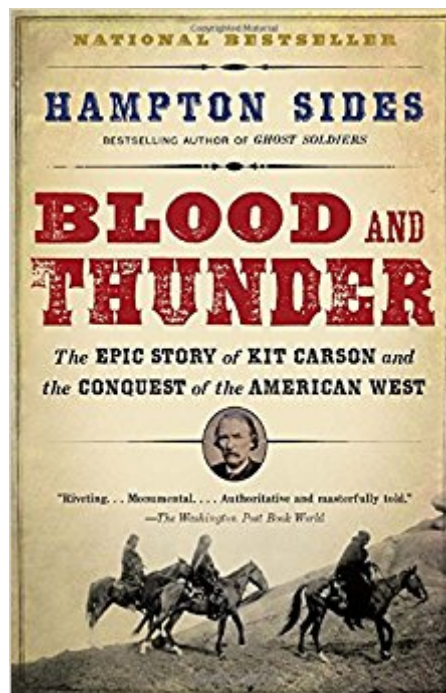




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Blood And Thunder: The Epic Story Of Kit Carson And The Conquest Of The American West



Synopsis

A magnificent history of the American conquest of the West; "a story full of authority and color, truth and prophecy" (The New York Times Book Review). In the summer of 1846, the Army of the West marched through Santa Fe, en route to invade and occupy the Western territories claimed by Mexico. Fueled by the new ideology of "Manifest Destiny," this land grab would lead to a decades-long battle between the United States and the Navajos, the fiercely resistant rulers of a huge swath of mountainous desert wilderness. At the center of this sweeping tale is Kit Carson, the trapper, scout, and soldier whose adventures made him a legend. Sides shows us how this illiterate mountain man understood and respected the Western tribes better than any other American, yet willingly followed orders that would ultimately devastate the Navajo nation. Rich in detail and spanning more than three decades, this is an essential addition to our understanding of how the West was really won.

Book Information

Paperback: 624 pages

Publisher: Anchor; Reprint edition (October 9, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1400031109

ISBN-13: 978-1400031108

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 1.3 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 681 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #29,455 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #57 in Books > History > Americas > Native American #272 in Books > History > Military > United States #301 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Military

Customer Reviews

Although delivering little in the way of new information, Sides, an Outside magazine editor-at-large and bestselling author (Ghost Soldiers), eloquently paints the landscape and history of the 19th-century Southwest, combining Larry McMurtry's lyricism with the historian's attachment to facts. Inevitably, Sides's main focus is the virtual decimation of the Navajo nation from the 1820s to the late 1860s. Sides depicts the complex role of whites in the subjugation of the Navajos through his portrait of Kit Carson "an illiterate trapper, soldier and scout who knew the Native Americans intimately, married two of them and, without blinking, participated in the Indians' slaughter. Books

about Carson have been numerous, but Sides is better than most Carson biographers in setting his exploits against a larger backdrop: the unstoppable idea of manifest destiny. Of course, as counterpoint to the progress of Carson and other whites, Sides details the fierce but doomed defense mounted by the Navajos over long decades. This culminated in their final, desperate "stand" during 1863 at Canyon de Chelly, more than a decade after a contingent of federal troops "operating under a commander whose last name of "Washington" seems ironic in this context" killed their great leader, Narbona. (Oct. 3) 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.

Hampton Sides's *Blood and Thunder* is more ambitious in its sweep than his acclaimed *Ghost Wars* (2001), a World War II history. His recounting of harsh frontier life and the violent clashes among the Navajo, the Spanish (Mexican), and the U.S. Army offers a gripping epic while enlivening many of the era's remarkable figures, from soldiers to trappers, farmers, Indians, and pioneer women. Critics especially praised Sides's nuanced discussions of the Navajo and other Native American tribes, as well as his inclusion of maps that chart key routes and conquests. A few critics cited some factual errors, tangential discussions, and omissions of some key historical figures, but overall it's clear that "Sides knows how to tell a good story" (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel). Copyright © 2004 Phillips & Nelson Media, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a wonderful book to read to refresh one's memory of Manifest Destiny, the Mexican-American War, and the history of the Navajo and other SW Indians, as well as the biography of Kit Carson, who was a guide to Fremont, the "pathfinder" and first Republican Party candidate for president, and Carson's father-in-law, a messenger who met presidents Polk, Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, and a man who had much influence in putting the Navajo onto their reservation, mountain man, scout, tracker, Indian fighter, etc. The author unfortunately seems to exaggerate some things. (The Navajo, like the Apaches, descended originally from Canadian Athapaskans. Sides claims that when Navajos met Athapaskans they were able to easily understand them. This seems unlikely, and it isn't documented.) But that being aside, this is a book very much worth reading.

