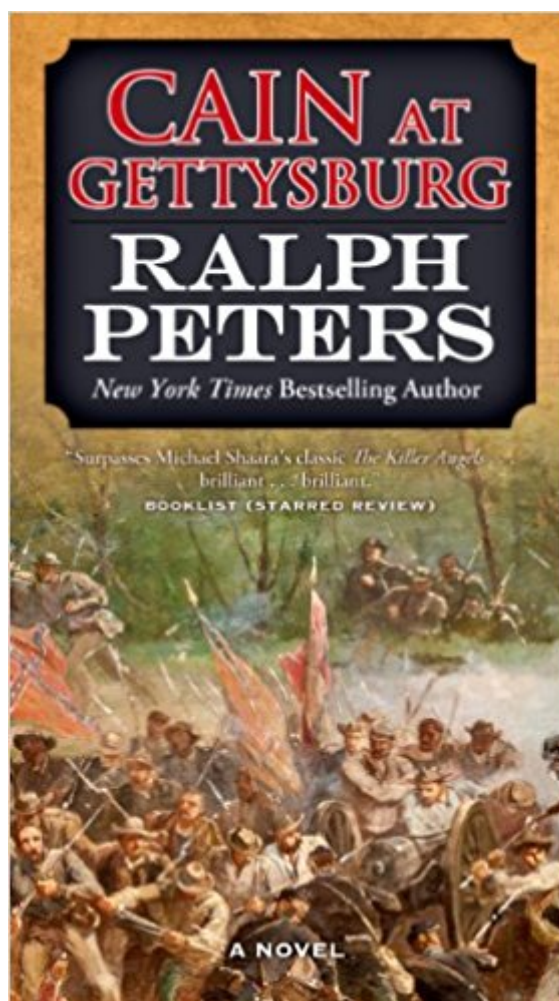


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Cain At Gettysburg: A Novel (The Battle Hymn Cycle)



Synopsis

Winner of the American Library Association's W. Y. Boyd Award for Excellence in Military Fiction. Two mighty armies blunder toward each other, one led by confident, beloved Robert E. Lee and the other by dour George Meade. They'll meet in a Pennsylvania crossroads town where no one planned to fight. In this sweeping, savagely realistic novel, the greatest battle ever fought on American soil explodes into life at Gettysburg. As generals squabble, staffs err. Tragedy unfolds for immigrants in blue and barefoot Rebels alike. The fate of our nation will be decided in a few square miles of fields. Following a tough Confederate sergeant from the Blue Ridge, a bitter Irish survivor of the Great Famine, a German political refugee, and gun crews in blue and gray, *Cain at Gettysburg* is as grand in scale as its depictions of Civil War combat are unflinching. For three days, battle rages. Through it all, James Longstreet is haunted by a vision of war that leads to a fateful feud with Robert E. Lee. Scheming Dan Sickles nearly destroys his own army. Gallant John Reynolds and obstreperous Win Hancock, fiery William Barksdale and dashing James Johnston Pettigrew, gallop toward their fates. There are no marble statues on this battlefield, only men of flesh and blood, imperfect and courageous. From New York Times bestselling author and former U.S. Army officer Ralph Peters, *Cain at Gettysburg* is bound to become a classic of men at war. This edition of the book is the deluxe, tall rack mass market paperback.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A classic novel of warfare that will be read for years to come." —W.Y. Boyd

Literary Novel Award

“Surpasses Michael Shaara’s classic *The Killer Angels*...a brilliant portrayal of how the Confederate infantry felt...In fact, brilliant is an adjective one is tempted to wear out in describing this book...”

• Booklist (starred review)

“[A] compelling tale of men at war...Peters’s colorful descriptions of harsh army life and the utter chaos of battle are accurate and convincing...”

• Publishers Weekly

“Action-packed...vigorous, decisive...Peters is both historically accurate and a well-practiced storyteller [with] a good sense of the language and culture of the time. Among the many strong points of Peters’ version is his attention to the immigrant players on the battlefield.”

• Kirkus Reviews

“Ralph Peters has given us a great treasure! You’ll want to keep *Cain at Gettysburg* long after you’ve read through it the first time. Visit with the ragged, but proud, veterans of Lee’s army; listen to them as they prepare for the fight ahead. You will marvel at this superbly crafted portrait of General George Meade’s soldiers in dusty blue, whose courage matched that of their commander. This wonderful saga pulls you right into the ranks of men marching to meet their destiny.”

• John W. Mountcastle, Brigadier General, U.S. Army (ret.), former Army Chief of Military History

“A captivating novel that combines the accuracy of the historian with the gripping prose of a gifted storyteller...spellbinding...”

• Dr. James S. Pula, author of *The Sigel Regiment: A History of the 26th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry: 1862-1865 on Cain at Gettysburg*

“Ralph Peters has done the seemingly impossible. He has found a new way to tell the story of Gettysburg and simultaneously restore a great general to his rightful place in our minds and hearts.”

• Thomas Fleming, New York Times bestselling author of *The Secret Trial of Robert E. Lee on Cain at Gettysburg*

“A great retelling of the Battle of Gettysburg, *Cain* had my complete attention. Ralph Peters challenges the notion that everything that can be written about this battle has been. His approach is fresh, original, and outstanding in every respect.”

• General Sid Shachnow, U.S. Army Special Forces (ret.)

