

The Thin Red Line: A Novel

By James Jones

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The Thin Red Line: A Novel By James Jones

They are the men of C-for-Charlie company—"Mad" 1st Sgt. Eddie Welsh, Pvt. 1st Class Don Doll, Pvt. John Bell, Capt. James Stein, Cpl. Fife, and dozens more just like them—infantrymen who are about to land, grim and white-faced, on an atoll in the Pacific called Guadalcanal. This is their story, a shatteringly realistic walk into hell and back.

In the days ahead, some will earn medals, others will do anything they can dream up to get evacuated before they land in a muddy grave. But they will all discover the thin red line that divides the sane from the mad—and the living from the dead—in this unforgettable portrait that captures for all time the total experience of men at war.

Foreword by Francine Prose

"Brutal, direct, and powerful . . . The men are real, the words are real, death is real, imminent and immediate."—*Los Angeles Times*

"A rare and splendid accomplishment . . . strong and ambitious, spacious, and as honest as any novel ever written."— *Newsweek*

"[A] major novel of combat in World War II . . . reminiscent of Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage*."—*The Christian Science Monitor*

"*The Thin Red Line* moves so intensely and inexorably that it almost seems like the war it is describing."—*The New York Times Book Review*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
"When compared to the fact that he might very well be dead by this time tomorrow, whether he was courageous or not today was pointless, empty. When compared to the fact that he might be dead tomorrow, everything was pointless. Life was pointless. Whether he looked at a tree or not was pointless. It just didn't make any difference. It was pointless to the tree, it was pointless to every man in his outfit, pointless to everybody in the whole world. Who cared? It was not pointless only to him; and when he was dead, when he ceased to exist, it would be pointless to him too. More important: Not only would it ***be*** *pointless, it would* ***have been*** *pointless, all along."*

Such is the ultimate significance of war in *The Thin Red Line* (1962), James Jones's fictional account of the battle between American and Japanese troops on the island of Guadalcanal. The narrative shifts effortlessly among multiple viewpoints within C-for-Charlie Company, from commanding officer Capt. James Stein, his psychotic first sergeant Eddie Welsh, and the young privates they send into battle. The descriptions of combat conditions--and the mental states it induces--are unflinchingly realistic, including the dialog (in which a certain word Norman Mailer rendered as "fug" 15 years earlier in *The Naked and the Dead* appears properly spelled on numerous occasions). This is more than a classic of combat fiction; it is one of the most significant explorations of male identity in American literature, establishing Jones as a novelist of the caliber of Herman Melville and Stephen Crane.

From Library Journal
Jones's 1962 novel follows the men of Charlie Company as they fight on Guadalcanal. Though LJ's reviewer was less than knocked out by it, a forthcoming feature film starring John Travolta, George Clooney, Nick Nolte, Leonardo DiCaprio, Gary Oldman, and many others should generate heavy interest.
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Review
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