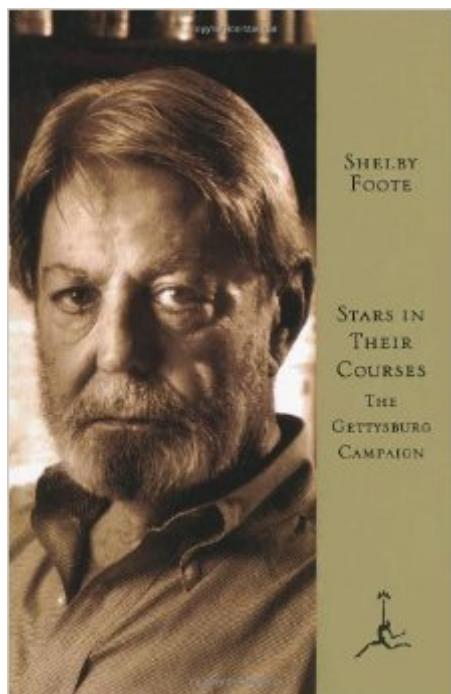


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Stars In Their Courses: The Gettysburg Campaign, June-July 1863



Synopsis

Historian/novelist Foote's masterly work has been culled from his critically acclaimed three-volume narrative of the Civil War.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The first Civil War book I ever read (not counting Stephen Crane's "Red Badge Of Courage" which I read back in the 10th grade), was Michael Shaara's "Killer Angels," an excellent book, moving and informative though somewhat discursive and lacking in as much battle detail as the reader may ultimately desire to know. That was by design as Shaara was seeking to show us the interior lives of the officers who fought at Gettysburg. In this sense "Killer Angels" is more like a novel than a history. "Stars In Their Courses" is a much more richly detailed - and not novelistic (though certainly not lacking in drama) - book, a book whose historical context is more fully exposed: each of the terrible interlocking events of those three days is exploded on the page so that we get a fuller appreciation of the totality of that battle, the "high-water mark of the Confederacy." I encourage anyone who is interested in furthering their understanding of the Battle of Gettysburg, or of simply reading a great book about the turning point in America's most devastating war, to read this book. And make sure, while you're at it, to also read "Killer Angels." Side by side these book give a fascinating view of three bloody days in the fields and woods of Pennsylvania. As an addendum, I would like to say that, while this book is more straightforward and less like a novel than KA, it is during the reading of Pickett's Charge from this book that both my wife and I broke down in tears. EKW

Mr. Foote is something of a folk hero to people who love reading civil war history. Read this, the central chapter of his magnificent three volume narrative, and you'll understand why. In one modestly sized book, Shelby Foote explains more of how and what happened during the three-day battle than many books five times its size. There are scores of books detailing the first day of the battle alone, but this little gem will tell the reader all he or she really needs to know about Gettysburg without going into every tiny detail about who commanded this or that regiment, or where every infantry company was stationed. Typical of Foote's writing, it is not florid or long winded, it simply takes you where you want to go. A must read.

Shelby Foote's monumental, three volume history of the American Civil War is widely recognized as one of the great works of the twentieth century. However, its great length - roughly three thousand pages - is undoubtedly intimidating to many readers. Fortunately, this 1994 Modern Library edition, *Stars in Their Courses*, the Gettysburg Campaign, circumvents this difficulty. *Stars in Their Courses* is the middle chapter in the middle volume of Shelby Foote's remarkable history. This extract offers an easy way for a reader new to Shelby Foote to become acquainted with his masterpiece. The editors of the Modern Library series should be commended for selecting this particular chapter. It is hard to imagine a better introduction to the Gettysburg Campaign. *Stars in Their Courses* is not only great history, it is great literature. Shelby Foote is an outstanding writer, one that happens, fortunately for us, to write history. In reviewing Foote's acclaimed historical narrative, one critic said, "It seems to me unlikely that it ever will be superseded." Remarkably, *Stars in Their Courses* is entirely self-contained. A reader not familiar with Shelby Foote's writing would not realize that this Modern Library edition was actually a single chapter drawn from a much larger work. The reader has no need to reference any other sources. *Stars in Their Courses* would make an excellent gift for that friend or family member that enjoys good literature, but heretofore has not developed an enthusiasm for the Civil War. The Modern Library edition is attractively bound, and printed on acid-free paper. Michael Shaara's Pulitzer Prize winning novel, *The Killer Angels*, would be a great companion gift to *Stars in Their Courses*. Shaara's focus is on specific participants in the three-day battle, especially Lee, Buford, Longstreet, Chamberlain, and Armistead. *The Killer Angels* was the basis for the epic movie, *Gettysburg*.

This is the perfect Shelby Foote sampler if the three volume, "The Civil War: A Narrative" seems either too daunting or you haven't the time. It's the entire "Stars in Their Courses" Chapter and part

of "Unvexed to the Sea" from "Fredericksburg to Meridian," the second volume of the trilogy. Simply put, it's the best and most concise account of the Gettysburg campaign you're ever likely to find. Foote doesn't overwhelm the reader the details, but instead, and with careful literary design, catches the ebb and flow of a great battle as it opens and occurs. If you've read the trilogy, then you probably don't need this, but it certainly is a lot easier to tote around than the rather ponderous size of the others. Also, if you're quite familiar with Gettysburg, then Foote may not be anything new, but I do think his mastery of the language eclipses most of what's out there (how historians drain the life out of such an exciting subject I'll never know). If you enjoyed this, I heartily recommend you pick up "Stars in Their Courses" in the audio where Foote reads the book himself. You listen to his voice and I'd hazard a guess that it's like listening to Homer read the Iliad or the Odyssey. Foote's melodious voice is mesmerizing and becomes a performance in itself. Foote deserves a 21 gun salute.

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