RALPH PETERS, New York Times bestselling author of *The War After Armageddon*, is a retired U.S. Army officer; a controversial strategist and veteran of the intelligence world; a journalist who appears frequently in the broadcast media; and a lifelong traveler with experience in over seventy countries on six continents. Peters has studied the Battle of Gettysburg since childhood, when his parents took him on annual pilgrimages to that hallowed ground. Combining years of walking those fields and painstaking research with insight into the souls of generals and privates gleaned from his own military career, Ralph Peters tells this great American tale in a masterful style.

As a retired soldier Ralph Peters knows how to imbue the protagonists of his novel - men often consumed by the demands of a chivalrous honor foreign to modern readers - with true honor. This is honor that comes from overcoming the faults and frailties that affect all of us and doing our duty anyway. The generals, officers, and enlisted of this book are not dry and 2 dimensional historical figures. They are living, breathing, bleeding, (and other bodily functions) men who you care about and wish success for even though you know the result of their efforts 149 years ago. The author gives appropriate homage to Michael Shaara's "Killer Angels" and has written a book that is similar in its "docudrama" approach to the 3 days of Gettysburg but is different in its willingness to eliminate any possible veneer of the "romance of war". When I was a Marine student at the Army War College in Carlisle PA the class spent a day at Gettysburg with families. Our group ended the day by standing in the woods where Pickett's men waited and then, at proper intervals we walking from there to Cemetery Ridge while reading aloud from Shaara's description of Pickett's charge. There were tears. Shaara's attribution of more flowery language, the boy singing "Kathleen Mavourneen" at the campfire, and the greater attention to sympathetic emotional exposition makes his book one that appeals to the heart as much as the mind. Peters' book will draw no tears - instead it will draw chills and shivers in its unflinching description of what it means to walk most of a mile uphill in the hot afternoon sun into hub-to-hub cannon fire. The reader will be left wondering how these men could survive this abbatoir and then after the war return to rebuild and build the country for the next 50 years. I read this in a long afternoon without a pause. Peters tells us that Gettysburg was so huge and complex that dozens of books could be written (and have been) about it and all be different. There have been and will be different ones than this but none better.

This is a praiseworthy, realistic account of the battle, but I was tempted to not write any comments as just about everything to say is addressed in these reviews. However, I have to add just a few things. First, as I intimate in the title, this "fictional" account of the battle actually goes out on a limb and pays some attention to Meade's role. I have not read every discussion of this battle, but one cannot read more than a few accounts of Gettysburg without noticing how Meade has been shoved into a corner, essentially dismissed as a mediocre, unimportant participant in the battle of Gettysburg. Peters makes up for that, and much more effectively than through simple description, by bringing Meade's thoughts and discussions to life. What we see here is that he was a thoughtful and talented commander. As Earl Hess also points out in his book, Meade was prepared to meet Longstreet's alternative "end run" all along. This is also the first time I have seen Lee's decision to stay the 3rd day and attack in terms of a grudge match with a general he regarded as inferior.

Whether or not this is actually true, it is a VERY intriguing idea. Second, Peters has intentionally filled in holes left open by the account in *Killer Angels*, and has done this very well without trying to copy Shaara's style. While the writing is from a different perspective with each author, these two books really dovetail into a more complete picture of the battle and the participants. Shaara elevated Buford and Chamberlain to celebrity status, but Peters essentially ignores them and focuses upon other pieces of the picture. Interestingly, Lee is giving a large share of attention in each book: I guess you really can't ignore him. Now I guess we need a 3rd fictional account from another talented author, with attention given to details on Culp's Hill, Stuart's ride, Stuart/Custer on the 3rd day, etc. Finally, Peters has added immeasurably to an understanding of American Civil War history with his vivid and very candid scenes with the common soldiers. What he adds to that understanding is the reality of war at the grass roots level, without whitewashing it. The descriptions of stripping corpses, defecating, cursing, spouting racist epithets are all a very real part of the Civil War. It's just that we have chosen to focus on the glory of battle without getting down to the seamy details. I have to smirk upon reading a recent review, which described the book as "vulgar." Sorry to shatter the idealism of the reviewer, but the Civil War was not just generals uniformed in fine uniforms with gold piping and epaulets, and eloquent discussions on the inherent rights of man by college professors. War is dirty, bloody, horrific... and vulgar. To ignore that is to elevate war to a level of esteem it does not deserve. I cannot recommend this book more. It should be on every Civil War bookshelf along with *The Killer Angels*.

Being a Civil War buff since 1963 (parents took me, my brother & sister to visit the battlefield in August, right after the Centennial Celebration), and having a library of Civil War books numbering in the mid-hundreds, I am wary of any new title, including fiction. This coming weekend, my wife, daughter & I will be staying in Gettysburg for a few days (I have a meeting in DC, and easy hour+ plus drive away), and decided to download a Kindle Civil War title to occupy the inevitable hotel room time I will have. This book was a very, very pleasant surprise. It opens with a reader attention holding description of transfer of power to Gen. Meade and continues on (I'll have to buy another book for the trip!). There have been comparisons of this book with "*Killer Angels*" but to compare the two is not quite fair. I perceived Shaara's book to be written in a style to lead the reader to "think" it was non-fiction (there are actually several books written about the accuracy of "*Killer Angels*"), but with Peters' book, it reads more in an enjoyable, fictionalized style, drawing more on the characters thoughts and speaking interactions with one another. Given the library of books about this battle, it is not hard to write a book that follows the course of the battle and "*Cain at Gettysburg*"

accomplishes that well. But it also does an excellent job at humanizing the characters that fought there. I can't imagine another epic film about this battle, but who knows? I would buy this book for sheer enjoyment of reading it, with the historical ties to the Battle of Gettysburg as a secondary reason.

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