter how you slice it!

This book, a detailed history of the British attack on Washington, DC and the city of Baltimore, including Fort McHenry during the War of 1812. There were times that the reading became slow and confusing, not because of the author, but because I was not as familiar with the major characters as much as I have been in reading other historical studies. I did learn much about this particular piece of US History, and the events leading up to the writing of the Star Spangled Banner. It is not a long book, and one I would recommend to anyone interested in the history of our country.

The reprinting of this Book verifies that this is a worthwhile read. I received the book as 'used' copy; it was in excellent condition. The details of the War of 1812 as it pertains to the burning of Washington, DC, and the attack on Baltimore are intense and fascinating. I had a distant McCormick relative who was in Burch's artillery and the author gave these local DC militia more credit than many historians have done. The only minor error was calling Alexander McCormick (my greatgreatgrandfather) a local minister; it was actually his brother, Andrew who was the Episcopal minister who introduced Dr. James Ewell to Gen. Ross. Alexander was credited with relating the theft and damage to his store on Capitol Hill. The final section on the huge Battle of New Orleans and the disaster for the British was special. But, a piece of irony was interwoven here of the signing of the Peace Treaty at Ghent essentially before this terrible battle. This great little book came promptly via and through a great bookstore in Maryland.

While this is not a total and exhaust history of the early 19th century and the war, it is a good overview of the actual war. The cast of characters and their actions during the days of the war makes for interesting reading and serves as a great way to see that folly and great individuals always seem to be but two sides of the same coin.

A well written book with lots of research and details. This should be required reading for every history student. Thanks

You might have a hazy recollection of the War of 1812, but I'd bet that you really don't remember much of it at all. This book is loaded with new material and old, and brings the events before, during, and after the war into sharp focus. It's difficult to think of the US as a barely surviving conglomeration of people who could hardly stand each other at that time in our history, and to see the changes that occur during the war which resulted in our population seeing themselves truly as "Americans" for the first time. It's also sobering to see how close we came to not existing at all.

I read the book to "brush up" on the War of 1812. I did that and more. First and foremost, the book offers remarkable detail of military strategy and the battle tactics that follow. It paints a clear picture of why Washington, D.C. was sacked and why Baltimore and New Orleans were so bravely defended. It's a fast-paced read that covers much ground, including political nuance, the impact of world events and the galvanization of our young country.

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