Hampton Sides has written a very solid account of the wild American West. While Kit Carson is the primary focus I would hardly call this a biography - in fact, it appears to be more of a true period

history with Kit Carson weaving in and out of the narrative. Oddly, this is my main complaint - parts of Kit Carson's most interesting adventures were only touched upon. I am amazed that Sides did not include more one Carson's travel with Fremont. For an excellent account of these adventures I would highly recommend *A Newer World : Kit Carson John C Fremont And The Claiming Of The American West* and *Pathfinder: John Charles Fremont and the Course of American Empire* as excellent companion books. While I am a bit baffled at the omission of the John Fremont/ Kit Carson adventures it really is my only complaint. Otherwise, Hampton Sides has written a fair and compelling account that speaks to harshness and brutality of the American West. Sides paints a vivid account of the settler/indian skirmishes that plagued the 1800's. Sides shows that both parties had its villains and its peacemakers. Kit Carson is portrayed as 2 parts indian killer and 3 part peacemaker. "Blood and Thunder" centers on the life of Kit Carson, however the Navajo indians play much more than a secondary role. Sides tells a history of the Navajos that is rarely seen in popular writing. We see that they have flawed characters and utter inability to understand the culture that was thrust on them. The histories of the Navajos and Kit Carson collide when he is forced to embrace a scorched earth policy that drove the Navajos into submission. Sides has an engaging writing style and while parts get bogged down in detail "Blood and Thunder" typically reads quickly. I also enjoyed the amount of effort that was put into research - while it is true that most of the sources are secondary Sides did an excellent job compiling the facts into a free-flowing narrative. IF you enjoyed "Blood and Thunder" I would also highly recommend *A Newer World : Kit Carson John C Fremont And The Claiming Of The American West* *The Age of Gold: The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (My personal favorite) *Pathfinder: John Charles Fremont and the Course of American Empire* All three books tell stories that are equally unbelievable and gives you a new respect for the early western pioneers. Overall 4 1/2 stars rounded to 5

Blood and Thunder incorporates the life of Kit Carson in the struggle of forces beyond control. The Westward Movement of pioneers looking for land, encouraged by government forces, devastated Indian Tribes who lost not only the land which had sustained them for generations, but removed the very animals which were their source of food, clothing shelter and sustenance. The author presents Kit Carson as a man who understood the loss of the land and a people incapable of affecting forces beyond their control.

While I wouldn't call this a biography about Kit Carson, the book covers the time Kit was alive and he is featured prominently in it. It was well written and I learned much about this time and place. If

you're at all interested in the mid nineteenth century American west, then you won't be disappointed.

This is so well written. It is hard to believe that a historical work could fill you with suspense, but this one does. It manages to find a middle ground between being very truthful and accurate and being unnecessarily gory. There are moments of sadness, moments of unexpected bravery, and many more moments of moral ambiguity. No one is glorified, but no one is unfairly demonized. I wish more historical works were written to that standard.

I gave this book 5 stars because it was a very interesting book to read and it was hard to put down. I liked the author's style of writing. The fact that he tried to make all of these people that are part of our history reachable to the reader as real people, something that we can understand, in real time as much as possible made the reading so interesting, as if you were there, watching history unfold. He did a good job in writing it . It's very interesting. If you're interested in the American Wild West, as it was called, or stories about Kit Carson , the Indian "wars," etc, it's a good book to read, worthy of your time.

I am not yet finished with this work but I'm about halfway through and I am absolutely enthralled with the quality. I borrowed it first from the library but with many demands on my time, couldn't finish before the loan ended. So I had to purchase my own copy. Quite frankly, Sides' style comes across better than a lot of novels I've read. I've never been one to be bored by history, even if it's just a list of names and numbers. But you don't have to worry about that with Hampton Sides' presentation of the material. He is thoroughly engaging and from this work I got on the track of some other books I want to check into as well. If you love this period in American history, you'll love Blood & Thunder.

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