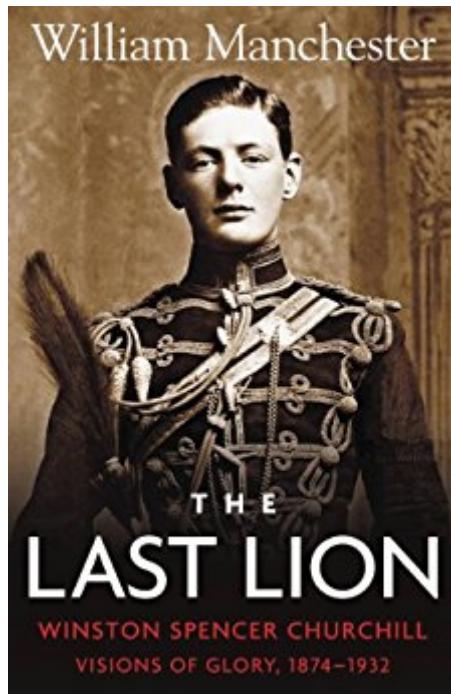


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The Last Lion: Volume 1: Winston Churchill: Visions Of Glory, 1874 - 1932



Synopsis

William Manchester met Winston Churchill on January 24, 1953. Their encounter on the Queen Mary sparked an intense curiosity in Manchester that would eventually result in his classic three-volume magnum opus *The Last Lion*. In this, the first volume, we follow Churchill from his birth to 1932, when he began to warn against the remilitarization of Germany. Born of a lovely, wanton American mother and a gifted but unstable son of a duke, his childhood was one of wretched neglect. He sought glory on the battlefields of Cuba, Sudan, India, South Africa and the trenches of France. In Parliament he was the prime force behind the creation of Iraq and Jordan, laid the groundwork for the birth of Israel, and negotiated the independence of the Irish Free State. Yet, as Chancellor of the Exchequer he plunged England into economic crisis, and his fruitless attempt to suppress Gandhi's quest for Indian independence brought political chaos to Britain. Throughout, Churchill learned the lessons that would prepare him for the storm to come, and as the 1930's began, he readied himself for the coming battle against Nazism--an evil the world had never before seen.

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Customer Reviews

I have been nervously awaiting this book for years. My first encounter with Manchester came when

volume one first came out. I was a child, and I went to visit my grandmother (who was in London during the Blitz); she held the book up to show me what she was reading. "The man." she said. "The great, great man." Years later, I read the first two volumes almost in one sitting - couldn't put them down - and have reread large parts of them over the years (every time I looked some piece up I'd find myself sitting down for an hour or two because I couldn't stop). I remember when *Finest Hour* reported that the trilogy would never be finished: it was like a punch in the stomach. I had my doubts about the ability of another author to write worthily of Manchester, and I was afraid this volume wouldn't measure up. No need to worry: this is every bit as much a page-turner as the last two volumes. It's not QUITE Manchester - I thought I could feel a bit of a difference in style, somehow - and yet it IS extremely good, much better than I had expected. Like the first two volumes, we begin with a preamble ("The Lion Hunted") in which we are (re-)acquainted with the book's subject. There is a certain amount of repetition of material from the two earlier preambles, but much good new material as well. I've read thousands of pages on Churchill, but even I found some good new anecdotes and quotations here. After that we're hurled right into the middle of the most dramatic days of World War Two. The unexpected, catastrophic defeats; the incompetence and perfidy of the people in charge of France - it doesn't take much from a writer to make this an exciting story, and yet I don't think it has ever been told better than this. Really, just what I had hoped for from Manchester himself.

"The Last Lion: Visions of Glory, 1874-1932," is the first of William Manchester's projected three-volume biography of Winston Spencer Churchill. I found it a superbly crafted, supremely well researched account of the first 58 years of the life of the 20th century's greatest statesman. With wit and candor, Manchester chronicles Churchill from his earliest days as the neglected and troublesome first child of Lord Randolph Churchill and his American-born wife, Jennie, to his entry into the political "wilderness" over home rule in India in 1932. Manchester's portrait of his subject is balanced and objective; we see Churchill at his finest: a courageous (almost to the point of foolhardiness) army officer, and later a gifted Member of Parliament who became one of the youngest Cabinet ministers in British history. We also see him at his worst: a Cabinet minister with appalling political judgment at times, quick to meddle in other ministers' affairs while neglecting his own, and with an uncanny ability to alienate not only his political foes, but almost all his political allies as well. In addition to a wonderfully written chronology of Churchill's life, Manchester provides an overview of the times in which Churchill lived. I was fascinated by the author's account of Victorian England -- its culture, its mores, and its view of itself in the world. The sections which

describe Churchill's times make highly entertaining and absorbing reading by themselves. "The Last Lion: Visions of Glory, 1874-1932," clearly shows why William Manchester is one of the pre-eminent biographers at work today.

"Defender of the Realm, 1940 -- 1965" is the final volume of William Manchester's massive three-volume biography, "The Last Lion", of Winston Churchill (1874 -- 1965). The first volume, published in 1983, titled "Visions of Glory", covered Churchill's life from 1874 -- 1932, while the second volume, published in 1988, titled simply "Alone", covered the years 1932 -- 1940. This new sweeping third volume covers Churchill's life beginning with his ascension to the office of Prime Minister in 1940. It focuses upon the WW II years, follows Churchill during the years between 1945 and his second period as Prime Minister from 1951 -- 1955, and concludes with Churchill's years of comparative retirement up to his death. The biography was a near lifetime project for Manchester (1922 -- 2004). Manchester had researched the third volume of the trilogy, prepared well-organized and voluminous notes, and done some of the writing. Near the end of his life, however, Manchester realized he would be unable to complete the third volume. He selected journalist Paul Reid to complete the work. The result of Manchester's and Reid's efforts is a detailed, dense study of 1200 pages. The book offers a thorough, multi-faceted look at the complex statesman that was Winston Churchill, in his determination, devotion to Great Britain and to civilization, brilliance, and frequent pettiness. Because Churchill's personal life was inextricably intertwined with his public life, this book goes far beyond biography. It is a masterful political and military history of the WW II years and, to a lesser extent, of the years following. Churchill the man is most in focus in the 50-page "Preamble" to the book.

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