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To America: Personal Reflections of an Historian

Stephen E. Ambrose

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In *To America*, Stephen E. Ambrose, one of the country's most influential historians, reflects on his long career as an American historian and explains what an historian's job is all about. He celebrates America's spirit, which has carried us so far. He confronts its failures and struggles. As always in his much acclaimed work, Ambrose brings alive the men and women, famous and not, who have peopled our history and made the United States a model for the world.
Taking a few swings at today's political correctness, as well as his own early biases, Ambrose grapples with the country's historic sins of racism, its neglect and ill treatment of Native Americans, and its tragic errors (such as the war in Vietnam, which he ardently opposed on campus, where he was a professor). He reflects on some of the country's early founders who were progressive thinkers while living a contradiction as slaveholders, great men such as Washington and Jefferson. He contemplates the genius of Andrew Jackson's defeat of a vastly superior British force with a ragtag army in the War of 1812. He describes the grueling journey that Lewis and Clark made to open up the country, and the building of the railroad that joined it and produced great riches for a few barons.
Ambrose explains the misunderstood presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, records the country's assumption of world power under the leadership of Theodore Roosevelt, and extols its heroic victory of World War II. He writes about women's rights and civil rights and immigration, founding museums, and nation- building. He contrasts the presidencies of Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Richard Nixon, and Lyndon B. Johnson. Throughout, Ambrose celebrates the unflappable American spirit.
Most important, Ambrose writes about writing history. "The last five letters of the word 'history' tell us that it is an account of the past that is about people and what they did, which is what makes it the most fascinating of subjects."
To America is an instant classic for all those interested in history, patriotism, and the love of writing.

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