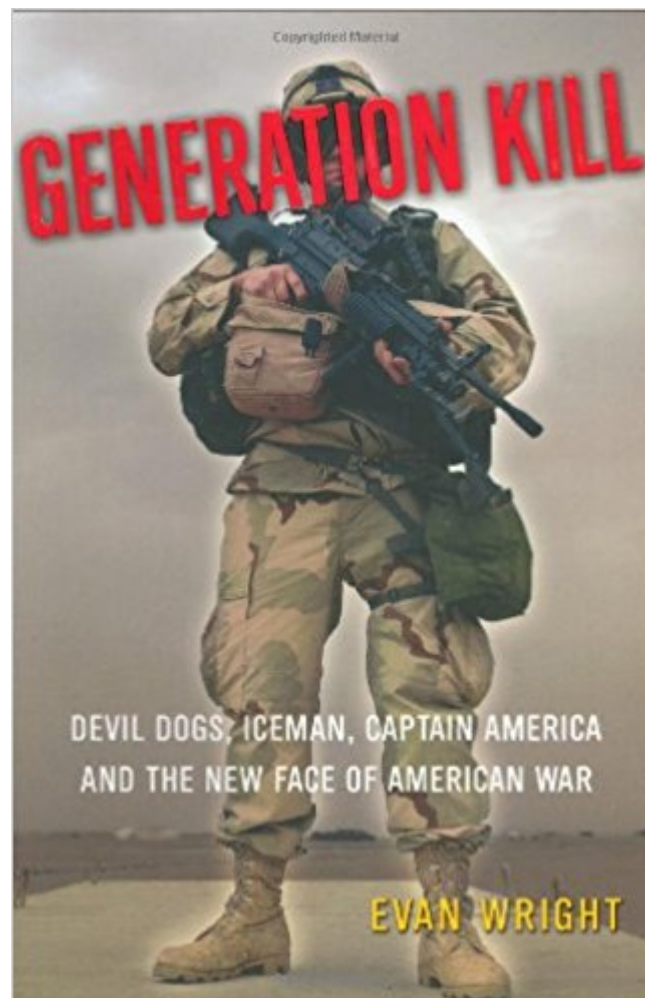




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Generation Kill: Devil Dogs, Iceman, Captain America And The New Face Of American War



Synopsis

In the tradition of *Black Hawk Down* and *Jarhead* comes a searing portrait of young men fighting a modern-day war. A powerhouse work of nonfiction, *Generation Kill* expands on Evan Wright's acclaimed three-part series that appeared in *Rolling Stone* during the summer of 2003. His narrative follows the twenty-three marines of First Recon who spearheaded the blitzkrieg on Iraq. This elite unit, nicknamed "First Suicide Battalion," searched out enemy fighters by racing ahead of American battle forces and literally driving into suspected ambush points. Evan Wright lived on the front lines with this platoon from the opening hours of combat, to the fall of Baghdad, through the start of the guerrilla war. He was welcomed into their ranks, and from this bird's-eye perspective he tells the unsettling story of young men trained by their country to be ruthless killers. He chronicles the triumphs and horrors—physical, moral, emotional, and spiritual—that these marines endured while achieving victory in a war many questioned before it began. Wright's book is a timely account of war; even more important, it is a timeless description of the human drama taking place on today's battlefields. Written with brutal honesty, raw intensity, and startling intimacy, *Generation Kill* is destined to become a classic and take its place in the canon of the most captivating and authentic works of war literature.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wright rode into Iraq on March 20, 2003, with a platoon of First Reconnaissance Battalion

Marines—the Marine Corps' special operations unit whose motto is "Swift, Silent, Deadly."

