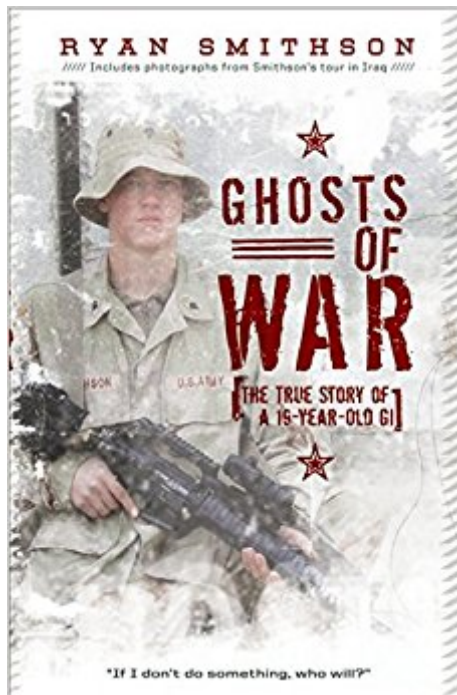




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Ghosts Of War: The True Story Of A 19-Year-Old GI



Synopsis

In this extraordinary and harrowing memoir, follow one GI's tour of duty as Ryan Smithson brings readers inside a world that few understand. This is no ordinary teenager's story. Instead of opting for college life, Ryan Smithson joined the Army Reserve when he was seventeen. Two years later, he was deployed to Iraq as an Army engineer. His story—and the stories of thousands of other soldiers—is nothing like what you see on CNN or read about in the New York Times. This unforgettable story about combat, friendship, fear, and a soldier's commitment to his country peels back the curtain on the realities of war in a story all Americans should read.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 9 Up •Smithson experienced the events of 9/11 while in high school and responded by enlisting in the Army Reserve after graduation. He married his high school sweetheart before being deployed to Iraq. Once there, he worked as an equipment operator in an equipment platoon, and while mortar fire was a regular occurrence, the missions he describes were all about bulldozing berms, filling craters created by IEDs, and convoying lumber. One gruesome section describes salvaging parts from Humvees in which soldiers died. A few missions, though, were more in the line of favors to the local population than anything that helps combatants. Some of the author's most poignant passages are his descriptions of interactions with Iraqi children. Where he was expecting rock-throwing, he encountered barefoot, dirty children grateful for the water the soldiers gave them. It is these children and the villagers he met that help explain for him the

purpose of the war. The book ends with Smithson's return home, his almost magical escape from night terrors, and his work with children in his own hometown. Writing proves to be his therapy for PTSD. There are mixed metaphors aplenty, crude and morbid humor, and other evidence of a young author, but it all works together to create a tough but powerful look at one man's experience. --Eric Norton, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, WI Copyright © 2003 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.

He lucidly recounts the intensity of battle and the pain of losing comrades. For Smithson, the war is a source of personal enlightenment, and this memoir is a remarkable, deeply penetrating read that will compel teens to reflect on their own thoughts about duty, patriotism and sacrifice. (Memoir. YA) (Kirkus Reviews (starred review)) A tough but powerful look at one man's experience. (School Library Journal (starred review)) Smithson avoids writing either prowar propaganda or an antimilitary polemic, providing instead a fascinating, often humorous-and occasionally devastating-account of the motivations and life of a contemporary soldier. (Publishers Weekly) Unflinchingly honest. (Kirkus Reviews (starred review))

Thank you, Ryan. I will apologize in advance as I'm sure my words will fall far short of my intentions to communicate how your book affected me personally. Thank you for making the decision to serve and for the service you provided not just to our country, but to the people of Iraq you helped while there. More than that, thank you for sharing your story. More often than not, those returning from war, as you pointed out yourself, are reluctant to share their experiences. From someone who never enlisted, it is easier to say you appreciate a soldier's sacrifice when you have no real concept of what was involved other than a vague notion of his/her temporary residence in an alien environment and the perceived anxieties of being there and missing one's family and friends. Was it dangerous? Well, it is war. That lack of specificity does little or nothing to paint a picture or transfer feelings to someone who wasn't there. I am certain that your stories brought me just a short distance towards truly understanding what you and other members of the armed forces have gone through, but it is farther than any newscast or anyone else has ever taken me. I truly (if not fully) appreciate your decision to help bring others on that journey, to help them share both your sacrifice and your newfound camaraderie. The decision to open up your soul in this way was, in some ways, as equally brave as going off to serve. Also, thank you for the laughs. The way you wove humor through a story about life, death, fear, and more... well, again, my words fail me, so I'll just say it

again: Thank you!

Good Book, my grandson leaves for Ft. Benning, GA Monday. Gave me an idea what basic training would be like for him.

"Ghosts of War" tells the story of a typical U.S. Army reservist deployed to the Middle East. While the story lacks boom-boom excitement, this is due to the fact that the story is an autobiographical account of his experiences "over there." Not everyone in Iraq or Afghanistan gets shot or injured. Nonetheless, all are deeply affected by the experience, and it shows in the book, which is worth the read. Anyone interested in another account of a G.I.'s experiences can read "War Year" by Joe Haldeman - a semi-autobiographical account of his year in Vietnam - which is perhaps the best "true" account of war I've ever read. I even teach "War Year" in my English classes (we also use "Ghosts of War").

I bought this book to learn why a 19 year old would join the Military right out of high school. I was not disappointed, very informative and I feel very honestly written. I feel that our government did not do justice to the individuals who chose to join the Military service at the time. I want to thank all our service men and women for the sacrifices they made and are making to defend our country. Thank-you Ryan for writing this book, I totally enjoyed it.

Awesome!

Surprisingly readable. What started as the kind of book that I wrongly thought would be a tale of little value, written by a talented enlisted man, turned out to be quite enjoyable. Perhaps is his style of writing, the way he describes his surroundings, thoughts, emotions, etc., but it does pack power and is well worth the price of the book. 4 Stars.

If you are considering joining the service, this is a great book to read. It offers a window into what to expect in both basic training and in war. Also, this story links the training to the actual "boots on the ground" experience of being at war - these insights will make basic training a little more palatable.

This book is a great story about a high school graduate that joins the army. It was a very interesting book and it's hard to put down once you reach the good parts. It really let's you see the war through

the eyes of a soldier who fought in Iraq. Great overall book and I would recommend it to anyone who likes to or wants to read a book about the Iraq war.

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