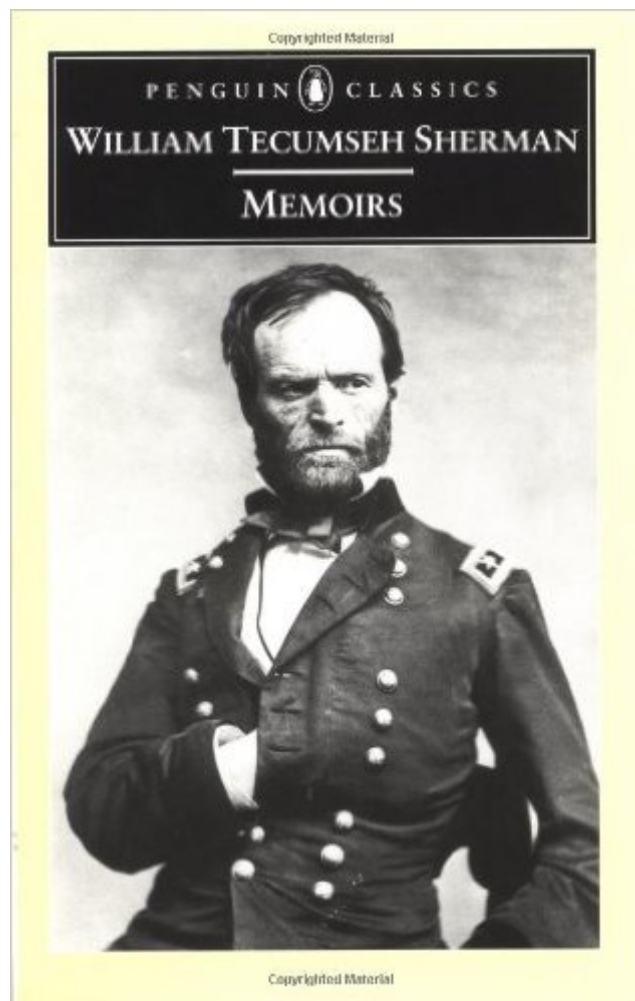


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Memoirs Of General William Tecumseh Sherman (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Before his spectacular career as General of the Union forces, William Tecumseh Sherman experienced decades of failure and depression. Drifting between the Old South and new West, Sherman witnessed firsthand many of the critical events of early nineteenth-century America: the Mexican War, the gold rush, the banking panics, and the battles with the Plains Indians. It wasn't until his victory at Shiloh, in 1862, that Sherman assumed his legendary place in American history. After Shiloh, Sherman sacked Atlanta and proceeded to burn a trail of destruction that split the Confederacy and ended the war. His strategy forever changed the nature of warfare and earned him eternal infamy throughout the South. Sherman's *Memoirs* evoke the uncompromising and deeply complex general as well as the turbulent times that transformed America into a world power. This Penguin Classics edition includes a fascinating introduction and notes by Sherman biographer Michael Fellman.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There's the example of Julius Caesar, of course. And in America, there was Ulysses Grant, whose orders and dispatches were so concise and unequivocal that they were credited by his subordinates for many of his victories. Grant's *Memoirs* are widely recognized as a classic of autobiography, as much for their literary merit as for their content. I've had this Penguin edition of "Cump" Sherman's *Memoirs* on my shelf for so long that the price is about a third of the current, but I've never been tempted to read them, chiefly because of Sherman's reputation for inhumanity during his service

against the trans-Mississippi Indians. A couple days ago, however, I opened the book on a whim and started reading, and I've hardly looked at anything else since. The writing is fantastic! Utterly unadorned yet vividly descriptive. Witty, and that's a surprise! Forthright, modest, down-to-earth. As thoroughly planned as one of his campaigns, which I find may be explained in part by his frequent assignment of logistic tasks in his early military career. He knew how to move supplies and keep account of where things were. Like any 19th C memoirist, or any Viking skald, Sherman feels obliged to trace his ancestry for a few pages, which I confess didn't immediately stir my interest. Then, however, when he begins his narrative of his military service in Florida, against the Seminoles, suddenly the saga comes to life. I learned more from this one chapter, as a primary source, about the early Americanization of Florida than from anything I've read elsewhere. I could feel the rash from the palmetto on my skin.

General William T. Sherman's memoirs, first published in 1875, are primarily an account of his service in uniform during the Civil War. Sherman rallied to the Union colors early in the conflict, but had indifferent success until the searing crucible of the Battle of Shiloh, where he fought under the command of the stalwart U.S. Grant. Shiloh was a turning point. With increasing confidence as a leader, Sherman played key roles in the siege of Vicksburg and in the relief of besieged Union forces at Chattanooga. When Grant was called east to head up all Union forces, he hand-picked Sherman as his successor in the West. Sherman would go on to take Atlanta, march to the sea at Savannah, and pillage his way through the Carolinas to hasten the end of the war. Sherman the man, and his memoirs, stand in vivid contrast to his contemporary and close friend U.S. Grant. Where Grant was modest and reserved, Sherman comes across as all nervous energy, talking up a storm and hardly able to sit still doing it. His memoirs are reflective of his personality, passionate and argumentative in between inserted copies of key correspondence. While less polished than Grant's, they are in many ways more entertaining and certainly more revealing of Sherman's feelings and personality. Sherman expresses an opinion on practically everything. His battles with newspaper reporters, whom he despised, date from an alleged nervous breakdown in the first year of the war. His exchange of correspondence with Confederate General John Hood over the forced evacuation of Atlanta, are a malstrom in miniature of the passions behind the war itself. Sherman is more than frank about the politics within the Union Army, and its sometimes troubled relations with civilian authority.

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