These highly trained and highly motivated First Recon Marines were the leading unit of the American-led invasion force. Wright wrote about that experience in a three-part series in Rolling Stone that was hailed for its evocative, accurate war reporting. This book, a greatly expanded version of that series, matches its accomplishment. Wright is a perceptive reporter and a facile writer. His account is a personality-driven, readable and insightful look at the Iraq War's first month from the Marine grunt's point of view. It jibes with other firsthand reports of the first phase of the Iraqi invasion (including David Zucchino's *Thunder Run*), showing the unsettling combination of feeble and vicious resistance put up by the Iraqi army, the Fedayeen militiamen and their Syrian allies against American forces bulldozing through towns and cities and into Baghdad. Wright paints compelling portraits of a handful of Marines, most of whom are young, street-smart and dedicated to the business of killing the enemy. As he shows them, the Marines' main problem was trying to sort out civilians from enemy fighters. Wright does not shy away from detailing what happened when the fog of war resulted in the deaths and maimings of innocent Iraqi men, women and children. Nor does he hesitate to describe intimately the few instances in which Marines were killed and wounded. Fortunately, Wright is not exposing the strengths and weaknesses of a new generation of American fighting men, as the misleadingly hyped-up title and subtitle indicate. Instead, he presents a vivid, well-drawn picture of those fighters in action on the front lines in the blitzkrieg-like opening round of the Iraq War. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Its timeliness notwithstanding, this chronicle of an American reconnaissance platoon's mission to spearhead the invasion of Iraq is not one of those hastily thrown together "instant books." The author was the only journalist to travel with First Recon. He joined the platoon in March 2003 and traveled with its soldiers into combat missions (including the assault on Baghdad in April). His book is not about the war itself but about one group of men who fought in it. Today's American soldiers, Wright says, are young men who are "on more intimate terms with the culture of the video games, reality TV shows and Internet porn than they are with their own families." (One 19-year-old corporal compares driving into an ambush to a *Grand Theft Auto* video game: "It was fucking cool.") Wright also explores how today's pop-culture-driven soldiers differ from those who fought more than three decades ago in Vietnam. A perceptive, often troubling examination of soldiers' view of war, peace, and combat. David Pitt Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

This incredible book is about the invasion of Iraq in March/April of 2003. It is about the First Marine

Recon Battalion, with a particular focus on second platoon in Bravo company. We meet other Marines as well, including the Alpha Commander, Battalion Executive Officer, Battalion Sergeant Major and the Battalion Commander. Some officers are competent (Lt. Fick, Capt. Patterson), others are disastrously incompetent (Encino Man, Captain America) and there are still others with mixed reviews (Ltc. Fernando and the XO). It's not about officers though. It's about the grunt Marines and their NCOs. While it details the experience of war, it also is a window into the tail end of Generation X and a strong look at military culture overall. Evan Wright rode along in a Humvee on the very front lines with 2nd platoon. He is a self-described liberal who wrote for Rolling Stone. Because he was willing to sleep, eat, ride, and experience the horror/thrill of combat with the Marines, they both opened up to him and grew to respect him (many have stayed in touch years later, which makes for an excellent Afterword). It seems like Wright is able to remain even keeled, but it is clear that he likes and deeply appreciates many of the Marines that he chronicles. Some critics have said that this book (and the outstanding David Simon HBO mini-series) glorify war, while others say it is an over-the-top anti-war story. As an Army veteran (and current Army Medical Officer in mental health) that has counseled over 1000 veterans and service members, I am of the opinion that this is very accurate and quite nuanced. I am also of the opinion that almost every war book or movie, when done accurately, has a bit of an anti-war message. War is hell. Even if you survive it.

I believe the author provided a true account of the gulf war combat. I was not there. Some things I believe were slanted to the left side, but I believe he did a brilliant and honest job of talking about combat. At the ground level, you do not know what is really happening. We throw young men and women into situations that are insane. They deserve our faith and commitment to them. The officers and POLITICIANS who order them, create the situations they need to survive, need to pay attention to books like these. Soldiers are neither stupid nor evil, the situations they asked to survive in often are. All honor to our armed forces.

This book had a strong impact on me in so many varied ways. It reads like a quick-paced thriller, a horror story, comedy, character drama and more, and all this while staying true to the facts of the first few weeks of the American invasion in Iraq in 2003. My first contact with Generation Kill was the TV series I came across while researching war for a piece I was writing. The series and book differ slightly, although the difference is more in the manner of presenting things than in the core story. The two different representations actually complement each other as the book offers more backstory and the benefit of hindsight, while the series more accurately depicts the chaos and how

the marines were left in the dark about their missions almost to the very end. While this chaotic storytelling was brilliantly incorporated into the series, it certainly wouldn't work in the book so the narration being supported by maps and additional information was a good choice for it. What this book does so well is that Wright doesn't take sides (as much as that is humanly possible), he merely reports the goings-on around him as he travels with team one of 1st Recon second platoon. He's equally frank about the marines' having doubts when the ROE say that every human being is an enemy, as he is frank relating the darker, more disturbing traits of some of the men. Perhaps the only 'fault' of this book is that it's so well written, has such compelling characters and fast paced plot that sometimes, as readers, we forget that it's not fiction. Reading it as fiction would certainly take away from its value and importance. Worth re-reading.

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