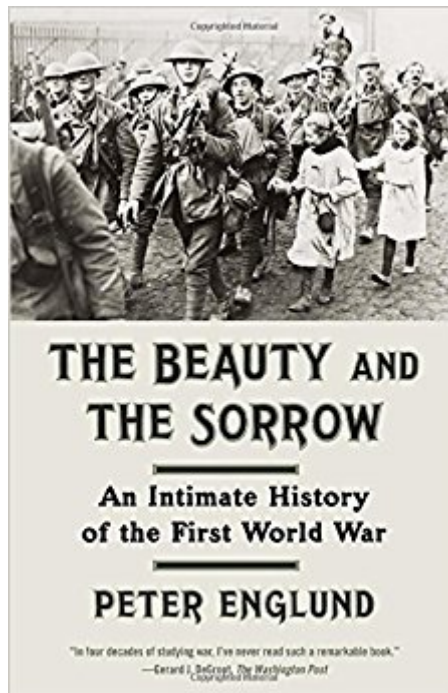




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# The Beauty And The Sorrow: An Intimate History Of The First World War



## Synopsis

An intimate narrative history of World War I told through the stories of twenty men and women from around the globe--a powerful, illuminating, heart-rending picture of what the war was really like. In this masterful book, renowned historian Peter England describes this epoch-defining event by weaving together accounts of the average man or woman who experienced it. Drawing on the diaries, journals, and letters of twenty individuals from Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Australia, New Zealand, Russia, Venezuela, and the United States, England's collection of these varied perspectives describes not a course of events but "a world of feeling." Composed in short chapters that move between the home front and the front lines, *The Beauty and Sorrow* brings to life these twenty particular people and lets them speak for all who were shaped in some way by the War, but whose voices have remained unheard.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Praise for *The Beauty and the Sorrow*: "In four decades of studying war, I've never read such a remarkable book." • "Gerard J. DeGroot, *The Washington Post*" "They call them the lost generation, but you'll find their story here." • "New York Post" "Intense and bighearted. . . . The accounts of [these] lives can be terrifying or stirring, but are most fully alive in England's accumulation of small moments, stray details." • "The New York Times" "History in the raw, an unconventional look at the war that did so much to shape the last century. . . . England has uncovered the stories of a myriad of fascinating characters." • "The Boston Globe" "An unforgettable and unprecedented view of the war as seen by 20 people who took part in it but, were

it not for Englund's remarkable job of unearthing and arranging their journals, letters, and memoirs, would probably have remained forever faceless, forgotten by time. . . . Lets us in on astonishing details of the war one would be hard-pressed to find elsewhere. . . . Shatters the mold . . . A beautiful tribute. • "San Francisco Chronicle" "Conveys the war's complexity better than any of the grand histories so far written. • "The Washington Post" "Whether considered as history or as literature it is, of course, both" "The Beauty and the Sorrow is radically original in form and epic in scope. • "Geoff Dyer" "A brilliant feat of retrospective journalism. . . . Englund's deft collation provides insights into more than the carnage. . . . This book fleshes out the grim statistics of the Great War. . . . The eloquence of everyday participants will link the reader to the era when the origins of the ensuing century's conflicts became apparent. • "Publishers Weekly (starred)" "An exquisite book. . . . There are adventures and battles, of course, but also many moments of quiet contemplation with closely observed details of street scenes, restaurants, railway stations, and deserted battlefields. . . . By turns pithy, lyrical, colorful, poignant, and endlessly absorbing. • "Kirkus Reviews (starred)" "A wonderfully wide and rich mosaic of personal experience from the First World War. • "Antony Beevor, author of Stalingrad and D-Day: The Battle for Normandy" "Englund covers a lot of ground in The Beauty and the Sorrow, geographically, topically, and in point of view. . . . He succeeds in his goal to humanize the war. • "Dallas Morning News" "Peter Englund is one of the finest writers of our time on the tactics, the killing and the psychology of war. In The Beauty and the Sorrow he superbly and humanely brings to life all the tragedy, chaos, death and gunsmoke of battle. • "Simon Sebag Montefiore, author of Stalin and Young Stalin" "Powerful and compelling . . . Of the many books about the First World War this is among the most strikingly original. . . . Almost every page of Englund's book is fresh and revelatory. • "Daily Express (UK)" "A literary as well as a historical achievement. • "The Guardian (UK)" "These lives are anything but ordinary, and the stories are absolutely riveting. . . . A fresh, varied, thoroughly convincing picture of the war. . . . There are some wonderful details. . . . Englund has chosen his voices with great care, and the resulting picture of the war in the round, with all its sorrows but also its joys, is made all the more vivid by the eloquent translation from the Swedish by Peter Graves. • "The Telegraph (UK)" "Englund frees individual experience from the collective cloak of history and geography [in] this extraordinary book. . . . The details build like a symphony. • "Mail on Sunday (UK)" "[There are] hundreds of eerie, moving, upsetting, and surprising incidents from the First World War within this extraordinary book. . . . Like a great novel, The Beauty and the Sorrow manages to be both more universal and more particular [than other books on WWI]. Peter Englund

frees individual experience from the collective cloak of history and geography. . . . The details build like a symphony. . . . Englund writes with a calm clarity, beautifully conveyed by his translator. •  
• "Mail on Sunday (5 stars, UK)" • "Anthologies of war reminiscences are often lazy stuff, mere compilations of extracted passages from diaries and letters. . . . [But] Englund's choice of witnesses and his use of their material are admirably judged. This is an anthology well above the common run. . . . This is a book about men and women living at the outer edge of human experience." • "Sunday Times (UK)"

Peter Englund received a Ph.D. in history at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He has been given a number of literary prizes in his home country, including the most famous one, the August. In 2002, he was elected to the Swedish Academy (who awards the Nobel Prize in Literature), and in 2008 was appointed its new Permanent Secretary. He has also worked as a war correspondent, in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.

This is a compelling book. One feels part of what happens to each person. You feel their sorrows - much too much sorrow. You share their occasional taste of beauty and happiness. As you get to know each person better through the author's words and use of the present tense, you develop a "relationship" with them. When they die (and some do) and when they are wounded, injured, or ill (and many are), and when they are helpless, trapped, prisoners - physically or in the horror the Great War - the War to End All Wars - you share their emotions and pain. It is painful to read in places, exciting in others. The author has created, in my opinion, a masterpiece. And when you see who has the "last word" in the book, you truly understand the ironic futility of the First World War.

If you're interested in WWI era history and want to hear it from those who lived it, read Englund's book. It will break your heart, show you how WWII was shaping as the next war, and reveal a lot about major social, cultural, and ethnic changes in the first quarter of the 20th century. Englund stays out of it and instead has carefully chosen "real people" who not only represent the trauma of the war, but also an awakening to new realities that would change life forever. You can feel not only the deprivation and circumstance of each life, but the grim necessity of facing things and trying to stay alive. Riveting.

A book I'm sure to read again sometime in the future. Beautiful, sensitive, and emotional. Peter Englund brings the reader right to the hearts and feelings of a small group of people involved in the

war from many aspects and corners of life. Very little appears to be hidden with honest frankness toward the pain and suffering of many. Be prepared to read some of the horrors of WWI along with the caring and selflessness of those in battle.

Probably the best narrative I've read about WW1. Personal narratives in various theaters. Particularly interesting is the role of several exceptional women and a 12 year old girl. Most WW1 fans consider the Western Front the key theater. This book incorporates Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Eastern Africa as areas of involvement. This book doesn't provide much in terms of strategic studies and tactical activities. In stead it offers human experiences across the various theaters and allows the reader larger insight into "The War to end All Wars".

This is a fascinating look at World War I, drawn from the histories of more than 20 people who were intimately involved in the war, some in the military and some civilians. It reads more like a novel than a history, but it is not fiction. The writing is so powerful that you can almost smell the gun powder and feel the snow piling over the tops of your boots. The book could have done with some maps. It's hard to keep track of where we are when the only locator is the name of some obscure little town. Also be warned that the Kindle edition does not include the many pages of photographs that are included in the hardcover edition. The photographs really bring the characters and locations to life.

The first time I read this, it was on a recommendation from a trusted friend. I enjoyed it and would have given it maybe 4 stars. I was a bit lost without maps and a basic knowledge of WW1 but I could still enjoy it and felt it was an important book. It moved me to read *A World Undone*, which I devoured and highly recommend. Then I went back and reread *The Beauty and the Sorrow*, this time knowing where these places and people fit in to the history. Then it became much more real, a really remarkable, memorable book.

Individual remembrances from diaries and first hand accounts of combatants and non combatants from 1914-1918. Not a history, as we know it, but an individual history from the select few.

Interesting approach to describing the War. Better detailed maps would have made this a 5-star book.

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